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## **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONSTRUCTION OF A KNOWLEDGE FIELD?<sup>1</sup>**

## **DESENVOLVIMENTO REGIONAL: CONSTRUÇÃO DE UM CAMPO DE SABER?**

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### **Abstract**

The world has been experiencing a global, national, regional, and local situation of economic, social, political, and ideological crises. This conjuncture leads us to start thinking about the process of regional development as a new knowledge field. Therefore, this paper discusses regional development as a possible knowledge field. Exploratory methodological tools were used by way of the literature. Results indicate that the discussion of regional development as a new knowledge field has created actions and public policies in inland and mid-sized cities of Brazil. That fact can be confirmed by the increase in postgraduate courses in the inland area of the country. This knowledge field should not be relegated to a second or third plane, given political projects that seem to forget about the importance of social and regional development for the Brazilian society.

**Keywords:** Regional Development; Regional Science; Regional Planning

### **Resumo**

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Vivencia-se um quadro global, nacional, regional e local de crises econômica, social, política e ideológica, esta conjuntura nos leva a pensar um novo olhar sobre o processo de desenvolvimento regional como um novo campo de saber. Assim sendo, este artigo discute o desenvolvimento regional como um possível campo do saber. Utilizou-se de um ferramental metodológico exploratório e à guisa da literatura. Os principais resultados apontam que o debate do desenvolvimento regional como novo campo do saber tem produzido ações e políticas públicas no interior e nas médias cidades brasileiras, fato demonstrado pelo aumento dos cursos de pós-graduação no interior do país. Esse campo de saber não deve ser relegado a um segundo ou terceiro plano, considerando projetos políticos que parecem esquecer a importância da causa do desenvolvimento regional e social para a sociedade brasileira.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento Regional; Ciência Regional; Planejamento Regional

## Introduction

This study aims to discuss regional development as a possible knowledge field. For this purpose, a theoretical-conceptual reflexive character was used, based on an analytical review of the literature. Clearly, discussions concerning regional development have gained ground, since a new research field, along with the formation of new researchers and professionals in Urban and Regional Planning/Demography of CAPES were established. These new researchers have been elaborating public policies and actions to intensify and reduce social and economic disparities, improving, then, the process of regional development. Also, postgraduate courses in regional development have increased in the Brazilian inland.

In the face of this brief report, the world has been experiencing a global, national, regional, and local situation of economic, social, political, and ideological crises. This conjuncture leads us to start thinking about the process of regional development as a new knowledge field. According to Furtado (1971; 2013), the socioeconomic development represents an ideal state for society, achieved by incorporating technical progress with endogenous dynamism. It requires socialization mechanisms to stimulate the "innovation versus diffusion" dialectic of the technical progress, in a combination of the nation's wealth and increasing improvement of the general population well-being. Similarly, Lopes (1984) states that the benefits of socioeconomic development must be experienced by all individuals, considering their location and the location of resources (natural or human) for the policies implementation. That way, the locations in space should condition the development, whereas this development should be the conditioner of the spatial characteristics. Thus, regional development comprises an analysis of social and economic factors in an inland part of a region, which constitute the spatial mobility of capital, work, and innovations. Such factors, when used correctly in a certain region, can reduce, or hasten regional inequalities.

In this context, regional development makes up a process of social, economic, cultural, and political transformation. These transformations are essential to understand the dynamic evolution of productive sectors in a region. Due to the advent of globalization, economic integration gained ground, and established the rules of productive and financial systems, as well as those of goods and services markets. Regions had to reinvent themselves to survive. Consequently, competitiveness and innovation brought new methods of production and management. This reinvention incited the participation of communities in debates over local/regional development, producing different results throughout the world.

That said, this study has the following structure, in addition to this introduction. The first section approaches regional development as a possible new "field". In a similar vein, the second section brings a reflection on regional development as a new knowledge field in the light of regional science. The third section ponders on the following questions: What is a "knowledge field"? A somewhat current and cohesive knowledge set? How does it produce or constitute itself? What are the influences and determinations of its formation, when no premises regarding the knowledge field of "regional development" exist yet? The fourth section analyzes the regional nowadays, explores the research and studies developed by postgraduate programs, observing the intellectual construction

dynamic of regional development in Brazil. The last, but not less important section, is the final considerations.

### Regional development: a new "field"?

This part intends to briefly explore the possibility of thinking about "regional development" as a possible new field<sup>7</sup>. Three short steps will be presented to formulate a proposition that converges with this intent. Firstly, it will be important to remember the disciplines of "origin". Resorting to a prosopopoeia: where have regional development studies spoken from thus far? Secondly, it will be necessary, once again, to go through the 'positive knowledge' and 'normative knowledge' dichotomy, from the moment when the notion of regional development could be formulated and characterized as a field until now. Thirdly, it will be suggested that regional development represents a "middle-range theory". If not a prerequisite, then, it is at least an important condition for the acknowledgment of regional development as a field of greater autonomy.

First step: which disciplines have known studies of regional development come from? It is important to remember that regional development implies the development of a region. Therefore, it is about asking: What is region? What is development? As expected, answers have been sought mainly in Geography and Economics.

However, regional development does not exclusively result from what these disciplines bring. Clearly, there is no reason to insist on creating connections with what is strange or distant, nor with "Urban and Regional Planning", that is, the area in which the subarea of regional development lies, when it comes to postgraduate courses. In fact, it is worth mentioning that Economics and Geography are autonomous "areas", according to the classification of CAPES. Thus, to resume, the designation "regional development" is also related to other disciplines, with emphasis on Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology<sup>8</sup>, History, and, at length, Law and Architecture. In that way, instead of sticking to the range of one or two disciplines, regional development could and should be extended to other knowledge fields, as that is how it will be treated from now on. Hence, regional development has adopted a distinctive interdisciplinary character<sup>9</sup>, possibly with more prominence in the context of postgraduate programs (PPG). By implication, another challenge regarding regional development studies consists in inventorying an intellectual production on regional development, which originates not only from Economics and Geography (rather known), but mostly from those disciplines previously mentioned (rather unknown).

Second step: concerning the 'positive knowledge' and 'normative knowledge' dichotomy, it is necessary to admit that it is not only properly disseminated, but also sufficiently didactic to indicate differences between *what exists* and *what is expected to exist*. Nonetheless, the distinction between the objective and concrete fact – which, in theory, corresponds to reality as it (supposedly) is – and the subjective idealized manifestation – which shows reality as it should be – is inadequate to distinguish regional development as empirical data on the one hand, and as a consciously designed purpose on the other. The inadequacy of this distinction brings some difficulties. Perhaps, the most serious one refers to the fact that the "reality as it supposedly is" does not simply differ from the "reality as it should be". After all, if reality is dynamic, then concrete fact and consciously designed

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7 Field is defined as a space that has some autonomy, in other words, it is governed by its own norms and rules. Nevertheless, a field cannot be dissociated from its surroundings, whereby it is conditioned to a lesser or greater degree. Internally, a field involves conflicts between the "agents" that integrate it, aiming for the conquest or preservation of positions. Hierarchies are established (and undone) according to the "capital" held by each agent in their respective field. Agreements made between the agents can placate conflicts, and temporarily guarantee some stability to the field. However, if on the one hand, internal tensions can be contained, on the other hand, threats coming from the surroundings can also create insecurity. If the idea of field suggests constant movement, as it seems evident, then, this notion has an unmistakably relational character (BOURDIEU, 2004).

8 Just to exemplify, it is possible to formulate a "meaning" based on Anthropology, according to which "it is history that makes a region [...] its multiple plans do not fit in geographical limits [...] The issue becomes more complex when [pondering] which history [is being] analyzed. Who are its protagonists? What [are] the discursive categories in operation? How [are] the experience narratives operated, told, and retold? What [are] the silenced categories? (RENCK, 2004, p. 12)

9 In fact, depending on the meaning, it may also be worth granting the expression "regional development" a multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary character (MATTEDI; THEIS, 2002).

purpose will be interwoven<sup>10</sup>. In other words, the distinction between a positive and a normative dimension, as postulated by positivism, is, in principle, arbitrary.

The regional development case is no exception. From this difficulty, another arises: strictly speaking, if "there were" regional development – regardless of what it means –, then there would be no point in changing reality, to turn it into what "it should be". In a way that the consummate "fact" of regional development would dismiss the formulation of a regional development "policy". To put it another way: the distinction is inadequate if the "intention" of regional development is thought to make sense only in view of the "nonexistence" of regional development. The fact against which any intention of regional development (as reality should be) stands would have to be the "lack" of regional development (as reality supposedly is). This "lack" can be understood, for example, as regional disparities. In this case, the existence of inequalities (social, economic, political...) among regions is what could change reality in favor of a "regional development", and on behalf of a reduction in regional disparities.

Third step: is regional development a theory? Or is it nothing but a hypothesis? Regional development is not a simple hypothesis, nor a consistent theory, but something in between. Since it is not a hypothesis nor theory, regional development can be considered a middle-range theory. Such theories are:

"intermediate theories among the small ones, but necessary working hypotheses that arise [...] during daily research routine and greater systematic efforts to develop a unified theory, capable of explaining all observed uniformities of behavior, organization, and social change" (MERTON, 1970, p. 51).

This kind of theories, being neither small and insignificant hypotheses, nor grand and consistent theories (such as the theoretical systems of Economics, Sociology, etc.), is used, mainly, as a type of guide for empirical investigations, occupying:

"an intermediate position between general theories of social systems, which are quite distant from the particular types of behavior, organization, and social change to explain what is observed, as well as the meticulous, orderly descriptions of details that are not generalized whatsoever" (MERTON, 1970, p. 51).

Abstractions may also be present in "middle-range theory". However, they are much closer to the social reality in question, meaning they can be tested empirically. Therefore, middle-range theories, as suggested in the case of regional development, could not be confused with grand theories, nor treated as simple hypotheses, since they involve limited aspects of social reality (MERTON, 1970, p. 51).

Considering the aforementioned steps - (a) the confirmation that regional development should not be limited to the concepts studied in just one or two disciplines, because, due to its evident interdisciplinary character, it tends to articulate with other knowledge fields, (b) the realization that the distinction between the concrete and objective fact, and the subjective idealized manifestation is inadequate to distinguish regional development as empirical data on the one hand, and as a consciously designed purpose on the other, and (c) the suggestion that regional development should be considered a "middle-range theory" - maybe some important conditions have been met, so that the formulation of a proposition which can contribute to the acknowledgment of regional development as a field of greater autonomy may be created. What is the question then?

The key question seems to be: "what is regional development from the Brazilian sociocultural perspective?" The inadequacy mentioned above regarding the distinction between fact and intention can be used as a starting point. Regional development is something "good", which does not exist, a solution to something "bad", which exists: inequalities (social, economic, political...) among regions, the so-called regional disparities. And what do regional disparities result from? In a capitalist economy, the development of productive forces in certain territories generates inequalities. This

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10 I personally sympathize with the idea that "the objective is not to understand reality [as it is], but understand [...] its contradictions as part of the struggle to change the world" (HOLLOWAY, 2003, p. 177).

occurs mainly because, in each "region", the provision of means of production is, quantitatively and qualitatively, differentiated, and so is the productivity of their labor force. As labor force operates the productive resources mobilized to produce goods in each region, within the context of a given national formation, the territory will be progressively altered and, from a "natural environment", it progressively transforms into a "technical-scientific-informational environment" (SANTOS; SILVEIRA, 2013).

This territorial division of labor will evolve into the coexistence of (or coordination between) some large metropolises, numerous mid-sized cities, many small urban centers, where industrial and service activities will be developed, and the "rural space", where primary activities (such as agriculture, husbandry, mining, etc.) will be developed increasingly with the support from industry. This socio-spatial division of labor creates a scenario in permanent change, characterized by the continuous generation of inequalities. Thus, regional development is "the" remedy sought to fight inequalities. Nevertheless, there is not only "one" remedy for regional disparities. It seems reasonable to notice that the expression "regional development" already suggests a divergence in relation to inequalities, hence the preference for regional development over regional disparities.

However, there are at least three possibilities of facing regional disparities, in other words, three ways of promoting regional development, with their respective theoretical and political implications, which leads to a debate held in the context of Economic Geography. From the first perspective, inequalities can only be corrected by the market; from the second, they can only be corrected by the State. Yet, from a third perspective, inequalities should/could be prevented by overcoming the material conditions which continually recreate them.

The first perspective recommends letting the market self-regulate without the intervention of organized groups in society (workers, through labor unions...) or the State. According to their lawyers, inequalities result from/are aggravated by (excessive) state interventionism. Despite recognizing the hegemony of liberal argument in the debate, investing in its details would be a waste of time and paper, which are scarce.

The second perspective proposes state interventionism. The diagnosis reveals that the self-regulating market is an illusion, and by letting it work with no coordination, inequalities will inevitably be generated. Thus, two points must be considered: it is necessary (a) to correct inequalities, and (b) regulate the market that generates them. Starting with the latter, the State must regulate the market that generates inequalities (for example, through laws, etc.). Consequently, the presence of the State, this agent responsible for "coordinating" the market, would reduce the generation of socio-spatial inequalities. Concerning diagnosed inequalities, measures or policies are recommended – with success – based on the economic growth of "losing" or "dejected" regions, with the intention of equating them with "winning" regions. It is not difficult to notice here a recommendation to "walk in circles": the means suggested to fight "evil" is also what provokes it. To put it bluntly, diagnosed interregional inequalities, resulting from an uneven economic growth, are, supposedly, best fought with an economic growth – the "losing" regions at higher rates than the "winning" regions. Another problem arises for the interventionists: empirically, inequalities are everywhere, growing everywhere, despite the presence of the State everywhere. This presence, instead of promoting the fight against inequalities, may have become functional to their existence and continuity.

The third perspective is in favor of the autonomy for each regional community in the definition of its corporate project. Here, neither the market nor the State is ignored, in the same way that the existence of the modern goods-producing society, whose market and State are ancillary institutions, is recognized. However, because of that, the most indicated remedy to fight socio-spatial inequalities could not limit itself to the measures proposed by the last two perspectives. The diagnosis is different: by keeping the modern goods-producing society intact (with its productive base and corresponding superstructure), provided the effects of an uneven geographical development occur, the interregional disparities tend to continually reproduce themselves. Thus, the (passive) wait for the State action through regional development policies, so that socio-spatial inequalities are attenuated or even extinct, will be innocuous.

Inequalities can be extinct if the members of regional communities resist (actively) the permanent coercion of the capital, which aims for the deprivation (of the control) of their livelihoods. These members may even become salaried if they regain (also actively) the means with which they can provide themselves and their families with material and spiritual conditions for a decent life. In short: inequalities can be extinct if the members of regional communities regain their autonomy. In



a peripheral and dependent social formation (in relation to social formations that have been ruling the world economy), such as the Brazilian formation, it is the concrete utopia with which an idea of regional development can be formulated.

## Regional Development and Regional Science

Regional development and Regional Science have a very tight link. While the theories of regional development appeared in the 1960s, following location theories, Regional Science emerged in the 1950s to rethink a new theorization and new approaches to regional phenomena, including the development process.

According to location theories, the spatial organization of city networks was used to optimize proximity, means of transportation, and population distribution. The optimization caused new agglomerations, new centralities, and market areas. That means space is not neutral, but a reflection of human actions (LACOUR; GASHET, 2002). In other words, location theories brought the elements distance, space, and place to the debate of spatial organization and productive activities. However, they were not enough to explain why certain regions, even with no tourist attractions, thrived more than others in terms of development. Location theories did not consider the relational and systemic aspects of socioeconomic development, which demanded an interdisciplinary approach. In this regard, both Regional Science and regional development theories emerged to explain gaps left by location theories.

Regional development theories are wide, since they comprehend concepts from the areas of development economics, development sociology, development policies, and reproduce throughout numerous theorizations and contributions (MARQUES DE OLIVERA, 2021). And regional development theorizations are incorporated by the researchers who integrate the so-called Regional Science construction and its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, which resulted in the explanation incorporation of the regional phenomenon, originated from different schools of thought and sciences. Nevertheless, the current idea of development, one of the main inspirations for the regional development concept, dates to François Perroux and his studies about growth and development poles. According to him, development was a social and mental change, which would lead to economic growth and improvements in living conditions (PERROUX, 1962). This conceptualization requires more thorough analyses and with different dimensions, other than just a pure quantitative approach, that is, a more systemic one towards other conceptualizations. Thus, during the evolution of spatial economics, economic development theories, and social sciences themselves, the concept of Regional Science was created to explain the development process in the context of regions.

The term Regional Science was coined by Walter Isard, to create a school that could include researchers of regional development in a single line of analysis. Regional Science, according to Proulx (1996, p 05) "(...) seeks to explain environmental, social, cultural, political, and economic differences among the various regions that comprise the national territory (...)" Development, which used to be just an object of research and concern for economists, gains a new emphasis in the studies of geographers, historians, sociologists, political scientists, and anthropologists. It also receives the nickname "regional development" as a stage and a process, whose dimension transcends the body of theory of a single school of thought.

Hence, it is possible to notice that the explanation for the development of different communities, which inhabit similar spaces and exploit natural resources of the same magnitude, resided in concepts and conceptualizations far more comprehensive than the simple accumulation of physical wealth. Changes in the way of life and the communities progress within the regions emerge as a challenge to new development approaches that congregate a series of factors, elements, and regional particularities. More than material resources, there are intangible and, sometimes, non-quantifiable elements that affect the socioeconomic dynamic of regions and their development stage.

If the interpretation of regional development seeks to identify the roles of space, public policy, and territories in the improvement of life quality and economic progress of regions, then it interacts with concepts of regional and human geography, urban and regional economics, and regional and urban planning, in a wide variety of relations. While geographical elements and their specific characteristics are the important components in spatial economics and location theories, in regional development theories, there is a wider set of economic and social relations that have regions

as their site of articulation. This does not mean that relations created in regions, whether tangible or intangible, lead to transformations in space (CLAVAL, 1995; 2012).

Regional development as a phenomenon that occurs in the region gathers analytical interpretations of the territories, occupations, interactions among different spaces, and their material living conditions. Therefore, the role of productive forces in the transformation of space and social relations gained importance in the idea of development, and as its element of transformation. Nonetheless, as time passes, regional development discussions became responsible for incorporating the multidisciplinary knowledge provided by development theorizations, and combine them with location theories within a new knowledge field: the Regional Science. Regional development itself constitutes Regional Science (FERRERA DE LIMA, 2020).

In the Brazilian context, regional scientists, besides contributing to the reflection on the development profile and actions to intensify and improve the development process of regions, also added to postgraduate courses and, especially, Programs in Urban and Regional Planning/ Demography/ Regional Development, one intrinsic element of regional science: interdisciplinarity. The area document (CAPES, 2016, pp. 08-09) indicates two sides of the interdisciplinarity definition: the dialogue and collaborations among the scientific disciplines, not only in academic discussion in class, but also in scientific research; and historical conditions that lead to interdisciplinarity, that is, it is the product of historical and social conditions of the period in which society lives.

According to Ferrera de Lima (2020), when dealing with the region category and its development process, where tangible and intangible, measurable and immeasurable elements interfere, interdisciplinarity imposes itself on certain lines of research. In that way, researchers connected with programs and studies in regional development become inserted, whether aware or not, in the construction of the Brazilian Regional Science. The way how space is organized, and how urban centers are created based on the productive activities still demands theorizations to explain why certain regions, even with no tourist attractions, thrive more than others in terms of development. In other words, regional development is nothing more than a knowledge field of a science under construction.

## Elements of a knowledge field in regional policy and planning

This section begins with the question: what is a "knowledge field"? A somewhat current and cohesive knowledge set? How does it produce or constitute itself? What are the influences and determinations of its formation, when no premises regarding the knowledge field of "Regional Development" exist yet? Without the intention of answering these questions and not falling into circularity – "art is something the artist makes" – the first step of an iterative process is proposed here:

- i). assign to certain practices of knowledge production the potential to contribute to the conformation of a field in which the indication of these practices cannot presuppose the existence of this field;
- ii). after delimiting these practices, to which a potential to form a certain field is assigned, identify how a knowledge field starts to constitute itself and critically evaluate the result of this process; and
- iii) try to combine other practices of knowledge production, to which a potential, based on the first delimitations and a field, is assigned.

The analysis limitations of this text refer to conditions of production and propagation of knowledge: i) reduce the text pretension, instead of the field "Regional Development", with the proposal to contribute to the field of "Regional Policy and Planning", perceived as a "subfield"; ii) among the multiplicity of knowledge that can constitute a field (common sense, political, technical-instrumental, scientific, academic, etc.), this exercise will be limited to knowledge produced in the academic context by researchers who consider their knowledge linked to that subfield (regional policy and planning); iii) the access to this knowledge is granted through its publication in academic journals (in Brazil), to which producers submit this knowledge, whose propagation depends, too, on a filter that every journal establish (originality, quality criteria, editorial line, etc.); iv) finally, the most restrictive delimitation, which is the inability to contemplate all or at least a representative part of the journals, whose editorial line focuses on regional policy and planning. To make it possible, the analysis was restricted to a single journal and its publications in a recent and limited period (2014 to 2017): the *Revista Política e Planejamento Regional* (RPPR).

Therefore, the present contribution used to form a knowledge field is quite limited. At other times, the idea that a more extensive and systematic study was conducted with all journals in Regional Development was already proposed.

There is no need to go into details about the editorial line of the journal, since the main interest is to analyze and systematize how the field is established in "practice" by the authors' option to submit their texts. Clearly, there are some criteria for this decision, which do not depend only on a supposed "adherence" of texts to the editorial line of the journal. Criteria such as the Qualis of the journal, presence in database and indexers, publication time, etc. must also influence the submission of texts to one or another journal. These "pragmatic" reasons will not be contemplated here. Table 1 summarizes the publications of papers between 2014 and 2018, with their respective numbers, as well as the number of authors.

**Table 1:** Number of papers, files, and authors published by Revista Política e Planejamento Regional (RPPR) between 2014 and 2018

Year	Vol.	Nº	Published papers	Files etc.	Nº of authors
2014	1	1	8		10
	1	2	8	4	16
2015	2	1	10		15
	2	2	10		14
2016	3	1	7		15
	3	2	9		16
2017	4	1	8		15
	4	2	7	1	13
2018			67	5	114
	5	1	6	1	11
	5	2	6		10
Prediction	5	3	7		

Source: Revista Política e Planejamento Regional (RPPR), 2018.

The analysis was performed using three criteria: i) **(Regional) location of institutions** in which the authors produced texts that were in fact published (submissions failure rate varies over time and has no relevance here). This location seems important to define knowledge production and, consequently, its contribution to the field; ii) **Aggregation into thematic fields** of texts published in four volumes of the journal (2014 to 2017) will be considered as a first approach (see above) to a knowledge field created in regional policy and planning; iii) **Spatial/territorial references** used in "applied" papers that bring a more empirical-concrete knowledge about a certain theme as their main contribution. In this case, the territorial location will be confronted with the themes explored in these papers.

According to adopted criteria, results may be summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 shows the regional distribution of the authors' home institutions. The Southeast region has the highest percentage participation (40.0%), followed by the South region (21.5%), and Northeast region (12.7%), while the North region and foreign institutions participate with 8.8%. The lowest percentage participation was represented by the Central-West region: 7.8%.



**Table 2:** Distribution of published papers according to the authors' home region

Region	Nº	Percentage
North	9	9%
Northeast	13	13%
Southeast	41	40%
South	22	22%
Central-West	8	8%
Foreign	9	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Revista Política e Planejamento Regional (RPPR), 2018.

Table 3 describes the topics according to region, State, and number of publications.

**Table 3:** Territorial topics according to region and State

Region	State	nº of publications	topics
General / Brazil		22	federalism, (regional) development, inequalities, politics, planning and strategies, agents, arrangements, scales, National Policy for Regional Development (PNDR), State capacities and collaborative governance, innovation, land reform, rural communities, conflicts, territory, transport, networks
N	AM – terr.	2	environmental impacts – national mining plan; ditto – sustainability; National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) – socio-environmental; Constitutional Financing Fund of the North of Brazil (FNO)
	RO/PA MATOPIBA region	2	
	Central-North	1	underdeveloped agriculture
		1	regional development
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	
NE		5	inequalities in mesoregions; culture and politics; water politics; climate change; Operation NE and PNDR;
	PB	3	Revitalization of the São Francisco River Basin; PCT; regional service center
	RN	2	National School Feeding Program (PNAE); expansion of higher education;
	PE	1	culture in the public policies field – traditional peoples – rural pop.;
	MA	1	territorial planning;
	BA	1	Technical assistance – land reform
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	
SE		6	The Açú Port (2x); territorial governance and dev.; mountainous region;
	RJ	3	tourism interiorization; metropolitan surroundings;
	SP	3	pendular mobility; metropolitan expansion; territorial governance;
	ES	2	rural-urban transition areas; ethnodevelopment through agriculture, mining boundary expansion;
	MG	1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	
South		2	power scales – regional dev. policies; program to fight regional inequalities;
	RS	2	solidarity tourism in traditional communities; scalar challenges
	PR	2	change in the decentralization policy;
	SC	1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	
C-W		2	region metropolization; Brasília-Anápolis-Goiânia axis
	DF	1	rural territory;
	MT	1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	
Multiples >2		2	development and tax war; interfederative cooperation
Foreign	AL	1	
	Argentina	4	
	Uruguay	1	
	Peru	1	
	Colombia	1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	

Source: Revista Política e Planejamento Regional (RPPR), 2018.

Currently, the challenge faced by this "knowledge field", which is related to "politics and regional planning" is not to be, once more, relegated to a second or third plane, given political projects that seem to "forget" about the importance of social and regional development for the Brazilian society. Hence the importance of this knowledge field consolidation, to strengthen the defense of this important theme, considering the social and regional inequalities that remain as urgent as ever. Before the recent transformations of "government capacities of intervention", and the reformulation of political agenda, it is essential to keep investigating, analyzing, diagnosing,

debating, and discussing, critically, the present and future conditions that may determine the possibilities and limitations of regional agendas in Brazil. These reflections on possibilities and limitations would be both structural in different scales and levels of depth, as well as in view of circumstances that may take or miss the opportunity to pursue one of the major challenges for any government: the acknowledgment of its responsibility to act in favor of reducing their country's social and regional inequalities.

## Contemporary Brazilian Regional Thought

The end of the Second World War can be perceived as a moment when, in Brazil, social thought was based on the interpretive exercise related to the nation. That means many intellectuals treated the country as an object to interpret in two different ways: analysis and transformation (ENRIQUEZ, 2010).

In a sense, the 1950s generation inaugurated, in the context of Humanities, something that meant for literature and arts in general, the Modern Art Week, the rupture, the endeavor to reach intellectual decolonization, since the Brazilian formation was still too attached to European standards. At length, without diminishing other initiatives or important authors, such as Gilberto Freyre, the Brazilian social thought experienced, with the end of the Second World War, not only a productive period, but perhaps, its origin through the combination between the scientific rigor of social sciences, and the dilemmas and challenges posed by Brazil in those circumstances (CARVALHO, 2014).

Building a national thought to solve specific problems of a country that went through the process of modernization was what guided many intellectuals, such as Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Florestan Fernandes, Josué de Castro, Celso Furtado, among others. Following this perspective of conceptual formulation regarding the country as a project and totality, a significant production of works that became classics was observed (CARVALHO, 2014).

In the case of Celso Furtado, the challenge to think of Brazil was posed considering a regional scale. According to him, the country had, back then, an uneven process that focused on the economic plan, which deepened with more wealth generation. The great Brazilian problem would be the uneven regional accumulation, which increased the gap between the diverse regions in social and economic terms (FURTADO, 2013; COLOMBO, 2015). Accordingly, attacking regional problems would be the path to create solid economic conditions for national integration. In short, favoring the economy of the Northeast was the most logical way to stimulate Brazil. Such concern about the whole, about the country, as a field of analysis and political transformation, characterized Celso Furtado's thought and posture (BARCELAR e DUARTE, 1994).

In contemporary terms, how is it possible to think of the regional in the country? This text results from an attempt to analyze this theme, using studies developed by Postgraduate Programs in Regional Development in Brazil as research space, aiming to map their intellectual production and academic orientations concerning the subject. Thus, the objective is to present, analytically and chronologically, the dynamic of intellectual construction on how Regional Development is defined in the country nowadays.

More recently, thinking of the regional means trying to apprehend diversity of thought and the multiple forms through which the country is perceived in a scalar way. In other words, it means identifying the economic, social, and cultural processes and parts that are stimulated in the vast territory. The study was conducted using database analysis as reference coming from the Sucupira Platform, a tool to collect information, perform analyses and evaluations, and be a reference base for the National Postgraduate System (SNPG). The 2013/2016 quadrennium was covered.

The stratified sampling technique was used to define this sample. This technique belongs to the probabilistic sampling group, and consists in separating the entire population or "object of study" into different subgroups or strata, in a way that one individual can only be part of a single stratum or layer. After defining the layers, individuals are selected using any sampling technique in each stratum separately to create a sample. For example, if a simple random sample is used in each stratum, then the study will be using a stratified random sample, which is the case here.

Through this database, a sample of 10% of the total for each studied theme was extracted. With the intention of identifying the most quoted authors on certain themes, their bibliographic references were used for conclusion. From them, data were scanned using a worksheet in Excel. Thus, enabling assessment of results.

The database consisted of 854 final papers – dissertations and theses. "Regional Development" was subdivided into 12 themes: i) **Agribusinesses and Ruralities** – Works involving themes related to agriculture and farming, and that encompass a commercial relationship with the commodity chain were selected;

ii) **State and Public Policies** – Works whose themes are connected with the State competence, as well as government plans and actions, legislations, and relations with foreign governments were selected; iii) **Economics and Finance** – Works whose themes focus on economic areas and the study of micro and macroeconomic components were selected; iv) **Environment** – Comprehends themes regarding conservation, environmental preservation, and conservation practices; v) **Education** – Covers themes related to the expansion and improvement of education; vi) **Administration, Companies, Industries, and Cooperatives** – Encompasses studies connected with diverse aspects of institutions, their management in whole or in parts; vii) **Technology** – Works concerning the evolution and dissemination of technology in numerous areas were selected; viii) **Space and Power** – Comprises themes regarding conflicts and occupation processes or disputes over specific geographic spaces. Table 4 shows the courses of Postgraduate programs in Regional Development, higher education institutions (HEI), location, region, and date of recommendation.

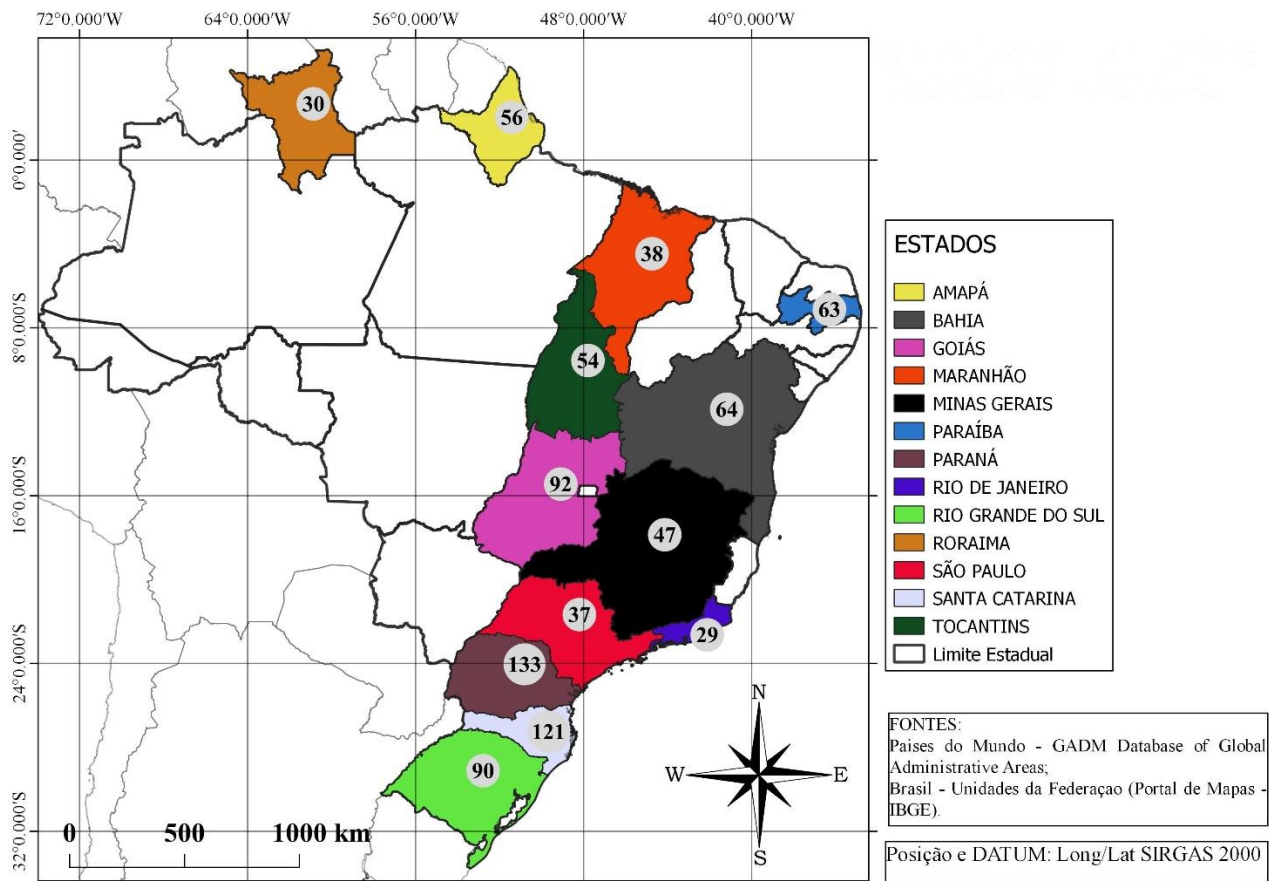
**Table 4:** Postgraduate programs related to Regional Development, Urban Planning

PROGRAM	HEI	CATEGORY	MUNICIPALITY THAT OFFERS MASTER'S	FEDERATION	LOCATION	REGION	DATE OF RECOMMENDATION
Territorial Development and Regional Development (P.S.M.)	PUC-ALFA	Private	Goiânia	GO	Capital	CW	2005
Regional Development	UFT	Federa	Palmas	TO	Capital	N	2006/2015
Regional Development of the Regional Development (M.Sc.)	UFRR	Federa	Boa Vista	RR	Capital	N	2011
Regional Development (M.Sc.)	UNIFA	Federa	Macapá	AP	Capital	N	2006
Regional Development (M.Sc.)	UEPB	State	Campina Grande	PB	Inland	NE	2008
Regional and Urban Development	UNIFA	Private	Salvador	BA	Capital	NE	1999/2005
Soc. and Regional Development	UEMA	State	São Luís	MA	Capital	NE	2010
Regional Development (P.S.M.)	INESP	Private	Divinópolis	MG	Inland	SE	2011
Territorial Development and Public	UFRFU	Federa	Seropédica	RJ	Inland	SE	2011
Regional Management and Regional Development	UNITA	Munici	Taubaté	SP	Inland	SE	2009
Regional Development	UNISC	Comm.	Santa Cruz do Sul	RS	Inland	S	1995/2005
Regional Development (M.Sc.)	FACCA	Private	Taquara	RS	MA of	S	2012
Regional Development	FURB	Munici	Blumenau	SC	Inland	S	2004/2011
Regional Development (M.Sc.)	UNC	Comm.	Canoinhas	SC	Inland	S	2006
Regional and Agro. Development	Unioest	State	Toledo	PR	Inland	S	2002/2009
Regional Development (M.Sc.)	UTRP	Federa	Pato Branco	PR	Inland	S	2009

Legend: M.Sc. – Master of Science; P.S.M. – Professional Science Master's degree – D.Sc. – Doctor of Science.

Source: Sucupira Platform (CAPES), 2018.

Figure 1 shows, spatially, the number of theses and dissertations defended by federated state, in the 2013/2016 quadrennium.

**Figure 1: Theses and Dissertations defended by State – 2013 to 2016**

Source: Sucupira Platform (CAPES), 2018.

The State of Paraná has the largest number of works defended, totalizing one hundred and thirty-three (Dissertations and Theses), followed by Santa Catarina (121), Goiás (92), and Rio Grande do Sul (90). The South Region shows the highest concentration of works, and is the pioneer in the Regional Development program.

Data obtained by studies performed in master's theses and doctoral dissertations of Postgraduate Programs in Brazil reveal that the Brazilian Regional Thought has some conclusive characteristics, that is: i) The Programs are in peripheral Universities, in the inland area of the country. In this case, what makes them peculiar is the increased interdisciplinarity; ii) The theme that stood out most among the works was "space and power". Therefore, more than the discussion on economic dimension, issues related to conflicts and concerns about the social definition of spaces gained ground. In a sense, Regional Development became more visible among geographers and social scientists than among economists, as before; iii) Research at postgraduate level confirms how much the concern about the local and territorial is part of contemporary discussions on the regional, prominently having the subtheme *space and power* as the most concerning. This means that, throughout Brazil, as demonstrated, thinking of conflicting processes that are delimited around geographic space indicates the main concern of those who commit to studying the Regional in the country. In other words, the contemporary Regional presents itself around what could be called a social geography or the relation between sociological and geographic debates at certain scales.

## Final considerations

This paper aimed to present and discuss Regional Development as a possible knowledge field, using a theoretical-conceptual reflection based on an analytical review of the literature.

The study showed that Regional Development does not result exclusively from the Economics and Geography disciplines. Thinking of regional development relates to other knowledge fields, such as Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, History, and, at length, Law and Architecture.

Regional Development is not a simple hypothesis nor a consistent theory. Since it is not a hypothesis nor theory, regional development can be considered a middle-range theory. Reflections on regional disparities in Brazil are huge, once the peripheral social formation is as dependent as the Brazilian one. Thus, formulating an idea of regional development is utopian or, according to Celso Furtado, "development is a myth".

Considering regional development, a regional science, all that remains is to demonstrate that space is not neutral, but a reflection of human actions. This fact can be confirmed by the spatial organization of city networks, means of transportation, and population distribution. Debates of regional development as a new knowledge field have created public actions and policies in inland and mid-sized Brazilian cities, which can be verified through the increase in postgraduate courses in the inland area of the country, as more than 50% of the courses in this area are located outside metropolitan regions and state capitals. The study also revealed that issues related to conflicts and concerns about the social definition of spaces gained ground. In a sense, regional development became more visible among geographers and social scientists than among economists, as before.

Finally, it is vital to consolidate this new "knowledge field", which is somewhat connected with "politics and regional planning". This new perspective should not be relegated to a second or third plane, given political projects that seem to "forget" about the importance of social and regional development for the Brazilian society.

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