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Land Approach in Territorial Development

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article a pour but de discuter des approches de la question foncière dans le cadre de l'aménagement du territoire. Nous avons cherché à comprendre le foncier en tant qu'élément de l'analyse spatiale dans le développement des politiques publiques d'émancipation mises en place dans les campagnes brésiliennes. Pour ce faire, nous avons réalisé une brève synthèse critique des objectifs de l'action publique pour l'aménagement des territoires où sont installés des paysans et petits exploitants, et des conflits qu'elle a générés. L'accent est mis sur le fait que ces conflits créent des mouvements d'émigration, à partir de terres qui n'offrent plus les conditions de la survie ou du développement aux exploitants. Ceux-ci reproduisent leur mode de vie ailleurs, ce qui complète la triade des effets dérivés de la question foncière : déterritorialisation, territorialisation et repossession. Le territoire est le résultat de ces conflits d'intérêt qui naissent des groupes sociaux et des relations de pouvoir. Ainsi, penser l'aménagement du territoire consiste à penser en termes de croissance économique et sociale depuis chaque territoire en fonction des intérêts en jeu et de leurs contradictions.

MOTS-CLÉS

Question foncière, aménagement du territoire, géographie

ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the approach of the land concept within territorial development. Thus, we sought to understand the land as a spatial analysis unit in the development of emancipatory public policies for Brazilian countryside. Hence, a brief critical review of public actions intentionalities was made, aiming at the territorial development of small farmers' and peasants' production of the country, and resulting conflicts. Regarding these conflicts, the emphasis is in the fact that they create exit movements from a given land, which no longer offers neither survival conditions nor development to farmers, who reproduce their lifestyle somewhere else completing the triad of land derivations: deterritorialisation, territorialisation, and repossession. The territory is a result of these and conflicting different ends, caused by social groups and relations of power. So thinking about territorial development, consists in thinking the economic and social growth for each territory, with their interests and contradictions.

KEYWORDS

Land, territorial development, geography

INTRODUCTION

The idea of territory has known important transformations throughout the history of geographical thinking approached within a perspective of Natural Sciences, with Ratzel, as well as a more humanized view within the courant of Critical Geography.

Currently, land is considered as a key concept of Geographical Science, for it is known as a spatial analysis unit often replacing the idea of geographical space. This substitution

results from the fact that land covers a fraction of space defined by social relations, therefore more suited for different analysis of social, political, and cultural conflicts.

The aim of this paper is first to provide a brief historiography of the concept of land, and the most current approach of this concept. Moreover, it emphasizes land as a spatial unit for territorial development, on the basis of which important public policies are being developed with various objectives and intentions.

1. LAND IN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Geographical Science has been transformed to follow the evolution of societies and their interactions in geographical space. Therefore, its key concepts of space, territory, region, landscape, and place were reinterpreted and contribute to spatial analyses with a new perspective.

The concept of land did not always have the same approach according to the current debates, and have been submitted to multiple sense derivations with the use of terms like: deterritorialisation, territorialisation, and repossession, and yet for some authors, multi-territorialisation. Thus, significant changes occurred in its epistemological sense, evolving from the naturalist idea of Ratzel to an idea of relations of power on a given portion of the geographical space, from the concept of Claude Raffestin. Ratzel brought up the debate about land to Geography, defining it as a geographical extract, on which the State has some power over the form of occupation and appropriation of its natural and social resources, and consequently the protection of its borders.

According to Saquet, "Society is transformed into State to ensure the possession and protection of the resources needed, such as soil, water, and food. Roughly speaking, Ratzel corresponds society and man to territory and soil" (2007:30).

Without neglecting the idea of Ratzel, one of the most significant debates about land appears with Claude Raffestin who considers fundamental the action of the State in defining the idea of land, although it is not exclusively defined by the power of the State. Another "fundamental power" is the daily practices and relations of society exerted on a given portion of the geographical space. Thus, in the concept of Raffestin, land is defined by power and Power, the latter resulting from the action of the State through government, social, and economic policies. "Land is the political space by excellence, the action field of power" (Raffestin, 1993:60).

However, although the idea of land has acquired new meanings by the end of the 20th century, it did not distance itself from the concept of border since the relations of power and Power are given over a delimited space, either politically or socially (when resulting from the power of social practices) and this delimitation makes land and border closer. The idea of land has also followed the changes of the modern world, especially because economic, political, and social relations have been considerably transformed with the end of the Cold War.

For Becker (1983), land is then understood as a result of power relations from very different social actors, knowing that, after the Second World War, States became influenced by the national space, but mainly because of international interests. This happens because of

economies interconnected with economical blocks, search for raw material, markets and their products, cheap labour, or farm or industrial goods lacking in the productive national matrix. These types of economic relations are essential to nourish the capitalist system and stimulate the economies of countries. This concept has become key in the analyses of space organization, and is used even by other Social Sciences to express spatial manifestations of social relations, either in the countryside or in the city.

But which sense is more relevant to use? Land considered as a simple delimitation or associated to power relations existing over a given space? Are lands standardized or do they result from distinct social relations, materialized in each territory?

In this regard, Bernardo Mançano Fernandes (2009) created a typology of lands, which aims to contribute to the reading of territorial disputes and conflicts of processes. According to this author, there are three kinds of territories. The first territory would be the governance space at all government scales, where public policies and programmes for economic development are created. The second territory corresponds to private properties, either fixed or movable, capitalists or non-capitalists. The third territory is the territorialities space, and concerns the relational space, its economic and social use.

These definitions are based on ideas of conflictuality and intentionality, because the search for land or its maintenance is done through conflict. This conflictuality process leads to socio-spatial transformations. Distinct interest manifestations over land are based in the character of intentionality. Each subject –economic groups or the State– act through intentions that are distinct because they are based in often opposing interests, such as, for example, land disputes between the peasantry or agribusiness in Brazilian countryside, or the fight for housing and real estate speculation in the city.

2. LAND, TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONFLICTUALITY IN BRAZILIAN COUNTRYSIDE

Fernandes (2008) stressed the difference of land disputes in the countryside and in the city when he mentioned that socio-territorial movements in the city are for housing and not for jobs, unlike what happens in the countryside where housing and work are directly connected. Thus, the conflictuality of interests between the countryside and the city are evidenced and materialized by distinct intentionalities.

Land disputes in the city are evident when territorialisations are defined as downtown, closed apartment complexes, residential areas, and suburbs. The suburb is always distant from downtown, as in a process of eviction, in order to hide what is not beautiful and socially adequate. The best areas of the city are taken by real estate speculation that “sells” the best fractions of the city to a part of society. All of this creates distinct territorialities in the city, because the use and domain of land are distinct due to the socio-economic difference between social groups that may produce evident conflictualities in big Brazilian cities.

Conflictuality is even more evident in Brazilian countryside where the intentionality of the State is completely distinct from the peasants'. With a neoliberal character, the State designs a countryside with a capitalist production targeted to exportation and favouring commodities, without considering the interests of small producers. This intention of the

State to stimulate large monoculture production creates a conflict of interests with the non-capitalist traditional production, targeted to food production and maintenance of the families in the field with reproduction conditions, and not with the character of exclusion they currently hold.

The conflict between the peasantry and agribusiness is clearly expressed in Fernandes, Welch and Gonçalves: "...while for the peasantry, the land is a site of production and housing, for agribusiness, the land is only a site of production. These are important characteristics to conceive peasantry and agribusiness as different models of territorial development" (2011:1).

Hence, a territorial dispute between capital and peasantry is evidenced. Peasant and capitalist properties are distinct territories; they are different totalities where different social relations are produced, promoting divergent models of development (Fernandes, 2008). Therefore, according to Fernandes: "conflictuality is a constant process powered by the contradictions and inequities of capitalism. The conflictuality movement is a paradox since it simultaneously promotes territorialization, deterritorialization, and re-possession of different social relations" (2008:2).

Therefore, manifestations of power relation are evident in territorial disputes. In the countryside, with agribusiness groups that, by expanding throughout the national territory, buy land, evict peasant production by expropriating them from their means of production, and even from the land they use for housing. And in the cities, the power relations of large real estate ventures that exceed the right to housing of every Brazilian citizen.

Thus, for being a space associated to power relations, domain, and political control, land is set as a spatial analysis unit essential to territorial development. Numerous researches and initiatives for territorial development, organized by the State or social institutions, use the concept of land as spatial substrate, as the locus of socioeconomic manifestations.

Actually, land is a reflex of distinct development models adopted in Brazilian countryside. These models present contradicting intentions because they adopt two opposite principles: compensatory/subordination development policies, and emancipatory policies (Fernandes, 2011).

Compensatory/subordination development policies are created by the State and are permeated with the intentionality to meet the capital, although they are created with popular participation. When elaborated by the Ministry of Agriculture Development (MDA), they tend to favor large monoculture production, and to territorialise agribusiness in Brazilian countryside. This is evident with the expansion of soybean along the West of the country, the growing of eucalyptus to produce cellulose in the South, and more recently with the expansion of sugarcane ventures that materialize the capital in the field in monoculture "spots", producing new lands and new territorialities. Examples of these policies are the *Territórios da Cidadania* (Citizenship Territories), that are projects involving a set of cities with common interests, the micro-regions, and the *Iniciativa para la Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana* (IIRSA, Initiative for Integration of the South American Regional Infrastructure), which is considered a "trans-territory" because it includes lands from several countries, and supports projects that meet the

interests of the transnational, such as improvements in transport, energy, and communication conditions. In Brazil it has been operating mainly in the Amazon region, in the fluvial transport department, improving port conditions and enhancing energy supply at the border of Colombia.

The creation and effectiveness of emancipatory policies -that refer to a territorial development promoting emancipation of peasants against capital, and stimulating the non-capitalist production of food- would cause the maintenance of peasants in the countryside, in their land. This is one of the many claims of social movements in the countryside that not only fight for agrarian reform, but also for small food production, for access to the means of production, and a fairer lifestyle. For this type of policy, it is right to mention the CONDETEC (Council of Territory Development of Cantuquiriguaçu), which aims to promote territorial development from the needs of each land, in this case stimulating policies towards family agriculture, which are created by this Council and funded by the MDA. This initiative actually considers a development based on the interests of all social classes, without favouring one over the others. Moreover it promotes the autonomy of people, the maintenance of peasant land, and the effective exercise of citizenship.

These public policies also concern other aspects of territorial development: the countryside, the city, health, education, among others. Most of the time, they are created with a compensatory character, and tend to avoid any discussion on the basis of the issues. Although they perform structural reforms, they reproduce inequity and social exclusion.

CONCLUSION

Because it is a scale unit that best represents the materialization of power relation, land is directly suited for territorial development policies, although each of these policies may produce deterritorialisation and repossession, since territorialities follow the subjects and are produced and reproduced in other spaces, creating or recreating lands. What must be stressed is that the land in discussion is not the delimited, unique space, deprived of social relations: "lands are not only physical spaces, they are also social spaces, cultural spaces where relations and ideas manifest, transforming even words in land" (Fernandes, 2008).

The territorial development would consist in promoting economic and social growth of one or more social groups in a spatial substrate, in this case the territory, which is the unit of analysis of the space in which relationships of these social groups are materialized through their intentions and their actions, in addition to being subject to the authority of the national State, with its political and economic interests. Promoting regional development would be nothing more than giving conditions to the territory to develop according to the interests of local communities and with minimum conditions of appointment of the basic conditions of subsistence.

It is important to highlight in conclusion that this reflection is not finished: indigenous lands and border lands were not mentioned, but are surely a part of the debate about land and territorial development, as they are also conflicting and intentionally distinct from other lands.

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