

## Territory and agrarian geography: Approaches and perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of territory currently has more and more centrality in the field of Geography, however, as Saquet (2020) asserts, this centrality was only possible from the movement of re-elaboration of geographical thinking that occurred at the international level from the 1950s/1960s/1970s. Specifically in the field of agrarian studies, initially, with the advent of Critical Geography and more recently with cultural studies, the territory has been an important element for many researchers who focus on different themes of Agrarian Geography. In this context, the research methodology is based on content analysis, according to Bardin (2022), in the analysis of works by Geography authors who have turned their attention to the study of territory, notably in the field of agrarian studies. From the perspective of the research results, we highlight the presence of a wide diversity of conceptions and theoretical approaches to the concept of territory from the perspective of numerous authors, a fact that evidences the diversity of geographical theories that have influenced the discussion around the concept of territory in the field of agrarian studies, notably reflections linked to the perspective of critical agrarian geography and cultural studies.

**Keywords:** Territory, Geography, Epistemology.

### INTRODUCTION

The trajectory of the concept of *territory* in geographical science is marked by the presence of different strands, and it is necessary to highlight that these debates around the concept are articulated with the social, political and cultural contexts of each period in association with the multiple paradigms that influenced scientific production in the field of geography.

In this context, it should be noted that territory becomes more central in the movement to re-elaborate geographical thought (1950-1970), which managed to break with the positivist, neopositivist, pragmatic, quantitative, and descriptive approaches that were very present in French regional geography, which favored the concept of region to the detriment of the concept of territory. (Saquet, 2020)

This conjuncture that gave greater centrality to the territory reverberated in studies on the field with the advent of critical agrarian geography, which had as precursors, according to Marques (2018), authors such as Orlando Valverde and Manuel C. de Andrade. Subsequently, other currents also brought important contributions with regard to the concept of territory in agrarian studies, as is the case of cultural approaches, which gained greater prominence from the 2000s onwards, as highlighted by Almeida (2008).

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In this context, the influence of critical and cultural currents in the field of agrarian geography can be seen in the International Symposia on Agrarian Geography (SINGA), events of great importance for agrarian geography that bring together researchers from Brazil and Latin America, in which the concept of territory has assumed an important role in supporting research that seeks to analyze the agrarian.

In view of this, the work we are developing has the following problem: what are the main theoretical perspectives that have supported the discussion around the concept of territory in the field of agrarian geography? Thus, this problem is articulated with the general objective of the research, which is to analyze the approaches to the concept of territory in the context of agrarian studies from the currents of thought that have influenced this sub-field of Geography.

Regarding the justification, we highlight that this research can bring important contributions in relation to the main approaches to the territory in the field of Agrarian Geography. In addition, the justification is also related to the social relevance of the research, which can contribute to the understanding of the theoretical basis of the territorial demands claimed by these peoples in the countryside, such as the territories of traditional use and occupation and ethnic identity as a factor of alterity and guarantee of the rights of these groups.

Regarding the research methodology, we built through a literature review, based on authors who discuss in depth the concept of territory in the field of geography, such as Claval (1999), Haesbaert (2019), Saquet (2020), Oliveira (2016b) and Almeida (2005), among others.

The work is structured in three parts, in the first part a brief discussion is held around the theoretical foundation on the theme of the research, in which the authors and currents of thought that have brought contributions to territorial studies are highlighted. In the second part, we will illustrate perspectives for approaching the territory in the field of Agrarian Geography and, finally, in the last section of the text we will present some final considerations.

## **THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE CONCEPT OF TERRITORY IN GEOGRAPHY**

The trajectory of the concept of *territory* in geographical science is marked by the presence of different approaches and conceptualizations of what constitutes it, and it is necessary to highlight that these debates around the concept are articulated with the social, political and cultural contexts of each period in association with the multiple paradigms that have been present in the history of geographical thought.

In this sense, territory is a key concept of geographical science, and can also be understood as a category, as analyzed by Souza (2009). However, it is worth mentioning that according to Saquet (2020) the concept of territory was not always highlighted in geographical thinking, obtaining

centrality only after the renewal movement, at the international level, which occurred from the 1950s onwards.

Thus, it is important to highlight that this concept has been defined throughout the history of geographical thought by different authors who linked their theoretical conceptualization to different dimensions of objective reality, such as in the political, economic, and cultural spheres. These proposed definitions of *territory* were also influenced by the different paradigms that influenced the history of scientific production in geography. According to Haesbaert (2007), there are two strands for the emergence of this concept, regarding its genesis he highlights:

From the beginning, the territory is born with a double connotation, material and symbolic, since etymologically it appears as close to terra-territorium as to terreo-terror (terror, to terrorize), that is, it has to do with (juridical-political) domination of the land and with the inspiration of terror, of fear - especially for those who, with this domination, are excluded from the land, or in the "territorium" are prevented from entering. (Haesbaert, 2007, p. 20)

Thus, once its genesis is understood, we will highlight some authors whose reflections on the concept of territory play an important role in the academic production of geography. From this perspective, one of the authors who address the concept of territory is the geographer Claude Raffestin (1993) who, in addition to specifically conceptualizing the concept of territory, also differentiates between the notion of space and the concept of territory itself. To justify this procedure, Raffestin (1993, p. 143) states that a series of theoretical inconsistencies in the use of concepts occurred within geographical science, about this conception, he asserts:

It is essential to understand well that space precedes territory. The territory is formed from space, it is the result of an action conducted by a syntagmatic actor (actor who performs a program) at any level. By appropriating a space concretely or abstractly (for example, through representation), the actor "territorializes" the space". (Raffestin, 1993, p.143)

Thus, for Raffestin (1993), space is an entity prior to the territory itself, it exists independently of any action, it functions as a "raw material" in the author's own words. Thus, the territory, for its existence, necessarily needs the realization of an action, the projection in the workspace, and can be energy and information that reveal relations marked by power.

Thus, Raffestin (1993) considers that space functions as an original prison and territory as a prison that men build for themselves. According to Bordo et al. (2012), for Claude Raffestin, the construction of territory involves the power relations exercised by people or groups of people, without which territory cannot be defined.

The perspective of distinguishing territory and space, as Raffestin did, is carried out by other thinkers who attribute confusion around the use of the two categories. In this context, Souza (2009)

points out that "It happens that for numerous authors space and territory appear as distinct elements, however, their treatments, from time to time, appear as synonyms". In view of this, the author weaves a history of the category space in the history of geographical thought and, within the theoretical distinctions he establishes between territory and space, the author analyzes that:

Space is a human projection, objectification of life, as the meaning of its existence, and territories are concrete appropriations exercised by these actions (praxis) that express material and immaterial dimensions. This perspective of association between territory and appropriation does not determine an economic apriorism. (Souza, 2009, p. 106)

Rogério Haesbaert (2007) conceives that territory, together with space, has strategic importance in the transformative dynamics of society, in addition to attributing political implications related to the concrete intervention of reality and in power strategies regarding the discussion of multiterritoriality.

Thus, Haesbaert's conceptual proposal points to a multidimensional and multi-scalar perspective of the concept of territory, in which it is conceived as an approach to space that emphasizes problems of a political nature or that involve the realization/manifestation of power relations in their plurality of spheres. The concept and the discussion carried out by Haesbaert in his book "The Myth of Deterritorialization" about territory have important elements for the systematization of the theoretical perspectives of the concept in geography.

Thus, according to Haesbaert (2019), the concept of territory can be grouped into four basic strands, the political, the cultural, the economic, and the "natural". The excerpt below expresses details of the first three strands, as well as the relations between the territory and the dimensions of objective reality.

- political (referring to space-power relations in general) or legal-political (also related to all institutionalized space-power relations): the most widespread, where the territory is seen as a delimited and controlled space, through which a certain power is exercised, most of the time – but not exclusively – related to the political power of the State.
- cultural (often culturalist) or symbolic-cultural: prioritizes the symbolic and more subjective dimension, in which the territory is seen, above all, as the product of the symbolic appropriation/valorization of a group in relation to its lived space.
- economic (often economicist): less widespread, it emphasizes the spatial dimension of economic relations, the territory as a source of resources and/or incorporated in the debate between social classes and in the capital-labor relationship... (Haesbaert, 2019, p. 40)

This classification of the strands proposed by Rogério Haesbaert in which the concept of territory has been adopted also encompasses the natural or naturalistic interpretative strand, which, according to the author himself, is older, has little representation in the production of the social sciences and works with the territory based on society-nature relations. Still in this context of trying to understand the aspects of the concept, Haesbaert (2019) proposes another way of organizing the

reasoning about the territory, understanding the dimensions within the philosophical perspective of the approaches.

In this way, the author analyzes the territory within the binomials materialism-idealism and space-time. Thus, the materialism-idealism binomial would be the result of the partial perspectives of territory (which emphasize a specific dimension, such as the economic, cultural, political, and natural) and the integrative perspective (which considers the joint analysis of the dimensions). Within the space-time binomial, Haesbaert (2019) points to the relational perspective of territory.

Another author who carries out a broad review and analysis of the literature around the concept of territory is Marcos Aurélio Saquet, who, in the book "Approaches and conceptions of territory", analyzes the history of the concept of territory at the international and national levels, with emphasis on the detailing of the trajectories taken by this concept, both in the scope of geography, and in other sciences, such as economics and sociology.

In this context, Saquet (2020) explains that from the re-elaboration of geographical science, in the mid-1950s/1960s and 1970s, it was possible to identify and characterize four central trends<sup>2</sup> or emphases involving geography, other social sciences, and philosophy, which bring together studies and debates on the *methods of approach and on the concept of territory*, one centered on the theoretical-methodological discussion, another based on the understanding of the geopolitical dimension of space, another focused on the explanation of territorial development, the restructuring of capital and social movements and, finally, the semiological tendency.

The research carried out by Saquet (2020), from another analytical perspective<sup>3</sup>, also detected the presence of four more *trends or perspectives* of approach to the territory that end up succeeding each other over time and coexisting in certain periods, even predominating in several countries.

one eminently economic, under historical and dialectical materialism [...] another based on the geopolitical dimension of the territory [...] the third, emphasizing the political and cultural, symbolic-identity dynamics [...] centered on phenomenology and [...] the last, which gained strength from the 1990s onwards, focused on discussions on environmental sustainability and local development... (Saquet, 2020, p. 15)

In this context, Saquet's contribution (op. cit) permeates these in-depth analyses around the approaches to the concept of territory, and it is important to mention that for him the concept of territory began to gain more centrality from the movement of renewal of geography that took place

<sup>2</sup> For a deeper understanding of the four trends in more detail, see Saquet (2020).

<sup>3</sup> This second classification proposed by Saquet (2020) was constructed by the author through the analysis of works by authors such as Giuseppe Dematteis, Vagaggini, Deleuze and Guattari, Massimo Quaini, Claude Raffestin, Jean Gottmann, Edward Soja, Indovina and Calabi, Umberto Eco, among others. Each of these authors has links with one or more of these tendencies, a fact that can be verified in the introduction to the book "Approaches and conceptions of territory".

between the 1950s and 1960s, with authors such as Pierre George, Pierre Monbeig, Yves Lacoste, David Harvey, Massimo Qauini, Giuseppe Dematteis, Claude Raffestin, Paul Claval, Horácio Capel, Jean Gottmann, Milton Santos, Manuel Correia de Andrade, among others.

Within this framework of renewal, we will also highlight the perspective of Milton Santos in relation to the concept of territory, an author whose main concept is that of space<sup>4</sup>, but who published works that analyzed and influenced reflections on the concept of territory, contributing to the expansion of studies centered on the concepts of territory and territoriality. (Saquet, 2020)

From this perspective, one of his analyses around the concept can be found in the book "For another globalization: from single thought to universal consciousness" in which the author brings his conception around the concept:

Territory is not only the result of the superposition of a set of natural systems and a set of systems of things created by man. The territory is the ground and the population, that is, an identity, the fact and the feeling of belonging to what belongs to us. The territory is the basis of work, residence, material and spiritual exchanges, and life, which it influences. When one speaks of territory, one must therefore immediately understand that one is talking about territory used, used by a given population. (Santos, 2019, p. 96-97)

Thus, the approach proposed by Milton Santos includes, in addition to nature and the objects built by man, the uses that the population makes of the territory<sup>5</sup>, which is considered the basis on which the life of society occurs. Furthermore, Santos (1998) analyzes that there is a new functioning of the territory based on horizontalities and verticalities, in which information fulfills the central role of connecting the parts of the territory.

According to the author, referring to the population and the territory, "one makes the other", that is, there is in Milton Santos' proposal a dialectical perspective for understanding the construction of the territory from its use by the population. (Santos, 2019)

According to Saquet (2020), Milton Santos' proposal around the territory, within the scope of the *territory used*, permeates an economic-material approach, which expands the reflection beyond the areal conception or that restricted to the Nation-State, and can be understood as a socially organized geographical space. In addition, he points out that for Milton Santos the use of the territory is the main characterizer of this concept.

Finally, we highlight the thought of Sposito (2004) about the concept of territory, in which for him, as well as Raffestin (1993), there are great theoretical-conceptual inaccuracies by researchers who confuse the concepts of space and territory because they do not have in-depth readings on the

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<sup>4</sup> For more details, see Saquet (2020).

<sup>5</sup> For Santos (1998), territory is forms, but the territory used is objects and actions, and can be considered synonymous with human space and inhabited space.



subject. In addition, Sposito (2004, p.111) states that the concept of territory cannot be analyzed ahistorically, that is, the category of time is essential for its understanding. According to him, the territory is:

... source of resources and only in this way can it be understood when focused on its relationship with society and its relations of production, which can be identified by industry, agriculture, mining, the circulation of goods, etc., that is, by the different ways that society uses to appropriate and transform nature. (Sposito, 2004, p. 112-113)

In addition to this perspective of the concept of territory, Sposito (op. cit) points out, in the final moments of his discussion about the concept, its importance today, emphasizing mainly its connection with economic and political aspects. According to him:

The territory, in short, a basic condition and historical reference for the consolidation and expansion of the capitalist system, remains important as a support and as a materialization of the social relations of production, expressing its political character very strongly. (Sposito, 2004, p. 116)

Therefore, through the different conceptions and conceptualizations presented about the concept of territory, we can understand that the concept has increasing relevance in geographical studies, through different authors, who analyzed and analyze it through different theoretical, methodological and epistemological perspectives.

This wide variety of perspectives around the concept is also crystallized in agrarian geography and trying to understand how this process has been occurring in agrarian studies is important to have an overview of the roles that the concept plays both in the academic sphere and in the perspective of the analysis of reality. Still in this context, we will continue, in the sequence, discussing the presence of this concept, specifically in agrarian geography, emphasizing the context of its strengthening and its theoretical importance in agrarian studies.

## **THE CONCEPT OF TERRITORY IN AGRARIAN GEOGRAPHY**

The concept of territory, in addition to great relevance in geography, has a strong presence in the studies of agrarian geography, since it is one of the most used concepts today in the interpretation, understanding and elucidation of the objective reality of the Brazilian countryside.

In this context, the concept of territory gained prominence in agrarian geography from the flourishing of the critical currents that were introduced in Brazil, which began to denounce the social injustices in force in the socioeconomic and political framework of Brazil. In this context, radical ideas from the United States and France had repercussions on Brazilian geographic production, especially from the 1970s onwards, and were part of a set of currents that began to influence Brazilian geographic thought. (Andrade, 2008)

Additionally, according to Andrade (2004), with the resumption of the concept in studies of political geography and geopolitics, the territory spread and began to compete with more traditional concepts, such as *space* and *region*. In this context of renewal, Manuel Correia de Andrade begins to discuss the concept of territory from the perspective of power relations, emphasizing that:

The concept of territory should not be confused with that of space or place, being closely linked to the idea of domination or management of a certain area. Thus, the idea of territory must always be linked to the idea of power, whether it refers to public or state power, or to the power of large companies that extend their tentacles over large territorial areas, ignoring political borders. (Andrade, 2004, p. 19)

Therefore, the discussion carried out by Manuel Correia de Andrade ended up highlighting the relationship between power and territory, not restricting the discussion of territory only to the context of Nation-States. According to Sposito and Saquet (2016, p. 100), Manuel Correia "Emphasizes, in his approach, the political and economic forces in the constitution of the territory. In the economic dynamics, it recognizes the breaking of borders by the actions of large companies."

From this perspective of contributions in relation to the territorial approach, we highlight that according to Marques (2018), the discussions carried out by Manuel Correia de Andrade, in the context of agrarian studies, marked by the excellence of productions and recognition of peers, ended up being precursors of critical agrarian geography in Brazil.

Additionally, according to Bombardi (2008), the contributions arising from the work of Manuel Correia de Andrade in agrarian studies introduced, together with the work of Orlando Valverde, the roots of critical thinking that is based on dialectics in Brazil. In this context, Bombardi (2007, p. 325) points out that "The legacy of these authors is truly indisputable, especially when one considers the theoretical-methodological leap made in relation to the previous generation. They formed the root of later critical thinking."

The work of Oliveira (2001), an author linked to the current of critical thought, reinforces this view, admitting that the book *A terra e o homem no Nordeste* was a political milestone in geography as a result of the discussion of the agrarian question based on social commitment and the transformation of reality, a fact that ended up having repercussions<sup>6</sup> on the movement of critical renewal of geography.

Therefore, the precursor character of Manuel Correia de Andrade's production in agrarian geography, also considering the work of other authors such as Orlando Valverde, ended up paving the

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<sup>6</sup> Other authors pointed out in this movement of critical percussion by Oliveira (2001) are Orlando Valverde and Pasquale Petrone.



way for the flourishing of critical agrarian geography in Brazil, based on the concern with the transformation of reality.

It is within this conjuncture that we also highlight the production of Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira, an author who, in addition to attributing centrality to the concept of territory in his work, ends up deepening the movement of renewal of critical agrarian geography.

... one of the first works of rupture in the studies of Agrarian Geography is the doctoral thesis of Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira "Contribution to the study of agrarian geography: critique of Von Thünen's 'Isolated State'". This work 'introduces the basic concepts of historical materialism and dialectical materialism, fundamental elements for a critical introduction to the ideologies of the works developed in Agrarian Geography, particularly in Brazil. (Fernandes apud Bombardi, 2008, p.106)

From this perspective, Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira<sup>7</sup> ended up contributing to the deepening of geographical studies around the critical current, especially in the field of agrarian geography, based on historical materialism as a method used to understand reality. The quote below illustrates well the contestations of the nascent critical geography and its repercussion on agrarian geography.

It is from this perspective that we consider of the most significant importance a review of the works that give theoretical substrate to the empirical works (15) developed in Geography, because most of them (16) are limited only to the application to the Brazilian reality of schemes proposed for analysis in other realities, without making a criticism of the theories and concepts used. Among these works is that of Von Thünen, which is the object of our study. (Oliveira, 2016a, p. 16)

In addition, in the context of the academic production of Ariovaldo U. de Oliveira, with regard to discussions of territory, we highlight his theoretical-conceptual reflection linked to the disputes between social classes in the capitalist mode of production. In this sense, it analyzes that:

... It is the social relations of production and the continuous/contradictory process of development of the productive forces that give the specific historical configuration to the territory. Therefore, territory is not a prius or an a priori, but the continuous struggle of society for the equally continuous socialization of nature. (Oliveira, 2003, p. 13)

Thus, the perspective adopted by Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira about territory stands out as a conception linked to Marxism and that understands territory as the concrete result of the process of social class struggle waged within capitalist society. The analysis proposed by Ariovaldo U. de Oliveira ended up corroborating the consolidation of the concept of territory in agrarian geography as

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that "It is from Marx's dialectical method that Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira elaborates and develops his theory, conceiving reality as a point of departure and arrival." (Bombardi, 2007, p.330)

a result of the centrality that the author attributed to territory throughout his works. Still in relation to the concept of territory, he highlights:

That is why we insist: we have to deepen the difference that moves us in the face of this theoretical struggle, and that is why we reaffirm that territory cannot be understood as equivalent, as equal to space, as many geographers propose. In this way, it becomes essential to understand that space is a property that the territory owns and develops. Therefore, it is prior to the territory. The territory, in turn, is a space transformed by work, it is, therefore, a human production, therefore a space of struggle, of class struggle or fractions of classes. Because of all the relations it involves, it is inscribed in the field of power, being, therefore, the place of society's daily struggle for its historical becoming. (Oliveira, 2016b, p; 20-21)

The approach proposed by Oliveira (2016b) dialogues with thinkers who contest the equivalence that some geographers attribute to space and territory. For the author, the territory is posterior to space, the result of the transformation imprinted by man in space, that is, through work, thus, it constitutes a human construction. Another important point of the concept proposed by the author is the link between the concept and the notion of power, a perspective that is also adopted by other theorists, such as Raffestin (1993).

In this context, it is important to point out that Raffestin's (1993) proposal about the concept of territory ended up influencing<sup>8</sup> the discussion made by Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira in relation to his conceptual approach to territory. The excerpt below clarifies this theoretical relationship, according to Sposito and Saquet:

In summary, Oliveira (1991, 1999) elaborates a relational and multiple approach to territory, highlighting economic and political processes, recognizing the area-network relationship in the process of control/monopoly of territory, with a significant influence of Claude Raffestin's conception." (Sposito; Saquet, p. 105-106, 2016)

Still from the perspective of agrarian geography, one of the authors who have given great prominence in his scientific production to the concept of territory is Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, who in the study of territorial development in the countryside, highlights the importance of the different conceptualizations of territory as elements that imply the adoption of public policies aimed at the peasantry or agribusiness<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, Fernandes (2013) also points out that the definition of the concept of territory configures a power relationship that must be constantly debated. Thus, Fernandes (2009), in an

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<sup>8</sup> According to Oliveira (2005, p. 74): "My works reflect this current that has the study of *territory* as the central theme of research in geography. I follow authors such as Lefèbvre<sup>59</sup>, Calabi and Indovina<sup>60</sup>, Raffestin<sup>61</sup>, Gottdiner<sup>62</sup>, Coraggio<sup>63</sup>, Quaini<sup>64</sup>, Chesnais<sup>65</sup> and Lacoste<sup>66</sup> among others."

<sup>9</sup> In order to deepen the theory, the details about the concept of agribusiness can be seen in Pompeia (2021), which analyzes that the origin of this concept derives from the discussion on agribusiness carried out by Harvard University researchers John Davis and Ray Goldberg. In addition, for more details of the concept from the perspective of agrarian geography, see Mendonça (2013).

article entitled "On the typology of territories", exposes his conception of the importance of this concept for this science, in addition to specifying notes about its typology.

In this typology, the first territory would be the space of governance of the nation, within which other territories arising from social relations would also emerge. The second would correspond to the property territory, which comprises the diversity and possibility of property types. Finally, the third corresponds to the multiterritoriality of the second in the first territory, even going beyond the national scales.

For Fernandes (2009), relations and social classes produce different territories and spaces that reproduce them in a constant conflict. In addition, according to the author, the concept of territory can have two distinct conceptions, in the first of which it can be understood only as spaces of governance as a way of hiding the multiple territories and perpetuating the subordination between dominant and dominated relations and territories.

In addition to this conception, another existing one, adopted by the author, is to conceive the territory as spaces of governance, but recognizing the other types of territories, fixed, flows, material and immaterial that are originated by social relations and social classes. It is from this perspective that Fernandes (2009) reflects on the typology for the territories, in first, second and third territories.

In the context of the analysis of the importance of the concept of territory in geography, Fernandes (2009) highlights that its understanding is of great relevance for the understanding of the territorial disputes generated by the expansion of neoliberal policies and for the process of dispossession, which can be understood as a process of deterritorialization.

When discussing his basis for his understanding of territory, he highlights Claude Raffestin's definition that space is prior to territory, in addition to understanding that the process of formation of territories always occurs with the fragmentation of space. Still from this theoretical perspective, Fernandes (2009) mentions that the territory has the following principles: sovereignty, totality, multidimensionality, pluriscalarity, intentionality and conflict.

In his analyses, Bernardo M. Fernandes understands that the denial of the attribute of the multidimensionality of territories is used so that territories are used as means of social control, so that peasant communities are subjected to the development models advocated by transnational corporations. In the framework of agrarian studies, according to Fernandes (2013), the struggle for land carried out by peasants constitutes a struggle for a specific type of territory: the peasant territory.

Furthermore, it explains that the social relations developed by non-capitalist properties and typically capitalist properties are distinct and promote divergent development models, as well as respectively disparate territories. In their typology, these two types of private property constitute the second territory and dispute the first (national) territory. Therefore, in the discussion about territorial

development in the countryside, Bernardo M. Fernandes points out, among other issues, the importance of the concept of territory, its meanings and its use for public policies aimed at the countryside.

Nevertheless, within the field of the history of geographical thought, as we have already pointed out, another current of thought that has also made important contributions around the approach to the concept of territory and has been highlighted in recent years in influencing works related to Brazilian agrarian geography is cultural geography.

According to Claval (2011), cultural geography is not exactly a novelty in geographical thought, but it was and is part of its history. This perspective is shared by other authors, such as Cosgrove (1998), a thinker who also points to cultural geography not specifically as something new in geographical thought, given that authors of classical geography, such as Vidal de La Blache and Carl Sauer are considered key figures in the beginning of European and American cultural geography, respectively.

Thus, within the specific context of Brazilian agrarian geography, the cultural approach has made significant contributions, including in the field of studies related to research on traditional peoples and communities. Therefore, in order to introduce the discussion brought by this approach around the concept of territory, we bring the proposal of Almeida (2005) who, in a work dedicated to the analysis of the relationship between territories, borders and territorialities, highlights important attributes of the territory, which go beyond the economic, social and political aspects, as can be seen below:

As an organization of space, it can be said that the territory responds, in its first instance, to the economic, social and political needs of each society and, therefore, its production is sustained by the social relations that cross it. Its function, however, is not reduced to this instrumental dimension; it is also the object of symbolic operations and it is on it that the actors project their conceptions of the world. (Almeida, 2005, p. 108).

Therefore, based on the analysis proposed by Almeida (2005), we highlight that the territory has some attributions, responding at first to the basic needs of the economic, political and social levels on which social relations are based. However, the thinker draws attention to the fact that the territory and its attributions go beyond these dimensions, permeating the symbolic and cultural perspective, in which the subjects project their worldviews and that the territory is pluralized according to scales and levels that are historically constructed and sedimented, encompassing different scales. Deepening the debate around the territory, the author highlights that:

As we have also said, territory is, for those who have a territorial identity with it, the result of a symbolic-expressive appropriation of space, being the bearer of meanings and symbolic relations. Bonnemaïson and Cambrezy (1997; p. 10) consider that "the strength of the

territorial bond reveals that space is invested not only with material values but also with ethical, spiritual, symbolic and affective values". Culture, therefore, is thus inscribed in the territory, leaving marks through history and human work... (Almeida, 2005, p.109).

Thus, the researcher follows a path of understanding the territory from an expressive symbolic-cultural appropriation of space, which is the bearer of meanings and symbolic relations. This approach to the concept is very reminiscent of the conception that Haesbaert (2019) identified as Cultural or symbolic-cultural, which prioritizes the symbolic and subjective dimension, with the territory being understood in this perspective as the result of the appropriation or symbolic valorization of a certain group in relation to its lived space.

These proposals around the concept of territory have had repercussions in the field of agrarian geography, including in published research that focuses on the analysis of conflicts, struggles and dynamics in which traditional peoples and communities and the peasantry are inserted, showing the centrality of territory in the study of issues such as the struggle for land and, in the terms of Deleuze and Guattari (2010), evidencing the capacity of concepts not only to serve to understand reality, but to transform it.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Within the scope of the research conclusions, we detected the presence of a wide diversity of conceptions and approaches to the concept of territory from the perspective of numerous authors. However, the presence of perspectives that consider the multidimensionality of the constitution of territories and the relational perspective in the field of power relations were relevant in the analyzed survey.

Another important issue in the scope of the results is the verification of a trend that has been outlined, over the last few years, in the field of agrarian geography, which is the achievement of greater centrality of the concept of territory in research that turns its gaze to the agrarian, mainly from the perspectives linked to critical agrarian geography and agrarian geography with a focus on the cultural approach. Furthermore, it should be noted that the results presented in this research are not finished, but are in the process of construction and result, partially, from research carried out at undergraduate and graduate levels.

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