

Regional planning in Brazil: past and present

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1. Problem, context and hypothesis of the work

Brazil, in the global scenario, is a typical example of unequal development. The Southeast region, strongly industrialized, has a level of development much higher than peripheral regions such as the Northeast and North. This is subject of this work, which is focused in the politics of regional planning in Brazil.

This study deals with the evolution of the regional planning politics in Brazil and discusses some key questions of this process, mainly those related to the present moment. Brazil has a long experience in this field, which is explained by some important features: an extent territorial area of 8.5 millions of km²; an historical process of occupation and development which caused accentuated social and territorial inequality; and the fact that one of his macro-regions – the Northeast – has 2/3 of the his space (900,000 km²) submitted to periodic droughts, with strong impact on the poorer population.

During decades the regional planning in matter was directed to the Northeast, which was considered the “problem region” of the country, resulting in a macro-regional planning approach. Since 2007, the country adopted a national politics of regional planning. It means to follow a politic that no more search to reach a macro-region, but multiple “meso-regions” dispersed in the entire territory. The research which supports this study aimed to answer questions related to two moments: that of the macro-regional politics and their consequences; and that of the “meso-regions” and their future perspectives.

As regards to the first moment, we concentrated our efforts in the industrial strategy (incentives to the private sector) adopted for more than four decades. In this case, we searched answers to the following impacts: work force (employs creation) and creation of new industry and service enterprises. As respect to the second

moment, this study highlights a critical analysis of the regional planning politics of the Federal government (“Política Nacional de Desenvolvimento Regional” – PNDR), and the discussion of the possibilities and limitations of this new politics.

We state that the previous regional politics produced important economical results. The most important of them was to avoid the economical decline of the Northeast, although little has made about the social features. On the other hand, the PNDR increases the action to the whole country, but acts in fragmental way. In view of this, our **hypothesis** is that it is possible and necessary to bring to new politics the positive gains of the old politics.

2. General and specific objectives

From the brief exposition above, we present now the objectives of the research which support the present paper.

The general objective is to describe in a systematic way the evolution of the regional planning in Brazil, aiming to recognize precisely the main facts and its breakages. It follows the specific goals:

- Discuss the theoretical bases of the regional politics in Brazil in the periods of 1960's to 1990's (macro-regional);
- Discuss the theoretical bases of the regional planning model initiated in 2007 (PNDR);
- Analyse the industrial and agricultural strategies of the macro-regional politics and its economical and social results;
- As a consequence of the previous point, perform an institutional analysis about the complex mechanism which involves the regional planning politics of the Federal Government.

3. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study used fundamental concepts of the social sciences, in particular that of politics economy and institutional analysis. Through them, we tried to understand the two moments of the regional planning in Brazil.

The methodology strategy involves the theoretical and empirical approaches, in the case of the execution of the regional planning (projects, programs, etc). The efforts employed in each step of the actual process aim to discuss our hypothesis. The

justification of this hypothesis is based on the fact that a new politics – the PNDR – cannot intend to begin from the zero.

The study, mainly qualitative, was supported by an extent bibliographic research, including official documents and relevant works of the area. The list of references includes texts from authors such as Celso Furtado, Wilson Cano, Francisco de Oliveira, Campolina Diniz and Tania Bacelar, besides published works of the author of this paper, produced through its professional trajectory.