

## TERRITORY CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES IN LATIN AMERICA: contributions to the debate (I)

Marcos Aurelio Saquet<sup>1</sup>

Horacio Bozzano<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** With the secular reproduction of Eurocentric conceptions, with more autonomous and recent Latin American thoughts, with original perspectives on the territory of indigenous peoples, with technocratic visions associated with international financing organizations, with the fashions of “who makes territory” without having theorized the enough and with other perspectives, this article is an invitation to a debate that, in addition to not being resolved, particularly, does not respond to the most forgotten and denied social environments and groups in Latin America. Conceptions of territory in Latin America need to be revisited not only from the perspective of critical science, but complemented by theories of social transformation. For this, conceptions and praxis need to relate dialectically in a game in which popular, scientific, technical and political knowledge participate in the same way, otherwise we will continue in our own bubbles while capitalism and its countless manifestations continue to predominate with its conspicuous subjects. Thus, the two general objectives of this work are: a) to share different conceptions of territory in Latin America (in geography and other sciences) and b) to socialize how we conceive the territory from our work praxis with people, through research-participatory action.

**Key words:** Territory. Conceptions. Praxis. Latin America.

### CONCEPÇÕES E PRÁXIS DE TERRITÓRIO NA AMÉRICA LATINA: aportes para o debate (I)

**Resumo:** Com a reprodução secular de concepções eurocêntricas, com pensamentos latino-americanos mais autônomos e recentes, com perspectivas originais de território dos povos indígenas, com visões tecnocráticas associadas a organismos de financiamento internacional, com as modas de “quem faz território” sem ter

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<sup>1</sup> Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná – UNIOESTE, Brasil.  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3435-8428>. E-mail: [saguetmarcos@hotmail.com](mailto:saguetmarcos@hotmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Universidad Nacional de La Plata – UNLP, Argentina.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1503-5383>. E-mail: [bozzano59@gmail.com](mailto:bozzano59@gmail.com)

teorizado o suficiente e com outras perspectivas, este artigo é um convite a um debate que, além de não estar resolvido, particularmente, não responde aos ambientes e grupos sociais mais esquecidos e negados da América Latina. As concepções de território na América Latina precisam ser revisitadas não somente a partir das perspectivas da ciência crítica, mas complementadas por teorias de transformação social. Para isso, concepções e práxis necessitam se relacionar dialeticamente num jogo no qual saberes populares, científicos, técnicos e políticos participem do mesmo jeito, senão continuaremos em nossas próprias bolhas enquanto o capitalismo e suas incontáveis manifestações continuam predominando com seus sujeitos conspícuos. Assim, os dois objetivos gerais deste trabalho são: a) compartilhar diferentes concepções de território na América Latina (na geografia e outras ciências) e b) socializar como nós concebemos o território a partir da nossa práxis de trabalho com as pessoas, mediante a pesquisa-ação-participativa.

**Palavras-chave:** Território. Concepções. Práxis. América Latina.

#### **CONCEPCIONES Y PRÁCTICAS TERRITORIALES EN AMÉRICA LATINA: contribuciones al debate (I)**

##### **RESUMEN:**

Con arrastres seculares de abordajes eurocentristas, con pensamientos más autónomos latinoamericanos más recientes, con perspectivas originales de territorio en pueblos indígenas, con visiones tecnocráticas asociadas a organismos de financiación internacional, con las modas de “quienes hacen territorio” sin haber teorizado lo suficiente

y con otras perspectivas, este artículo es una invitación a un debate que, no sólo no está resuelto, sino que particularmente no termina de dar respuestas a los ambientes y grupos sociales más olvidados y ninguneados de toda América latina. Las concepciones de territorio en América Latina necesitan ser revisitadas desde perspectivas de ciencia no sólo críticas, sino emparentadas con teorías de la transformación social. Para ello concepciones y praxis deben dialectizarse en un juego donde saberes populares, científicos, técnicos y políticos participen por igual, sino continuaremos en nuestras propias burbujas mientras el capitalismo y sus incontables manifestaciones continúan haciendo de las suyas con sus sujetos más conspícuos. Los dos objetivos generales del trabajo son: a) compartir y socializar diferentes concepciones de territorio na América Latina (na geografía y otras ciencias) y b) como concebimos el territorio a partir de nuestra praxis trabajando con la gente, mediante la investigación-acción-participativa.

**Palabras clave:** Territorio. Concepciones. Praxis. América Latina.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, much has been said and written in Latin America regarding territory, be it as a concept, category, reality (object of studies) or as a space for social and spatial transformation (objects of intervention and/or transformation). Nevertheless, in certain situations, we find a lack of theoretical-methodological accuracy and scientific rigor, as well as of clarity and political objectivity that is expected in favor of the Latin American people, the subjects of each territory, particularly when it comes to public funding.

Nowadays, we are going through a time when this matter is being debated with growing and unceasing attention. This has been so mainly as a product of the theoretical advances that have occurred since the 1970s. Currently, the debate is at its highest point. With a centuries-old reproduction of Eurocentric approaches, with more autonomous and recent Latin American thoughts, with original perspectives on the territory of indigenous peoples, with technocratic visions associated with international funding organizations, with fads such as “who makes territory” without having theorized the enough and with other perspectives, this article is an invitation to a debate that, in addition to not being resolved, particularly, does not respond to the most forgotten and denied social environments and groups in Latin America. Thus, in this opportunity, we put forth a first reflection - part of a much broader and complex body of work- as preliminary contributions to the debate of theories and praxis of territory in Latin America. Our general objectives are: a) to share different conceptions of territory in Latin America (in geography and other sciences) and b) to make known, concisely, how we conceive territory from our work praxis with people, through participatory action-research (IAP).

This is the first text in a series that is being discussed, planned and written, taking into account the most detailed understanding possible of the conceptions and praxis of territory (i) materialized in Latin America. This time, we analyzed the work of some geographers and other researchers from Mexico and Colombia, whose more detailed information will be made available at the *Red Latinoamericana Territorios*

*Posibles, Praxis y Transformación* (Possible Territories, Praxis and Transformation Latin American Network). To this end, in addition to the bibliographic research, we conducted eight interviews in each of the aforementioned countries in 2019-20, based on the following questions: i) How do you define and understand territory? ii) What theoretical conception nourishes your perspective of territory? iii) In what themes has the concept of territory been used? iv) Do you carry out territorial praxis? v) If so, how do you perform your territorial praxis?

Therefore, from the research and publications that we have already carried out on the topic - see Bozzano (2000, 2003, 2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2017, 2019) and Saquet (2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c) -, as well as from the problematization of a recent publication on “Latin American thought” - found below-, we share some summaries of our studies and our actions carried out in the territory, to show aspects that we consider fundamental concepts of territory studied up to this point. It is a joint reflection made a few years ago, theoretically and empirically, which is not restricted, therefore, to a “flight made without leaving home”.

When we refer to thought, we consider it to occur simultaneously with the production of knowledge (be it popular and/or scientific or other). This process includes also going through reflections, interactions, apprehensions, sensations, perceptions, and debates that would normally facilitate the understanding an ever more complete and broader set of relations, contradictions, conflicts, transitions, movements of territorial (de) formation, as well as virtuous, broader and more complete praxis and transformation processes than mere criticism and political-cultural resistance .

This means that theoretical positions related to the status quo persist in hegemonic processes of power, with essentially neoclassical views that do not question social contradictions and do not propose transformative alternatives in favor of a more just and ecological society.

These two instances - knowledge and thought -, in our minds and practices, are in unity and mean, at the same time, life itself (social-natural), knowledge, thought: the integration of epistemological and ontological processes. As Lefebvre (1995 [1969])

clearly states, all thought exists and is in motion, and is, at the same time, thought (and knowledge, with varying degrees of depth) of a movement.

Accordingly, knowledge and thought happen simultaneously, although we can recognize different levels of knowledge and thought, normally and rigidly Cartesianly separated. Thus, knowledge and thought are conditioned, subjectifying and objectifying themselves in time and space, with certain characteristics inherent to each social group and territorial context. Subjects also think when making a sculpture, planting and eating, travelling or not, working or resting and, under certain conditions, systematizing, in written form or not, their thoughts, sometimes also reproduced outside academic spaces.

It is clear that there are singularities that characterize scientific thought, however, we do not conceive it separately from the people: popular knowledge is part of scientific knowledge, although this is not often recognized, apprehended and systematized: it is another science (SAQUET, 2008, 2011, 2017c, 2019b). People have talent and creativity, different cultures, identities and differences, being able to potentiate them by means of the integration of popular and academic knowledge, respecting and cooperating (i) to improve the standard of living of the most humble and simple people.

Consequently, in order to understand this relationship of integration, we need to review the methods, theories, concepts and their meanings and, primarily, the way of doing science. Along with universal knowledge, then, there are knowledges contextualized with our singularities and complexities, which need to be worked on at a level that reaches urban and rural communities (FALS BORDA and MORA-OSEJO, 2004). Therefore, this requires a research methodology and participatory action, in which science is produced taking into account the construction of useful knowledge for just causes, discovering other types of knowledge, such as that of indigenous people, creating a much broader and complete, popular and scientific knowledge, applied to the reality of the people (FALS BORDA, 2008 [1999]), as it will be further described at the end of this article.

With that in mind, practice also implies thought, usually reproduced. Although, often this reproduction is not systematic as it occurs in academia; at the same time, reproduction is already a practice that we may or may not carry out daily. Thus, considering that practice and reflection are both a part of thought, we believe that it is not coherent to separate them, including the conception of subordinate social groups with a certain level of common sense.

This article is organized in two parts: conceptions of territory and territorial praxis as the basis for final considerations, with the challenges presented by an ongoing theoretical-practical reconstruction carried out by us over the years in different networks of cooperation and solidarity.

### **PROBLEMATIZING THE DEBATE ...**

In the last 15 to 20 years, the conceptions of territory in Latin America have gone through a remarkable development. However, the productions that analyze, question and cross territorial issues are minimal and insufficient. Our text is a contribution to the debate, inviting the participation of interested parties, as it is both a heated and pressing topic and process, relevant to the millions of forgotten people and degraded environments: territory and, from its Latin meaning, *territorii*, the land that belongs to someone, as well as their places are also *stlocus*, in ancient Latin, places that belong to someone. Despite it seeming that territory and its places belong to capitalism and its cruel forms of use and abuse of environments and people, territory has the meaning of life, in Latin, or, in the native languages, “Pachamama” or “Madre Terra” (Mother Earth), for some indigenous Latin American tribes.

Our problematization stems from this notion and praxis of life, from the aforementioned thought-knowledge unit and from a synthesis produced by Haesbaert (2019a, 2019b) who, as part of a movement different from ours, affirms that, in the Latin American context, there are three great possible interpretations of territory, namely: i) territory as a *category of practice*, defined based on common sense linked to the knowledge of social groups, as a category experienced and a tool for struggle; ii) territory as a *normative category*, as it appears in the State in certain territorial public

policies.iii) territory as a *category of analysis*, a concept resulting from academic and intellectual reflection.

Nevertheless, according to Rogério Haesbaert (2019a), with regard to Latin American thought on territory, the concept of territory as a category of practice seems to be clearer and, at the same time, he recognizes that intellectual investigation can interact with the use of a territory in everyday life, serving as a political tool mainly for subordinate groups.

Haesbaert (2019a) also notes what he calls the first diffuse conception of territory in Latin America (a peripheral continental region or specific space), in the modern-colonial context, related to the sovereign state power of a Eurocentric matrix: it is a distant conception of expressing Latin American thought on the matter. For Rogério Haesbaert (2019a), if there is a Latin American practice or thought, it occurs among oppressed social groups that fight to defend their territories (such as those of the urban peripheries and the original or indigenous peoples). Nevertheless, Haesbaert (2019a) states that these social groups struggle to build their territories of life and, consequently, these represent a category of practice. Oppressed social groups - especially indigenous people - have an integrated / integral view of territory, an aspect that seems to be recurrent, in the words of Rogério Haesbaert, in Latin America, when it comes to territory. Accordingly, we find a diversity of subjects, with different conceptions and practices which revolve around their space of life, who use said conception as a tool for mobilization and struggle. Struggles between oppressed groups, the State and the capitalists, generate “an overlap between territory as a category of analysis, as a category of practice and as a normative category (HAESBAERT, 2019a, p. 147). Finally, Rogério Haesbaert makes reference to the existence of “a Latin American dialogical thought-action on territory” (IDEM, p. 147), which is carried out from a decolonizing perspective.

This is a thought-provoking classification, therefore, based on it, we asked some questions (among others that, certainly, could be asked). Are these three great conceptions of territory identified by Haesbaert (2019a) - as a category of practice, normative and analysis - adequate to understand Latin American thought on territory?

If the conception of territory related to the sovereign State power with a Eurocentric matrix is far from expressing a Latin American thought, why is it that state territorial policies are inherent to this thought? Is the academic the only space for scientific reflection? Where and how does the understanding and elaboration of new conceptions of territory take place? What is the Latin American dialogical thought-action? Where, how and why does it happen?

### MEANWHILE, IN MEXICO ...

In Mexico, a country where the debate on territory is quite diverse and intense, we have identified varied highly relevant concepts, such as that of Vergara Figueroa (2016), in which territory is the result of the appropriation of space; it is demarcated, affective and polysemic, precisely because of the different practices (economic, political and symbolic) and the different rituals carried out, conflicts, struggles, and social-territorial resistance. In this context, the subject's body has centrality, because it modulates the territory every day, through work, appropriation, demarcation, memory, rituals, pilgrimage, conflicts, etc. Thus, territoriality is also fundamental, understood as relations of power and knowledge inherent to class society: it is manifold and integrates material, symbolic and emotional dimensions. This conception of territory, which we understand to be humanistic, relational, multidimensional and multiscale, stems from the reading of authors such as Georg Simmel, Jesús Martín-Barbero, Beatriz Nates Cruz, Bernardo Mançano Fernandes etc.

*It is a space built socially by the social-natural interactions that take place therein. It is multidimensional, but it is also a unit - historical and ever changing - that differentiates and identifies itself in relation to other territories, which articulates and gives a specific meaning to its internal processes and external relations (INTERVIEWED 1 MEX, 2019).*

It translates and adapts itself, expanding conceptions of academic-scientific analysis produced internationally by researchers - many of them recurrent in the Mexican literature studied - such as Claude Raffestin (power and society-nature relationship), David Harvey (spatial and temporal corrections linked to the

accumulation of capital), Milton Santos and Marcos Saquet (on the resistance to the great tendencies of capital) etc.

In Buendía Castro and Pérez Sánchez (2017), the understanding of territory is centered on networks - based on Norman Long - understood as social and organizational structures used to make decisions aimed at development considering characteristics such as identity, belonging, trust, commitment and collective work. Hence, territory possesses a cultural and political significance (of projection to the future), and corresponds with a place of social, collective and ecological perception and action, a conception built from the perspective of action research, as we will explore in detail further below.

Conceptions such as those of Buendía Castro and Pérez Sánchez (2017) - among many others - are part of many intense and qualified discussions that take place within the scope of the Red Gestión Territorial del Desarrollo (Red GTD, Territorial Development Management Network) - formed by 13 research-action groups established in Mexico and interconnected to other similar groups in Brazil and Colombia -, which works based on a careful and appropriate critique of the concepts of territorial development reproduced in Latin America, closely linked to neoliberalism and the bourgeois State at the international level. The approach to territory adopted is directly related to that of development, assuming a historical-critical, decolonizing and cross-scale proposal, in which territory has specific meanings in each space-time, due to the contradictions, disputes, powers, conflicts, and confrontations: therefore, territorial management needs to be carried out by local actors, as a stepping stone for improving living conditions through decision-making autonomy, democracy, combating poverty and inequality, as well as through food sovereignty (RAMÍREZ MIRANDA, 2015).

In this sense, research and actions are executed from an interdisciplinary and politically operative perspective, focusing on the issue of food sovereignty and the integral development of men / women, in a resistance movement with counter-hegemonic orientation, valuing knowledge through participatory action-research (RAMÍREZ MIRANDA, 2018).

Moreover, from this action-research perspective, there are remarkable results, socialized in different ways, as in Hernández Moreno, Ramírez Miranda and MenéndezGámiz (2015), as well as through more punctual publications that reveal, for example, how to manufacture Pan de fiesta de San Juan Huactzinco (Party Bread of San Juan Huactzinco). This bread is characterized by a hybrid between innovation and conservation of flavor and handling, contributing to the maintenance of the identity passed down from generation to generation as family heritage (ELIZALDE and PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, 2012).

From Mexico, it is worth highlighting research that is done specifically for the subjects, such as that of Ávila Sánchez (2017), among many others. In this research, territory is understood as being formed by the coexistence of relations and production of goods and other relations of trust and solidarity existing in collaborative networks aimed at agricultural production destined for family consumption. Therefore, the bonds between producers and consumers are valued through spatial and personal proximity, in contrast to the large transnational networks.

*A territory is a physical-spatial area where a given social group leaves its mark through reproducing material and social conditions for its historical and daily existence. Through their practices and habits, trends in social, cultural, political, economic and other dynamics are expressed, from this group or groups, which defines its self apprehension, its evolution and ownership as a heritage (INTERVIEWEE 2 MEX, 2019).*

Consequently, territory, in addition to being an appropriate and urbanized area (as an object of study), is characterized as a space of different identities and mobility, recreated historically and geographically in the struggle for the reproduction of life (as heritage of the people who live in it), said conception comes from authors such as Elisée Reclus, Henri Lefebvre, Guy Di Meo, Claude Raffestin, David Harvey among others.

*I analyze these practices based on statistical data, and also through qualitative methodologies (life histories, semi-structured interviews with actors in the process, individual, family and collective producers), which describe the way in which their rurality has changed and that acquires precise mathematics from its permanent link with the urban environment and the development of practices of proximity and the different modalities in which their pluriactive character unfolds. Therefore, the actors involved in the process express determined forms of their territorial dynamics through their changing identities, due to the permanent influence of the urban*

*environment on rural life. Consequently, my territorial praxis is limited to the direct knowledge and involvement of my students, in the processes that dynamize territories, in this case, the urban-rural territory (INTERVIEWEE 2 MEX, 2019).*

*In the Rural Innovation Laboratory, we have worked on social innovation processes in rural communities, trying to support dynamics of territorial resistance (INTERVIEWEE 1 MEX, 2019).*

The research techniques are diverse and territory contains different relationships and appropriations, changes and permanences, practices and theories, social involvement and political-cultural resistance. These perspectives of territorial praxis seem diffuse even in Mexico, as we have also identified in Sántiz Gómez and Parra Vázquez (2017) who, when studying indigenous culture in Chiapas, identified an integrated view of their life, considering family, economic, cultural and environmental aspects, where past and future are closely related. Working with the indigenous people, development was built from the space itself, of each community studied, in the areas of training and productive transformation.

In order to spark interest in these productive transformation projects, there were exchanges of experiences from peasant to peasant, since learning how to work with another vision takes time, dedication and a lot of patience [...]. (SÁNTIZ GÓMEZ and PARRA VÁZQUEZ, 2017, p. 336).

The decolonization of minds necessarily goes through the practice of confrontation, struggle, mobilization, (in) formation - without separating practice from theory, science from popular knowledge-, through a territorial praxis as of that of the lekilluxlejal of the Tseltales from Chiapas , performed with training, transformation projects and community organization (SÁNTIZ GÓMEZ and PARRA VÁZQUEZ, 2017).

Consequently, more than a possible category of practice, territory is understood as a territorial praxis, of struggle and confrontation, in different processes of mobilization, (in) formation, evidently being substantiated as (i) material and , at the same time, as popular science, in which there is no separation between science / intellectuality and common sense. Recognizing popular conceptions, coexisting with academic and intellectual ones, is fitting, however, this is very little in view of the serious situation of the living conditions of the Latin American people. We need to

identify and understand academic and popular concepts, uniting and enhancing them in a dialogical and respectful way, living and working with the people. Not only do we recognize the coexistence of knowledge and practices, analyzes and reflections, but we also work with the subjects studied so as to understand them, valuing them, talking, debating and fighting with them alongside.

### MEANWHILE, IN COLOMBIA ...

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Likewise, we find there an incredible diversity of approaches, concepts and territorial praxis, an aspect that encourages us to continue studying Colombian literature for a long time to come. In Nates Cruz, Velásquez López and García Alonso (2017), they come up with a creative approach to territory and historically territorialized memory in spaces of conflict and peace, characterizing itself as a historical root of the present. For these researchers, territory is formed socially and historically. It encompasses power, conflicts, disputes, confrontations and appropriations, as well as distinct economic, cultural and political networks and practices. Therefore, territory is scalable, complex and plural, understood through a historical-critical, reticular, multidimensional and politically operative approach (constructed for the studied subjects) (NATES CRUZ, VELÁSQUEZ LÓPEZ and GARCÍA ALONSO, 2017).

At the same time, as interviewee 1 from Colombia states, territory means the production of a place considering the dimensions of geography (people-space relationship), sociability (social relationships), historicity (moments and rhythms) and of emotion, recognizing power relations, knowledge, history, identity, etc.

*I assume that praxis means contributing conceptually so the world of politics and direct management may impact people with a positive change. Therefore, I have participated and participate in: The National Commission for Territorial Ordinance, Departmental Developmental Council, National Interinstitutional Commission for Territorial Ordinance, Public discussions on territorial problems in ex-centered towns focused on the object of determining, working and supporting the resolution of problems particularly in postconflict scenarios. I support grassroots organizations from the conceptual*

*point of view. I consider that praxis provides meaning, contributes and changes the world, when what we do has some kind of impact on the political agenda (INTERVIEWEE 1 COL, 2020).*

In this context, praxis occurs inside and outside the university, mainly through participation in different state and public activities, at different scales, from the local to the national level: its activity seems to have a very well-defined political content, in favor of the simplest and most humble people.

Furthermore, it is recognized that territory is a polysemic concept, with political, anthropological and geographical content. Therefore, the result of cultural and political processes, involving imagery and perceptions, struggles and conflicts, symbols and feelings, tradition and power. Such a conception is influenced by researchers such as José Luis García, Guillermo Páramo, Yi Fu Tuan, Horacio Bozzano, among others. It focuses on risk analysis and territorial ordering, a theme that, according to interviewee 2 from Colombia, seems quite prominent in that country's territorial literature.

In this context, territory is understood as totality and complexity, in a multidimensional perspective (political, economic, social, cultural and spatial) linked to the geographical space and life in a historically characterized society.

*Territory is a complex, dynamic and porous totality of multidimensional relationships intertwined between a certain collective and self-referenced human subject, and a specific portion of geographic space, conceived as a social product and supporting element of such a collective historical subject (INTERVIEWEE 3 COL, 2020).*

There are dominations and resistances, risks and actions in territory, as well as multiscale interactions, a conception nourished by references such as Bertalanfy, Rapaport, Maturanae Varela, alongside with I. Wallerstein, D. Harvey, A. Quijano, R. Haesbaert, CW Porto-Gonçalves and A. Escobar, as evidenced by interviewee 3 from Colombia. Said conceptions, with prominent decolonial traits, are used, as the interviewee himself mentions, in regional studies to understand the effects of globalization and, also, in participatory-action research, more specifically in water

management.

*Over the past two years, I put forth processes of participatory research-action in the rural territories of the municipalities of the periphery of the metropolitan space of Bogotá D.C. This investigation centers on the management of water in rural spaces, especially on the role of the community associations of rural water users, state institutional agencies that have related competences in a direct or indirect way with the use and management of water at different levels of territorial organization, as well as in the vertical, municipal, regional or national scope. [...] The territorial approach I exposed earlier allowed to deepen the understanding of the relationships of the territorial fabric that underpinned the processes of management of the water, as well as the behaviors of the different social actors. From this practice, new water management strategies have emerged from user associations. In general, it came as a surprise the territorial awareness in village communities and the capacity of agency that can develop their associations as they deepen in the territorial knowledge and in relation to the relationships and contradictions between the different institutional levels of the State (INTERVIEWEE 3 COL, 2020).*

This praxis seems culturally, environmentally and politically rich, performed in theory and in practice in a transversal, scalable and interinstitutional manner, involving state organizations, community associations and other subjects interested in the territorial management of water, understood as a heritage of all. Analysis and political practice seem to happen in tandem with the definition of management strategies and norms, generating territorial knowledge, in a theoretical and practical unit, that is, of territorial praxis.

Apparently, in these conceptions studied in Colombia, territory and space are not dissociated, nor is it practice from theory, as identified in interviewee's 4 responses: territory is the socially appropriated space where a certain control or domain is exercised. This premise is based on historical and dialectical materialism, evidencing power relations, behaviors and perceptions of the subjects, consequently, hybridizing a conception that seems very current and relevant both socially and scientifically.

*My territorial praxis has taken place mainly in local geographic spaces, such as the housing complex where I live, where I participate as president of the General Meeting of Joint Owners, which allows me to be an actor in decisions referred to the use and occupation of the space that legally belongs to us individually (private individual space) and collectively (private space). Other forms of territorial praxis are the ones I do in the space of the university where I work, in my neighborhood, and in the city in which I interact socially, within the framework of power relationships that establish me certain rights, limitations, prohibitions and sanctions. I also experiment certain territoriality in places close and far away from my daily space of life, where I have built, through time, empathic, symbolic or emotional relationships (INTERVIEWEE 4 COL, 2020)*

It is staggering how diverse the territorial praxes we have identified so far are, from more localized or anchored actions in place of daily life, through intermediation by state organizations, to broader and more complex processes specific to participatory action-research. Actions take place at different scalar levels, however, they are always directly linked to social transformation and management of the territory at the local level, taking into account solidarity, environmental conservation, struggle and political confrontation.

Although we have not yet delved into Colombian literature as we planned and it is quite possible that this is directly linked to the subjects interviewed. The predominance of perspectives from a historical-critical approach is clear, with a phenomenological-humanistic or materialistic and dialectical basis, evidencing subjects and places: topophilia, symbols, behaviors, identities, contradictions, resistances, conflicts, dominations, confrontations, etc. Evidently, themes such as violence and peace have been discussed at length, however, there is a great thematic heterogeneity (soon to be published in the Red Latinoamericana Territorios Posibles, Praxis y Transformación, as already mentioned).

Regarding territorial praxis, the experiences are also heterogeneous, as previously mentioned. However, these experiences are concrete and linked to the political commitment of the researchers interviewed so far, working with the State, with associations of residents and other community subjects, in an inter-institutional and trans-scale manner, anchored in their places and territories of daily life.

Moreover, these experiences of praxis identified in Colombia and Mexico, seem to have a certain dialectical unity with those verified in Argentina by Bozzano and Canevari (2020); when referring to participatory action-research (FALS BORDA, 2013 [1970], 2015 [1970], 2015 [1998]), these authors highlight the following assertions and praxis they considered as fundamental:

On practical reason: to appeal to practical reason as a matrix for our arguments and our actions, by means of a fruitful and moderate dialogue between philosophy, science and community, has proven to be extremely important at the social level. Practical reason is still reason and, therefore, is related to the Territorii philosophy, a method created decades ago to think and solve problems, generating solutions in a perpetual spiral of respect for the other, without the conventional truths defined by a researcher or politician.

On the conjunction of knowledge: having the premises reflected by Orlando Fals Borda as a starting point, Horácio Bozzano and Tomás Canevarias posit the essentiality of the conjunction between academic and popular knowledge, overcoming the traditional dichotomy without arrogance, in an interdisciplinary and multidimensional way; the historical, social and cultural dimensions are incorporated into praxis through the participation of the subjects, valuing their community knowledge. Thus, both joint projects and processes are oriented and materialized, in a place where cooperation and conflict “coexist”.

On horizontal participation: in the perspective of praxis, horizontal experience corresponds to the subject-subject relationship, going beyond the subject-object relationship, to study and take action with neighbors, politicians, businessmen, students, teachers and researchers.

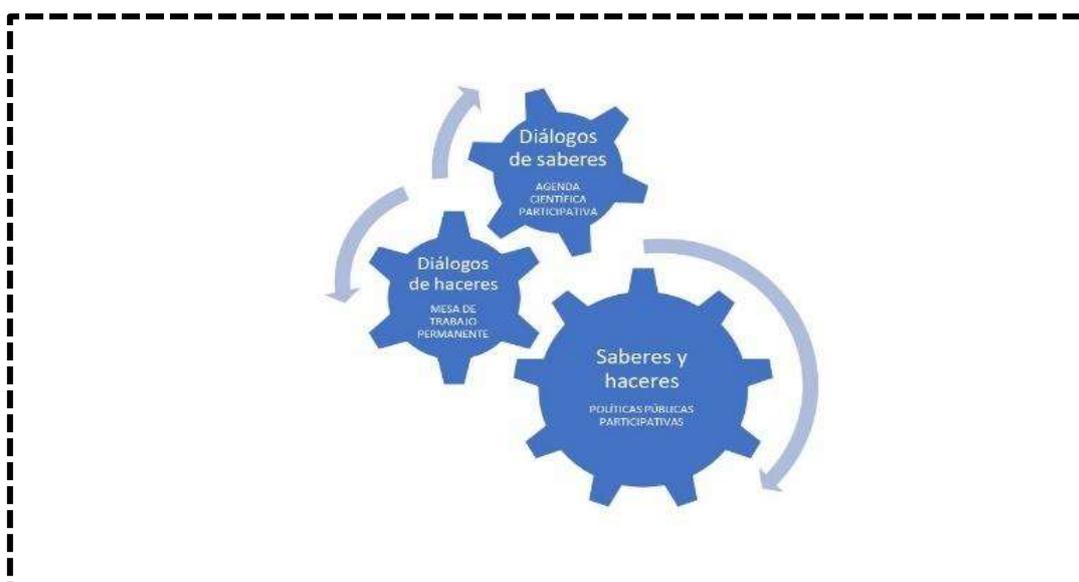
On the overthrow of asymmetries: breaking asymmetries requires a deep and systematic, cultural, political and economic transformation, subverting to the status quo. Without detriment to the rigor of methods and techniques, research seeks to rebel against routine, selfishness and manipulation, promoting the

spiritual dimension of scientific research amid cooperation and conflict, as Santos (1996) stated.

On types of knowledge: based on social participation with equity and reciprocity, as well as a holistic conception synthesized by Fals Borda (2015 [1970]), combining knowledge relating to experience (lived territories), practical (real territories), propositions (legal, thought and possible territories) and concerted and intelligent territories.

On communicative interaction: therefore, the subject-subject communication needs to be dialogic and of mutual learning, establishing relationships of trust between the researcher and the research subject, in a constant exercise of advances and setbacks.

Thus, Bozzano and Canevari (2019, 2020) propose the concept of dialogues of actions, which is formulated in terms of two successive and complementary hypotheses in participatory-action research: i) The dialogues of actions are based on the dialogues of knowledge, insofar as they are inscribed in a transformation theory; ii) Spirals of reflection and action build dialogues of articulated and participatory actions and knowledge, aimed at accompanying the construction of more sustainable participatory public policies based on practical reason, the conjunction of different knowledge, horizontal experience, breaking asymmetries and communicative interaction (Figure 1).



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**Figure n. 1- Illustration of the dialogues of actions.**

Source: Bozzano e Canevari (2000).

The dialogues of action involve, concurrently, theories and practices. The dialogue of knowledge without action may result in discourse; the dialogue of action without knowledge may only lead to mere will to do and actions without the necessary thought and reflection. Consequently, the dialogues of knowledge and practices are not detached nor elitist: they take place simultaneously, in territorial praxis projects like those previously mentioned (Mexico and Colombia), with a seemingly common “bridge” with praxis as performed in Argentina and Brazil. This theme will be discussed further on the next text, based on the problematization that follows as a final consideration of this first socialized reflection.

**THE CONTINUITY OF THE PROBLEMATIZATION: DECOLONIAL TERRITORIAL PRACTICES**

...

An abstract discussion of the lives of people I do not know and whose situation I am not familiar with is not just a waste of time, it is also inhuman and impertinent (FEYERABEND, 2010 [1987], p. 363; emphasis added in the original).

We believe, in the same vein as Feyerabend (2010 [1987]), that apprehending sensations, immersing oneself in people's lives is crucial. From our instincts and senses, our perceptions and interpretations, we aspire to understand and value different worldviews that, moreover, cannot be understood and explained properly from a distance. From this viewpoint, science is a tradition of understanding reality, as well as other important views, such as art and religion (FEYERABEND, 2010 [1987]). For us, science and philosophy are not pure abstractions, nor are they restricted to academic intellectuals: they are praxis of idea and matter, practice and theory, reason and emotion.

In this way, it seems to us that the three categories identified by Haesbaert (2019a) can constitute a kind of “starting point” for more refined research on territorial thought in Latin America. From the above, it seems clear that practice is also

often theoretical and reflected; that what is normative is also systematized, idealized, theorized and practical; the analysis is also practical and, often, normative, as revealed by the concepts and praxis discussed herein.

State policies are incorporated into everyday life, including academic life, influencing and being influenced; influencing intense research, for example, in Brazil, on rural territories and citizenship implemented since 2003; influenced by these same policies, which end up “defining” academic research agendas in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. Within these policies, there are clearly neoliberal conceptions, which have been discussed, planned, systematized, standardized, etc., revealing a tactic linked to praxis of social and territorial domination that, in turn, is also theoretical and practical, normative and, often, academic.

University, therefore, is not (in) materialized as the only space for research and reflection. The latter are also present, as described above, in community spaces, associations, residential condominiums, neighborhoods, etc. In a more refined research, presently being executed, this diversity of spaces and rhythm is even greater.

There, whoever has a territorial praxis, predominantly, realizes it through IAP, generating other conceptions and techniques, of coexistence, dialogue, participation, struggle and political-cultural confrontation, in a clearly decolonial and counter-hegemonic movement (Chart 1). This movement was made possible, at the same time, by science and practices, theories and techniques, norms and popular knowledge, interacting with each other, that is, working centered on the subject-subject relationship. Whoever has this work perspective, has political commitment and direct involvement with the people studied, notably simpler and more humble, constituting a praxis of interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, multidimensional and scalable liberation: it does not seem possible to separate theory and practice, reflection and action, norms (of coexistence) and analysis.

	<b>Conceptions</b>	<b>Territorial praxis</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	- They are critical-historical, cross-scale and multidimensional, directed	- They are linked to political and cultural resistance in the face of the hegemony of the State and large

	<p>toward the realization of regional and / or local development projects.</p> <p>- They are carried out through participatory action-research, with decolonial political content.</p>	<p>companies, especially at the local level.</p> <p>- Aspects such as the body, memory, identity, work, the society-nature unit, and struggle stand out.</p>
<b>Colombia</b>	<p>- They are critical-historical, multidimensional and scalable, also aimed at the studied subjects.</p> <p>- They are performed through inter-institutional and trans-scalar participatory action-research, with the construction of common territorial management strategies and norms.</p>	<p>- They happen at different scalar levels and in an inter-institutional way, especially at the local level, that is, the place, through joint projects, of political and cultural resistance.</p> <p>- Aspects such as power, networks, identities, symbols, feelings, emotions, and perceptions stand out.</p>

**Table 1 - Summary of the concepts and praxis identified so far in Mexico and Colombia.** Own elaboration, May 2020.

When doing participatory action-research in Mexico and Colombia, certain premises and practices are established, which are seemingly connected, that is, they are inside and outside universities, taking effect in an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional way, revealing there is a clear political-ideological content geared towards social transformation in favor of building a more just and ecological society.

The option for territorial praxis, which contains theory and practice, methods and techniques, science and popular knowledge, occurs in the midst of the involvement and commitment on the part of the researcher. She/he is a subject who also lives and participates in territorial processes, as a subject in relationship with other subjects (although they are the subject of study) at different scalar levels: research and actions are, normally, multidimensional and cross-scale, although, as we have shown earlier, they may be based either on phenomenological-humanistic, or on historical and dialectical materialism.

The territorial approach adopted is directly related to development processes (or to alternatives to development, which are not always made explicit), assuming a critical-historical, decolonizing, plural and trans-scale proposal, in which territory has

historical and geographical, anthropological and political meanings, being reproduced as a place of life (human and non-human), full of contradictions, disputes, powers, conflicts and confrontations and, at the same time, of cooperation and solidarity, environmental preservation and conservation.

In short, praxis is made from the bottom to the top. Here we have a fundamental characteristic of the conceptions identified so far, in Mexico and Colombia, where we see theories and practices “walking together”, in a conscious and popular direction, without mechanically repeating scientific formulas, building a conscience that creates historical values based on everyday experience (GRAMSCI, 1975 [1929-1932]).

That is how, over the years, we’ve done our research and cooperation projects with subjects from the countryside and the city, peasants and workers from the urban periphery, directly contributing to qualify the levels of class and place awareness there, by means of participatory, dialogical, solidary, cooperative and popular territorial praxis (SAQUET, 2018,2019c).

Furthermore, this is the kind of praxis- similar to those identified and now published - that we carried out from a multidimensional perspective, in the projects *Vida na Roça* (1996-1998) and *Vida no Bairro* (2002-2006), among others, in a movement to counter the hegemony of the bourgeois state and agribusiness, as well as public welfare management, (i) materializing participatory research and participatory actions among researchers, teachers, students, workers, peasants, unionists, etc. In both projects, the actions aimed at development while respecting the nature, culture and the most immediate needs of the popular classes, valuing the territorial singularities and their respective subjects and knowledge (SAQUET, PACÍFICO and FLÁVIO, 2005; SAQUET and FLÁVIO, 2005; SAQUET, 2018, 2019b, 2019c).

Praxis means proximity, not distance between researcher and research subject; it is pluriactive, solidary, interactive, scientific and popular, in which all subjects are beings who think and feel, breathe and eat, have important knowledge and experiences for the common inception of solutions to everyday problems.

Working with the subjects studied, in research (diagnostic phase) and in action (phase of cooperative and solidary action), in a local university-society interaction, we believe that we have managed to integrate knowledge and techniques, urban and rural subjects, from the constitution of spaces of joint learning (workshops, courses, exchanges, political movements, meetings, assemblies, etc.). Thus, praxis is not in a footnote, it is (i) materialized in our daily life, inside and outside the classroom, inside and outside the university, in participatory-action research.

There, the territory was (re) produced (in the countryside, in the city and between these different spaces) as a space for political organization, mobilization, (in) formation, struggle, confrontation, dialogue and knowledge production, in a praxis of transformation realized with our continued involvement in participatory research and participatory action (for details, see SAQUET, 2019b).

The "[...] theories elaborated at the heart of research and theoretical-conceptual operations must be in favor of a socio-political-cultural praxis, [...] placing itself in favor of the development and improvement of the living conditions of a population "(SAQUET, PACÍFICO and FLÁVIO, 2005, p. 69). "The dialectical method is not only a method of theoretical analysis [...], but it also is an instrument that creates possible alternatives and practices to carry them out" (VAGAGGINI and DEMATTEIS, 1976, p.137) .

Therefore, we understand praxis as a way of being in the world; a practical attitude that is not necessarily devoid of theory, it has an existential meaning: practice and being in the world are indivisible and undergo a dynamic, transcendental and concrete understanding, that is, dialectical in a day to day basis, through which humankind opens up to the world (DUSSEL, 2017 [1973]).

Accordingly, it is clear that overcoming crises needs to occur along with profound transformations, trying to solve problems, overcoming developmentalism through political and scientific confrontation, achieving a liberating policy with responsibility and honor. Hence, the researcher needs to have a commitment-action while being, in fact, politically and scientifically engaged with the key groups that need

scientific knowledge and our collaboration, as argued by Fals Borda (2015 [1970], 2013 [1970]).

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