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Conceptual considerations on territorial development

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Introduction.

Developing a State based on its internal activities is an idea which has been recurrently analyzed and studied by different –social and naturaldisciplines; this has caused this subject's approach to be broad and diffuse. Thus, different perspectives on development have sprung: biological, economical, anthropological, ecological and sociological ones.

Additionally, the height of investigations focused on space-place in the latter part of the 20th century, led studies to paired up the concept of "development" with different adjectives in order to differentiate global-local, internal-external, urban-rural notions. Expressions such as "endogenous development", "exogenous development", "local development", "regional development", "urban development" or "metropolitan development" were created.

This does not mean they are exclusive prescriptive concepts, but analytical categories that represent different perspectives of the same process: "development" and all of these variations share a common factor, they all take place within some "*territory*"; in other words, all of these variations refer to *"territorial development*".

Regardless of the adopted classification, territory is an essential concept when designing, implementing and evaluating development plans, policies and/or programs; simply because it reveals society's expression and citizens' rights to build and socially make it theirs. Territory is a scenario

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of social interactions, an expression of power, administration, planning, cooperation or conflict relationships that happen inside of it.

However, it is very common to find that territory is conceptually used as a synonym for region and space; in fact, from classical geography's point of view they are seen as "immobile and permanent receptacles or scenarios in social relationships and therefore devoid of meaning and sociopolitical significance, this makes it possible to use these words as synonyms".¹ This essay's goal is to reflect on the analytical categories which study it and clarify some chiaroscuros regarding territorial development and some strategic considerations (plans, programs or policies).

Reflections on the concept of territory.

Territory is usually geographically described as terrestrial surface (relief, minerals, soil, vegetable and animal life, weather, etc.), notion which takes us to any area inhabited by human groups and limited into different areas: local, municipal, regional, national and supranational.

Authors like Vidal de la Blanche, De Martonne and Hartshorne consider territory is geography's most important research object and not other frequently used terms such as landscape, region, set of buildings and land exploitations and use.² This approach studies territory's physical and natural relationships, as well as its demographic characteristics; in fact, it is considered as the platform for human and coexistence and economic sustenance activities, social, institutional, cultural and religious relationships.³

It is important to note that both territory and processes derived from its dynamics are the essence of social life; they are processes which actively affect social structures and are the product of social groups' power relationships.⁴ Ergo, territory is a social scenario, an active part of the ecological and biological dynamic, its development is intimately connected to social processes, forming a social-natural complex.

Following this logic, the concept of territory refers to a terrestrial portion, limited politically and administratively, including a power or possession

¹ Montañez, G. & Delgado, O. (1998). "Espacio, territorio y región. Conceptos básicos para un proyecto nacional", in: Cuadernos de Geografla, Vol. VII, No. 1 -2, Departamento de Geografía, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

² Ramírez, B. (1995). "La región y su diferencia: los valles centrales de Querétaro 1940-1990". Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana–Xochimilco, RNIU.

³ Ramírez, B. (1996). "Los Paradigmas contemporáneos en el análisis de la relación Territorio – Sociedad", en Diseño y Sociedad, No. 6. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana–Xochimilco.

⁴ Soja, E. (1989). "Postmodern Geographies. The reassertion of space in critical social theory". London: Verso/New Left Books.

relationship of an individual or social group and which has sovereignty, property, appropriation, discipline, surveillance and jurisdiction limits,⁵ the concept of territory is related to the idea of possession or management of state or private public power within limited space.⁶

Territory seen as social construction has its origin in spatial activities of agents who operate in different areas. Spatial activity refers to the network of relationships and activities carried out by a specific agent: an individual, a local firm, an organization or power group or a multinational company.⁷ The capacity and scope of spatial activity is unequal and convergent in places; this is why the appropriation of territory and subsequently the creation of territoriality generate power geography characterized by inequality, fragmentation, tension and conflict.

Territoriality is "the degree of control exercised by one person, social group, an ethnic group, multinational company, a State or block of states over a specific portion of space".⁸ It also refers to "the group of practices and its material and symbolic expressions capable of guaranteeing the appropriation and permanence of a specific territory determined by a social agent, a State, different social groups and businesses".⁹ Territoriality is related to appropriation and the latter with spatial identity and emotion which combined form appropriate right, factual and emotional territories.

According to Soja, territoriality and regionalism are two closely related terms. Both work, in many ways to segregate and compartmentalize human interaction by controlling presence/absence and inclusion/exclusion;¹⁰ in other words, territoriality divides territory into spatial-temporal divisions of activity and of relationships called regions.¹¹

This perspective supports the fact that territory is understood as a socially constructed space where institutions in charge of political, economic and social activities are generated and regulated by formally instituted rules, customs and values socially implemented by communities.

⁵ Geiger, P. (1996). "Des-territorialização e espacialização". In: Territorio: Globalização e Fragmentação. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec. p.p. 233-246.

⁶ Correia de Andrade, M. (1996). "Territorialidades, desterritorialidades, novas territorialidades: os limites do poder nacional, e do poder local", in: Territorio: Globalización y Fragmentación. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec. p.p. 102-125.

⁷ Massey, D. & Tees, P. (1995). "A Place in the World?; Places, Cultures and Globalization". Oxford: Oxford University Press/Open University.

⁸ Montañez, G. & Delgado, O. (op cit).

⁹ Correa, R. (1996). "Territorialidad y Corporación: Un Ejemplo", in: Territorio: Globalización y Fragmentación. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec. p.p. 86-101.

¹⁰ Soja (op cit).

¹¹ Jiménez, G. (2000). "Territorio, cultura e identidades", in Rosales, R.(coord.). Globalización y regiones en México. Mexico: UNAM.

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Territory is ascribed with attributes like territorial organization and territorial development which in turn are disintegrated into different intervention levels and scales such as local, regional and national development. Territory is then understood as a spatial system; that is, a group of places interconnected by networks and horizontal flows.¹² In this sense, it is important to study development and its social, economic and political consequences based on territorial structuration.

Territory and Power

The concept of power is energy needed to make everyone else's conduct adapt to one's will; in sum, it is the influence exerted over subjects or groups. Power becomes political power when coercion or reward for obedience is related to benefits provided by the community.¹³ The State is, basically, the institution that aspires to monopolize (based on the idea of sovereignty) political power to ensure social order.

J. E. Sánchez states that power relationships assume territorial forms because the latter materializes these relationships; in fact, factors that link power relationships to geographical space are: 1) the correspondence among power relationships and the construction of territory (space which is socially constructed, articulated and organized is a material means for the operation of power and society); 2) the control of territory by social groups; 3) location of decision centers in their relationship with territorial organization processes.¹⁴

These factors strengthen the recognition of territory as backdrop to human control, organization/distribution, production/use and social or belonging relationships.¹⁵

a) Territoriality: control strategy

Social action on a specific area means control or territoriality system, which is defined as a social behavior strategy or pattern (institutional, group, individual) which establishes different dynamic and pluridimensional access channels which affect, mold and arrange peoples' ideas, actions, resources and their interrelationships by limiting and controlling a territory.¹⁶

¹² Ocampo, L. F. (1996). "Lo Regional Punto de Encuentro" in *Ciudades*, revista de la Red nacional de Investigación Urbana, No. 29, Mexico.

¹³ Ramírez, B. (2003). "Modernidad y posmodernidad, globalización y territorio. Un recorrido por los campos de las teorías". Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana–Xochimilco, Miguel Ángel Porrúa.

¹⁴ Sánchez, J. E. (1992). "Geografía Política". Madrid: Síntesis.

¹⁵ Sack, R. (1991). "El significado de territorialidad", in: Pérez, P. (comp.). Región e historia en México (1700-1850) métodos de análisis regional, UAM: Instituto Mora. p.p. 115-136.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

This strategy is a social construction related to conflict and status brought on by possession, personalization and defense of an area, which differs according to the levels of social organization and specific historical contexts regulated by capitalist production relationships. It operates over physical, social and psychological activities and social agents participate, those who exercise control as individual or group controllers that come from different territories and levels of action.

The authority in charge of control defines reality constantly and without this external control, the controlled ones would be confused and lost without the description of reality and their raison d'être. Creating a sense of security, certainty and significance, those in charge control this world and benefit from it.

The design of any control strategy stems from concrete historicity which is a group of ideological and material conditions and society perceives itself depending on its social learning, experience and cultural influence. Here is where physical geography, urban trajectory, growth rhythms, institutional capacity (political, religious, educational, familiar, military, scientific), political traditions and its leaders, regional cultures and its social elites, mass media, values resulting from reward and punishment behavioral dynamics and feelings of patriotism, desire or fear.¹⁷

These social processes are generally provoked by social conflicts and behaviors which influence or become more complex in time; however, they can also be the product of voluntary actions according to conscious goals where consensus, planning, force of reason and convergence of interests empowers society and forces it to take control of its own destiny.

b) Territorial Organization

Every society shapes its space and by doing so it classifies everything into areas and its characteristics: basins, protected, rural, urban areas, industrial agglomeration, localities, electoral districts, municipalities, states and all things related to the location of settlements and spatial distribution of consumption, production, distribution and services.

This organizes geographically and hierarchically everything private, public, actions, interests and procedures of different agents (economic, social, cultural, religious), under an order logic which defines a (national or international) social organization model which articulates concrete capital production and circulation ways.¹⁸

¹⁷ Sánchez (op cit).

¹⁸ Klein, J.L. (2006). "Geografía y Desarrollo Local", in: Hiernaux, D. & Lindon, A. Tratado de Geografía Humana. Barcelona: Anthropos-UAM.

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It also speaks of urban administration's autonomy, centralization or decentralization of its public space: its federal, state, municipal and local areas. Thus, a specific urban territorial and planning organization includes development schemes with the participation of micro, meso and macro levels, regional typology, central areas, homogenous and polarized space, regional plan and growth poles; it connect local, national and global interests with its interregional dynamics of value transfer.

c) Specific use

Territorial organization is carried out depending on the allocated use which is controlled by prescription and reproduction strategies. Prescription refers to permissiveness in territorial access and exit, use of limits, borders, sovereignty, nation concepts and all kinds of barriers like cultural, social or economic ones which prohibit, restrict, hold back or exclude people and activities.

Intermediation logics of control include regulations, legal rights, brute or mental force, prohibition in the use of areas, codes, visas, workspaces and use of desks; cultural norms, verbal or physical behavior which bring about communication obstacles such as signs, marks, tattoos, symbols, gestures, corporal signs, keys, speech modulation, accents, rhythms, slang, etc.

Prescription allows the personalization of territory and specific territorial gradation –primary, secondary, public or interaction- related to the importance it has on peoples' lives and occupation time. There is a difference between migrants and native inhabitants or different areas that exist in a city: housing, commercial, service, industrial, administrative or recreational.¹⁹

Reproduction includes necessary forms and mechanisms to sustain, keep, conserve, enhance, deepen or change any territorial dynamic. This includes the regulation of interpersonal relationships' limits and hierarchies. Territorial defense and resilience are brought on by any transgression on control or confrontation norms by forms of social organization. The result can be to invade, widen, take, attack, suppress or produce territories thanks to relocation, deterritorialization or destruction of borders which lead to a change in activities (rural to urban; natural to agricultural or housing) or a reconfiguration of identities.

d) Social Sense Provider

The construction of territoriality implies a set of practices that intend to institutionalize behaviors and social rationalities so as to achieve human

¹⁹ Sánchez (op cit)

coexistence. They cover a wide ideological range and can be classified into four groups:

- Social regulation: values which give social content and significance to identities, belongings, purpose, direction and are interested in guaranteeing containment and manageability of contradictions. For example: speeches used by states, political parties, social organizations, churches or private companies.
- ii) Construction of differences: allows social, control and status levels, traditional gender, sex, place relationships, social ethnic considerations and different productive activities to be taken for granted and viewed as normal.
- iii) Government and State legitimacy: they have political significance which justifies their task and ensure ruling classes their own permanence in the holding of power; it is related to State's organization, strategies and intervention.
- iv) Spatial representations: formative determinants related to the conception of public and private space. It can be seen in development plans, institutional, management, territorial organization programs, etc.

If we take into account the previous considerations, territorial-related research on social phenomena begins with the notion that nature and society are not two real entities that interact with one another; they become articulated into a social process which not only has social categories, but also natural ones that are conditions for social life in its entirety.

Discerning the concept of development.

The word "development" implies human and social welfare; it becomes the subject of debate when adjectives or prefixes are added to it. This is why it is important to answer the following question: Which are the connotations and orientations of "development"? To answer this, we have to take into account the fact that developmental management has been studied by four perspectives: biological, economic, human and local approaches.

Development seen from a biological approach

This term originated in the second half of the 18th century when biology's knowledge on development were progressively applied to the social context. The evolutionary theory of species contributed to this process, its creative use in the second half of the 19th century consolidated the use of the term "development" in social areas which resulted in the so called "era of social Darwinism".

This approach stated that human societies fight one another to survive, just like biological organisms. Thereupon, "modern" societies represent the

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highest level of social progress. This biological vision of societies implies a feeling of superiority based on planning strategies to impose on other societies.

Economy and development

The economic theory included the term development after WWII; this devastated context highly emphasized the development of new independent nations and other economically-ruined areas. "Economic growth" was addressed because everyone thought poverty problems could be solved by it. This planning of development strategies in government management was focused on promoting technical cooperation and capital transfer as an instrument to promote economic development.

Initially, development was associated to growth and was exclusively circumscribed to the economic factor due to the great influence of the Neoclassic Theory. Thus, development has been seen in a reductionist way, its levels depend on produced physical quantities; for decades, development was considered a synonym of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP per capita was the usual measurement for the level of development; even in Latin America. Osvaldo Sunkel refered to the characteristics of development and made a comparison between development and growth.²⁰

Nonetheless, it was soon discovered that economic growth was not enough to achieve society's development. On the other hand, Seers elaborated another concept of development (although it was formulated under the neoclassic economic theory); he stated that there were important elements which were being ignored such as equity in income distribution or the need to change structures in outdated economies.²¹

In this sense, other approaches consider development not as an inherent consequence of capitalist development, but as a problem of economic modernization; this are called Depententist Theories. That is the case of Gunnar Myrdal's Circular cumulative causation theory which states that economic development happens in a cumulative way and in one direction (positive or negative) drifting away from a balanced position.²²

The main argument of this theory is that, in time, market forces will tend to widen and not narrow differential growth rates between advanced and non-

²⁰ Sunkel, O. & Paz, P. (1970). "El subdesarrollo latinoamericano y la teoría del desarrollo". Santiago de Chile: Siglo XXI Editores S.A. Mexico: Editorial Universitaria S.A.

²¹ Seers, D. (1970). "The Meaning of Development", in Revista Brasileira de Economía, Vol.24, No. 3. Río de Janeiro: Fundaçao Getulio Vargas.

²² Myrdal, G. (1979). "Teoría económica y regiones subdesarrolladas". Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

advanced regions. Industrial accumulation and infrastructure development in advanced localities generate profits to develop businesses. As economies progress and businesses benefit from them, industrial growth is reinforced and the process becomes a self-reinforcing one; meanwhile, growth rates in non-advanced regions will decrease because there are not enough advantages to counterbalance the weight of advanced regions. The process goes on and on and the gap between rapid and slow growth regions is widened²³ (Moreno, 2008: 21).

Ergo, public management was meant to plan strategies to promote economic processes' development-physical place relationship; there is also a great need to determine the adequate spatial location of market and transportation costs and not the necessary conditions to achieve human potential (food, employment and equity).

As we can see, economic approaches try to explain development as an exclusive part of the production dynamics; nonetheless, the intervention of social actors and the effect of the environment are not important factors. Said approaches lack environmental awareness; they assume nature can be "dominated" to provide resources for human benefit.²⁴ Consequently, development planning strategies, in the best case, consider nature as a means of achieving progress due to the existence of resources and empty spaces which should be civilized.²⁵

Harris mentions that economic development has been criticized in two ways: a) it causes inequality in the distribution of benefits of development linked to inequality in all of the remaining income which increases over time and b) development's negative impact can be seen in the environment and existing social structures.

Said situation is worthy of studying, it is important to study progress by paying special attention to economic, social and political processes. As said by Juan-Luis Klein: "development is the result of social, political and economic actors' will to actively affect development processes of their territories".²⁶

Development seen under the human and sustainable approach

We have to acknowledge that development implies efficient exploitation of an area's existing resources to promote growth, generate employment and

²³ Moreno, S. (2008). "Desarrollo Regional y Competitividad en México", in Meixueiro, G. (coord.). Documentos selectos de desarrollo regional y políticas públicas, Centro de Estudios Sociales y de Opinión Pública, Cámara de Diputados/ LX Legislatura. p.p. 17-48.

²⁴ Klein (op. cit)

²⁵ Klein (op. cit)

²⁶ Ibidem.

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improve the quality of life of the population that inhabits it. Thus, "to develop collectivity, territory plays an important role because it generates identity which forces socially opposed actors to systematically work together".²⁷

Because of this, development can be understood as the attainment of economic, political, cultural, institutional and environmental levels which promote the transformation of human beings and societies into an environment of social, natural or other relationships with dignity, personality and transcendence.²⁸

In this context, human development gives more importance to individuals and their environment; however, new approaches related to the environment, generation of endogenous abilities, local adaptation to foreign models and networks of social relationships that generate trust within the community and territory are gaining ground; the latter determined and is determined by a series of relationships (man-man and man-nature), languages, affections and change processes. It can be understood as a social system which has relationships and horizontal flows which unites men and the latter with nature.²⁹

Thus, development appeals to environmental sustainability making room for "sustainable development" or the process of substantially improving the population's levels of welfare from a holistic approach (without harming the environment).

Conceptualization of territorial development: a proposal

As it was previously mentioned, territory is a social construct, an assessment, a product, a space which is historically and culturally constructed through practices, strategies, perceptions and the way it is read by its members; although we have to acknowledge the growing differentiation process among the areas that integrate it.

Development dilemmas are affected by different variables which carry a connotation of regionalism; that is, territorial differentiation cannot be explained by themselves or through strictly spatial, structural or historically internal factors, but through a relationally dynamic way, thanks to the understanding of constant socio-economic transformations and continuous interrelationship processes.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Boisier, S. (2001). "Desarrollo (local) ¿De qué estamos hablando?", in Madoery, O. & Vázquez, A. (eds.), Transformaciones globales, Instituciones y Políticas de desarrollo local. Rosario: Editorial Homo Sapiens. p.p. 25-47.

²⁹ Aceves, F. (1997). "La territorialidad. Punto nodal en la intersección espacio urbano-procesos de comunicación-movimiento social", in Comunicación y Sociedad. No. 30 Mayo, Departamento de Estudios de la Comunicación Social, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara. p.p.51-74.

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In this sense, territorial development means having a policy which includes decentralization, coordination and administrative cooperation aspects, population organization, territorial organization and provision of infrastructure and services, etc. Nonetheless, territorial development is not a vertical policy, but a different way of studying growth in the long term and in a continuous manner.³⁰

Territorial development is more qualitative than quantitative. It refers to territory's natural resources, human resources inhabiting and working in it, institutions that safeguard and promote social interaction, common associative practices, culture and places which form it. If we see it like this, it is an endogenous and exogenous public and private economic and social process.³¹

Public powers are no strangers to individuals' environment or habitat in territorial development; they actually have a decisive role in the generation of welfare because they redistribute resources through association, delegation and management mechanisms. Thus, territory is a decisive factor in local agents', social and productive organizations', public institutions' and civil society's development. The degree and quality of integration will promote the emergence of unstructured territories with fragmented developments which generate new conflicts and deepen existing social imbalances and vice versa.³²

Local development can be understood as *the process that organizes* society's progress, the result of plans carried out by different local actors so as to exploit human and natural resources of a specific territory, keeping negotiations and open-dialog with economic, social and political agents. It means looking for social welfare and improving the quality of life of urban and rural, local and global communities; it is also related to multiple social, natural and intellectual aspects needed to mobilize numerous factors to implement the previously agreed-on development strategy.³³

Finally, territory intended for development is no longer a place where things used to happen and becomes part of the events, not only as a container, but also as a participant. This way, local development finds its meaning. Its goal is not to tranfer resources from one territory to another of from one socio-professional category to another; but favor and promote the creation of local projects which is more relevant because it is creative before being re-distributive.

³⁰ Boisier (op. cit.)

³¹ Klein (op. cit)

³² Ocampo (op. cit).

³³ Becerra, F. A. (2003). "Características subyacentes en el desarrollo socioeconómico de la provincia de Cienfuegos durante el período 1987- 2000", Universidad de Cienfuegos. (Without printer)

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Territorial development planning

An important factor for territorial development strategies is the interest actors show on control forms and strategies; these actors hold and reproduce territory's specific organization. These forms are based on social learning and cultural influence so as to decipher the nature of these relationships among specific determinations of concrete territorial organizations and social systems or structures³⁴ (Ramírez, 2003).

These ideas can be specifically completed through territorial dynamics to facilitate, stop, condition or transform these great trends which result in regions that "win" and those who "lose".

This concern makes us think that territorial problems or processes are relevant to the extent that they are included in bigger processes. In other words, territorial dynamics acquire specific directions depending on global context and must be considered in territorial planning processes.

The understanding of what happens in territories must stem not from earth sciences, but from social dynamics present in specific natural environments; this is why territory should not be exclusively a "natural resource" subject to its own laws; but the product of society-environment relationship because it is an essential element of social and productive organization which carries out society's different configurations and expressions. Social processes are the ones that uphold, maintain or erode geographical determinations.

Territorial development strategies should specifically consider:

- (Metropolitan or rural) region which has stopped being the main concept of the study of territory because of the existence of new reticular articulations and the possibility of creating "virtual" regions.
- Globalization processes restructure territories and include differential articulation of the latter, from local to global areas.
- Development planning has traditionally been based on economic sciences which has had serious difficulties to integrate territorial dimension and ends up being reduced to its spatial variable (measurable geometric dimension).
- Build inter and trans-disciplinary approaches and give anthropology, history, sociology, economy or psychology an opportunity. This will allow social sciences to open themselves up to complex perspectives where multiple references play an important role in the understanding of social rights.
- Address an unexplored field from different perspectives and scales which include functional geographical units such as political-

³⁴ Ramírez (op cit).

administrative ones, electoral districts, municipalities, etc., the identification of the territoriality of local problems, cultural regions, regional power networks and economic restructuration.

• Analizar territory not as a geographical clipping equivalent to traditional regions, but as a framework that establishes different links and interactions with other spaces and scales.

Final thoughts

These previous paragraphs have shown us that territory is a social construct that stems from ideological and material practices carried out by its members. This results into collective perception and cultural institutionalization of citizens' behavior which form a social regulation sphere. Far from being neutral, social action is a control or territoriality system established by the authority exercising it thanks to multiple strategies related to territorial organization, its specific use and social meaning provider.

Regional spaces are defined not by its concept but by their similar characteristics which endow them with relative autonomy. This homogenous vision of space is identified with lineal and regular spaces which can barely form point networks or interacting nodes if and only if they share certain likenesses.

Everything that is territorial takes place in irregular, non-linear space with surfaces or volumes with irregular trajectories referred to as fractals. Different social agents converge with their own power assessments and strategies that are far from a homogenous vision of their spatial tasks.

Development problems from a territorial perspective have different premises than from a regional one. It moves itself from the modernity paradigm thanks to its progress-related speech and the national territory's homogeneity. It explains diversity and emphasizes complexity and contradictory trends in local and global and their different development logics. On the one hand we have capital control which strives for territorial alienation using a homogenous and abstract social model implemented by the Nation State; the result is deterritorialization, simulation and loss of identity models. On the other hand, we are approaching social autonomy and control of territory; history, culture and different structures of reality become relevant.

The analysis of these social control dynamics generate an interdisciplinary field of knowledge which is nurtured by methods, technics and analysis angles from different disciplines such as economy, sociology, politics, linguistics, anthropology, social psychology, history, human geography and ecology which provide technical instruments of their own as well as their object of study.

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