

The (re)emergence of the concept “milieu” in the contemporary context of neoliberalism and destructive economy

A (re)emergência das noções de meio no contexto contemporâneo do neoliberalismo e de economia destruidora

La (ré)émergence du concept de milieu dans le contexte contemporain du néolibéralisme et de l'économie destructrice

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Abstract

The paper deals with the geographical approach on the (re)emergence of the concept of “milieu” in the frameworks of the analysis of contemporary neoliberal economic rationalities. It intends to retrace preliminarily the different meanings of the notion and concept of “milieu” and its relation to the notions of environment and ecology. Then, we approach the perspective of the destructive economy and environmental devastation in its counterpoint with the concept of “milieu”. In conclusion, we note the emergence of new perspectives on the concept of “milieu” that open up other possibilities in the relationship between society and nature.

Keywords: environment; milieu; ecology; destructive economy; neoliberalism

Resumo

O artigo trata da abordagem geográfica sobre a (re)emergência do conceito de meio nos quadros da análise das racionalidades econômicas neoliberais contemporâneas. Pretende-se retratar preliminarmente os diferentes sentidos da noção e conceito de meio e sua relação com as noções de meio ambiente e de ecologia. Em seguida, aborda-se a perspectiva da economia destruidora e de devastação ambiental em seu contraponto com o conceito de meio. Em conclusão, constata-se a emergência de novas perspectivas do meio que abrem possibilidades outras na relação da sociedade e da natureza.

Palavras-chave: meio; ecologia; economia destruidora; neoliberalismo

Résumé

L'article traite de l'approche géographique sur la (ré)émergence du concept de milieu dans le cadre de l'analyse des rationalités économiques néolibérales contemporaines. Il retrace de manière succincte les différentes significations de la notion et du concept de milieu et sa relation avec les notions d'environnement et d'écologie. Puis, nous aborderons la perspective de l'économie destructrice et de la dévastation environnementale dans son contrepoint avec le concept de milieu. En conclusion on constatera qu'il émerge de nouvelles perspectives de milieu qui ouvrent d'autres possibilités dans la relation de la société et de la nature.

Mots-clés: mésologie ; milieu ; écologie ; économie destructrice ; néolibéralisme

Introduction

The article brings a geographical approach to the re-emergence of the concept of milieu by reflecting neoliberal economic rationality. The methodology is based on the reading of historical epistemological changes that led to the resignification of concepts amidst discursive and non-discursive, material and symbolic disputes, and in disputes between fields of knowledge and power relations. It should retrace the different meanings of the notion and concept of “milieu” beforehand, and its relationship with the concepts of “environnement” and “écologie”. The perspective of the destructive economy and environmental degradation is addressed, taking the counterpoint into account, the concept of milieu. By then, new perspectives of the "milieu" are found as a pathway to other possibilities for society-nature relations. Thus, we seek to analyze the concept of milieu and its avatars in the light of facts that contribute to a better understanding of this ever-growing phenomenon of destruction based on “free competition”, “free initiative” and the repeated discourse of “technical capacity” and a supposed social-oriented “wealth creation”.

A brief genealogy of the notion and concept of milieu

We wonder why, despite an expansionism “with broadax and firebrand”, we were and still are blinded by the idea of “development”? Why economic geography, regional geography, critical geography and the critical political economy of space and territory could not become detached from the type of rationality that consists of seeing nature as a mechanics? Sometimes these fields of knowledge can verify the facts but do not take the necessary consequences of a radical change of position in relation to "development" and "economic growth". This is true even if several theoretical proposals are coupled with the prefix "echo" or the adjective "environmental", or nouns such as "environment" or even "sustainable" are used.

The possibilities in a given space and time have been conditioning the emergence of hegemonic human sciences, which were associated from the outset, back in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with colonial and imperial capitalism. They emerged in a strategic discursive field built by capitalism itself, which always intended to be the

torch bearer of “progress” associated with the spread of “civilization”. But there was criticism, warnings, and diverse and practical learning of studios of nature and society from the very beginning, drawing attention to the risks and dangers to which “progress” was oriented. Many scientists, philosophers, naturalists, geographers, economists, anthropologists, etc. however, thought at that time (and still today) of capitalism as a “necessary evil” to achieve progress and liberation from exploitation: one had to “overcome evil with evil”. Contemporarily, a renewal of this debate is obscured by an analytical error about neoliberalism itself, because it does not represent a radicalization of neoclassical theories of “*laissez-faire*” economy. Thus, the conceptual and epistemological innovations of neoliberalism, which will be the basis of risk and danger society daily diffused through competition and the creation of the neoliberal subject, are left in the shadows. These processes are based on state interventionism in the environment, since the eighteenth century, and are coeval with the emergence of the notions of milieu in different sciences but geography in particular. This will unfold and stress the unmanageable destructive interventions grounded on technology

Thus, the “new neoliberal forms” that have led to a step forward in the development of capitalism are problematized (or a recolonization of internal territories). It had conducted capitalism to infiltrate into spaces with relatively little exploitation of natural resources, destroying natural resources through sharp plundering and feeding the enlarged reproduction of capital in the forms of labor relations and productive organization (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2017). The new forms of exploitation of the territory are associated with “new neoliberalism”, but which in fact proves to be a strategical-war neoliberalism that puts states and companies against the majority of society itself. (SAUVÊTRE; LAVAL; GUÉGUEN; DARDOT, 2021).

To accomplish this intention, we will briefly trace the epistemology of the debate on the emergence of the notion and concept of milieu in geography and in other knowledge fields.

Every notion or concept arises in a given practical configuration and a history of rationalities. In the analysis of the meaning of milieu and natural environment, we make use of Foucault's methodology to understand problems that emerge in a field of knowledge linked with discursive and non-discursive related practices (FOUCAULT, 2001; TAYLAN, 2018).

Concepts are not entities, as well as clear-cut sentences produced by science hovering, to some extent, over societies and stories, but are built, minutely, through political, social, scientific and philosophical practices. There is no point then in tracing the genesis of an unchanged concept that would emerge at different times, nor talking about people who would anticipate things that would happen decades or centuries later. It would be as if they envisaged the future and defuse some kind of science of divination that could foresee a deeper truth. The conditions that enabled the emergence of the notion of milieu and environment shall be found in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it will be reworked in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Both ideas presuppose a network of cross-linked discursive fields essential to understand the present destruction of

nature that was already forecasted, chiefly due to past rationalization practices applied in the domestication of nature. The latter, in fact, indicated the need to tone down the impact of expansion, colonization and industrialization through the practice of protection of nature.

In this vein, we intend to retrace this genealogy starting when discourses are associated with practices or carrying out an archaeology dig of discursive formations present in a given historical moment and in a given space. Our aim is to reframe the contemporary perspective of the global North/South divide in terms of the unequal exchange of wealth. The latter reveals environmental and social injustice inherited from colonial forms of exploitation of the environment. It was perceived and analyzed by scientific and political discourses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, paradoxically, that was vital to the process of imperialist expansion of capitalism (HICKEL; DORNINGER, WIELAND; SUVWANDI, 2022). We must conciliate the notions of global South and North according to the evolution of territorial formations that are, in turn, part of ever-changing contexts, which is true for notions such as the old conception of a Third World. In this sense, one can see that under discursive units a wide diversity of contexts flourishes, making it difficult to define precisely those groups of States that would correspond to the global South concept in the face of the global capitalism network. There is a dissonance, in the context of globalization, between geopolitical settings and the economical networks of multinational forms throughout the world. They are both polarized and fragmented at different scales, with their centers located in privileged territories in the global North, and a lesser extent in certain territories of the global South (VELTZ, 1996).

Associated with the previous questions, we ask ourselves how the political economy or political ecology, or social geography or environmental geography, or even the geographical environment can, today, face the problem of the changing way of dealing with human and non-human elements and the current form of exploitation?

Much has been written in geography about the necessary, intricate, and indiscernible relationship of society and nature, between the human and the non-human. But, in our view, there are still dominant approaches, which, despite referring to the destruction and the collapse caused by capitalism today, have not yet managed to surpass a dichotomous approach to the relationship between the subject (society) and the object (medium). On the other hand, it must be made clear the connection between labor exploitation and the exploitation of natural resources, and between the rationality of *standard* economy and nature. We think it is important to study the “creation of the neoliberal subject”, the diffusion of *self-entrepreneurship* and competition between people as critical to the processes of unlimited exploration of nature. From the point of view of human societies, there is a “history against nature” teaching that natural processes are external to man or that is possible to “correct” or reform the Earth itself advocating that everything can be dealt with by the employment of the technique.

Given these facts and the development of various interpretations of the concept of milieu, we think it is important to grasp the emergence and many shades of meaning of

this notion to better understand the fate it had in the context of natural sciences and humanities.

The term and the notion of milieu appear in scientific discourses in the eighteenth century and went through several changes in the nineteenth century. According to Canguilhem, the notion, but not directly the term milieu, emerged with a strictly mechanical sense in Newton in the eighteenth century, as an “action at distance” when he referred to a fluid:

The mechanical notion of milieu, but not the term, appears with Newton, and the mechanical sense of the term is present in the Encyclopedia of D’Alembert and Diderot, in the article called *Milieu*. [...] The French mechanists called milieu what Newton understood as fluid, a substance that would be known as ether in Newtonian physics (CANGUILHEM, 1952, p. 129-130, *apud* FOUCAULT, 2004a, p. 29).

Subsequently, the term will appear in a different context in biology with Buffon, Lamarck, and, in a rather different fashion, Auguste Comte. With Lamarck, the meaning of milieu is to be external to individuals, because it would simply involve them, hence the conceptions of “*environment*”, in French, which involves the human being. It was clearly expressed through the conception of “*milieu ambiant*”, a term coined by the naturalist Étienne Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire under Lamarck's influence, who saw the milieu as a “circumstance” and life as a struggle for existence. Life, thus, seeks to adapt to this external nature (CANGUILHEM, 1952). Lamarckism was not a mechanism though, as it will at the end of the nineteenth century with certain neo-Lamarckism projects, and, according to Canguilhem (1952, p. 165-167), it represented a “naked vitalism. There is an originality of life that the milieu does not encompass, that is ignored”. Therefore, the milieu appears to be foreign or external, in the proper sense of the word. For Lamarck, “nature is external to life” (CANGUILHEM, 1952, p. 168), what is a dualistic life-nature perspective that stresses the domestication of nature as a form of adaptation.

According to Ferhat Taylan, Auguste Comte would have made a grand synthesis of mesology rationality associated with the concept of milieu, back in post-revolutionary France. He sought a formula for constituting a limited type of modification of the world, trying to putting an end to revolutionary illusions that planned the complete transformation of man: “Only the laws of nature – from where that transversal milieu – can organize the knowledge of individual and social man in connection with the physical, biological and social means in which he exists” (TAYLAN, 2018, p. 21).

Taylan (2018, p. 21), in defending a continuity between reality, world order and knowledge, but not as the analogical reasoning that stresses a similarity between social order and physical or vital order, alerted us that the mesology was aimed at finding a “harmony between the living being and its milieu”. Thus, positivist science is also a mesological political project leading to a regulatory power by which “the social organism should govern itself by regulating its way of life”.

This synthesis by Auguste Comte, according to Taylan, is based on Lamarck's notion of “milieu” and Cuvier's “conditions of existence.” The milieu echoed by Lamarck and Newton is characterized by a physical, mechanical action of a fluid ambient influencing “normal” types. It will later be “confronted with the rising of the Darwinian paradigm founded no longer on types, but on living populations where the Darwinian environment point out to a space of interaction in which populations will not cease to confront each other” (2018, p. 22). Thus, in the midst of competition and struggle for survival, the idea of positivist “harmony” in the coexistence of the living being and its milieu could no longer be intended.

In fact, for Canguilhem, Lamarck's interpretation is different from Darwin's, because

Lamarck thinks of life in terms of duration [how to stay alive: ‘life resists solely by deforming itself so as to outlive itself’], and Darwin more according to interdependence. One life-form implies a plurality of other forms with which it is in contact. (CANGUILHEM, 1952, p. 172, our translation.

It provides a synoptic view that would resemble that of the geographers of his time: thus, for Canguilhem, Darwin's milieu is a biogeographical environment.

Canguilhem (1952, p. 173) stresses that Humboldt and Ritter¹ “apply to their object, the relations between historical man and milieu, the category of totality” and would feature in their approach a determinism of the geographical substrate on historical relations, which gave rise to Ratzel's anthropo-geography and then geopolitics, which defended the well-known “vital space”. Thus:

One can summarize the spirit of this theory of the relationship between man and his geographic milieu by arguing that doing history consists of reading a map, if we understand by map the configuration of a set of metrics, geodesic, geological, climatological, and descriptive biogeographical data. (CANGUILHEM, 1952, p. 174).

Canguilhem tells us that, following this first mechanistic interpretation of the development of organic forms, there is a mechanistic explanation of the organism's movement within the milieu. The organic is seen as a mechanical system, as reacting to

¹The biogeography of Alexander Von Humboldt, creator of the famous natural frameworks, which associate different aspects of climate, altitude, soil, geology, cultures and agriculture in the remarks he made of the Andes in the early nineteenth century, would be part of this great tradition of Greek's geography of the Ecumene and of the science of the coordination of human space according to celestial phenomena, that is, a mathematical geography which was founded by Eratosthenes and Ptolemy. The organic is inscribed in a relationship of determination with the physical support of nature. As Paulo Scarim shows us, in Humboldt, there is a “vitality” linked to the physiognomy of regions, with a connection, a unity of organic life with its surroundings (SCARIM, 2021b, p. 14-15). Is this a mechanical determinism of the milieu over organisms?

an elementary physical stimulus, with the determinisms of psychology that will consider animals, living organisms, as an object of a bundle of stimuli that will lead to varied reactions in the milieu. Therefore, the “behavioral milieu coincides with the geographic milieu, the geographic milieu with the physical milieu.” (CANGUILHEM, 1952, p. 175).

Canguilhem underlines the predominant approach in Humboldt's greatest book, *Cosmos*, whose subtitle is “A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe”, as a totalizing claim to knowledge, subjecting it to a certain mechanics of the world. On these mechanistic conceptions of organisms' responses to external stimuli in biology, geography or psychology, Canguilhem (1952, p. 176) writes: “We can clearly see individuals, but they are objects; we see gestures, but they are displacements; centers, but *they* are environments; machine operators, but they are machines”. Canguilhem also tells us that this methodology found, initially, in the geography itself its limits and the way to its reversal. Geography later confronted the complexes of elements limiting each other and where the effects caused by an element become, in turn, the very cause, giving rise to a cycle of mutual influence. In this sense, we can mention the example of plant species that end up constituting their own environment, or the famous example of the tick, analyzed in the first half of the twentieth century (UEXKÜLL, 1965 [1956]), that chooses and conforms to its environment, demonstrating that organisms, animals and plants are not constituted of just reflexes or only of objects susceptible to stimuli. Or, as Scarim (2021b, p. 10) quotes, Claude Bernard's observation in the nineteenth century: living organisms do not live among laws but between other living organisms and events, “the milieu of living being is also the work of the living being”.

On the other hand, but complementary, Geraldino (2010) demonstrates that the notion of milieu transits from a “between places” perspective to be understood as a vehicle or a means to something and, finally, milieu as an organism with its surroundings. Thus, from Newton to Darwin and Lamarck, the milieu is environment, a term related to something nuclear, representing something fluid or a surrounding in which an organism is immersed. However, still with Geraldino (2010, p. 63), “more than grasping the milieu as a fluid to which an organism would be immersed, [Auguste Comte] intends to use it as the total set of external circumstances or the occurrence of the necessary conditions necessary for the existence of any organism” The author concludes that the concept of milieu took on a naturalistic perspective (milieu of something) in the physics of the “between places” and with Comte, it became “milieu defined by itself”. He also writes that in Portuguese milieu and environment would be synonymous in meaning, as well it draws closer to the notion of ecology. Both the differences and complementarities that exist between these terms will be addressed later.

On the other hand, Canguilhem's assertion on the emergence of the conception that every action triggers a reaction, in some scientists, a standpoint that argues for a mechanistic explanation of the body's movements in a certain milieu, is subject to nuances. In this sense, Paulo Scarim (2021b, p. 32-48) builds on the emergence of vitalism and the milieu, relying upon several authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Humboldt, discussing the connection of science and philosophy in this period. The author

discerned that there was a transition between mechanism and vitalism through a body-Earth association or analogy and that it was present in several thinkers who could be seen at a first glance as mechanists. We understand that it was established that the system of life and mechanism would be associated with the play of internal and external forces of nature to bodies, in terms of geology, physics of the world and in Kosmos and would thus encompass an organic totality grounded on the articulation of physics and chemistry. The Earth as an organized “body”. These interpretations are acutely developed by Scarim in another essay on the milieu and its emergency in the science of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He demonstrated how geographical thought positioned itself in relation to the concept of milieu assuming it as a gatherer of relations between living beings amidst “locations, situations and connections through which physical, chemical and biological relations take place” (SCARIM, 2021a, p. 12).

Still bringing nuance to these claims of Canguilhem, Taylan (2018) will expand the horizon of the epistemology of knowledge, demonstrating that there is a practice in the eighteenth century of knowing nature based on a non-mechanistic biogeography key. It was produced by several naturalists, scientists, military and people who worked with colonial rule, by putting the Earth under scrutiny. This knowledge was produced and applied only by European countries in their colonial expansion, and it will be later systematized by geographers. From the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, travels and expeditions to the unknown interior of African and American continents, as well as Asian and Australian, will be important for science, economy and for the entire colonial rule. New-born modern geography will systematize this body of knowledge. However, at the same time that geographers had been producing information for imperialist and colonial projects, they also produce knowledge on the topic of soils, forest preservation, etc., leading to detailed and humanistic descriptions of colonized lands, such as those written by Humboldt. These accounts do not separate the history of nature from the history of man, describing in detail soils and populations, and reconnecting the living conditions to the conditions of the environment and their reciprocal influences, in a certain totality, with the causalities of interconnected phenomena, but which had not yet unveiled a notion or concept of milieu.²

Taylan (2018, p.134) states that with the experience of adapting plants and domesticating nature represented by “Jardin d'Acclimatation” or “botanical gardens” in imperialist metropolises or colonies in the eighteenth century, a rational experience of “*terrain*” (land) was processed and represented, which will translate the Foucauldian interpretation of rationality as “an instance of reflection within the practice” and which will contribute to the systematization of scientific knowledge.

²On all these points, see Taylan (2018, p. 131-139). On the issue that Humboldt and Ritter did not reach the concept of milieu, consult Geraldino (2010, p. 70-71). In the latter case, as Canguilhem said, the notion of milieu was already there, even if the concept had not yet emerged or been explained, even because Humboldt and Ritter are inseparable from the general ideas of their time.

The experiences of geographers, naturalists, explorers, scientists, colonial officials, etc., in producing reports, surveys and mappings of these worlds hitherto little known. It will contribute to the construction of mesology that sought to build up a systematization of the relations of living beings with the milieu. Thus, there would have been an applied and practical mesology before the formulation of the discourses of knowledge of Newton, Buffon, Lamarck, Cuvier, Comte and Humboldt in the early nineteenth century. Taylan (2018, p. 138) states that

at the confluence of the history of travel and expeditions, the history of the sciences, the history of the environment, and European expansion, these researches [plant adaptations to different kinds of soils and climates] seized the scientific practice as a pathway to control the environment, which made Europeans possessors of conquered environments. It also contributed to redefining the relations of colonized societies to their natural environment.

An undeniable bond between the imperial experience and the harvest of native plants and the collection of animals by naturalists. But this also provoked, Taylan (2018, p. 138) tells us, the emergence of a complex and multidimensional sensitivity towards the milieu, that simultaneously marks the idea of “a preservation of exotic environments – launched into a critique of deforestation practices – and the intensification of the will to control nature as a means of governing colonial territories”, and also capturing and integrating indigenous knowledge to better exploit these spaces. This heterogeneity in the rationality of discourses and practices, from the turn of the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, exists because it is fed, paradoxically, both by a project of social reform and political domination and a project of human science.

These bonds between society and nature, in addition to what has been substantiated in the field of knowledge by Canguilhem, Taylan, Geraldino, and Scarim, since the middle of the eighteenth century, will be worked on by the “possibilism” of the French school of geography, a denomination created by Lucien Febvre in the early twentieth century (BERDOULAY³, 2017 [2008]). This neo-Kantianism placed the contingencies of the society-nature relationship as a central point, that is, it predominantly indicated the reciprocity of causes and consequences in the relationship of life with the milieu (BERDOULAY, 2017, p. 217). This dominant group of French geographers, according to Berdoulay, defined the study of place, and modes of life, as a way of

³Berdoulay has been writing since 1981 and he was only translated and published in Brazil in 2017. This makes it difficult that a deep reading of the French school can be made in Brazil, which is still associated with a certain environmental determinism with the concepts of “possibilism”, “natural environment” and “genre of life”. This interpretation can be seen in Marcelo Lopes de Souza (2017, *Por uma geografia libertária*). On the other hand, it is true that in French authors of the late nineteenth century there is some vagueness and relative determinism, but never an absolute man-milieu relationship.

identifying relations from the variety of scales, connections, and intersections that depart from purely deterministic aspects of a milieu.

Yves Lacoste (1980), arguing against this reading, criticized the view of the genre of life of traditional French geography in its localist and regionalist because it would “stack” physical and social phenomena. He points out that this perspective marked the coincidences of these configurations to give meaning to a territory, and from this issue, geology ended up gaining prominence in explaining all sorts of phenomena that involve life and society. For Lacoste, this is an obstacle to multiscale approaches at different levels. They are unstable in terms of connecting phenomena to a variable geometry that occurs over territories and that rely on contingency and differential relations that grant political and geopolitical events their due place. Geraldino (2010, p. 80-87), based on Vidal and Maximilien Sorre's citations, stresses that the milieu and the genre of life constitute a double-edged problem, since “geographical causes affect men through social facts” that, in turn, are associated with a specific culture and leave their cumulative marks on territories and, thus, men project themselves into a genre of life.

In turn, Taylan (2018, p. 129-137) indicates that a certain perspective of geography took part in the tradition that highlights the association of life with the conditions of the milieu and the possibilities for the existence of life, demonstrating a mandatory connection of life and Earth, staying in line with Scarim (2021a, 2021b). This will be extrapolated to the very construction of the geopolitical strategy of “living space” of existence. As for all living beings, it would represent a necessary territory as a living space for certain people or nations. According to Geraldino (2010, p. 87), Max Sorre will tell us in the 1950s about three complexes: the climate complex (interfering with life), the living complex (subsistence and pathogenic complexes) and the social complex (cultural complex), the latter mediating the three others in the building of human ecology.

Berdoulay informs us though that among nineteenth- to early twentieth-century French geographers, at the date of the imperialist expansion of capitalism, there were those “optimistic with progress” of Western industrial “civilization”, who thought of a positive evolution carried out by a “creative destruction” process within the society-nature relationship (thinking of “positive” choices and feedbacks to be absorbed by the milieu). On the other hand, the “pessimists” who saw the changes brought about by “civilization” – in the case of the dominant Vidalian current never referring to capitalism, unlike Elisée Reclus's analysis – with a critique of what it resulted of the “destructive economy”, with the prominent and leading figure of Jean Brunhes in the latter group.

At the same time, a portion of geographers applied the notion of “environmental geography” or socio-environmental geography (SOUZA, 2019) to deal with society-nature relations, understanding it as a result of an intricate correlation between these two terms. Geraldino (2010, p. 117) will say that the milieu, environment, and ecology would be synonymous, defending a geographical milieu where one has a sense of place, with its coexistences and correlations, and that “the common use of a certain space is the foundation of everything”, as once said by Vidal.

However, the environment and the milieu also differentiated from the concept of ecology, born in the mid-19th century. Philippe Pelletier (2016, p. 107) states that ecology is strongly dualistic in the beginning, separating man from the milieu. He accents a difference between Reclus's conception of milieu, and Haeckel, the creator of the term ecology, which proposed “a return to nature” and “a natural social order”.

Pelletier (2016, p. 111-112), in turn, discusses the concept of *mesology*, which was first employed by Bertillon in 1860, and which according to Canguilhem, Taylan, and Fressoz (2013) has already reached this notion since the eighteenth century. Reclus will return to the notion of *mesology* in the book *The Earth and Its Inhabitants*, indicating that “man is himself a milieu for man”, and referring to a “milieu-space” and a “milieu-time” in the complexity of social and natural correlations and aspects from a dynamic notion of milieu. This formula is close to that used by Laval when referring to the importance of the notion of milieu in Foucault, because the milieu where man lives “is a normative space as such and human action, in transforming the milieu, transforms man himself. Man produces himself by producing his own milieu” (LAVAL, 2018, p. 81).

Pelletier (2016, p. 118) tells us that the notion of milieu in Paul Vidal de La Blache (a deterministic version, contrary to Berdoulay and Geraldino) is associated with Haeckel's notion of “*Umgebung*” or “*umgebende Aussenwelt*”, which would mean the “a milieu that involves species”, indicating this externality that Canguilhem spoke of, and not the *Umwelt* (“milieu”), which Vidal mistakenly attributed to Haeckel. Instead of speaking of the *milieu* in a strict sense, rather he is working with the French conception of *environnement*. For Pelletier, this “mistake” by Vidal would have been the transition of the notion through the English word *environment* that would have been chosen by Spencer to translate the French *milieu*. Vidal de La Blache writes, in his book *Principes de Géographie Humaine*: “this word of milieu or *environnement*, according to the English expression” (LA BLACHE, 1922, p. 7, *apud* PELLETIER, 2016, p. 199). According to Pelletier, for Paul Vidal de La Blache, *milieu* and *environnement* would be the same thing. The term *environnement*, familiar today, “conveys an envelope of exteriority” that does not have precisely the notion of *milieu*. It is the external conditions, according to Pelletier, stressed by Darwin. Reclus, unlike Vidal, would never have used the term *environnement* or ecology. He judged the term milieu more suited to reflect on the combination of man and nature, according to Pelletier (2016, p. 119), unveiling a “secret harmony” between the two.

The milieu, therefore, would still hold the meaning of a mechanic in some authors, although it is covered by the notion of organicity. This is because one is always thinking about the reciprocal effects of man and milieu. Thus, even if we do not demand a separation of the natural and the human, the meaning of the concept brings to a certain notion of “progress” and hierarchy between man and his milieu. Therefore, even when we speak of human ecology or a human geography, would we be invoking this prominent hierarchy, or a greater adaptive intelligence of man to the milieu in relation to all other living beings? And would this be translated into man's greater skill to adapt to different

situations? (According to the different quotations from classical geography listed by Geraldino on the debate involving the milieu).

Another critique of the notion of milieu comes from Milton Santos, as well as from other authors associating it with “environmentalism”. For the latter, there would be a lack of historical perspective that would be replaced by an ecological succession and biological bias (SANTOS *apud* Geraldino, 2010, p. 35-37). Milton Santos, for its part, defends the notion of milieu but values it as both a technical milieu and a technical-scientific-informational one in transforming the way of life of humanity itself, referring in the first place to the environmental crisis and predation (SANTOS, 2002, p. 233-259).

Paul Claval (1988) will write that Vidal de la Blache was a neo-Lamarckian, who defended an adaptation to the milieu as a genre of life, and not as an evolutionism grounded on the natural selection of the “fittest”. Based on a dialectical approach inherited from Ritter's positions, he would not have thus sustained a kind of poor determinism. But this does not nullify the prominence of man in these geographies.

These positions stressing the connections among determinism, possibilism and milieu, and between environment and ecology, carried out by the geographers mentioned above, failed to make it clear that all the criteria were grounded on discursive possibilities and scientific practices of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. They were also associated, in many ways and at a given time, with those perspectives linked to the emerging knowledge, practices and political ideas of colonial and imperial capitalism of that period.

Therefore, it seems to us, that it is not a question of trying to confirm which would be the most correct, but of observing how the field of geography dealt with those topics and how it integrated the concern with the milieu and environment. It matters little precise denomination, but the meaning of the concept on a given occasion. The milieu thus could be as deterministic as the environment. More than the determinism-possibilism dichotomy, what is important is to verify the geographers' position in relation to nature and the relationship of the human with non-human, or with other people. This approach is what should guide these readings, as well as the search to overcome some dichotomies that will be reinforced by the nascent sciences in the nineteenth century and that will be problematized in the field of geography to some extent.

Augustin Berque (2014), to whom we shall return later, when referring to the meaning of *mesology*, or discussing the concept of milieu the reciprocity of the man-nature relationship, is alluding Vidal de La Blache's “possibilist” geography, in terms of the possibilities of choice, different positions of man in relation to nature, but keeping some divergences in the interpretations.

It should also be noted that human geography or anthropogeography, takes the perspective of the man-nature relationship from the actions of man to adapt or transform the milieu, or even to draw attention to the disasters caused by the social interventions in the milieu. This seems to be evident in the ecology of man, in the demands of the human body, in its relations with the limits of the ecumene claimed by Maximilien Sorre when

referring to in the relationship of human societies with the environment (SORRE, 1943 [1951]). Max Sorre, according to Rodary (2002), will speak of a “geographical milieu” to call attention to the set of three interconnected complexes: the natural milieu (in the physical-chemical sense), the living milieu (the biosphere) and the human milieu (in the anthropogeographic sense). This author is originally associated, among other things, with “pathogenic complexes”. His work, which invoked the issue of emerging diseases related to climate phenomena in an early stage, seems to us very up-to-date due to his remarks on several internal and external aspects of men and societies from the point of view of the relationship of populations, climate, food, in short, man and the environment (SORRE, 2018 [1943, 1951])⁴. Sorre speaks of the “age of man” to refer to the history of the ecumene from the last glacial period to modernity and calls to a very current issue when he writes that: “The variation of past climates shows the amplitude of their changes can exceed the variability of all living species, including ours. Man can be banished from the vast regions of the globe” (SORRE, 1951 [1943], t. 1, p. 416). But he makes this statement not by placing man as a factor of climate change as today, but by recognizing that this change can put an end to our specie. He states, in this sense, that food resources would be susceptible to being reduced in face of a growing deterioration of climates and that: “Nothing assures us that in the future we will be able to ward off the multiform assault of parasitism with the same success [that has been had until then]” (1951, p. 1, p. 417). Thereby, he invokes the various possibilities of species extinction due to this evolution and indicates that: “The natural environment in which we live changes without cessation, and the fate of infectious diseases attests that they are resourceful in varying their modes of attack” (1951, t. 1, p. 417). With the accelerated destruction of land and sea habitats, any parallel that could be made with viruses and other parasites and bacteria today, which multiply and pass from animals to humans due to changes in the milieu, is not pure coincidence. Sorre predicts the decline of the human species but then emphasizes that this moment is far from the case chiefly due to the state of acknowledgment of “cosmic rhythms”.

Sorre (1951, p. 1, p. 419) also invokes, as a source of problems for the man-milieu relationship, the unbalanced relationship between population growth and food production. He demonstrated a Malthusian and also Darwinian influence, which is no longer current, but when he invokes this unbalance, it is to verify the decrease in soil fertility, the ravaging of vast areas due to abusive exploitation and the risks that this could lead to.

Following Max Sorre, Pierre George (1977, p. 647) will propose to make a “geography of disease” that stems from the transformation of the milieu because of full-scale pollution that, in turn, produces pathologies linked both to industry and

⁴See, in this regard, Max Sorre (2018). It is the translation of some parts of Max Sorre's book, *Les fondements de la géographie humaine*, which was carried out by Ana Letícia Espolador Leitão and José Carlos Braz Machado. See, in particular, the chapter “Géographie des régimes alimentaires”, which is the fifth chapter of “Livre II: Le milieu vivant et l'alimentation de l'homme”.

transformations of rural and urban milieus. Is precisely this what he called the “disease of civilization”, and what we call the disease of capitalism.

What seems interesting to us is that environmental risks and dangers are acknowledged since the eighteenth century and were enunciated by several authors in a more or less explicit way. Thus, we stand against the prevailing trend that there would have been no reflections or empirical observations on the destruction of nature in the eighteenth century. We thus question whether these systematic concerns would have emerged only in recent times in scientific practices, or if they would have arisen only with the idea of conservation and the creation of parks in the United States in the nineteenth century or in Brazil in the middle of the nineteenth century. In fact, the warning about the destruction of nature and the limits that should not be exceeded in its exploration and exploitation was launched in the eighteenth century, as Taylan has reminded us about the experiences with plants and soils, warnings made by Humboldt and other authors in very early stage. These observations will be even more explicit in the middle of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. As we have seen with Max Sorre, they are increasingly inscribed in a broader sense of the destruction of nature.

Emergence of the notion of destructive economy

In addition to the denomination of the society-nature relationship, the act of creating or reframing a concept strategically reveals one vision, a perspective on the reality that is extremely important and that creates senses and facts that allows grasping the situation from a different angle. A central issue that was highlighted by this debate, since the eighteenth century but markedly in the nineteenth century, was the forms of destructive exploitation of industrial, mining, deforestation, and bush fires. At the end of the nineteenth century, Ernest Friedrich created the concept of *Raubwirtschaft* (destructive economy) to name this situation, taken it as a phase or form of creative destruction that would trigger a phase of “progress” in society. For its part, the *Human Geography* of Jean Brunhes (1925[1910]) saw the concept as an interesting idea but criticized Friederich’s “exaggerated optimism with progress” (GARCIA; GRANGÉ, 2016, p. 164-173).

This destructive economy is associated by Brunhes with the principle of energy degradation and the notion of limit. The concept of *Raubwirtschaft*, for instance, “goes against the normal paradigm of man-milieu relations spread by a certain type of social Darwinism in the passage from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century” (GARCIA; GRANGÉ, 2016, p. 170). Thus, Brunhes opposed the “progress” that excluded environmental limits, indicating that the industrial revolution constituted a “new geological force”. Jean Brunhes, influenced by his brother and physicist Bernard Brunhes, reverses the notion of “progress”: this should be the ability of “civilization” to slow down the degradation of energy, that is, the irreversible process of “usury and deterioration of the world” (GARCIA; GRANGÉ, 2016, p. 170). Thus, the rational and scientific struggle against the destructive economy and entropy demands a new criterion of the progress of

“civilizations”, since the capability of nature to react and rebalance processes is hampered by the devastation.

Therefore, when the industry accelerates the devastation of nature, it is atrocious. Therefore, Bernard Brunhes said that “the worst barbarians are the civilized people!”, a position that was echoed by Jean Brunhes (1925 [1910], p. 445), also rescuing Elisée Reclus, and comparing the “savages” to the “civilized”, and concluding that the latter devastate nature in a rather dramatic manner:

It seems particularly odd that the devastation characterized by all its grave impacts goes, above all, hand-in-hand with civilization, while “savages” only know attenuated forms. The latter practice partial forms of destruction and spoliation, but never reach the devastation itself and they do not suffer from the misery that follows.

For Jean Brunhes, as previously noted, criticism is always to Western industrial civilization, the one that emerged alongside the concept of milieu, but never to capitalism, a word that does not incorporate the vocabulary of French geographers at the time.

But this notion of destructive economics was relatively forgotten in the following decades in the context of French geography, for various reasons. They avoided the path of differentiation and neglected the concept of destructive economics from other disciplines of human sciences. French geography, instead, has chosen that type of rationality that engendered the notion of “progress” through the development of technology in capitalism (GARCIA; GRANGÉ, 2016). Another point invoked to explain such negligence would have been the particular and minor place that Jean Brunhes occupied in French Geography. This researcher has not created a dominant school, unlike Vidalians, who dominated the attributions of chairs in universities and institutes, and research centers (BERDOULAY, 2017 [2008]). But with Max Sorre, a continuer of the French school for the best part of twentieth century, this concern with destruction, with the question of the man-milieu relationship resulting in devastation and the indication that variable areas could present recurrent dangers within the analysis of pathogenic complexes, was also present.

One of the aspects of the destructive economy propagated by the classical economy is that they assumed “natural factors as a free, infinite and unalterable good and disconnected from human activities; it is the accumulation of capital, an uncommon factor created by men, that limits growth” (PASSET, 1979, p. 41, *apud* GARCIA; GRANGÉ, 2016, p. 173). This dematerialization will be even more accentuated by the neoclassical current of the late nineteenth century.

We think that these facts, unveiled by such a classic author as the geographer Jean Brunhes, since the beginning of the twentieth century, are accentuated by the current neoliberal phase, which is distinct from neoclassical economics in several points. It is because neoliberals had theorized about since the interwar period on the conceptualization of the “governmentalization” of society by interest. This has to be taken into account in addition to a free-market perspective and that of competition, which provokes abstract and idealized models of market agents that cause a “pure and perfect” competition that leads

to “balance” in the search for the essential use value, where the State should not interfere. Contrary to what most people thought, they have often mobilized categories considered as conservative as a model for society, proposing a social order based on the nuclear family and “Western values”, which are those of the “freedom of enterprise” that represents the essence of this “civilization” (DARDOT *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, an internalization of the precepts of capitalism, which was increasingly associated with legal interventionism and the State's coercive power, provoked this competition and this “market freedom”. Over time, it revealed authoritarian features of neoliberalism that were scarcely theorized about until recently by the critics of capitalism. In this way, neoliberalism is not a radicalization of liberalism or classical political economy, let alone a radicalized resumption of neoclassical economics theorized at the end of the nineteenth century. The neoliberal economy has introduced the notion of danger and risk which all individual entrepreneurs must take into account. Neoliberalism indeed has to lead to unlimited competition and consumption, which has evident effects on the risks experienced by individuals in their own lives and for the milieu.⁵

This situation is reflected, therefore, in the equation neoliberalism-exploration-exploitation that is represented by the global North's economic appropriation of the South. The global South sees its collective wealth drained to North countries through this unequal system of exchanges, but with very different situations between and within the countries with their different social classes.

Returning to Jean Brunhes' work and his historical context in relation to the destructive economy, there is an absence of the political dimension or criticism of capitalism itself, which in such an author was a criticism of the generic “civilization” or “man”, and not of capitalism. On the contrary, in this regard, what can be inferred from Marx's work is that, from Liebig's readings on soil fertility in the mid-nineteenth century, it refers to a metabolic rupture of capitalism in the relationship of human production with natural conditions (FOSTER, 2011). All the same, in Marx's work, the need for “progress” as a necessary horizon in capitalism to achieve a classless society, is featured prominently in his work. However, even if this was cushioned by the writings of the old Marx, in *Das Kapital* he recognizes the contingency and the specific historical situations of diverse populations under capitalism, a system that inevitably leads to a metabolic transformation of the way of life.⁶

Another geographer who demonstrated to be sensitive and perceived the destruction of the milieu in the early twentieth century, criticizing the predation of American territory, was Carl Sauer. It followed the continuity of the critical line enunciated before, demonstrating since the 1920s an openness to anthropology from its notion of “cultural landscape” and its changing form, in the United States, which led to

⁵On all these points we can consult the seminal work of Foucault (2004b), *Naissance de la biopolitique*.

⁶On all these points see Zanotelli (2019, p-72-93) and Musto (2018).

the “over-exploitation of natural resources”. He also denounced the situation of Native Americans who were plundered, and their lands stolen (ZANINETTI; MATHEWSON, 2016; SAUER, 1998). By the way, in the geography practiced in Brazilian in its earlier period, the indigenous question was poorly addressed depicting them as semi-civilized peoples. A good account of this subject is the expeditions organized by IBGE and whose reports illustrated by photographs were published in the *Revista Brasileira de Geografia*, between 1939 and 1968 (Cf. SANTOS, 2022).

Closer to the present moment and following the analysis of Garcia and Grangé (2016, p. 174-177), another geographer who made a vigorous critique of destructive capitalism in the 1970s was William Bunge. He developed a geography of human survival as the fundamental limit of the destructive economy, and his criticism of the form of the human-machine-nature relationship led him to propose the overcoming of private property to transform the relationship between humans and the way that the continuity of the species unfolds. It is necessary, he argue, to change the situation of those exploited people that struggle to survive and are “domesticated” by power and capitalism, and essentially placing the political question of the transformation of capitalist relations as the only possibility to ensure the survival of the human species Hence,

[...] by coupling domestication and exploitation Bunge built an explanation that considers technique as a social and biological mediator of the relations of domination and production of territories. In this vein, he demonstrated that the capitalist configuration of territories represents a limit to survival, insofar as its first organizational principle is not its own biological reproduction [Brunge brought the example of children who struggle to survive in working-class neighborhoods of industrial Detroit]. (GARCIA; GRANGÉ, 2016, p. 178).

Bunge, according to Garcia and Grangé (2016), placed the relationship between humans at the heart of the analysis. He did not reduce the social analysis of the relationship with the milieu to a political economy of resources, operating a radical critique of technique and capitalism, geopolitics, and social and racial bias, but proposed a type of geography that contemplates both the social conditions of production of territories and milieu as for its disappearance. It reiterates the concept of Social Geography, previously forged by Elisée Reclus to substitute that of ecology.

Below, we briefly present a new perspective on the environment based on Augustin Berque.

A new perspective on the milieu

The emergence and changing condition of the concept of milieu and the destruction and economic dispossession indicate the need for an epistemological debate that seeks to understand, considering local and regional conditions and facts, the

relationship between society and nature from a perspective of the milieu and mesology, in a different angle that of Augustin Berque (2018).

Berque thinks, like Pelletier, that French *environnement*, the equivalent of English's environment, is the object of ecology as a form of turning the knowledge of nature into an object, also considering the milieu and mesology as a constructed relationship of humans with their surrounds, and for him, it is precisely this what creates a milieu. It is not the relationship of a subject with an object, but a perspective in which the subject assumes himself to be nature itself, eliminating the bipartition between subjects (society) and nature (object). The subject, in assuming himself as nature – in the senses, action, thought and language – would overcome the dualism of this relationship. When we found ourselves in a landscape, we constitute with nature just one body, starting a particular relationship of mediation. Thus, when there is a transformation and destruction of the milieu itself, in a kind of mimicry, the subjects see themselves as the destroyed milieu and identify themselves with their destruction.

Thus, according to Augustin Berque, the subject/object (environment) enters a ternary relationship with the predicate (the intensive and extensive qualities of phenomena) through a connection in which reality (the environment) is the being. The milieu or reality is not an object, it is an existential relationship for the being. The notion of milieu, for the author, presumes that science should not be a spectator of nature, and recognizes itself as part of man-nature reciprocity. A scientific method can no longer be included in its object. The use of this method transforms its object, and therefore reality is neither objective nor properly subjective, but trajectory (one among two). It is the “interpreter of a human or non-human relationship”, and due to mediation, things will exist concretely (BERQUE, 2018).

For Berque, the milieu is an ecological-technical-symbolic system in which we exist, in an inter-relationship that resembles Foucauldian's notion of dispositive. Humans has a variety of behaviors according to milieu, as well as diverse cultures inserted in the same milieu may also have different behaviors. Just like with the other life-forms. That is, there is no general rule to define these relationships, they are reciprocal assumptions of entities and milieus. Living beings live in a reality full of signs and meanings in concrete milieus, not in a crude abstraction of the environment. Mutation and the mechanics of natural selection are accidents and are insufficient to explain the meanings of life, which cannot be reduced to a pure relationship of stimuli-adaptation to a given milieu (UEXKÜLL *apud* BERQUE, 2018, p. 36). Thus, beings are changed in and through the environment in the same way that the environment is modified by societies and with societies. This is part of the contemporary inclination to reconsider the dominant rationalities erected as the *modus operandi* of the capitalist system.

However, we question the extent to which these theses are not yet included in a mechanism that perpetuates the notions of necessary “consciousness” and “revelation” of a “truth” to men. It does not reveal, although it throws into doubt scientific truths, the ways that government techniques and biopower function, and also does not grasp the struggles of concrete powers that produce another being or their fragmentation under interests. This

is true no matter any well-made theoretical demonstration of the double face of human/non-human relationship.⁷

In another vein but still very close of this conceptualization of milieu, is the indigenous thought studied by Viveiros de Castro in *Cannibal Metaphysics* (2015, p. 217-231 [2009]). The author claims an indigenous philosophy that thinks of non-humans on the same level as humans. It results in many perspectives that does not seek a transcendental or universal reference or a relationship of subject and object. It is therefore outside the aforementioned dualism. Viveiros de Castro, in relation to Indigenous “perspectivism”, tells us that the dialogue with this thought has to be made by thinking together with them to amplify the possibilities of reasoning about our world.

These readings of Viveiros de Castro, in our opinion close to those of Berque, hold a fertile dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari (1980), regarding the immanence of society-nature and the relationship of the human with the non-human. This can be seen when referring to the plurality of contexts and by leaving the traditional position of nature built by the philosophical tradition and the dominant sciences over the centuries. In addition, it is in line with the work of Lévi-Strauss and his mediation between indigenous meanings and myths and Western thought (ZANOTELLI, 2019).

Indigenous thought also allows us to renounce dominant rationalities and establish another life that sees nature from a perspective other than that one of industrial society. This body of thought exercises an epistemological and strategic war inspired by the idea of the creation of a rival, which is derived from the South American indigenous system of thought. It was interpreted later, by Pierre Clastres, as one of the ways to prevent the emergence of the State in these societies (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1972; ZANOTELLI, 2014). Thus, criticism of the dominant rationalities is found in indigenous thought itself, as well as the seeds of the indigenous struggle against the destruction of its milieu and culture.

As attested by historians, the Indigenous people are aware of the warning against the dangers of colonial and capitalist technical and technological innovations. These warnings are not recent. Fressoz (2013) writes that about two hundred years ago many warnings were made and environmental threats were first described, debated, contested, and there was already resistance, etc. Nevertheless, technical, and technological innovations that led to the expansion of capitalist relations in society expanded, and the destruction persisted.

Fressoz (2013) wonders why this devastation is still in progress. To summarize, he forged the concept of “modern disinhibition”, which explains how the omission was circumvented despite the explicit dangers and risks. Rational justifications were produced, he explains, and criticisms were anticipated, norms were produced, and technical and technological changes were accepted. Thus, the Environmental Impact Assessment and

⁷See, in this regard, the concept of ecophilosophy forged by Jean Calmon Modenesi (2021) from authors such as Deleuze and Guattari, and Heidegger, following up a reciprocal premise of the human and the non-human.

the Contemporary Environmental Impact Reports in Brazil and the famous environmental compensations, which often create dependencies on entire populations displaced by the productive and spoliative processes, are devices of "security", convincing and reparation that perpetuate and justify capitalist development. Fressoz writes that at accepting the risks, which would be limited by precaution and the production of norms, legal rules, and rhetorical structures, unlocked modern disinhibition concerning “development”. Expert committees were set up to justify innovations for the sake of the economy and nation, and the transformation of impacts on the milieu into financial instruments was already invoked and practiced since the outset of the nineteenth century (FREZZOZ, 2013, p. 3-4).

Concluding Remarks

The historical development of the concept of milieu and its avatar (environment), as well as ecology, had a heterogeneous set of meanings over time. They are transformed concomitant with modern forms of man's relationship with nature that predominantly engendered environmental devastation. Historically, the perception of environmental devastation goes back to the eighteenth century in Europe and in colonial territories. But it has always been circumvented by the processes of power relations and by scientific justifications in line with the economic and political settings. This ultimately had leading to processes of controlling through milieu, with biopolitical regulation of bodies operating in the same key, assuming bodies as the place of all experiments in relation to life, producing health and disease. Both, the concept of milieu and biopolitics, are coeval and were born in the same epistemological framework as the forms of industrial production and colonization of nature.

Geographical research on the milieu and on the destruction caused by capitalism since its very first stage is worthy of attention. Many of them foresaw these events, such as those of Reclus, Jean Brunhes and Max Sorre, with the latter bringing to the fore the pathogenic complexes to denounce the risks that already existed in the first half of the twentieth century, and which we today can keenly feel with the pandemic of Covid-19. The evidence that such pandemics are the result of the transformation of *habitats* of animal species, carrying viruses that can be transmitted to men, is clear-cut.

However, new conceptions of the milieu, such as those of Augustin Berque, are close to those of indigenous thought, bringing up a fertile field to establish a connection with other forms of thought and relations of powers and knowledge. This could open up possibilities of getting out of the impasse in which science and the dominant technique were engaged in neoliberal frameworks, but in particular in the case of global South countries, highlighting the accentuated extractivism of global commodity exchanges. Thus, despite “ecological” discourses and "lessons" that global North nations give to countries of the global South, the matter of their own demand for growing raw material is carefully avoided, a process that has catastrophic impacts on societies and nature. The myriad of examples of environmental disasters caused by industrial activities in Brazil testifies to this. On the other hand, the global North has not redeemed its "historical debts"

to the South, the majority being former colonies, for the social and environmental devastation that resulted from this colonization. There is also no clear compensation for the historical responsibility of industrial economies in the emission of greenhouse gases and climate change that can engender the diffusion of diverse pathogens. The countries of the South indeed are kept dependent through unequal exchanges that lead them to increase their debts with Northern multinational banks. Thus, these nations are forced to pay these financial debts with more environmental devastation, exporting raw materials.

We can also point to the diversity of global, national, regional and local settings in society's relationship with the milieu, in such diverse scales of interaction and with analyzes at various levels that would provide thought-provoking readings of this global debate. It is necessary to examine differences and complementarities in the stories that reach this global South, such as Yves Lacoste's (1980) methodological approach in the debate on third-world heterogeneity in the past. But this story and this geography will be left to another essay.

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