

THE CITY-REGION UNDER COEXISTENCE IN THE TERRITORY

A CIDADE-REGIÃO SOB AS COEXISTÊNCIAS DO TERRITÓRIO

LA CIUDAD-REGIÓN BAJO LAS COEXISTENCIAS DEL TERRITORIO

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Abstract

In the last decades, contemporary urbanization has provided great transformations in the Brazilian territory, such as the growth of the number and size of cities and the representative increase of urban roles in the territorial division of labor. These changes are shown by the new spatial logic of industrial companies, the recent strategies for locating commercial and service equipment, as well as the current configuration of the urban habitat at various geographic scales. This new configuration of the territory places the city-region as a spatial unit to be considered in order to understand the present system of cities in its multiple scales, allowing us to think this concept within the framework of the urban-regional studies of the territory. In studying the city-region, we must also consider the integrated logics by increasing the flows of people, goods, inputs and information in the territory, as a spatial configuration materialized by the recent urbanization process.

Keywords: City-region, urbanization, city, region.

Resumo

Nas últimas décadas, a urbanização contemporânea tem proporcionado grandes transformações no território brasileiro, como o crescimento do número e tamanho das cidades e o representativo aumento dos papéis urbanos na divisão territorial do trabalho. Essas mudanças são evidenciadas pela nova lógica espacial das empresas industriais, pelas recentes estratégias de localização dos equipamentos comerciais e de serviços, como também pela atual configuração do habitat urbano em diversas escalas geográficas. Essa nova configuração do território coloca a cidade-região como uma unidade espacial a ser considerada para entender o atual sistema de cidades em suas múltiplas escalas, nos permitindo-nos pensar esse conceito no âmbito dos estudos urbano-regionais do território. Ao estudarmos a cidade-região devemos considerar, ainda, as lógicas integradas através do aumento dos fluxos de pessoas, mercadorias, insumos e informação no território, como configuração espacial materializada pelo processo de urbanização recente.

Palavras-chave: Cidade-região, urbanização, cidade, região.

Resumen

En las últimas décadas, la urbanización contemporánea ha proporcionado grandes transformaciones en el territorio brasileño, como el crecimiento del número y tamaño de las ciudades y el representativo aumento de los papeles urbanos en la división territorial del trabajo. Estos cambios son evidenciados por la nueva lógica espacial de las empresas industriales, por las recientes estrategias de localización de los equipamientos comerciales y de servicios, así como por la actual configuración del hábitat urbano en diversas escalas geográficas. Esta nueva configuración del territorio coloca a la ciudad-región como una unidad espacial a ser considerada para entender el actual sistema de ciudades en sus múltiples escalas, permitiendo pensar ese concepto en el ámbito de los estudios urbano-regionales del territorio. Al estudiar la ciudad-región debemos considerar, aún, las lógicas integradas a través del aumento de los flujos de personas, mercancías, insumos e información en el territorio, como configuración espacial materializada por el proceso de urbanización reciente.

Palabras clave: Ciudad-región, urbanización, ciudad, región.

First words: elements to think about the city-region today

Since the second half of the last century, we have been experiencing a qualitative change in the general process of urbanization, which can be understood by the strong transformations that have taken place in different scales of the urban and the city, which is especially related to the information revolution, the tastes and the growth of consumption, directly influencing in the production of these spaces (SANTOS, 2005 [1993] and LIMONAD, 2008b).

The technical-scientific-informational environment (SANTOS, 2004 [1996], 2008 [1994]), coming from the recent modernization in space, has been diffused everywhere, even in the peripheries of the big cities, or even in the regions farthest from the agglomerations Metropolitan urban areas.

This way, we observed a dissolution of large productive investments for the territory, of public policies of State of diverse natures and, consequently, an increase of the urban population, not only in the more developed areas of the territory, where most of the great cities and centers Metropolitan meet. Thus, according to Santos (2005 [1993], 138), “We would, now, be leaving the stage of the mere urbanization of society, to enter into another phase, in which we face the urbanization of the territory.”

Regarding these new trends in Brazilian urbanization, geography studies, considered from the perspective of urban and regional dynamics, continue to favor areas where these changes occur more intensively in large cities, since such spaces are shown as latent reflection of these transformations arising from the globalization of the economy (HARVEY, 2000).

This is a process that makes possible the debate about the “deregionalization” of the world, due to the discourses of the relative homogenization promoted by the economic and cultural commodification, since, according to Haesbaert (2010), what is seen is the accentuation of regional movements Localized, by the very fact that globalization feeds on differentiation¹.

In Brazilian urban network², we tried to understand this new process of urbanization that is arriving in regions and cities, that's to say, to apprehend the cities in the regions, among different scales of analysis that, according to Limonad (2008b), are also a reflection of a process intrinsically linked to the structuring of the territory and which mainly involve the spatial distribution of the population and the economic activities of various sectors.

On this theme, we followed the debate on regional inequalities, especially in areas of lower urban and regional dynamics, which tend to remain on the margins of the main economic flows and present lower levels of incomes and well-being of the population, commonly measured by the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) / Inhabitant.

This is illustrated by the various regional development policies that have resurfaced everywhere to mitigate the negative effects of globalization, such as those implemented by the Ministry of National Integration (MIN, 2005), based on the National Regional Development Plan (PNDR), which proposes strategies to alleviate inequalities within the Brazilian microregions.

Based on these regional development policies carried out in the last decades, new heterogeneities and inequalities accentuated by contemporary urbanization, marked by the activation of the territory by various productive forces, can be seen through new technologies, tools, machines and a whole infrastructure provided by man to extract capital (LIMONAD, 2008b).

Thus, our concern about the current moment of Brazilian urbanization, a process that is increasingly integrating the territory from its structuring, providing the appearance of urban phenomena, such as peri-urbanisation, centralization and urban segregation, depicts the city-region as a characteristic space unit that represents the recent changes seen in Brazilian territory, that can extrapolate the metropolitan context, due to the increasing intensity of the spatial mobility of the population and the urban dispersion (OJIMA; MARANDOLA JR., 2012).

For some scholars (KLINK, 2001; SCOTT et al., 2001b; LENCIONI, 2006), a city-region would be a polarized space unit commanded by a city that exerts influence over a large area made up of several smaller cities. A city-region is defined by the urbanization process, and its main elements are integrated by increasing the flow of people, goods, inputs and information centripetally in the territory (SANTOS, 2005 [1993]).

Cities and their respective regions are a feature of this new Brazilian urbanization, especially with regard to the spatial forms of urban occupation in metropolitan areas or not. The reading of these regions can assume some possibilities of format in the urban and regional scope (MOURA, 2009), promoted, particularly, by the restructuring of the territory, in which the centers assume a regional concentration character,

in a privileged geographic situation in relation to the great Urban centers of the country. Thus, the interlocution with some authors that deal with the phenomenon of the city-region shows us the definition of the theoretical-methodological contributions that guide this discussion that follows.

Some studies about the city-region

The studies that refer to the discussion of the concept of city-region are associated with the stages of urbanization until we reach the era of globalization, which has resulted in the intensification and the reduction of the means of transport and communication located not only in the richest countries but also in the least developed countries (LENCIONI, 2006; HARVEY, 2009 [2004]).

This way of thinking comes in the face of the emergence of contemporary processes that imprint the new arrangements and dynamics visualized in various parts of the territory, which are identified by most of the scholars who treat these spaces in the economic view (Scott et al., 2001b), as being a feature of the city-region formation process.

The importance of each one of the studies carried out on this theme makes it possible to requalify the spatial scale used in the urban-regional studies, however, always taking care of the dimension and the space-time reality that each one proposed to develop.

Regarding the origin of city-region terminology, we must not forget the role of the Scottish philosopher Patrick Geddes, who devoted himself to the study of cities at this stage of urbanization (late 19th century and early 1910), saying that it was necessary to see them as an extension of the inhabitant and reintegrate the man into the urban movement³.

Geddes (1915, 1994)⁴ was one of the first to use the term city-region in his book *Cities in Evolution* (SARMENTO, 2014), originally published in the early twentieth century when he studied London and its role in the constitution of a large region composed of villages, small towns and industrial towns, giving rise to what he initially called the great cities-region. Sarmiento (2004, p. 13, emphasis added) states that in Geddes's view, "[...] the city-region has a clear urban center, which develops radially in its *hinterland*."

The discussions carried out by Geddes (1915), although they took place more than a century ago, served as the basis for the first urban-

regional studies in the context of the new phase of urbanization known by human being during the last century (SARMENTO, 2014)

John B. Parr, a researcher at the University of Glasgow (Scotland), is one of the followers of this reading and has focused on changes in urbanization and the role of city-regions in the British context as well (PARR, 2005). In some of his research (Ibid.), He dedicated himself to investigate the imprecision in the identification of these spaces in the current context of urbanization, in the face of the so-called globalization and the “network society” that promoted new changes in the organization of cities (CASTELLS, 1997).

At first, taking some classical concepts of geography, such as that of the region, Parr (2005) states that there is confusion in the understanding of the homogeneous region, the nodal region and the political region⁵, when we study the city in the current phase of urbanization. To do so, we must distinguish two forms of region: the city-region and the polycentric urban region.

Parr (2005) described the importance of the city-region as a fundamental feature of spatial organization in the territorial dimension of a country. According to the author, there has been a growth in the interest of the study of these spaces, but focused on the zonal structures and spatial interactions (CORRÊA, 2006 [1997]) related to commercial activities, population mobility (mainly pendular) and capitals that present themselves as indispensable variables for the conformation of the city-region.

In the journal *Urban Studies*⁶, we find the research of Coombes (2014) dealing with the London case, and the difficult task of defining the limits of the city-region, based on the political-administrative issues in that territory. This is a challenge in which cities that are in an area of currency with other states, which makes difficult the adoption of a regionalization closer to the territorial dimension of its city-region. Coombes (2014) also discusses the importance of rural occupations in reading the city-region, since they help to define the organization of cities and the territorial dimension of the city-region.

Thematic areas, specific to each part of the territory, can be used as a reference in the size of the city-region. In the research of Kanai (2014, 2387), the formation of the city-region of Manaus is treated from the space guided by the State under the ecological enterprise. The preservation

areas and the layout of a dendritic urban network are commanded by a metropolis located in the middle of Brazilian Amazon.

In this way, we start from the premise of studying the urban-regional context in which the primeval city uses other fixed ones in the structuring of the urban network (SPOSITO, 2011; SANTOS, 2004 [1996]).

With reading about city-region, we can say that his discussion is confused with the experiences of Californian school geographers Allen Scott, John Agnew, Michael Storper, and Edward W. Soja who have for some time studied globalization in the political perspective (SCOTT et al., 2001b), which is the most densely populated and technologically most developed region in the United States (SCOTT et al., 2001b). For these scholars, the city-region emerges as a socio-spatial unit that examines the increasingly dynamic socio-economic flows in the territory (SCOTT et al., 2001b).

Soy (1993) indicates that the city-region becomes the most complete urban form of the urbanization process in the contemporary world. Protecting the realities of each territory, these spaces present ruptures and continuities with the process of formation of the cities and regions themselves and, in order to capture their meaning, we need to better understand the nature of this phenomenon.

In a more recent reflection, Soja (2013, p.150) points out that:

The dominant urban literature has not yet explicitly recognized this regional model of urbanization, but there are signs that the transformation from metropolitan to regional urbanization and the use of associated terms such as regional cities and cities will grow in importance for geographic analysis over the next decade.

When we raise the production on the subject in Brazilian context, we have as one of the main names the Professor Sandra Lencioni (Geography / University of Sao Paulo). In some studies (LENCIONI, 2004, 2006), the author discusses local, regional and global relations from the perspective of contemporary geographic networks, analyzing their dynamics related to the restructuring of the territory.

Having as main object of study the metropolis of São Paulo, Lencioni (2004) considers the role of geographic networks as fundamentally important for the understanding of the city-region, regarding the direct and indirect relation of the generation of capital. In much of her study, the author analyzes the processes of production of the urban-regional space from the productive restructuring linked to industry.

Lencioni (2006) argues that globalization and the recent economic adjustments of the productive forces have been driving changes in the geographic networks, especially in the urban ones, which has provided a multiplicity and spreading of the activities in the territory. The networks express “[...] the circulation relations of capital and it is in this expression that we show one of the dimensions of space: space as a medium, that is, space as mediation necessary for the reproduction of capital on a globalized scale” (LENCIONI, 2006, p.66). Although the author is referring to production in a global space, at an advanced stage of urbanization, her argument encompasses the whole line that points to the defining networks of this production and that takes place in the relation between the global form of organizing the network of flows that stimulates this process.

In Ribeiro (2004), we saw the importance of investing in the theoretical and conceptual tasks to account for the increasingly dynamic processes in the territory, as well as the diffuse⁷ urbanization that requires us to build, from theoretical-empirical experiences, notions of city-region, one of the important phenomena that “[...] integrate contemporary rationality and reflexivity, which update technical and social relations of production” (RIBEIRO, 2004, p. 208)

In Brazilian literature, one of the best-known studies on the city-region theme was carried out by professor and economist Jeroen Johannes Klin, who approached the city-region as a space that assumes new attributions in the scope of economic development as a function of the process itself of productive restructuring that was accentuated at the end of the last century, taking as a case study the Greater ABC Paulista region (Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo and São Caetano do Sul). In his study, Klink (2001) leads the central discussion focused on the interpretation of the role of the cities-region in the current context of globalization, with the new regionalism as the path of discussion.

In his work, the concept of city-region is worked under the influence of productive restructuring of the economy; it is the light of the new regionalism versus traditional regionalism, which suggests challenges for the regional Governance system against the old fragilities of the economic fabric and Region of Greater ABC Paulista (KLINK, 2001).

Among the academic studies, in post-graduate studies in the country, we point out the dissertation thesis of Magalhães (2008), which carries out a theoretical reflection on the city-region, listing the forms of the city and its region from the new productive arrangements in the

territory; The formation of the city-region in Brazil and the production of space in the city-region, characterized by extensive urbanization (MONTE-MÓR, 1994) in three main Brazilian metropolitan-industrial areas: São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte. In order to support their discussion, Magalhães (2008) uses the post-metropolis and exopolis (SOJA, 2000) concepts to understand the shape of the city-region, and reaffirms that the growth of the metropolis affects directly or indirectly several regions of the territory, which shows us the emergence of this process from an urbanization without frontiers, without respecting the official institutions of the territory.

The research of Arrais (2008) presupposes the study of the relations between the regional spaces and the city, starting from the analysis of the elements that compose contemporary urbanization and, as a consequence, the integration of cities and regions, showing how a single spatial unit, justifying its understanding from the city-region concept (SCOTT, et al., 2001b). In order to do so, Arrais (2007) seeks to study the role of Goiânia (GO) and its region of influence in this process of regional integration, which shows beyond the official political-administrative limits of the federative units. In the case of the capital city described by Arrais (2007), we have to consider the proximity and relationship with the political-administrative entity of the federal district, Brasília, which gained a projection in the national urban network never seen (IBGE, 2008).

Thus, as far as we know, the urban phenomena of contiguity and dispersion present in the city-region and their reading should consider their relationship with other spaces inserted in the urban network, which allow the view of regional integration in several scales (SCOTT et al. Al., 2001b).

Moura (2009), when studies some works by the aforementioned authors, states that the regional cities can encompass “[...] a relative diversity of configurations, ranging from a large metropolis, a large productive space, to a network of small and medium-sized cities “(SCOTT et al., 2001b, apud MOURA, 2009, p.59).

In the Geography Brazilian Journal⁸, it is possible to list some studies in its 222 issues published in almost 70 years of history, based on themes related to the urban-regional geography, but also on the internal organization of the city; urbanization; Public policies and planning, among others.

This survey shows us a prioritization in the urban regional studies in the journal, especially since the 1970s, when the great regional studies of the IBGE (REGICs, for example) began to be realized. However, it is necessary to highlight the growth of the theoretical-methodological propositions and the articles that deal with the internal study of the cities in the journal.

Taking the approach of the city-region and the area of influence in the magazine, we can mention the following first studies: the city of Jequié (BA) and its influence from the cocoa producing area in 1956, published by Santos (1956)⁹ and only in the 1960s, with the work of Corrêa (1965), on the area of influence of the city of Aracajú (SE).

From this survey, in which we have presented some productions that propose or use the construction of the concept of city-region, we have observed that the interest on the subject is still little spread in the country. However, we understand that studying the relations between the regional spaces and the city has demanded, in recent years, the search for new concepts and other scales of analysis, and the city-region seems to be a response to this new process of territorial reorganization, when one observes the new meanings that urbanization has been following in Brazil in the last decades (MOURA, 2009; OJIMA and MARANDOLA JR., 2012).

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that we understand the current process of urbanization with the formation of several urban-regional units in the territory, the city-region being one of them, irrigated by flows and interconnections with cities of different sizes (MOURA, 2009).

The city-region as a new expression of cities and / or regions

What phenomenon would that be? The city-region, as Lencioni (2006) points out, is a new expression of globalization in the spatial organization of cities and regions, a new format and / or a “condition, medium and fundamental product for social reproduction of the present day” (LENCIONI, 2006, p. 71)

For most scholars, the city-region would be a polarized space unit commanded by a large city (commonly related to a metropolis) that exerts influence over a particular area. This is defined as the process of urbanization of its surroundings, and its logic is integrated by increasing the flow of people, goods, inputs and / or information centripetally in a given region.

We understand that these characteristics are not only present at the top of the Brazilian urban network, but also in the way in which some medium and small cities have been organizing in the last decades in the territory (SPOSITO, 2007). For example, when Ojima and Marandola Jr. (2012, p.104) state that:

Everyday horizontal displacements between small cities or between medium and small cities, with a plurality of orientations and destinations presents new dynamics in the non-metropolitan urban that are not yet well delineated, and which do not necessarily pass through central metropolitan spaces.

The socio-spatial boundary of these cities-region, which is not easy to identify (LENCIONI, 2006), can be measured by the presence of other centers of the same type. In other words, its definition is linked to its area of influence, as well as its relation with other regions. The very relationship with the regional or national metropolis can cancel the formation of a city-region¹⁰.

As Parr (2005) states, the concept of city-region has been used in several spatial scales, even to identify territories formed by minority groups or even ghettos present in neighborhoods of a city, but its application is related more commonly to The spatial interactions of the city.

The city-region, as Magalhães (2008) states, presents itself as a geographic entity in full exploration, which makes it an increasingly present object in studies that seek to understand the diverse socio-spatial processes that make up the relationship between the city and the region.

A great exercise that we can use to better illustrate the characteristics of a city-region is provided by Lencioni (2006), when he develops the idea that spaces become metropolis, but not all spaces are filled by the metropolis. In each of these, there are nuances and, for this reading to be valid, a great territorial extension is necessary.

What we have perceived is that the nucleus of the city-region emerges as a gateway to economic activities present in the territory, as a regional development corridor, where flows of capital, goods, people and information go by encouraged by the density of networks and associated with a better diffusion of means of transportation and communication of the territory. (SCOTT et al., 2001b; LENCIONI, 2006). Thus, it is important to highlight the confusion found in some authors regarding the synonymy used between global cities and city-regions (MOURA, 2009).

The city-region, sometimes discussed by Scott et. al. (2001b), it is pointed out as a great obstacle to urban and regional planning, since there is a difficulty in reality, in the institutional recognition of this space unit with an independent administrative character, which implies the execution of joint plans, as in Brazil.

According to Scott et al. (2001b), these spaces are sources of deep socio-spatial inequalities distributed in increasingly fragmented and segmented spaces. Scott et. al. (2001a) also report that, considering the economic, political and territorial aspects, the regional cities function increasingly as spatial nodes essential in the global economy and, consequently, in the organization of cities. It is possible to understand that “With these increasing changes, it has become increasingly evident that the city, in the strict sense, is a unit of local social organization less appropriate or viable than the city-region or the regional network of cities” (SCOTT et al., 2001a, p.11).

Conclusions: the employment of the city-region

The concept of city-region can be identified in some geographic scales of space, as reported by Simões and Amaral (2011, 566), when they emphasize the increase of intraregional flow and the deceleration of the demographic migration to the great urban centers, caused, partly because of the availability of services and the availability of access to consumer goods that are closer to the population living in the smaller cities, which is largely fueled by the diffusion of the income transfer policies registered in the last decades in Brazil (JARDIM, 2011). In addition, even with their departure from the large metropolitan regions, these regional cities have connections with these larger centers, whether by air, rainfall or road connections, which are more common for this city level.

We should look at a city considering its region and all the problems that involve its planning. As we have already said, in order to have a city-region, we must pay attention to the administrative limits of the federation units that often inhibit their action, especially in view of the socioeconomic dynamics of this current moment of globalization (ARRAIS, 2008).

We should not list regions and cities in an unlinked form, but rather being associated as a single organism, considering the cities in

the regions. In addition, we know that the spatial mobility promoted by capital, with the multilocation of productive units, business and distance investments, has been promoting great changes, through this movement of internalization of economic activity and the creation of new urban centralities (SIMÕES and AMARAL, 2011), intensifying the circulation of goods, services and manpower in these regions.

We understand that this spatial unit presents in areas of varied demographic configuration that often do not respect the administrative limits of the territory, and that these do not coincide with the economic and cultural identity of the place, however, they are more inserted in the global processes of change Socioeconomic level. In addition, we cannot forget that many cities and their regions were formed from geographical accidents, thus inducing their location and development in the territory (MUMFORD, 1968).

We need to think of the various forms of spatial mobility, whether definitive, seasonal, commuting, among others, in their varied scales: the movement of goods between factories and stores, the movement of consumers to shopping centers, the search for specialized urban services, the going and coming from school and the going and coming from work and back home, information destined to mass consumption, often the responsibility of the growing advertising and advertising sector, we are all involved in this spatial logic that is embedded in the existence and social reproduction of the current stage of capitalism (JARDIM, 2011).

In order to identify the boundaries that separate the city-region on this scale, it is important to stress that, unlike what is seen in some studies, in which the metropolis is marked internally by the complex network of centralities, increasingly representative within the region-cities denote an intimate connection with their area of influence, still susceptible to hierarchical relationships in the network (SIMÕES and AMARAL, 2011). However, it is known that historically the concept of city-region in Brazil has been used to understand the metropolitan arrangements, associated with the phenomenon of the disturbance, a reflection of the urbanization of the territory from the twentieth century.

Accordingly, we mean that the political-administrative boundaries of official territory entities do not define exactly the size of the city-region, but may correspond or point to such boundaries. In addition, although we consider the social production of urban space in the identification of the

boundaries of the city-region, in our view, the polarization relations and definition of its hinterland seem to be still the best way to identify these spaces located in non-metropolitan areas of the territory.

The production of the space of the city-region is the result of the process of extension of the urbanization that we have observed today, since besides the economic variables, fundamental to understand the region, the discussion also demands a social, political and cultural survey.

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Notes

- 1 To exemplify this phenomenon, it is enough to look at the recent movements of refugee migrants from Syria and North Africa towards some European countries.
- 2 In an urban system that comprises a set of urban networks structured and articulated in geographic scales of different dimensions (SPOSITO, 2011).
- 3 About Patrick Geddes, see the Discursive City Encyclopedia at: <http://www.labeurb.unicamp.br/encidi/index.php?r=verbete/view&id=40>
- 4 The original extracted from the book published in 1915 is *Cities in Evolution: an introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics*. An importante book by Geddes is *City Development: A Study of Parks, Gardens, and Culture Institutes; a Report to the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust*. available in electronic address: <https://archive.org/>
- 5 In summary, for Bezzi (2004), the political region would be that planned, with its defined limits for the performance of official institutions.
- 6 The texts from the journal *Urban Studies* can be accessed at following address: <http://usj.sagepub.com>
- 7 On the occasion, scholars have been giving some denominations to explain this current phenomenon of urbanization: as extensive urbanization, explained by Monte-Mór (1994) as a phenomenon of extension of the metropolitan urban fabric; Diffuse urbanization, discussed by Sposito (2007) in the reading of non-metropolitan urban spaces. The most common expression found in the Brazilian literature on this process is dispersed urbanization, in Reis Filho (2006) and Limonad (2008a, 2008b), although this is more related to the metropolis space.
- 8 IBGE makes available all the numbers of the Brazilian Geography Magazine (1939-2006) on the Internet for download, at the electronic address: <http://www.biblioteca.ibge.gov.br>
- 9 This paper was published in an expanded form in a book titled **City as a regional center: definitions and methods of evaluation of centrality** (SANTOS, 1959).
- 10 We already can see that some important institutions, such as the United Nations, have been considering data on city sizes based on this spatial unit (cities-region) rather than metropolitan areas (SOJA, 2013).

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