

# Economic Geography and development: different approaches in graduation courses syllabi in Brazil

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# Economic Geography and development: different approaches in graduation courses syllabi in Brazil

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## Abstract

In Geography, one of the most dedicated disciplines to debating development is Economic Geography. This paper aims to present and discuss different approaches to development found in Economic Geography course syllabi in Geography undergraduate programs offered by Brazilian public institutions. After consulting the academic curriculum of undergraduate programs in Geography and analyzing Economic Geography course syllabi, the produced database underwent statistical, graphic, and cartographic treatment. Results allowed us to identify the main authors, works and approaches to development in Economic Geography course syllabi—such as uneven development, regional development and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Economic Geography. Development. Education.

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## Geografia Econômica e desenvolvimento: diferentes abordagens nos programas de cursos de graduação no Brasil

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## Resumo

Na ciência geográfica, a Geografia Econômica é uma das disciplinas que mais se dedica ao debate sobre desenvolvimento. Este artigo tem o objetivo de apresentar e discutir diferentes abordagens de desenvolvimento nos programas da disciplina Geografia Econômica no Brasil, em cursos presenciais de graduação em Geografia oferecidos por instituições públicas. Nesta pesquisa, consultaram-se matrizes curriculares de cursos de graduação em Geografia e se analisaram programas de Geografia Econômica; com a informação obtida, se organizou um banco de dados que sofreu tratamento estatístico, gráfico e cartográfico. Os resultados permitiram identificar os principais autores, obras e as abordagens de desenvolvimento predominantes nos programas de

Geografia Econômica – como desenvolvimento desigual, desenvolvimento regional e desenvolvimento sustentável.

**Palavras-chave:** Geografia Econômica. Desenvolvimento. Ensino.

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## Geografía Económica y desarrollo: diferentes enfoques en los programas de cursos de grado en Brasil

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### Resumen

En ciencia geográfica, la Geografía Económica es una de las asignaturas más dedicadas al debate sobre el desarrollo. El propósito de este artículo es presentar y discutir diferentes enfoques de desarrollo contemplados en los programas de la disciplina Geografía Económica en Brasil, en cursos de grado en Geografía ofrecidos por instituciones públicas. Para realizar esta investigación, se consultarán matrices curriculares de cursos de grado en Geografía y se analizaron programas de Geografía Económica; elaboramos un banco de datos con la información obtenida y posterior tratamiento estadístico, gráfico y cartográfico. Los resultados permitieron identificar los principales autores, obras y los enfoques de desarrollo predominantes en los programas de Geografía Económica – como el desarrollo desigual, el desarrollo regional y el desarrollo sostenible.

**Palabras clave:** Geografía Económica. Desarrollo. Enseñanza.

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### Introduction

Debates around development are long standing in the Humanities. In Geography, its importance is underlined by the profusion of concepts that cross its history and that of Economic Geography, a foundational discipline of the program, which has been discussing development under different theoretical-methodological approaches and epistemological frameworks.

This article aims to present and discuss different development approaches contemplated in Economic Geography course syllabi, in in-person undergraduate programs in Geography offered by Brazilian public institutions. Such an analysis can help us understand

how Geography addresses the topic of development considering its most used concepts, authors, and works, thus subsidizing reflections and the improvement of the discipline.

For this purpose, we used: (1) bibliographic review—mainly books and articles on Economic Geography and development concepts, (2) secondary data on undergraduate programs in Geography in Brazil, available on the Ministry of Education’s e-MEC platform,<sup>1</sup> (3) documents containing the academic curriculum of Geography undergraduate programs offered by public higher education institutions (HEIs), accessed on these institutions’ website, and (4) Economic Geography course syllabi.<sup>2</sup> Gathered on a database, these data underwent statistical, graphic and cartographic treatment.

This article consists of six sections. First, we present the expansion of undergraduate programs in Geography in Brazil, identifying the offer of Economic Geography. Next, we discuss aspects of this disciplinary subfield’s conformation. Subsequently, we highlight the authors and works cited in the Economic Geography course syllabi, as well as mentions of the term development. Finally, we revisit different approaches to development prevalent in Economic Geography.

## Expansion of Geography undergraduate courses in Brazil

At the beginning of the research, we surveyed the offer of undergraduate programs—bachelor’s and teaching license—in Geography, using as main source the set of public data available on the Ministry of Education’s e-MEC portal (Cadastro Nacional..., [n.d.]). Our search strategy consisted of entering GEOGRAPHY on the COURSE field, not discriminating between in-person and distance programs in this first survey. From the Excel database, we applied filters to the categories presented (modality, administrative category, course load, and municipality) generating a smaller secondary database, containing only in-person programs from public institutions.

We then accessed the website of each institution to retrieve the program’s academic curriculum and verify the offer Economic Geography. This information was added to the database in a new column, as follows: YES – offers the discipline, NO – does not offer the discipline, and OTHER – offers the discipline under a different name.

We restricted our scope to public institutions they are large in number and more easily present the curricular information on their portals. Between 2020 and 2021, we identified 169 undergraduate programs in Geography offered by public institutions in Brazil (Figure 1), revealing the robustness of this higher education system.<sup>3</sup> They are both bachelor’s and teacher license programs, in many cases of mixed and/or continuing education, producing a professional who often fits into what Rocha (1996) called geographer-educator. Of this

1 We thank Gustavo Teramatsu, a PhD student in Geography at IG-Unicamp, for his help in accessing the e-MEC platform data.

2 We thank the Economic Geography professors and course coordinators for making available the course syllabi analyzed in this research.

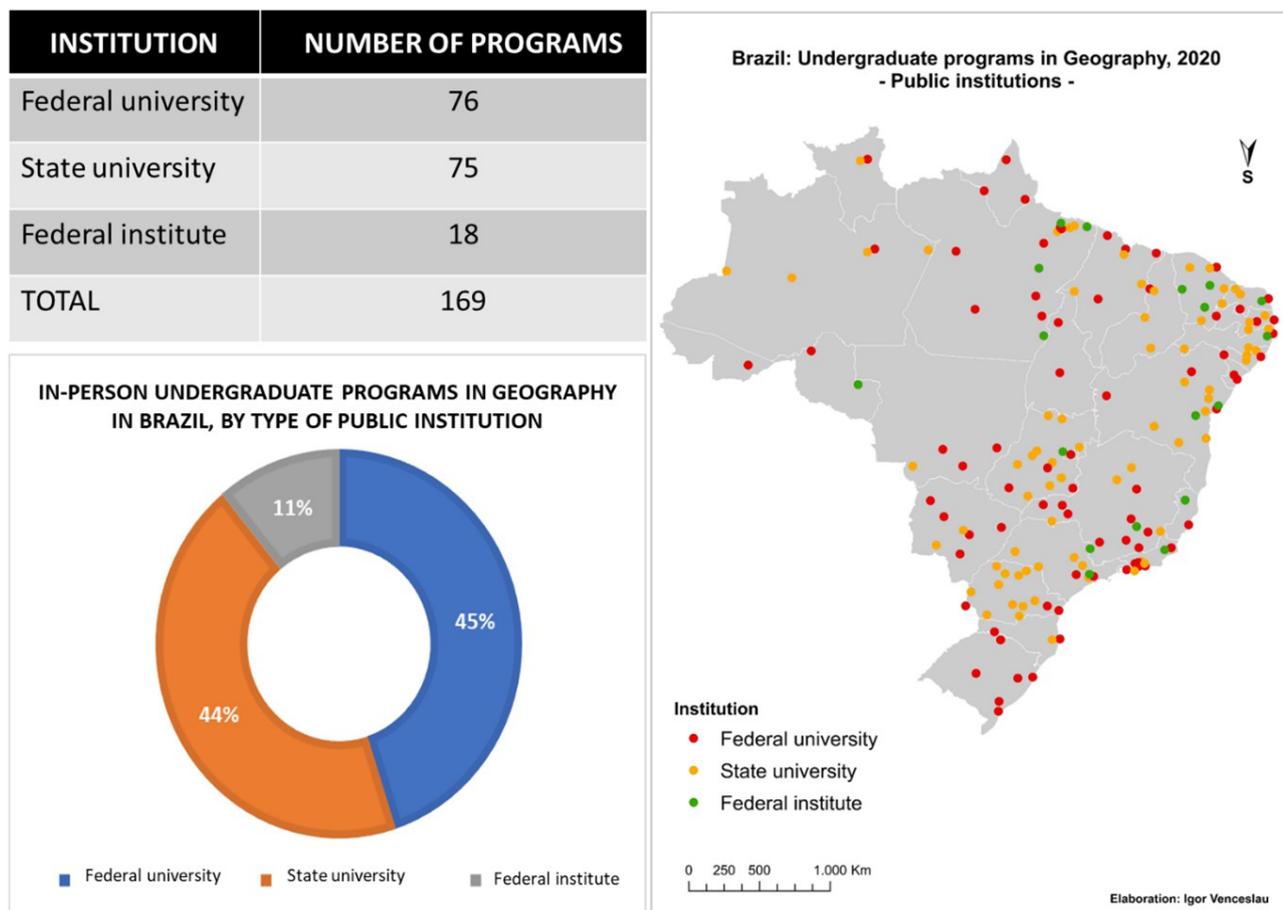
3 Between 2003 and 2008, there were more than 300 programs. For a detailed analysis, see Fiori (2012).

total, federal universities account for 76 programs (45%) and state universities for 75 (more than 44%).

There remaining 18 programs (11%) are offered by federal institutes. More recent than universities, the offer of undergraduate courses by the institutes is linked to the expansion of higher education that has marked the last two decades, in conjunction with the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (Reuni), which from 2007 proposed the creation of new courses in regions previously unserved, and other public federal policies (Fiori, 2012; Teramatsu; Straforini, 2022).

This phenomenon must be analyzed in the reciprocal relation between education and territory, for “the unequal diffusion—both quantitatively and qualitatively—of educational institutions has much to do with this game of influences between territory and educational phenomenon” (Santos; Silveira, 2000, p. 57). Analyzing the geographical distribution of this expansion, we note that Geography programs are offered by public institutions in all states and the Federal District, but in contrasting numbers: from states with only one program to Minas Gerais, with programs in 15 different cities.

**Figure 1 – Brazil: in-person undergraduate courses in Geography by type of public institution, 2020**



Source: Own elaboration based on e-MEC database (Cadastro Nacional..., [n.d.]).

Geography programs are present in all Brazilian regions. The three types of public institutions present some spatial complementarity, with a few overlapping cases, with state universities and federal institutes, or advanced campuses of federal universities outside the capital cities. This reveals a joint effort between the states and the Union to take public higher education to the countryside.

Such capillarity of Geography programs results from a historical process marked by periods of university expansion (Fiori, 2012). Until 1959, only the coastal states and Minas Gerais offered these programs, with a higher concentration in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In 1989, already under the democratic regime and the new Federal Constitution, some states still lacked undergraduate programs in Geography. According to Fiori (2012), only between 1996 and 2010 did Geography programs experienced a greater expansion, including the countryside, reaching all units of the federation in 2008. This was due to the aforementioned public policies of this period.

In this process the demographic variable assumes a key role, often accompanying the most populous regions, with campuses opening in the main medium-sized cities, especially regional centers such as Santarém (PA), Barreiras (BA), Uberaba (MG) and Passo Fundo (RS). Although restricted to Geography programs, this map differs from Santos and Silveira's (2011 [2001]) diagnosis on the geographical distribution of public higher education institutions in 1996, when they were markedly concentrated in Brazil's coastal strip.

Such trend could only be changed by “a very explicit political project from the federal government to create expanded conditions for local and regional development, as well as countryside development through the diffusion of universities, which found an echo at the local scale for its achievement” (Teramatsu; Straforini, 2022, p. 125).

Federal Universities offer Geography programs mainly in the state capitals and the Federal District. In some federative units, especially Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraíba and Pará, these institutions also offer a Geography program in countryside cities, usually medium-sized cities (regional centers) far from the capital.

State Universities, in turn, offer Geography programs in the major cities, besides the state capital, except for Espírito Santo, Rondônia and Amapá, states where there is no such institution. In some cases, state universities have good capillarity, such as Paraná (11 cities offer a Geography program), Goiás (ten cities), Bahia (seven), São Paulo (four) and Ceará (three).

In turn, Federal Institutes tend to offer Geography programs in different geographical locations: (a) places with high demand for the universities' existing supply, as in the metropolises of São Paulo, Brasília and Recife, (b) complement state action or federal universities in the countryside, as in the hinterlands of Ceará and Pará, and (c) in the countryside of states without state universities, such as Espírito Santo and Rondônia.

## Economic Geography in undergraduate programs in Geography in Brazil

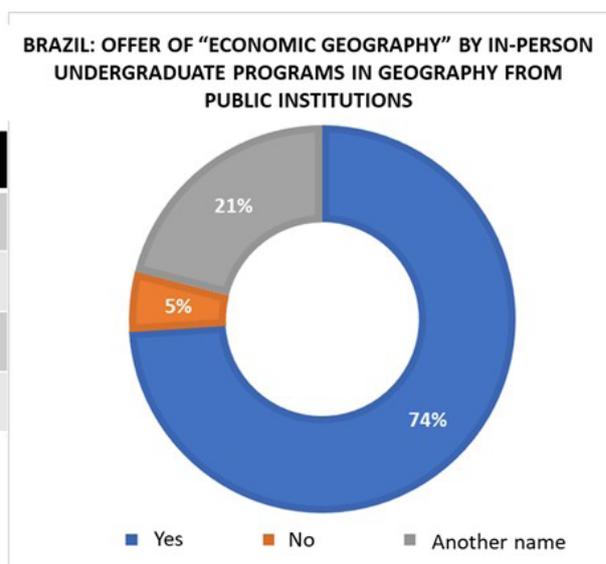
Economic Geography is a discipline offered by most Geography programs in Brazil (Figure 2). Only eight of the 169 programs do not offer the subject, demonstrating its relevance for geography education. In 125 courses (74%), the subject is offered under the very name of Economic Geography, which reveals its consolidation in the basic academic curriculum and, thus, justifies the analysis presented below. Despite the many differences between Geography courses, especially in teacher education (Giroto, 2013), noting recurring disciplines helps to identify their predominant approaches. In turn, 36 courses (21%) offer the contents of Economic Geography under other, possibly older, names.

Programs without Economic Geography on their curriculum are offered mainly by state universities in countryside municipalities (Table 1).

As mentioned, the subject Economic Geography can appear under other names related to activities such as industry, commerce and services or political economy (Table 2). Between December 10 and 16, 2020.

**Figure 2 – Brazil: Offer of Economic Geography by in-person undergraduate programs in Geography from public institutions, 2020**

OFFER	NUMBER OF PROGRAMS
Yes	125
No	8
Another name	36
TOTAL	169



Source: Own elaboration based on the undergraduate academic curricula available on the educational institutions' website, accessed between December 10 and 16, 2020.

**Table 1 – Brazil: in-person Geography programs from public institutions that do not offer Economic Geography, 2020**

INSTITUTION	TYPE	FEDERAL UNITY	CAMPUS/CITY
UFPR	Federal University	PR	Litoral/Matinhos
UEMG	State University	MG	Carangola
UERJ	State University	RJ	Duque de Caxias
UNEMAT	State University	MT	Cáceres
UESPI	State University	PI	Teresina
UESPI	State University	PI	Floriano
UESPI	State University	PI	São Raimundo Nonato
IFES	Federal Institute	ES	Nova Venécia

Source: Own elaboration based on the undergraduate academic curricula available on the educational institutions' website, accessed between December 10 and 16, 2020.

**Table 2 – Brazil: other names for the discipline Economic Geography offered by in-person Geography programs in public institutions, 2020**

INSTITUTION	TYPE	FU	CAMPUS/CITY	SUBJECT
UNILA	Federal University	PR	Foz do Iguaçu	Political economy of the territory
UNIFESP	Federal University	SP	São Paulo – Zona Leste	Political economy and Geography of
UFSC	Federal University	SC	Florianópolis	Political economy fundamentals for Geography; Industrial Geography; Geography of trade and services
UnB	Federal University	DF	Brasília	Economic Geography of energy and strategic planning
UNIR	Federal University	RO	Porto Velho	Economic and trade Geography
UEG	State University	GO	Anápolis	Spatial Economy
UERJ	State University	RJ	Maracanã/Rio de Janeiro	Geography of industry
UESC	State University	BA	Ilhéus	Geography of industry, trade and international relations
UVA	State University	CE	Sobral	Industrial and economic Geography
IFCE	Federal Institute	CE	Iguatu	Economic and political Geography
IFMG	Federal Institute	MG	Outro Preto	Economic and Human Geography of Brazil
IFSP	Federal Institute	SP	São Paulo	Economic globalization; Organization of industrial space

Source: Own elaboration based on the undergraduate academic curricula available on the educational institutions' website, accessed be

We must consider these other names to value the multifaceted history of this disciplinary subfield. They respond to different interpretations of this subfield, but also to historical periods in which certain theoretical approaches or preference for analyses of certain economic activities, such as industry, trade and services, predominated.<sup>4</sup>

Importantly, most undergraduate academic curricula include this subject as a compulsory discipline, and usually offer it on the first semesters and, sometimes, as a prerequisite for subsequent disciplines. Moreover, the topic of development, subject discussed below, is most strongly addressed in this discipline.<sup>5</sup>

## Conformation of a disciplinary subfield

After surveying the offer of Economic Geography by the undergraduate programs in Geography at the various public educational institutions in Brazil, we highlight aspects of its conformation and various transformations. At no time did this trajectory fail to accompany the general changes that Geography underwent, so that its evolution is consistent with the science itself and its epistemological crises.

In Europe, Economic Geography emerged in the mid-19th century, when the international trade growth accelerated the specialization of each region on its strongest productive industry. Economic Geography presented itself as an essentially descriptive subfield, offering pictures of productive activities, flows of goods and large markets (Claval, 2012).

Such studies are related to what we could call the “textbook phase”, when description and inventory reigned, correlated to the so-called “geography of trade” or “trade geography,” when texts began to circulate that were concerned with listing empirical data related to different issues: agriculture, industry, trade, population, cities, etc., especially from late 19th century, a time of mercantile capital hegemony and the search for new markets by the European industrial powers<sup>6</sup> (Arroyo, 2019).

Works from this period are marked by “interest in making inventories on resources and productions, describing their characteristics and identifying the main producing countries or areas and of trade exchanges, often accompanied by a complementary report of a

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4 Aloysio Araújo Junior and Carlos Espíndola (2015) analyze economic studies in Geography and propose a methodological approach for teaching Economic Geography.

5 In Brazil, besides Economic Geography, other disciplines also discuss the topic of development, such as Urban Geography, which addresses urban development; Regional Geography, where development acquires a regional perspective; Environmental Geography and/or Environmental Education, which tackles sustainable development; and disciplines linked to planning, with several notions of development (urban, rural, regional, environmental).

6 “This particular geography accounts for the movement of commodities ‘between the countries of the world’ (MILL, 1894) and does not, like the other specializations, go beyond the descriptive level. A review of the thematic indexes of the textbooks—Chisholm (1889), Mill (1894), Stamp (1927), Vasconcellos (1916), Smith and Phillips (1946)—shows that they follow the same expository structure: they assign the first chapters to the marketed products, detailing their agronomic or technical characteristics, and leave the last chapters to the countries (or continents), identifying the production areas and transport systems linked to them. [...] An indicator that these works were conceived with a mainly informative character is the large number of reissues that many of them present (George Chisholm reaches twenty editions and Dudley Stamp ten editions), given the need to update the numerous statistics included” (Arroyo, 2019, p. 2-3).

regional nature,” since these were works characterized “by the priority attention given to activities more related to natural resources, the influence of environmental determinism and historicism and their explanations, as well as an explicit distancing from economic theory, considered too abstract and alien to concerns with space” (Méndez, 1997, p. 14).

It is in this sense that, for Claval (2005, p. 13), economic geography has long been isolated from economics and the rest of geography, playing a very modest role. “It then approached economics, incorporating many results from location theory, international relations theory, and macroeconomics” and later “also innovated in the field of polarization phenomena, the role of information, and the interpretation of external economies.” In the 1950s, the development of the urban-industrial system and the deepening of the social division of labor placed the city and industry as precursors of a new economic reality. The complex relations then established led to the need to define new fields.

In the 1960s, quantitative methods began to influence not only geography thought, but the social sciences in general, with classificatory approaches focused on developing theories and models and on pragmatism, using statistical and mathematical models. This is the paradigm of the so-called New Geography, of Anglo-Saxon influence. Moreira (1980) explains that its assumption lies on the spatial organization by typologies and combinations of variables that reveal themselves as spatial arrangements according to mathematical patterns and quantitative models.

New Geography manifested itself mainly through quantification, but also used other instruments, such as models, systems theory, the diffusion of innovations, as well as the notions of perception and behavior, and multiple ways of valuing the empirical and the ideological. In the case of Economic Geography, we see a strong influence of analyses that prioritize the locational perspective and the proposal of various models by means of two distinct and complementary paths (Santos, 2008[1978]): in the first, one starts from very simple postulates and gradually introduces more complex ones; the second method is to move from reality, making a series of simplified generalizations. Both highlighted that the model is, by nature, a partial and simplifying representation of reality.

As Santos (2008 [1978], p. 73) states, “the great mistake of so-called quantitative geography was to treat a method—indeed, a questionable method—as a theory,” since the quantitative or simply statistical approach and contribution are of little use without systematic knowledge of mechanisms and processes. Still according to Santos, one of the key reasons why geography has known such a slow evolution is the weight that old ideas have within this discipline, and the so-called quantitative geography marks the maximum point of the de-spatialization of space, reduced to a web of coordinates unrelated to reality.

By the 1970s, the economic aspect fully integrates geographic analysis and gains importance in the discussions mainly due to the incorporation of historical and dialectical materialism as a theoretical and methodological reference, evident in the postulates of radical geography, prioritizing the totality approach. We see a significant valorization and affirmation of economics as an explanatory element of spatial processes and, thus, the influence of political economy and its critique is effective insofar as several of its concepts and categories are internalized in the unraveling of reality by Geography.

Different theoretical frameworks that anchor Economic Geography try to break with evolutionism and the ideology of linear progress. In a way, they follow Trotsky's unequal and combined development. According to Löwy (1995, p. 73-74), this theory is an attempt "to account for the logic of the economic and social contradictions of the peripheral capitalism countries or countries dominated by imperialism", because founded on the postulate that "by linking all countries among themselves by its mode of production and trade, capitalism has made the whole world a single economic and political organism" (Trotsky apud Löwy, 1995, p. 74).<sup>7</sup>

Nunes (2004) calls attention to the main influences in Brazilian Geography coming from economic thought: the agricultural modernization theory, Ignácio Rangel's theories, the land rent theory (rural and urban), the theories derived from spatial economics (critical), the concepts and ideas inspired by Marxist thought, regional development and industrial restructuring.<sup>8</sup>

## **Authors and works featured in the Economic Geography course syllabi**

Qualitative analysis of the course syllabi considered those of Economic Geography and related subjects, that is, of other subjects with similar names (such as Economic Geography plus another segment, for example: Economic Geography and the Organization of Space, Economic Aspects of Geography Analysis, or Foundations of Economics for Geography). In all, we selected 33 course syllabi from relevant institutions at the different Brazilian regions. Of these, 22 expressly featured the term development, so the detailed analysis focused this group.<sup>9</sup>

Each syllabus outlines the objective, the methodology, the evaluation criteria, the class schedule, as well as the content and bibliography (basic and/or complementary) for

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7 At different moments of the elaboration of contemporary critical thought, the classical proposals of the theorists of imperialism are resumed: uneven development (Vladimir Lenin), revision of primitive accumulation (Rosa Luxemburg) and uneven and combined development (Leon Trótsky).

8 For a systematic study on the main influences of economic thought in the Brazilian geographic production, see Nunes (2004).

9 We identified 33 course syllabi from the three types of public HEIs, at different regions of Brazil, which were requested from professors who teach the subject Economic Geography and/or related ones, and from coordinators of undergraduate programs in Geography. These 33 syllabi are from courses at federal institutes (1), state universities (14) and federal universities (18); from Economic Geography (19) and correlated/similar subjects (14), and from the regions: Northeast (9); Midwest (3); Southeast (11), and South (10).

the subject<sup>10</sup>—the latter two being the objects of our analysis. All syllabi analyzed are from the period between the second half of 2017 and the second half of 2020.

As Economic Geography is a priority in the list of disciplines that make up the undergraduate program, the predominant course load identified is 60 class hours, the minimum found, with some syllabi reaching 136 class hours. In most syllabi the course load consists of theoretical activities, mainly lectures, but some also expressly include practical activities such as seminars and field classes.

The contents contemplated in the syllabi are subdivided into thematic units, covering from the relationship between space and economy, the evolution of Economic Geography and its main theoretical approaches, to the recent dynamics of capitalism, such as the globalization and financialization processes.

To analyze the predominant bibliographic references cited in the syllabi we adopted the methodology used by Firkowski (2015) regarding Industrial Geography.<sup>11</sup> We used the general and complementary bibliography presented in the syllabi, totaling 633 references.

Bibliographical analysis resulted in a total of 239 authors, and we can highlight those who guide the teaching of Economic Geography in Brazil (Table 3). The most cited author is Milton Santos, with 43 occurrences, followed by David Harvey (41). Armen Mamigonian is the third most mentioned author in the syllabi (26), along with Georges Benko (25). François Chesnais accounts for 12 occurrences, followed by Clélio Campolina Diniz (11). With 10 mentions we have Domenico Losurdo, Ricardo Méndez, and Roberto Lobato Corrêa. Also among the most cited authors are Karl Marx and Neil Smith (9); Eric Hobsbawm and Ignácio Rangel (8); and Eliseu Savério Sposito, Giovanni Arrighi, and Manuel Correia de Andrade (7).

We can observe an important diversity of authors, including geographers, economists, historians, sociologists, philosophers; Brazilians and foreigners; authors with more traditional approaches, others who use more contemporary theories; some widely known and others less so, such as Ha-Joon Chang.

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10 The bibliographical references are usually presented as a last item in the syllabus, sometimes separated into “compulsory” and “complementary” bibliography. Of the total syllabi analyzed, only one linked the bibliography to each of its thematic units.

11 We adopted the mathematical method of cluster analysis, which allows a set of data to be grouped into homogeneous classes according to their degree of similarity. These groupings are organized hierarchically according to the level of similarity (or distance), represented by a dendrogram (diagram of the hierarchical tree). Similarity between classes can be measured from distances. The present work adopted the Euclidean distance (metric distance between data), where closer values indicate high similarity between clusters, versus more distant values, which indicate low similarity.

**Table 3 – Authors by number of mentions in Economic Geography course syllabi**

AUTHORS	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
Milton Santos	43
David Harvey	41
Armen Mamigonian	26
Georges Benko	25
François Chesnais	12
Clelio Campolina Diniz	11
Domenico Losurdo	10
Ricardo Méndez	10
Roberto Lobato Corrêa	10
Karl Marx	9
Neil Smith	9
Eric Hobsbawm	8
Ignácio Rangel	8
Eliseu Savério Spósito	7
Giovanni Arrighi	7
Manuel Correia de Andrade	7
Ha-Joon Chang	6
Luiz Gonzaga de Mello Belluzzo	6
Marcos Aurélio da Silva	6
Pierre George	6
Peter Dicken	6
Ricardo Antunes	6
Ruy Moreira	6
Vladimir Lenin	6

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of course syllabi, 2022.

Besides the main ones, which appear recurrently, there are a number of authors who are also mentioned in the syllabi, although less often: Alain Lipietz, Allen Scott, Antonio Thomaz Júnior, Joseph Schumpeter, Maria Laura Silveira, Michael Storper, Mónica Arroyo, Paul Claval, Pierre Monbeig, Pierre Veltz, Arioaldo Umbelino de Oliveira, Carlos Brandão, Cláudio Egler, Francisco de Oliveira, István Mészáros, Manuel Castells, Michael Löwy, Neil Brenner, Paul Krugman, Paul Singer, Rogerio Haesbaert, Wilson Cano, Jamie Peck, Caio Prado Júnior, Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves, Antônio Carlos Robert Moraes, Wanderley Messias da Costa, Octávio Ianni, Celso Furtado, Leila Dias, Leon Trótsky, Adam Smith, Claude Manzagol, Rosa Luxemburgo, Doreen Massey, Fernand Braudel.

A total of 416 works were identified. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, by David Harvey, with 14 mentions, along with *Economia, espaço e globalização na aurora do século XXI*, by Georges Benko, with 13, are the most cited works in the Economic Geography course syllabi (Table 4).

**Table 4 – Works by number of mentions in Economic Geography course syllabi**

<b>WORKS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF MENTIONS</b>
HARVEY, David. <i>Condição pós-moderna. Uma pesquisa sobre as origens da mudança cultural</i> . São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1992.	14
BENKO, Georges. <i>Economia, espaço e globalização na aurora do século XXI</i> . São Paulo: Hucitec, 1996.	13
SMITH, Neil. <i>Desenvolvimento desigual: natureza, capital e a produção de espaço</i> . Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1988.	9
CHESNAIS, François. <i>A mundialização do capital</i> . São Paulo: Xamã, 1996.	7
SANTOS, Milton. <i>Economia espacial: críticas e alternativas</i> . São Paulo: Hucitec, 1979.	7
SANTOS, Milton. <i>Por uma outra globalização: do pensamento único à consciência universal</i> . Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2000.	7
DICKEN, Peter. <i>Mudança global. Mapeando as novas fronteiras da economia mundial</i> . Porto Alegre: Bookman, 2010.	6
HARVEY, David. <i>A produção capitalista do espaço</i> . São Paulo: Annablume, 2005.	6
MÉNDEZ, Ricardo. <i>Geografía Económica. La lógica espacial del capitalismo global</i> . Barcelona: Ariel, 1997.	6
CHANG, Ha-Joon. <i>23 coisas que não nos contaram sobre o capitalismo</i> . São Paulo: Cultrix, 2013.	5
GEORGE, Pierre. <i>Geografia Econômica</i> . Rio de Janeiro: Fundo de Cultura, 1967.	5
MAMIGONIAN, Armen. <i>Tecnologia e desenvolvimento desigual no centro do sistema capitalista</i> . <i>Revista de Ciências Humanas, Florianópolis</i> , v. 1, n. 2, p. 38-48, 1982.	5
SANTOS, Milton. <i>A natureza do espaço: técnica e tempo, razão e emoção</i> . São Paulo: HUCITEC, 1996.	5
SPÓSITO, Eliseu Savério (org.). <i>Glossário de Geografia Humana e Econômica</i> . São Paulo: Editora da Unesp, 2017.	5
ANDRADE, Manuel Correia de. <i>Geografia Econômica</i> . São Paulo: Atlas, 1974.	4
ARRIGHI, Giovanni. <i>O longo século XX: dinheiro, poder e as origens de nosso tempo</i> . Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto; São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 1996.	4
BEAUD, Michel. <i>História do capitalismo: de 1500 aos nossos dias</i> . São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987.	4
BELLUZZO, Luiz Gonzaga. <i>Os antecedentes da tormenta: origens da crise global</i> . São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2009.	4
BENKO, Georges. <i>A ciência regional</i> . Oeiras: Celta, 1999.	4
DINIZ, Clélio Campolina; LEMOS, Mauro Borges (orgs.) <i>Economia e Território</i> . Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2005.	4
HARVEY, David. <i>A loucura da razão econômica. Marx e o capital do século XXI</i> . São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017.	4
HARVEY, David. <i>O enigma do capital: e as crises do capitalismo</i> . São Paulo, Boitempo, 2011.	4

**Table 4 – Cont.**

<b>WORKS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF MENTIONS</b>
HARVEY, David. <i>O novo imperialismo</i> . 2ª ed. São Paulo: Loyola, 2004.	4
JABBOUR, Elias. <i>China hoje: projeto nacional, desenvolvimento e socialismo de mercado</i> . São Paulo: Anita Garibaldi, 2012.	4
LENIN, Vladimir. <i>Imperialismo, fase superior do capitalismo</i> . 4 ed. São Paulo: Global, 1987 [1917].	4
MANDEL, Ernest. <i>O capitalismo tardio</i> . São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1983.	4
MONBEIG, Pierre. <i>Novos estudos de Geografia Humana brasileira</i> . São Paulo: Difusão Europeia do Livro, 1957.	4
SANTOS, Milton. <i>Técnica, espaço, tempo: globalização e meio técnico-científico-informacional</i> . São Paulo: Hucitec, 1994.	4

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of course syllabi, 2022.

Following is *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, by Neil Smith, with 9 occurrences. With 7 occurrences we have *Toward an other globalization* and *Economia espacial*, both by Milton Santos, as well as *The globalization of capital*, by François Chesnais, the fourth most cited work. Unlike in the past, there is no textbook or compendium as a reference work to give students an overview of this subfield.

Besides the most mentioned works (Table 4), other less cited works include: *Trajelórias Geográficas*, by Roberto Lobato Corrêa; *Fuga dalla storia?*, by Domenico Losurdo; *The theory of combined and uneven development*, by Michael Löwy; *Capital*, by Karl Marx; *O Brasil: território e sociedade no início do século XXI*, by Milton Santos and María Laura Silveira; *The Myth of Economic Development* and *The Economic Growth of Brazil*, by Celso Furtado; *Teorias da globalização* and *A era do globalismo*, by Octávio Ianni; *Les Révolutions du capitalisme*, by Maurizio Lazzarato; *The theory of economic development*, by Joseph Schumpeter; and *O capitalismo, sua evolução, sua lógica e sua dinâmica*, by Paul Singer.

Most works are from the 20th century, many published in the past decades, already with several editions and widely used, but also in recent years, for example: *A era do capital improdutivo*, by Ladislau Dowbor (2017); *L'économie des inégalités*, by Thomas Piketty (2015); and *Conhecimento, inovação e território*, by Mario Vale (2012). These bibliographies feature works from various countries, notably Brazil, the USA, and France, but also England, Spain, and Italy. Importantly, translated works are privileged, since most of the foreign works cited have Portuguese translations, except for *Geografía Económica: la lógica espacial del capitalismo global*, by Spanish geographer Ricardo Méndez, which circulates in Spanish.

## Development in the Economic Geography course syllabi

As for the course syllabi, analysis show that the development approach is present and permeates several thematic units, in greater or lesser detail. Of the 22 syllabi analyzed (out of a total of 33), eight only mention the term development, with no breakdown to elucidate the approach chosen for discussing it. In these cases, topics such as “growth and development,” “polarization and development” or “theories of development” are simply listed. In 14 other syllabi, the term development is not only mentioned, but its approach is further detailed regarding the theoretical framework and authors used to address it.<sup>12</sup>

More detailed syllabi allowed us to identify topics aimed at discussing from Marxist, neoclassical or Keynesian perspective approaches to new proposals with various alternative development concepts that have emerged in the last decades, such as local development or sustainable development. We also identified entire thematic units with topics dedicated to discussing the spatial dimension of development, its relationship with territory, and with territorial development policies, and a recurrent concern with uneven geographic development.

As mentioned, the term development appears in the 22 syllabi analyzed, but it can be qualified by different adjectives in the same syllabus (Graph 1). Thus, “uneven development” predominates with nine occurrences, followed by “development” (seven), and “regional development” (three). Other designations such as urban-regional, local, sustainable or territorial development occur less. Many of these approaches are commonly contemplated in other disciplines of the syllabus, such as: urban development in Urban Geography; rural development in Agrarian Geography; strategic development in Political Geography.<sup>13</sup>

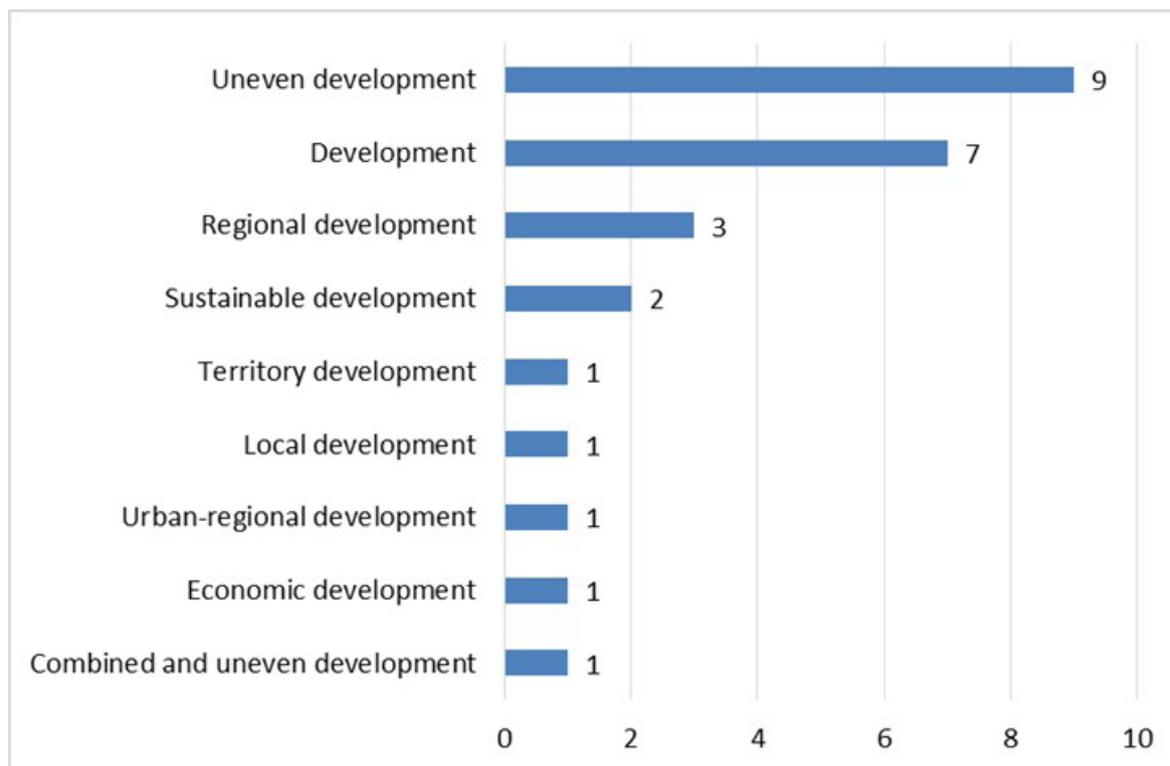
According to Lamberti and Gama (2020), until the early 20th century, both Geography and Economics approached the topic of development based on the constraints of material progress and was directly linked to the notion of economic growth. Only after the 1950s did the debate start to address new issues, contributing to the emergence of different concepts and interpretations.<sup>14</sup> For Porto-Gonçalves (2006, p. 64), the debate on development was for a long time based not only on the idea of economic progress, but also on a Eurocentric model, in which a developed country would correspond to an urban and highly industrialized country, which would be superior and therefore amenable to generalization. Thus, different conceptions of development sought to compare countries as “first world or third world,” “industrialized or undergoing industrialization,” “developed or underdeveloped,” “central or peripheral,” “rich or poor,” “winners or losers.”

12 In 11 syllabi (out of a total of 33), the term development is not explicitly cited, but they contain content topics that address issues concerning spatial economics, regional economics, economics in peripheral capitalism, center and periphery in the world economy, and François Perroux’s theory of growth poles.

13 Marcelo Lopes de Souza (2013) proposes a socio-spatial development philosophically founded on the Castoriadis-inspired principle of autonomy, which the geographer includes among the key concepts of socio-spatial research.

14 Development is one of the entries in the *Glossário de geografia humana e econômica* (2017) organized by Eliseu Sposito.

**Graph 1 – Development concepts mentioned in the Economic Geography course syllabi**



Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of course syllabi, 2022.

Development is a concept that has been the subject of extensive literature and is still subject to important discussions in several areas of knowledge. According to Clark (2007) and Moreira and Crespo (2012), over the past few years, emerging new denominations—such as human development, local development, sustainable development—have been broadening the traditional concept of economic development in the quest to make other dimensions (social, local, and environmental) more explicit.

### **Development approaches in Economic Geography**

Since the end of the Second World War, several debates have been held around development and underdevelopment, some of them influenced by Rostow (1961[1959]), who explains the evolution of societies as a linear process going from less to more advanced stages characterized by complete modernization. According to this theory, countries should go through five stages of economic development, at the end of which they would have transitioned from traditional society, the most backward and static stage, to the era of high mass consumption, the fifth and most advanced stage of a nation's development. In other words, it emphasizes the sequential character of the development process, a path or trajectory that all countries would follow.

At that time, however, Gunnar Myrdal's (1968[1957]) criticism of the equilibrium assumptions of neoclassical economics also circulated, pointing to cumulative circular causation as a mechanism for the persistence of inequalities, further distancing the initially less developed regions from the more advanced ones. Thus, the interdependence of relations, activities, and regions should be at the core of studies on development and underdevelopment. For Myrdal, state action could avoid the cumulative processes of imbalance both between countries and between regions within the same country. The vicious circle of backwardness and poverty could be broken by the planned implementation of social, political, and economic reforms.

In turn, François Perroux (1955) warns that economic growth does not spread uniformly throughout space, but concentrates in points, creating imbalances between neighboring areas; that is, it starts from poles (activity centers) and then spreads from them. Contesting the neoclassical equilibrium models, Perroux shows that heterogeneity and disequilibrium constitute the ways in which growth would manifest itself within economy. As Manoel Correia de Andrade (1967) explains,<sup>15</sup> Perroux distinguishes between the terms growth and development: growth poles would be those that cause output and per capita income growth without bringing about other changes in regional structures, whereas development poles, in addition to output growth, also modifies the structures that favor the population of the region it polarizes. The latter are usually induced, tools of a policy, of a planned action.

Interestingly, the dialogue with Perroux's elaborations permeates most texts in the book *Géographie active* (1964) by Pierre George and his colleagues Raymond Guglielmo, Bernard Kayser, and Yves Lacoste, either to adhere or to disagree with the idea of polarization as a way to conceive the region. This book expresses, in a way, the renewal of geographical thought that George and other French colleagues promote in the 1960s, when discussions about planning and the role of the State within a development project are prominent. According to Pedrosa (2013), this work prompted, in Latin America and Brazil, an awareness of the role of Geography in social transformation.<sup>16</sup> Studies on the Third World and underdevelopment were already circulating, with the publication of Lacoste's books *Les Pays sous-développés* (1959) and *Géographie du sous-développement* (1965).

Back to the post-war period, it is worth remembering the creation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1948, under the leadership of Raul Prebisch and Celso Furtado, who interpreted economic development based on the international division of labor, noting the deteriorating terms of trade to the detriment of primary goods producing countries. According to the ECLAC, one way to face the

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15 The author explains the repercussions and developments of studies on polarization in Brazil and cites Boudeville, disciple of Perroux, who worked for three years in the country in a context of rising regional planning.

16 On the emergence of critical geography in France and in the USA from the perspective of structure, considering antecedents and unfoldings, see Pedrosa (2013). The author highlights the pioneering role of French geographers Pierre George, Jean Tricart, and Jean Dresch in the process of renewing geography in the 1960s.

structural obstacles to development would be to implement policies aimed at fostering import substitution industrialization and achieving economic diversification to overcome the primary-exporter character that places Latin American countries on the periphery of the world economic system.

Another contribution that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s-70s is dependency theory, around two perspectives (Katz, 2020). A Marxist perspective, whose main exponents were Rui Mauro Marini, Theotonio dos Santos and Vania Bambirra, highlights the necessarily unequal character on which capitalist development is based, generating underdevelopment in the periphery.<sup>17</sup> In their various writings, these authors emphasize the subordination of industrialization to multinational corporate interests and the growing global integration of capital and claim that underdevelopment could not be eradicated with corrective policies or with more investment. The other perspective is formulated around the book *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (1969), by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, and its thesis of associated dependent development, which underlines the importance of the relations established between local ruling groups and the central powers and identifies these connections with different situations of dependence in the association between domestic and foreign ruling groups.

A core concern in Geography is the uneven development between countries and even between regions within the same country. Thus, the different perspectives mentioned above are resumed by geographical discussions with different emphases, nuances and criticisms.

Milton Santos has been a very interested in this debate since the 1960s, when he published several articles and books on urbanization in underdeveloped countries analyzing common characteristics or differences between large cities. His most prominent work at the time was *The shared space: The two circuits of the urban economy in underdeveloped countries* (1975), where he analyzes the unequal and selective space organization that capitalist modernization creates in the Third World. Santos criticizes the theory of growth poles, like other spatial theories, for considering only the upper circuit of economy, believing that only modernization, by establishing cutting-edge industries, is capable of stimulating growth; on the contrary, these theories consider the lower circuit as a brake on economic growth, unaware that it is actually a result of technological modernization. In his words, “economic growth and the development of the lower circuit of economy occur in parallel. Thus, growth does not appear as the process capable of eliminating poverty” (Santos, 2003[1979], p. 174). By conceiving space as a core component of social totality and its movement, Santos adopts the category of socio-spatial formation to understand the specificities of underdeveloped countries, and thus question the mechanical adoption of Western models and paradigms that hardly explain Third World reality.

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17 At this time, the work by German economist André Gunder Frank stands out. He was a precursor of dependency analyses when defining underdevelopment as an intrinsic characteristic of dependent capitalism. Frank considered that the “development of underdevelopment” illustrated how advanced economies were consolidated at the expense of backward economies.

Neil Smith discusses the significance of uneven development under capitalism and its importance in restructuring space. Smith seeks to understand the “Geography of Capitalism” positing that “the logic of unequal development derives specifically from the opposed tendencies, inherent in capital, toward the differentiation but simultaneous equalization of the levels and conditions of production” (Smith, 1988, p. 19). Capital is invested in the built environment but equally withdrawn and moved elsewhere seeking higher profit rates. That is, the spatial immobilization of capital in its material form is as important as its perpetual circulation. This dialectic of differentiation and equalization allows us to explain the spatial (global, nation-state, urban) scales produced by capital. Smith maintains a close dialogue with David Harvey,<sup>18</sup> his professor, a widely read author in Economic Geography, who formulated the theory of uneven geographical development, with numerous publications discussing the movement of capital accumulation and its spatial expression.

An important author of Brazilian critical geography who discusses development is Armem Mamigonian, whose scholarly work focuses on the relations between Geography and Marxism. His understanding of the Brazilian economic and social formation is founded mainly in Ignácio Rangel’s proposal, a Brazilian economist who addresses the capitalist economic cycles and its specificities in Brazil, disagreeing with some ECLAC and dependency theory formulations. Among his main points, we highlight the discussion about Brazil’s dynamic insertion in the long world cycle, as defined by Kondratieff, growing both in the expansion stage by entering the international division of labor and in the recession stage, by substituting imports, managing to reduce the distance from the capitalist center. By employing different strategies, such as the use of idle capacity, Brazil has managed to build a complete industrial building. The analysis also considers the power pacts that supported each moment of this historical process (Mamigonian, 2000, 2019).

One of the most widespread readings on the political-economic transformation of late 20th century capitalism can be found in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* by David Harvey (1992[1989]), where he analyzes the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation, the latter based on the flexibility of work processes, labor markets, products, and consumption patterns. According to Harvey, this new capitalist accumulation generates changes in the patterns of uneven development, both in productive sectors and in geographic regions. In *Economia, espaço e globalização*, Georges Benko (1996) introduces the regulation theory, discusses the Fordism crisis, studies the relationship between high-technology industries and regional development, and cites local development linked to the decentralization of political, economic, and financial decision-making levels.

In the 1990s, the discourse of sustainable development was widely spread after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, in

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18 Smith dialogues above all with Harvey’s ideas in *The limits to capital*, first published in 1982, but was only translated into Portuguese in 2013.

1992, which, among other results, established a common agenda among signatory countries called Agenda 21.<sup>19</sup> Given the lack of consensus on what this term means, its content varies depending on the implementation actors. For some sectors of the environmental movement, it means protecting “the environment” but disregarding the social and economic reality involved. For companies, it means ensuring their high profit rates by creating and selling a series of new technology against pollution or environmental degradation. And for some governments, the term is often linked to applying for international loans from financial bodies. Sustainable development is thus often used as just another adjective, lacking a conceptual or praxeological sense, in which the contradictions are expressed in dissensions, in the lack of discourse rigor, which adapts and adopts different meanings according to the interests or needs of each agent (Diegues, 2003; Leff, 2006). Santos (2005[1994]) observes that the media has become the vehicle for major campaigns involving funding from international agencies that operate by withholding credit for projects, imposing an international agenda by defining what should be discussed and excluding other essential issues. Bertha Becker (2000) understands that sustainable development and ecological influence emerge as a proposal for international cooperation, therefore, a specific feature and a new parameter of contemporary world geopolitics. For the author, sustainable development would reveal a revaluation process of the political dimension of space, as well as of the existing conflicts at various geographical scales.

## Final considerations

Economic Geography experienced several changes, following the general changes undergone by Geography; thus, its evolution is consistent with the progress of the science itself. Offered by most Brazilian undergraduate programs in Geography—which have expanded in recent decades across the country—, the discipline manifests the plurality of epistemological frameworks that characterizes Brazilian Geography. Such diversity is revealed by the number of works and authors cited in the course syllabi, who have the most distinct origins and philosophical orientations. Importantly, no specific author or work in isolation contributes majorly to compose these courses.

Development is a prominent theme in Economic Geography. Economic Geography courses adopt different approaches to development, from classical to more recent ones, which extrapolate the notion of economic development, such as discussions around regional, territorial, local, sustainable, strategic or endogenous development, among others. Among the perspectives, uneven development stands out in the course syllabi analyzed.

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19 The first theoretical and political interests in addressing the so-called environmental issue in the development process emerge as early as the 1960s, when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and later the Club of Rome's *The Limits of Growth* report (1972), led to the first major international debate on environmental issues, resource scarcity, and the limits of economic and social development, bringing together several heads of state at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm in 1972. The *Brundtland Report*, entitled *Our Common Future*, published in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, first defined “sustainable development” as that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Our study examined Economic Geography course syllabi focusing on the contents included in the thematic units and on the adopted bibliography (authors and works). Other studies on the thematic and didactic organization of lesson plans, the profile of professors who teach Economic Geography and the students' perception can provide was to better understand development in tertiary education. How to incorporate new approaches to development into Economic Geography debates without giving up those that have accompanied the evolution of the discipline remains a challenge. Knowledge and discussion of the various approaches by professors and students fosters a plural education that is committed to the challenges of today.

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## Author's contribution

**Mónica Arroyo:** bibliographic and documentary review, survey of Economic Geography course syllabi by contacting professors in several Brazilian public universities, and manuscript writing.

**Fernanda Laize Silva de Lima:** bibliographic and documentary review; statistical and graphic treatment for analysis of the data obtained from Economic Geography course syllabi, and manuscript writing.

**Igor Venceslau:** bibliographic and documentary review, data collection on the offer of undergraduate programs in Geography in Brazil, data treatment for database composition and elaboration of graphs, tables and map, and manuscript writing.

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