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Diversity in Geographical Science and the Political Dimension of/in Territory

Tatiana de Souza Leite Garcia

E-mail: tatianagarcia@usp.br

 0000-0001-7582-0802

University of São Paulo (USP),
São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

Geography is anything but homogeneous. The field spans a wide thematic, theoretical, and methodological range—from positivist and quantitative traditions to critical, systemic, socioenvironmental, and humanist approaches, among many others. This epistemic plurality does not signal fragmentation; it reflects the discipline's inherently interdisciplinary nature and the knowledge produced across its subfields—Physical and Human Geography (Suertegaray, 2016).

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As a science committed to the manifold relations between society and nature, Geography organizes its object of inquiry through concepts such as space, territory, landscape, region, and place, in both research and teaching. Scholars mobilize and debate these categories according to thematic focus and analytical lens.

These features—of Geography as a science and as a school subject—position the discipline as a bridge between the human and natural sciences. Together, they can generate reflections and solutions to contemporary social, environmental, economic, and institutional challenges. A political dimension is central to meeting those challenges. In this sense, Geography offers distinctive contributions to understanding global transformations and their territorial expressions, enabling critical, propositional, multidimensional, and multiscalar analyses.

This issue of *GEOUSP* showcases the thematic breadth of contemporary geographical scholarship. The articles converge in their attention to the political dimension as it materializes in territory(ies), underscoring the transversality and complementarity of the themes. Territory appears not merely as a physical substrate but as a social space where interactions between society and nature—and among people—unfold. Its dynamics and differentiated uses are historically produced and reveal asymmetries in access to resources and in capacities to exercise power.

The political-territorial dimension has concerned Geography since it emerged as a modern science, especially in the late nineteenth century with Friederich Ratzel's writings. Many theorists have helped us grasp territory as a political space—Jean Gottmann, Simon Dalby, John Agnew, among others. A comprehensive literature review is not feasible here, primarily due to the term's polysemy and diverse applications. Still, we concur with Inácio and Silva (2025, p. 4) that “[...] territory, as a category of geographical interpretation, functions as a tool that expresses a field of forces and the spatialization of power.”

We also offer a modest tribute to the Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin, who passed away in September 2025 and whose work—rooted in a Foucauldian conception of power—shaped generations of scholars, including in Brazilian geography. In his seminal *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*, published in French in the 1980s and in Brazil in 1993 as *Por uma Geografia do poder*, power is relational, multidimensional, and asymmetrical; it operates as a means of control and domination over people and things to secure its trump cards—population, territory, and resources.

For Raffestin, territory is the stage of power, the locus of relations among actors, where processes of appropriation and control are (re)produced through varied uses of energy, information, and communication. In his words, “territory is a particular trump, resource and obstacle, container and content, all at once. Territory is the political space par excellence, the field of action of trump cards” (Raffestin, 1993, pp. 59–60).

This relational reading—territory as space produced by social practices saturated with power—opened avenues for more critical interpretations of spatiality. Territory and territoriality are not given: they are historically constructed by political, economic, and social actors across multiple dimensions and exercises of power, among people, vis-à-vis nature, and within territories.

Souza (2020) underscores, in her dissertation, the continuing relevance of Raffestin's propositions, which have become "classics" for studies of power relations inscribed in territories and territoriality. One should also note other themes Raffestin treated over his career, including borders.

Within Brazilian geography, several authors have advanced investigations that operationalize territory as an analytical category in dialogue with international debates on its relational and political character. In *Geopolítica da Amazônia* (1982), Becker demonstrates how territorial integration policies and development projects express geopolitical struggles over resources, identities, and sovereignty, showing that Brazilian territory—especially the Amazon—is continuously traversed by power relations and that Geography is indispensable for unveiling mechanisms of domination and resistance in the region. Costa (1988, 2008) highlights the centrality of territory in state formation—its role as regulator, planner, and executor of territorial policies—and how territorial appropriation expresses the strategies of state and private actors. Santos (2004) conceives geographic space as a dimension of social totality, marked by the dialectical coexistence of technique, time, and territory. His notion of "used territory" broadens the concept by linking it to social practice, emphasizing how everyday and political uses of territory materialize power relations and concrete historical conditions. Haesbaert (2004) and Saquet (2007) further stress the multidimensional and processual character of territory, conceiving it as a social construction that entwines economic, cultural, and political practices with conditions tied to territoriality.

This brief theoretical–conceptual frame illuminates the thematic diversity in this new issue of *GEOUSP: Espaço e Tempo*, where territorial questions serve as a key thread. The articles assembled here attest to Geography's vitality in interpreting contemporary problems, whether through empirically grounded analyses of specific territories or through critical categories that clarify space in its multiple dimensions.

Kauê Lopes dos Santos's contribution examines the expansion of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Africa through Milton Santos's Theory of Urban Economic Circuits, situating recent reconfigurations of capitalism at the global scale within territories of the Global South.

The historical and cultural dimension comes to the fore in the article by Kenia Fabiana Cota Mendonça and Luís Fernando da Silva Laroque on the Maxakali—part of the Jê Language Family—who inhabit the area between the Pardo and Doce rivers in northeastern Minas Gerais, and on the crisis of the Indian Protection Service (SPI). Their documentary analysis traces how SPI's actions (and omissions) affected this Indigenous people, revealing the ways institutionalized violence intertwines with territorial expropriation and the denial of rights—a theme that resonates with geographic critiques of domination and marginalization.

Gabriel Pereira and João Batista Ferreira Neto address climate in their proposal for a bioclimatic zoning of Brazil based on the Universal Thermal Climate Index. Their study points to rising thermal discomfort and its connections to El Niño and La Niña, spotlighting an interface between physical geography and health geography.

Field research anchors the contribution by Gutemberg de Vilhena Silva and Clícia Di Miceli on the Guianas. Systematizing four expeditions conducted between 2017 and 2022, they reveal cross-border dynamics—flows of people, goods, and cultures—and show how these processes

reconfigure Amazonian territorialities. The piece exemplifies why fieldwork remains a pillar of geographic inquiry: it captures everyday practices, territorialities, and the diversities intrinsic to local and transnational realities in the Guianese Amazon.

Melisa Estrella examines network-territories and zone-territories in environmental conflicts through the case of mining in Esquel, Argentina. She shows how both pro-mining and anti-mining actors seek to impose competing territorial projects via varied strategies, continually updating and reconfiguring power relations across conflict phases.

Laís Ribeiro Silva and Mirlei Fachini Vicente Pereira explore territory, innovation, and agribusiness by analyzing agtechs—startups linked to agribusiness—in Uberlândia (MG). They detail how these firms bundle services, finance, and technological innovation to create new geographical situations and reposition Brazilian territory within a globalized economy.

Rafael Straforini and Anniele Freitas investigate the mobility of teacher-education public policies through the spatiality of actors involved in building the National Curriculum Base (BNC) for Teacher Education between 2016 and 2019. They demonstrate that the BNC reflects the interests and alignments of specific groups operating across local and global scales and political arenas—most notably corporate actors—within (and across) territories.

This issue of *GEOUSP* also features a special dossier on *New Gender Perspectives in Geography*, assembling contributions that deepen critical reflection.

Lorena Francisco de Souza and Fabiana Leonel de Castro offer an essay on Black feminist political theory and its contributions to geographic thought, highlighting how intersectionality exposes social and epistemic inequalities and opens avenues for more inclusive scientific and educational practice.

Bernardo Francisco Bronzi advances a geography of trans people, analyzing spatialities marked by stigma, prejudice, and resistance in dialogue with right-to-the-city debates.

Andrea Natalia Barragán León discusses how modern allopathic medicine pathologizes the female body and its life cycles, historically producing spaces of violence and subordination.

Finally, Mariane Biteti argues that gender geography is not a “genre” of Geography, presenting an epistemological and ontological review of nature, body, and technique to make the case for integrating gender into an anti-capitalist ethical-political project.

Collectively, the articles in this issue confirm the richness, quality, and timeliness of contemporary geographic debate. They range across local and global scales; human and physical geography; empirical analyses, theoretical applications, and conceptual reflection. More than ever, they underscore the need for dialogue with other fields of knowledge and reaffirm Geography as a critical, indispensable science for understanding—and helping to address—the challenges of the twenty-first century. We wish all readers a stimulating read.

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