

## SPACE AS A CENTRAL CATEGORY OF GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS: REFLECTIONS FROM ABAETETUBA/PA

## *O ESPAÇO COMO CATEGORIA CENTRAL DA ANÁLISE GEOGRÁFICA: REFLEXÕES A PARTIR DE ABAETETUBA/PA*

## *EL ESPACIO COMO CATEGORÍA CENTRAL DEL ANÁLISIS GEOGRÁFICO: REFLEXIONES DESDE ABAETETUBA/PA*



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**ABSTRACT:** Geography is once again undergoing a movement of renewal within the critical current. The humanistic approach to Geography, based on phenomenology, considers life experience as fundamental, valuing contexts, experiences and feelings allied to spatial ideas. In view of this, the main objective of this article is to highlight space as an important category of analysis for geographic research, pointing it out as central, and cannot be abandoned or placed in a secondary plane in debates, even in those in which the contexts of experiences and feelings are evident. Dr. João Miranda Avenue and Dom Pedro II Avenue, main avenues in the city of Abaetetuba/PA, will be used as a spatial reflection. The consumption relationship shows that, despite seeming opposite, these forms of consumption are interconnected in some way and there is mutual interference in both. Which corroborates the premise: there is a need for a common sense of space in research.

**KEYWORDS:** Spatial analysis. Experiences and feeling. Marxist geography.

**RESUMO:** A Geografia passa novamente por um movimento de renovação dentro da corrente crítica. A abordagem humanística da Geografia, a partir da fenomenologia, considera a experiência de vida como fundamental, prezando por contextos, vivências e sentimentos aliados às ideias espaciais. Diante disso, o objetivo central deste artigo é evidenciar o espaço como uma importante categoria de análise para as pesquisas geográficas, apontado o mesmo como cêntrico, não podendo ser abandonado ou colocado em segundo plano, nos debates, até mesmo naqueles em que se evidencia os contextos de vivências e sentimentos. Utilizar-se-á como rebatimento espacial a Avenida Dr. João Miranda e Avenida Dom Pedro II, avenidas principais do município de Abaetetuba/PA. A relação de consumo evidencia que apesar de parecerem opostas, estas formas de consumo estão interligadas de alguma forma e há interferências mútuas em ambas. O que corrobora com a premissa: há necessidade um sentido comum de espaço nas pesquisas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Análise espacial. Vivências e sentimentos. Geografía marxista.

**RESUMEN:** La Geografía vuelve a vivir un movimiento de renovación dentro de la corriente crítica. El enfoque humanista de la Geografía, basado en la fenomenología, considera la experiencia de vida como fundamental, valorando contextos, vivencias y sentimientos combinados con ideas espaciales. Ante esto, el objetivo central de este artículo es resaltar el espacio como una importante categoría de análisis para la investigación geográfica, señalando que es central y no puede ser abandonado o relegado a un segundo plano en los debates, incluso en aquellos en los que se destacan los contextos de experiencias y sentimientos. Como límites espaciales se utilizarán la Avenida Dr. João Miranda y la Avenida Dom Pedro II, principales avenidas del municipio de Abaetetuba/PA. La relación de consumo muestra que a pesar de parecer opuestas, estas formas de consumo están interconectadas de alguna manera y existen interferencias mutuas en ambas. Esto corrobora la premisa: es necesario un sentido común de espacio en la investigación.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Análisis espacial. Experiencias y sentimientos. Geografía marxista.



## Introduction

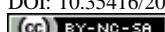
To conceive space as a foundational category of Geography is, above all, to acknowledge that it cannot be reduced to a mere physical dimension or a neutral support for human actions. Space is simultaneously the product and the producer of social relations, imbued with intentionalities, contradictions, and meanings. Throughout the epistemological trajectory of Geography, different readings and theoretical approaches have sought to grasp this complexity—some privileging technical and formal rigor, others emphasizing the subjects' lived and sensitive experience. Between these perspectives, the centrality of space has emerged not as a fixed point of departure, but as a historical and political construction that requires the constant renewal of analytical perspectives.

Despite having a consolidated theoretical tradition and a well-defined object of study, Geography still exhibits internal divergences. Ferreira (2019) draws attention to the peculiar characteristic of Geography being “divided” into Human Geography and Physical Geography—both presenting clear differences in their scientific methods and methodological procedures. Furthermore, the author points to a retreat from theoretical construction and a proliferation of more propositional forms of research.

The importance of propositional and applied research is not denied; however, without any theoretical construction, propositional studies become fragile. Moreover, not only does the research itself become fragile, but so does the science to which it belongs as a whole. This becomes evident when, even today, questions persist regarding what Geography actually studies, amid the confusion that still permeates the work of geographers.

In Brazil, dissatisfaction with the quantitative Geography that prevailed during the 1960s and 1970s led to a movement of renewal within the discipline. This movement had, as its initial landmark, the National Meeting of Geographers organized by the Brazilian Association of Geographers (AGB) in 1978. That same year also marked the publication of a seminal work in this renewal process: *For a New Geography* by the renowned geographer Milton Santos. From that point onward, several studies emerged expressing concern with social reality and offering sharp critiques of it. Consequently, this perspective came to be known as Critical Geography—or Marxist Geography—given its grounding in the fundamental pillars of Marxism (Campos, 2001).

Milton Santos, Ruy Moreira, among others, thus began to emphasize space as the central object of study in Geography. Until then, “the role of space in relation to society has often been minimized by Geography” (Santos, 1977, p. 81, our translation), as Milton Santos argued in



that context. Despite the valorization and prominence of space, Geography once again undergoes a process of renewal within the critical tradition.

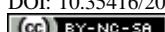
The humanistic approach to Geography, grounded in phenomenology, considers lived experience as fundamental, valuing contexts, experiences, and feelings intertwined with spatial ideas. As a result, there is no single, shared representation of space (Campos, 2001). One thus observes, if not an abandonment of Marxist foundations, at least their relegation to a secondary plane.

In light of this, the purpose of this article is to shed light on the centrality of space by articulating contributions from the critical, dialectical, and phenomenological traditions of Geography. The aim is to demonstrate that spatial analysis remains indispensable, even when studies focus on experiences, lived realities, and affectivities. Taking the municipality of Abaetetuba, in northeastern Pará, as an empirical reference, the article seeks to problematize how different forms of consumption—such as traditional practices found in local markets and modern forms linked to wholesale retail—express distinct and often antagonistic spatial rationalities. This reflection is situated within the effort to conceive space as a contradictory totality, in which hegemonies and resistances, continuities and flows, and memories and ruptures coexist.

## **Space in Geography: between epistemological ruptures and continuities**

At this point, the discussion starts from the following premise: a common representation of space is essential as an analytical basis for any object of study. It is assumed that there are multiple spaces within a single space; that is, different lived experiences coexist within the same analyzed space. However, there is always one representation that supersedes other forms of representation within that space.

There is an explanation for this premise. During the 1960s and 1970s, Henri Lefebvre wrote a series of articles and books addressing the nature of space, which went on to influence numerous Brazilian thinkers and researchers both within and beyond Geography, such as Martins (1996), Carlos (2017), and Damiani (2012), among others. This demonstrates how Lefebvre's writings fostered a heightened attention to space; spatial analysis proved particularly well suited to studies of the urban phenomenon. It is worth noting that “the urban is distinct from the city” (Lefebvre, 2008, p. 84), meaning that the urban extends beyond the city and



reaches areas traditionally considered rural. For the author, city and countryside each maintain their own specificities.

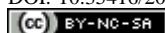
Returning to the importance of space, understanding it is by no means a simple task. For this reason, the intention here is not to engage in a debate so exhaustive as to close the discussion; on the contrary, the debate on space may never truly be concluded. The aim is to highlight authors who identify space as essential for understanding an analytical object.

The trajectory of Geography as a science has been marked by internal disputes over its identity, object, and method. Since its institutionalization, space has been treated unevenly: at times as an absolute, measurable, and objective substrate—as in positivist and quantitative paradigms—and at other times as a subjective dimension imbued with meaning, as proposed by humanistic and phenomenological Geography. In both cases, what is at stake is how human spatiality is understood and, above all, how it is produced.

The critical turn that occurred in Brazil from the late 1970s onward, catalyzed by Milton Santos's *For a New Geography* (1978), broke with the technicism of quantitative Geography by proposing space as a social and historical construction, an expression of the material and symbolic relations that subjects establish with territory. Santos's (2009) definition of space as an “inseparable system of objects and actions” already signals its complexity: objects do not exist without actions that mobilize them, and actions necessarily unfold within a material setting. More than that, space is a terrain of dispute—a place where unequal social projects confront one another.

This understanding is deepened by Lefebvre (1991) through his theory of the production of space. For the author, space is the product of social relations, but also an instrument for the reproduction of those relations. His analytical triad—perceived space, conceived space, and lived space—should not be understood as fixed categories, but as moments of a single dialectical process in which space is simultaneously practiced, represented, and experienced. Lefebvre distances himself from both objective and subjectivist views, rejecting the separation between materiality and symbolism.

Harvey (2013), in dialogue with this tradition, broadens the understanding of space by proposing a typology that distinguishes absolute, relative, and relational space, with the latter being the most conceptually dense, as it considers the intertwining of space-time dimensions as constitutive of social processes. Harvey warns that capitalist logic appropriates relational space and converts it into a commodity, producing spatialities functionalized for profit. In this sense, Lencioni (2008) and Carlos (2017) identify in the process of spatial metropolization a



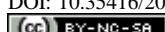
form of capital reproduction that reorganizes not only formal urban spaces, but also ways of life in peripheral and traditional territories, as observed in Abaetetuba.

Alongside this critical tradition, phenomenological Geography—represented by authors such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1980) and Edward Relph (1976)—asserts the value of lived experience in understanding spatiality. For Tuan (1980), space becomes place only when it is endowed with meaning, and such meaning is constructed through the subjects' everyday experiences. However, as Doreen Massey (2009) cautions, when detached from historical contexts and power structures, this perspective risks essentializing lived experience and overlooking the contradictions inherent in the production of space.

The tension between the idealism of humanistic Geography, represented by Tuan (1980) and Relph (1976), and Massey's (2009) critical perspective highlights the need for an approach that integrates lived, sensory experience with structural analysis. While the former emphasize everyday experience as constitutive of the meaning of place, the latter warns against the risks of decontextualizing such experiences, stressing that space is simultaneously socially produced and permeated by power relations. Thus, the epistemological intertwining of materialism and idealism emerges as a necessary strategy to avoid superficial or essentialist readings, enabling space to be understood both as lived place and as the product of historical, economic, and political forces (Tuan, 1980; Relph, 1976; Massey, 2009).

In the Brazilian context, this rapprochement remains relatively uncommon, yet it shows signs of consolidation in studies that engage in dialogue with critical Geography and humanistic phenomenology. Research inspired by Santos (2009), alongside more recent works by geographers who explore everyday experience, spatial appropriation, and the social perception of places, points to an effort to reconcile structural analysis with subjective experience (Holzer, 2008). Although not yet a fully established tradition, this approach demonstrates originality by articulating the sensitive and material dimensions of space, signaling the possibility of a Geography that is simultaneously critical, reflexive, and attentive to the richness of human experience.

For Lefebvre (1991), space is produced dialectically through social relations, allowing for analysis at multiple levels. The production of space thus occurs through spatial practices that mobilize material bases and their symbolic representations, ensuring hegemonic appropriation and permanence by particular social actors (Lefebvre, 1991). This argument corroborates the claim presented earlier in this chapter: although different lived experiences



coexist within the same space, there is a hegemonic representation of that space. Therefore, a common representation of space is required to support the analysis of objects.

This theory of the production of space has influenced geographers worldwide. Harvey (2013), for example, introduces into the debate a tripartite conception of space. According to this perspective, space is divided into three dimensions: absolute space, characterized as fixed and understood as the “space of private property and other bounded territorial entities (such as states, administrative units, urban plans, and urban grids)” (Harvey, 2013, p. 10, our translation); relative space, understood as a space with “multiple geometries from which we can choose, and whose spatial frame depends strictly on what is being relativized and by whom” (Harvey, 2013, p. 11, our translation); and relational space, which posits the impossibility of separating space and time in analysis. In this sense, the space-time relation “implies the idea of internal relations; external influences are internalized in specific processes or things through time” (Harvey, 2013, p. 12, our translation).

Harvey’s (2013) tripartite view of space converges with Lefebvre’s (1991) conception of space as a social production. Each society produces space through its own relations. Once again corroborating the premise outlined earlier, Moreira (2006) argues that space “coincides with the very construction of human life, since it is by constructing society that humans construct their space, and do so dialectically” (Moreira, 2006, p. 41, our translation). This dialectical view of space enables a broad analysis across multiple levels and variables, encompassing contexts both within and beyond the city.

It is therefore within space that intentionalities are materialized, providing support for lived processes. Santos (2009) contributes to this discussion by conceptualizing space in relation to the constitution of the lived technical-scientific-informational milieu that emerged from the 1970s onward. His methodological effort lies in conceiving space as an inseparable system of objects and actions—material and immaterial—thus ensuring spatial dynamism (Santos, 2009). This conception provides a basis for analyses that approach the totality of the phenomenon under investigation. The historical process is complex and mutable, and the analysis of totality offers the most faithful integrity to reality (Santos, 2009), reinforcing the arguments put forward by Moreira (2006).

Space as totality—as a dialectical social construction that is both produced and reproduced—confers upon space its inherent complexity. When processes are fragmented, the movement of dialectical construction is emptied (Santos, 2009), for reality itself is complex. Analyses grounded solely in perception can severely limit the understanding of spatial



complexity, potentially leading to partial interpretations that obscure multiple spatial scales and, consequently, compromise social analyses of space.

From this dialogue among authors, it becomes clear that conceiving space as a geographical category requires acknowledging its multiscalar, contradictory, and relational nature. It is through this movement that space ceases to be merely a backdrop and becomes an analytical protagonist of reality.

### **Totality, contradiction, and hegemony: space as a field of dispute**

If space is socially produced, it is produced under asymmetrical relations, making it simultaneously a field of appropriation and resistance. Santos (2009) reminds us that space cannot be understood through isolated parts, as spatial reality constitutes a totality in motion, composed of multiple scales, temporalities, and interests. This totality, however, is contradictory: within it, dominant rationalities—linked to technical, economic, and informational logics—confront subordinate rationalities that are often silenced in official discourses.

Lencioni (2008), in analyzing the expansion of metropolitan logic across territory, demonstrates that even non-metropolitan cities are affected by this dynamic, producing fragmented, functionalized, and exclusionary spaces. In this context, metropolization refers not merely to urban growth, but to a new form of spatial organization subordinated to the logic of capital. This interpretation is shared by Rogério Haesbaert (2004), who proposes the notion of multiterritoriality to account for the complexity of territorialities experienced by subjects who simultaneously inhabit traditional spaces and the functional spaces of capital.

Lefebvre (2008) complements this perspective by arguing that the urban has become a commodity, a product of capital, reconfiguring even the countryside, which comes to be governed by urban logics. In this context, traditional ways of life do not disappear, but are strained and often marginalized. The persistence of these practices, however, should not be interpreted as residue or backwardness, but as resistance—a form of (re)existence that challenges the hegemony of dominant rationality.

It is at this point that phenomenological Geography, when articulated with critical thought, can contribute to enriching spatial analysis. The valorization of the experience of place, memories, and affectivities, as proposed by Tuan (1980) and Relph (1976), makes it possible



to access dimensions of spatiality that cannot be captured solely through technical or economic indicators. Nevertheless, as Massey (2009) warns, such experiences must be analyzed within the structures that enable—or deny—their existence.

Perception, then, is understood as “a response to external stimuli, a purposive activity in which certain phenomena are clearly registered while others recede and are blocked” (Tuan, 1980, p. 4, our translation). Illustrating this notion of perception, Clark (1991) notes that central areas of the city are perceived more clearly because they are more frequently visited, but that perception varies according to age, gender, social class, and other factors.

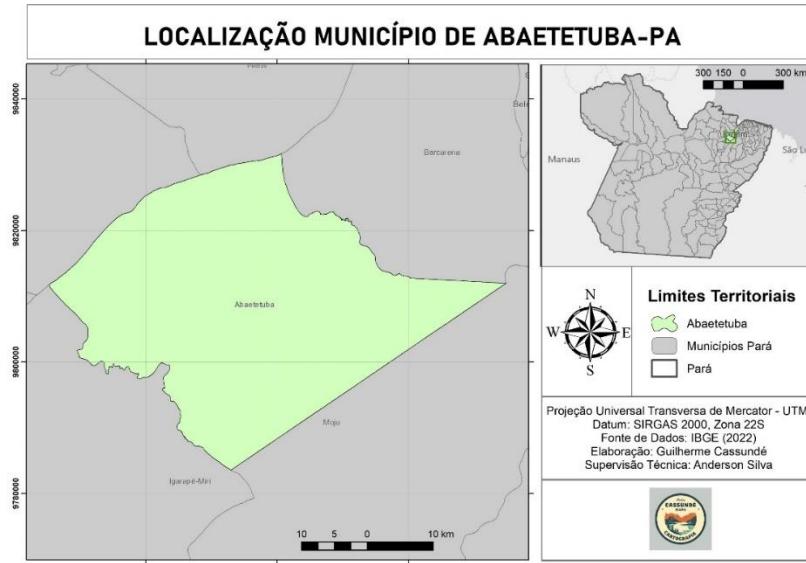
It is evident that, in phenomenology, space tends to be conceived as something already given, studied and analyzed differently depending on who perceives it. This perspective appears to exclude the mutability of space—that is, the understanding that space is “always in a process of becoming, always being made—never finalized, never closed” (Massey; Keynes, 2009, p. 8, our translation). A space treated as given and finalized—as phenomenology seems to do—ultimately lends a reductionist character to analytical studies of space.

## **Between markets and wholesale outlets: spatial contradictions in Abaetetuba, Pará**

Based on the theoretical reflection developed thus far, an empirical reading of a concrete reality is proposed: the case of the municipality of Abaetetuba, in the state of Pará, Brazil (Figure 1). Located in the Lower Tocantins region, this municipality exhibits longstanding riverside characteristics, with a traditional economy historically associated with fluvial circulation, open-air markets, and small local businesses. In recent decades, however, the expansion of the wholesale sector, driven by enterprises originating outside the state, has profoundly altered spatial organization and local consumption practices.

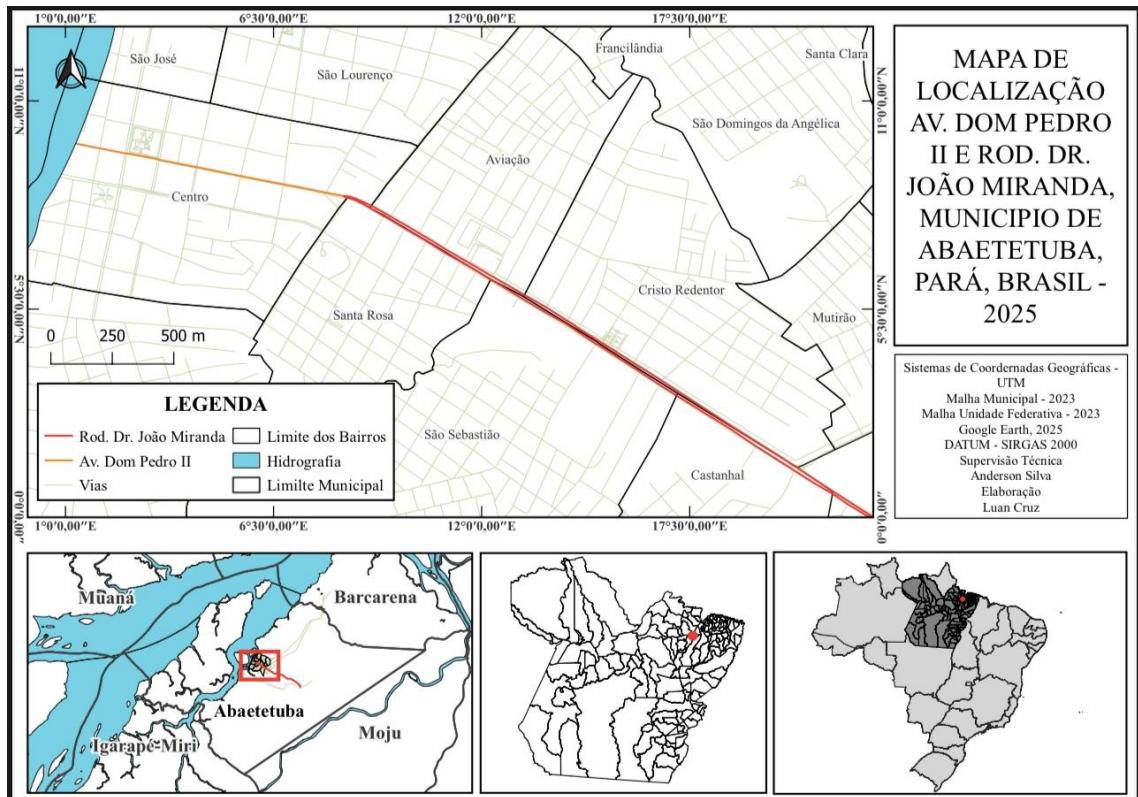


**Figure 1** – Location Map of the Municipality of Abaetetuba



Source: Prepared by Guilherme Cassundé. Technical supervision: the author. Adapted from Sirgas (2000) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (2022).

Dr. João Miranda Avenue and Dom Pedro II Avenue (Figure 2) encapsulate this transition. Along these avenues, two forms of spatial appropriation are expressed: on the one hand, the traditional riverside market, where practices of buying and selling remain grounded in orality, trust, and riverside territoriality; on the other, modern and highly organized wholesale outlets—structured according to logics of efficiency, standardization, and control—embedded within a broader commercial circuit. As observed by Ventura Neto and Santos (2023), this movement reveals the financialization of space in medium-sized and small cities, restructuring the urban economy through actors linked to financial capital.

**Figure 2 – Location Map of Dr. João Miranda Road and Dom Pedro II Avenue**

Source: Prepared by Luan Cruz. Technical supervision: the author. Adapted from Datum Sirgas (2000).

This coexistence between traditional and modern forms of consumption demonstrates that space is not homogeneous: different temporalities, rationalities, and ways of life coexist within it. However, this coexistence does not occur under equal conditions. Due to their power structures and financial backing, wholesale outlets impose a spatial hegemony that displaces local practices and reshapes flows, meanings, and relationships. This reaffirms the arguments of Lefebvre (1991) and Santos (2009) that space is traversed by relations of domination and that every spatial practice is also a struggle over representation and appropriation.

By not employing the term “spatial cut,” this study adopts an approach that recognizes the analytical part—the avenues examined—can only be understood as an expression of a whole: a contradictory and dynamic totality in which local and global scales, as well as internal and external forces, intersect. As Santos (2009) argues, the analysis of totality makes it possible to identify invisible connections among seemingly disconnected phenomena, revealing space as a field of interdependencies.

### **Aspects of the whole within the part**

In geographical research, it is very common to encounter the expression *spatial cut*. The use of this expression is associated with a part or fragment of space that one intends to investigate. However, this terminology may suggest the act of “cutting,” “removing,” or “setting aside,” which poses a problem for spatial analysis. The issue lies precisely in the fact that it makes little sense to speak of a “cut” when analyzing a whole.

Although this article focuses on a part of space, the expression *spatial cut* is deliberately avoided. This choice stems from the understanding that all processes and phenomena occurring in a given part do not occur without cause or without prior conditions. No matter how innovative or unprecedented a process or phenomenon may appear, the conditions that allow it to emerge in a particular space have identifiable and knowable origins. This is precisely the intention of this section of the article: to highlight aspects present in the part—Dr. João Miranda Highway and Dom Pedro II Avenue—that are directly related to the whole and, therefore, cannot be simply detached from space in order to be analyzed.

Among the many aspects that could be examined in the chosen spatial manifestation, the form of consumption was selected. This choice is justified by the fact that these two continuous thoroughfares display both more traditional and more modern patterns of consumption. Regarding traditional consumption, one observes the market located at the end of Dom Pedro II Avenue, which flows into the most traditional open-air market situated along the riverbanks. In contrast, along Dr. João Miranda Highway, two wholesale outlets originating from outside the state of Pará have been established, alongside a supermarket owned by Pará-based entrepreneurs that changed its name and now operates as a wholesale outlet.

In this regard, Ventura Neto and Santos (2023, p. 289, our translation) argue that this phenomenon

constitutes a scenario of dispute that appears to frame a process of spatial restructuring on an even broader scale. In the regional context, companies linked to financial capital operating in the supermarket retail sector have become part of an urban economy that has intensified around metropolization and the growth of medium-sized cities.

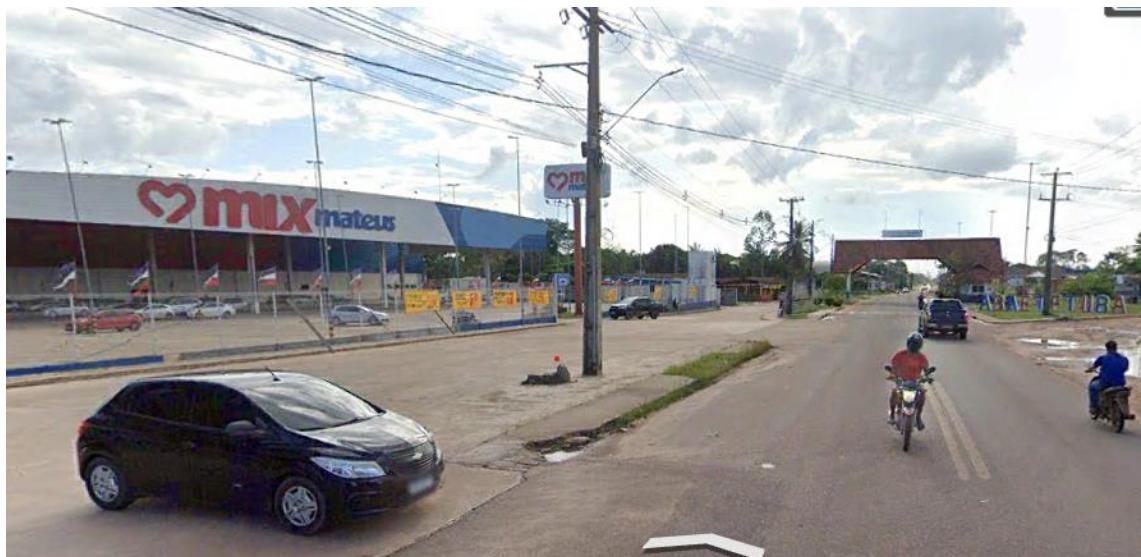
This observation confirms that the choice of consumption as the basis for spatial analysis in this article is analytically sound.



### ***The lived experience of buying and selling on a daily basis***

An example of what has been discussed above can be found right next to the municipality's main entrance: the construction of a wholesale enterprise (Figure 3). This is not the only one in the municipality; in fact, there are other examples along the same highway under analysis. The implementation of this type of enterprise did not occur at that specific location without prior relations that enabled its establishment. For this reason, the analysis would be compromised if a mere "spatial cut" were made to examine the implementation of wholesale outlets of this kind in Abaetetuba.

**Figure 3 – Wholesale enterprise**



Source: Google Earth (2024).

As previously mentioned, along the same Dr. João Miranda Highway there is another wholesale enterprise belonging to a different group (Figure 4), demonstrating that the presence of this type of establishment is not an isolated case in the municipality.

**Figure 4** – Wholesale enterprise in Abaetetuba



Source: Google Earth (2024).

The enterprises mentioned above originate from outside the state of Pará. However, to demonstrate that spatial objects change as spatial relations change, there is also a local (state-level) supermarket chain that has modified its operations across all its units, combining supermarket activities with wholesale and department-store functions (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** – Local wholesale and retail enterprise



Source: Google Earth (2024).

The change in the profile of this local enterprise confirms that space is always in the process of being constructed—as a becoming, in Massey's (2009) terms. Moreover, this transformation occurred as a result of intensified competition generated by the presence of

wholesale outlets from outside the state of Pará. Some local enterprises that failed to adapt to this new competitive landscape were forced into bankruptcy. The solution adopted by this retail chain, therefore, was to adjust to this new phase of competition that emerged with the arrival of such enterprises (Ventura Neto; Santos, 2023).

A less in-depth analysis of the reality outlined above reveals that changes have occurred in certain aspects: in the relationship between how and where basic goods are purchased, and in the very ways of interacting with the new space produced through the construction and operation of wholesale enterprises. A more in-depth analysis would raise further questions: what existed in these places prior to the construction of these developments? Were there dwellings, or merely vacant land without effective occupation? If the latter, was the land used in any way—informal football fields or areas for birdwatching<sup>2</sup>?

It is clear that the transformation brought about by the production of a new space has altered lived experiences within it. Forms and functions change; processes change as well. Prior to the construction and operation of these enterprises, what was the most common way of purchasing goods, and where did it take place? These questions emerge from lived experience and affect, yet they cannot be analyzed in isolation. Such concerns may stem from processes that did not originate there for the first time, but rather from dynamics already present elsewhere. Therefore, even when analysis is grounded in lived experience and feeling, spatial analysis cannot be set aside, as it is through space that social relations—and new relations—are produced, following the creation of new spaces.

Despite the changes brought about by the arrival of wholesale enterprises, the more traditional form of buying and selling—through open-air markets—has not disappeared entirely. Dom Pedro II Avenue hosts an open-air market (Figure 6) and ends precisely at Abaetetuba's most traditional market, located along the banks of the Maratauira River, a tributary of the Tocantins River (Figure 7).

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<sup>2</sup> Term used for hunting birds or simply observing, appreciating, and cataloging them.



**Figure 6** – Open-air market on Dom Pedro II Avenue



Source: Pulsar Imagens (2024).

**Figure 7** – Open-air market on the banks of the Maratauíra River



Source: Holofote Virtual (2010).

The images above attest that there are multiple spaces within a single space. Despite changes in consumption practices brought about by the arrival of wholesale enterprises, the

tradition of purchasing basic consumer goods at open-air markets persists. Observation of this phenomenon points to a shared definition of space, as proposed by Lefebvre (1991), who argues that the production of space is the result of social practices, which can be differentiated when social strata are taken into account. Nevertheless, as Lefebvre (1991) also emphasizes, there is always a hegemonic actor in relation to others. This further reinforces the need for a common understanding of space in analysis, even when focusing on non-hegemonic lived experiences, since these are inevitably situated under the hegemony of other actors.

In Figure 6, one can observe traditional open-air market stalls alongside small boats that serve both to unload products coming from islands surrounding the municipality and to purchase basic consumer goods for those areas—a characteristic feature of riverside cities. If the analysis were conducted solely from the standpoint of economic hegemony, wholesale outlets would appear in official statistics as dominant within Abaetetuba's process of economic development. However, the economic importance of open-air markets—so deeply rooted in consumption practices in cities of all sizes—cannot be denied. In other words, markets have been affected in their buying and selling processes by the arrival of wholesale enterprises. Even when analysis is grounded in lived consumption experiences within the markets, it is impossible to analyze this space without considering the role of wholesale developments, as they have promoted a spatial reorganization of consumption that differs from the period prior to their arrival—even within the markets themselves.

The totality of space, as proposed by Santos (2009), is a process that analyzes precisely what has been outlined above. Within a fragment of a whole, it is possible to observe a range of relationships that are connected to other relationships produced in the analyzed space, whether directly examined or not. The need for a shared understanding of space is essential so that, based on it, similar and/or different relationships—produced within the same space or across different spaces—can be characterized, thereby revealing experiences of common or divergent lived realities. Furthermore, this understanding unveils the contradictions inherent in space, indicating the need for struggle so that such contradictions may be overcome.

## **Final Considerations**

Adopting space as the central category of geographic analysis is not merely a theoretical choice; it constitutes an ethical stance in the face of the complexity of social life. The case of Abaetetuba demonstrates that even territories considered peripheral are embedded in broader



spatial logics, operating through processes such as metropolization, financialization, and the imposition of new forms of consumption and urban organization. At the same time, it reveals that traditional practices persist, are reinvented, and resist the pressures of capital—not as remnants of the past, but as active forms of (re)existence.

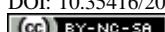
Theorists of spatial analysis point to a concrete complexity. Because of this complexity, space requires a shared meaning so that such complexity is not reduced. Studies grounded in the lived experiences of non-hegemonic classes have become increasingly present within Geography, which represents a highly positive and enriching development for the discipline. What must not occur, however, is the fragmentation of space as a methodological shortcut for conducting such studies. It is reaffirmed that a shared understanding of space is necessary to prevent analytical reductionism.

The municipality of Abaetetuba is a classic Amazonian riverside municipality, characterized by clearly evident traditional features. Nevertheless, it has begun to experience new dynamics as a result of the metropolization of space, a process that has been transforming the realities of cities of all sizes, including within the Amazonian context. The financialization of space—a defining feature of metropolization—has expanded on a large scale, reshaping social and economic relations.

Based on what has been presented, a shift in patterns of product consumption becomes evident. Wholesale retailers have become hegemonic, from an economic standpoint, within the municipality's formal economy, transforming the population's consumption environment—though not for the entire population. A significant portion of residents continues to maintain—either through resistance or as their only viable alternative—the tradition of purchasing goods from open-air markets. Although this tradition persists, it has been affected to some degree by the arrival of wholesale enterprises.

Consumption relations reveal that, despite appearing opposed, these forms of consumption are interconnected and exert mutual influence. This finding corroborates the premise stated at the beginning of Chapter 1 of this article: there is a need for a shared understanding of space in research. This need is confirmed even when studies focus on non-dominant classes within spatial relations.

Space, as taught by Santos, Lefebvre, Massey, and many others, is always a social construction—a contradictory process of becoming. By integrating theory and empiricism, structure and lived experience, totality and fragment, this study reaffirms the importance of a



Geography committed to a critical reading of reality—a Geography that sees space not merely as a backdrop, but as the very plot of social struggles.

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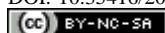
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