# Matopiba: Historical, geographic and socioeconomic aspects

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This writing seeks to address the general aspects involving the history, geography and socioeconomic context of MATOPIBA. To this end, a brief theoretical explanation will be presented based on the contributions of Arilson Favareto, a brazilian researcher, in contextualizing the region.

The dissemination of the territorial approach to development in public policies and development studies, especially in the rural context, throughout the 21st century, is a discursive line that is being used. Of particular note is the polysemy associated with the concept of territory and the predominance of a normative focus in research, which tends to view territorial development as an intervention project, with an innovative *framework* for understanding the evolution of territorial dynamics, based into a theory of long-term change, a medium-range theory of rural territorial dynamics and a theory of the articulations between social structures and forms of sociability. This *framework* is applied in empirical studies conducted by the authors in different territories in Brazil, aiming not only to describe, but also to critically analyze the development dynamics and the possibilities

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of overcoming the forms of domination present in these regions (Favareto et al. , 2015).

The literature on territorial development applied to rural regions in Latin America gained significant prominence in the early 2000s, reflecting European debates such as those inaugurated by Bagnasco on the Third Italy and the European Union's *Leader program.* In the Latin American context, Schejtman and Berdegué published an influential work. In Brazil, studies by Veiga and Abramovay were pioneering and influenced the creation of the Territorial Development Secretariat of the Ministry of Agrarian Development in 2003. However, for Favareto (2019), subsequent literature often presented a normative bias, treating rural territories as mere units of planning and policy application without a critical analysis of their constitutive structures (Favareto, 2019).

In response to this gap, the Rural Territorial Dynamics research program was conducted in nineteen cases in eleven Latin American countries between 2008 and 2013. One of the main conclusions of this study was the formulation of a middle-range theory to understand territorial dynamics in rural regions. This program sought to answer two main questions: whether, during the 1990s, there were locations capable of simultaneously reducing poverty, inequality and experiencing economic growth; and which factors explained this positive performance, as pointed out by Favareto (2019).

The study found that, even in the context of the 1990s, some locations achieved this positive convergence in social and economic indicators. As for explanatory factors, an innovative hypothesis was raised, highlighting the importance of local institutions in determining development trajectories. It was obser-

ved that institutional changes were not only driven by exogenous forces, but also emerged from endogenous processes, such as the formation of social coalitions (Favareto , 2019).

Furthermore, the program identified five critical domains that influence territorial dynamics, including structure of access to natural resources, dynamic markets, productive structure, relations with cities and public policies. The interaction between these domains results in different compositions of territorial performance in terms of inequality, poverty and economic growth, highlighting the complexity of rural territorial dynamics in Latin America (Favareto , 2019).

According to Favareto (2019), the five main factors that shape territorial dynamics in rural areas are the following, in summary: the structure of access and use of natural resources, dynamic markets, the productive structure, relations with cities and public policies.

The structure of access to natural resources is a crucial element. Territories with less concentrated access to natural resources tend to have lower inequality and can achieve more inclusive economic growth.

Dynamic markets play a significant role in attracting external income, boosting the local economy and raising living standards.

The productive structure also influences territorial dynamics. Territories with a more diversified production structure tend to favor the participation of small producers. On the other hand, those who are more specialized may experience economic growth but face greater inequality and vulnerability.

Relations with cities are another important aspect. Territories that have important urban centers are more likely to diversify their production. However, those lacking urban centers face capital flight, limiting local investment opportunities.

Finally, public policies play a crucial role in shaping the social and economic dynamics of territories. They can both reinforce existing structures and promote change. However, it is important to note that these policies are also shaped by pre-existing territorial conditions.

In short, the formation of broad coalitions that value territory as a basis for social reproduction is more common in less concentrated and diversified territories. In more concentrated territories, coalitions tend to be more restricted and prioritize external insertion to the detriment of territorial cohesion. These factors combined result in different territorial performances in terms of inequality, poverty and economic growth.

Favareto *et al.* (2015) and Favareto (2019) schematically illustrate the typical trajectories as follows:

**Figure 1 - Adapted scheme of typical trajectories**

Source: Adaptation carried out by the author (2024), based on the work of Favareto *et al.* (2015) and Favareto (2019).

There is an approach to the idea that the identification of exemplary trajectories does not mean that a territory is condemned to a certain type of performance in terms of growth, poverty and inequality based on its initial conditions. It is noteworthy that there is a path dependence that begins with the way in which natural resources are appropriated throughout the history of territories, influencing the productive structure and the relationship with urban centers. However, it is noteworthy that there is still room for coalitions to challenge dominant forces or for external forces to partially alter these structures or their results, as institutions are not fixed and there are always contradictions between them and the external context that can be explored. for social action.

This approach provides an understanding of the heterogeneity of Latin American territories, especially in their rural regions, filling an analysis gap. By highlighting the role of typical structures in these regions, such as access and use of natural resources and relations between rural areas and urban centers, it offers a more substantial reading of the factors that influence territorial formations. Furthermore, Favareto (2019) combines elements:

> [...] inspired by recent and rarely put into dialogue approaches such as the capabilities approach (SEN, 1998), institutionalism (NORTH *et al.*, 2009), with approaches that explore the interdependencies between actors, assets and institutions and their results in terms of social and economic performance. (Favareto, 2019, p. 48).

This combination provides a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the social and economic dynamics of the territories. Favareto (2019) discusses the specific case of MATOPIBA, a region that has undergone transformations in its territorial trajectory, as set out in the following illustration:

**Figure 2 - Adapted diagram of the typical trajectories - MATOPIBA Case**

Source: Adaptation carried out by the author (2024), based on the work of Favareto *et al.* (2015) and Favareto (2019).

It is described that the MATOPIBA area moves from type 5, dynamically, between types 3 and 4 of the schematic figure, indicating the existence of municipalities that connect or become medium-sized cities, while others remain distant from these connections. This distinction results in different dynamics: in some cases, there is a transformation of productive structures, leading to a reduction in poverty, while in others poverty persists despite the generation of wealth. This occurs due to the presence of elites who influence the territory, but who act in a restricted manner and often do not represent the interests of local society as a whole, resulting in unequal territories and difficulty in social inclusion (Favareto, 2019).

In short, based on Favareto (2019), there is a shift of MATOPIBA from type 5 to types 3 and 4 in terms of territorial trajectory. This movement implies a transition from a dynamic

characterized by coexistence between large estates and smallholdings, without access to dynamic markets and virtuous relationships with medium-sized cities, to a situation in which some municipalities establish links or transform into medium-sized cities, while others remain distant from these connections. . This displacement directly influences the productive structure, relations with cities and local coalitions, affecting patterns of growth, poverty and inequality in the region. The next topics will address the MATOPIBA region more specifically, exploring these changes and their impacts in greater detail.

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