



Sociedade & Natureza

ISSN: 0103-1570

ISSN: 1982-4513

Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Instituto de Geografia,  
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia

Matos, Fábio de Oliveira  
Brazilian regionalization in the first half of the 20th century  
Sociedade & Natureza, vol. 31, e46576, 2019  
Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Instituto de Geografia, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14393/SN-v31n1-2019-46576>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=321363062027>

- ▶ How to cite
- ▶ Complete issue
- ▶ More information about this article
- ▶ Journal's webpage in redalyc.org



Scientific Information System Redalyc

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Project academic non-profit, developed under the open access initiative



Sociedade & Natureza

ISSN: 0103-1570

ISSN: 1982-4513

Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Instituto de Geografia, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia

## Brazilian regionalization in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

---

**Matos, Fábio de Oliveira**

Brazilian regionalization in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Sociedade & Natureza, vol. 31, 2019

Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Instituto de Geografia, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia

**Available in:** <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=321363062027>

**DOI:** 10.14393/SN-v31n1-2019-46576

# Brazilian regionalization in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Fábio de Oliveira Matos <sup>1</sup> [fabiomatos@ufc.br](mailto:fabiomatos@ufc.br)  
*Universidade Federal do Ceará, Brazil*

**Abstract:** This work aims to analyze the process of Brazilian regionalization throughout the first half of the 20th century. For that, I conducted an analysis of the bases of construction of the regional planning and its relation with the organization of the beginning of Brazil-Republic, from the perspective of Historical Geography. The operational procedure of the research was carried out in two moments: first, a bibliographical search about concepts and themes was done, such as regionalization, natural region and regional planning. Secondly, I applied documentary surveys on the regionalization plans developed in Brazil in the selected period, with emphasis on the prospect of what would be consolidated as Brazilian regions. From this investigation, it is possible to observe the complexity in the regional adjustment arrangements of the State, as well as the role of regionalization in the search for the formation of the federative unit at the beginning of the last century.

**Keywords:** Regionalization, Brazil, Natural Region, Historical Geography.

Sociedade & Natureza, vol. 31, 2019

Universidade Federal de Uberlândia,  
Instituto de Geografia, Programa de Pós-  
Graduação em Geografia

Received: 02 January 2019  
Accepted: 04 February 2019

DOI: 10.14393/SN-v31n1-2019-46576

## Funding

Funding source: Coordenação de  
Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível  
Superior  
Contract number: 001

CC BY-NC-ND

## Introduction

The notion of Brazilian regionalization process generally emerges associated with the Country's republican political development; this concept, is historically administrative and inherent of macro-region in the National State formation. In these terms, the epistemology of the concept of Region becomes pertinent only under the acceptance that sub-region is about the region of development. Therefore, it is possible to notice that the process of regional division presents a variety of conceptions established with the very formation of the concept as well as with the establishment of a parameter originated from Brazilian Society development.

Santos (1994) offers an important contribution to region concept by highlighting the magnitude of perceiving the process of regional construction exogenous methods. In this sense, the region concept originates itself from the dialectic analyses of internal and external factors of its formation.

Since the referred process is under constant construction, the Region, conceived in the sense of planning, development and State action, presents distinct perspectives given the historical moment. We concur with Albuquerque Junior (2009) when this author affirms that borders and territories cannot be placed on a non-historical level, since their elaborations are essentially present throughout time, under the perspective of space in its multiplicity, that is: economic, political, juridical or cultural.

Therefore, regional space comes to light as a result of a “net of relations between agents that produce themselves and act on different spatial dimensions” (ALBUQUERQUE JUNIOR, 2009, p. 35). Similarly, regional spatiality is not stationary, always revealing new readings to the limits of its expansion/reduction processes. Such advances on the manner of conceiving it, brings Region closer to the notion of place; on this account, the search for understanding Region internal dynamics runs through the essential weighting of the way of life of human actors - their daily processes of cooperation and conflicts as well - within the regional limits.

Based upon this premise, the present work, of geo-historical nature, is a result of a bibliographic and documental investigation aiming to understand the regionalization process adopted in Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century. With regard to the construction of the bibliographic basis, consultations were made in scientific databases such as Scielo e-Library, and in the site of Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - CAPES (“Coordination for Improvement of Higher Education Personnel”), as well as in the libraries of Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE (“Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics”).

In order to survey floristic division map of Martius, Eichler and Urban (1858), it was used the “Flora Brasiliensis” digitalization project. The triad regionalization, natural region and planning, under the responsibility of the Centro de Referência em Informação Ambiental - CRIA (“Environmental Information Reference Center”) were the Boolean terms selected to the present investigation. For that matter, two moments synthesizes the investigation procedures: initially, a documental and bibliographic search on the concepts and subjects related to the objective, and, in a second moment, the analysis on the Country’s regionalization process at the beginning of the last century.

## **Federalism and regionalization in Brazil**

Paviani (1992, p. 372) states that “talking about region is walking in a terrain full of labyrinths and epistemological traps”. Accordingly, it is possible to realize the complex web of studies and propositions concerning regionalization in Brazil built under many different theoretical influences. When addressing Brazilian regionalization in the first half of the twentieth century, it is feasible to consider that earlier, in the mid-nineteen century, the regionalist discourse was already taking shape in Brazil, structuring itself as a response to centralized politics dictated by the Imperial Government in opposition to separatist trends in that period. Even with the social and spatial reorganization developed during the First Republic initial years, it sought to pave pathways to consolidate national unit, through the mobilization of decentralized agents (Albuquerque Júnior, 2009).

However, despite the possibility of different interpretations to the term, one of the first legal documents in the Brazilian Republic to deal

with administrative division, elaborated by the *Directoria do Serviço da Estatística do Ministério da Agricultura, Industria e Commercio* (“Board of Statistical Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce”) did not include a Regional Scale, being basically aimed to organize Brazil, politically and administratively, in States, Municipalities and Districts. As the document made clear, the proposition to this organization, was basically a preliminary work; however, it was observed that the document itself, had not yet been suggested to Brazil-Republic, “coming closer, in its making, to a similar work produced in the last days of the previous regimen (sic)” (BRASIL, 1913, p.4).

The work to ensure the delimitations of Brazilian States expressed the concern to bring stability to the Federative Model emerging in the Country according to Decree nº 1 from November, 15<sup>th</sup>, 1889, influenced by the North American model, which was characterized by the duality Union and Federative States in a single territory and unique people (FABRIZ; FERREIRA, 2002). The institutionalized way of implementation, in the Brazilian case, results in “imperfect federalization” (MORAIS; VANDRESEN, 2003, 190).

The regional oligarchies of the country, which performed a dual role, represent such situation. Although financing the consolidation of a republican model, the oligarchies were simultaneously trying to legitimate regional autonomy by means of a discourse with political, economic, cultural and environmental characteristics. Therefore, it allowed the constitution of a State that sought to ensure the strengthening of its borders in face of the dissipation of power relations among its federative entities. In that case, the responsibility for the dialogue with regional leaderships was a role for the President of the Republic.

When dealing with regional opposition to integration, Ratzel (1983) points out that, based on strong traditions, and with strong tendencies to autarchic life, the regional oligarchies search for autonomy could result in the formation of actual sub-states, in relation to State as a whole.

Therefore, according to the author, the articulation and cohesion of the political space in State - Territory organization is more important than the physical dimension. In this sense, it was possible to observe that, gradually, the Brazilian federative draft surpassed the one-off separatist movement under the aegis of the republican observance of regional peculiarities, with the imposition of nation and homeland notion. A leitmotif to the Republican Manifest, from 1870, synthesized the core of the emergent regional politics that was further adopted in the First Republic: “Centralization - Detachment, Decentralization - Unit”. In spite of the argument that federation was the only guarantee to the Country’s unity (CARVALHO, 2011), the “*Annaes do Congresso Constituinte da República*” (“Annals of the Republic Constitutive Congress”) from 1890, outlined the complex situation of the republican ideology, affirming that the goal was to pave the way for political independence to each State in particular, in Brazilian Federation. (BRASIL, 1890, p. 481).

To this extent, it is not exaggerated to attest that the Brazilian federation is born in opposition to local republican aspirations. Abrucio (1999) tells us that the regional elites wished to govern themselves as they used to do previous to 1889, however, without the Emperor's interference. So, it is established a parallel in which the foundation of the Country's federalism settles on the anti-republican practice, obtaining the support of the central power to extend the survival of the nationalist constitution.

That way, a regionalist federative republic took shape, in which, local regional leaders, by means of election frauds, commanded the country's directions. A profile change in regional conception is evident with regard to the dialectical relationship between regionalism and nationalism, starting from its attempt to re-elaborate itself as a means to promote the directions of Brazilian nationalist discourse. Candido (1985, p. 113) adds to that issue that:

(...) our nationalism was forged under regionalist positions, but pre-modernists regionalism showed itself, with its 'countryside tales'; artificial, presumptuous and creating a subordinate feeling, easy to raise complacency towards our own country, facing with European eyes our most typical realities.

On the financial sphere, the regional economic fragmentation of the Country was known, at that time, by the denomination of 'economic group of islands', considering that, historically, there were not technical conditions for economic integration. Thus, the country had sugar, coffee and extractive economic activities distributed in those islands for instance. With the fragile integration of these economies by the federal entity, the regionalist perception of Brazilian economy surpassed the logic of a national market.

It is feasible to consider that regional oligarchic fragmentation and the lack of national representativeness characterizes Brazilian geopolitics at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, this time of wide domination of regional oligarchies suffered a severe shock in the national context of that historical moment, represented by the rupture of alliances between its most important representatives - Minas Gerais and São Paulo - in 1930. This event promoted a political organization that, despite alignment with regional centralities, started to present a more centralized national profile, intensified by Getúlio Vargas' coup in 1937, known as *estadonovista* ("new-state") coup.

Influenced by the *castilhist* *reservadora* ("castilhit's reserved") politics, the *Estado Novo* ("New State") political regime tries, based on the construction of national identity, to disseminate its acceptance in the Country.

A product from that time, for instance, was the obligation to broadcast the recently created *Programa Nacional* ("National Program"), known nowadays as *Voz do Brasil* ("Voice of Brazil"), which consisted in its genesis in broadcasting via radio one of the most important means of communication at the time, Vargas' nationalist propaganda. In the economic field, the policy of industrialization and the integration of Brazilian economy start to aim at disrupting the 'economic islands'

organization, conveying the proposal of a national economy, marked by some federative initiatives, such as:

- i) The transfer of the oligarchies right to legislate over local commerce to the federal sphere;
- ii) The implementation of services and infrastructure works at a national scale, especially regarding transportation and communication; and
- iii) The extinction of fees for inter-regions commerce.

The new nationalist policy originates a large variety of organizations with the objective to build an economic national identity. For example, the Conselho Nacional do Petróleo (“National Oil Council”) in 1938, the Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (“Vale do Rio Doce Company”) in 1942, the Instituto de Resseguros do Brasil (“Brazil’s Reinsurance Institute”) in 1939, the Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (“National Metallurgical Company”) in 1941 and the creation of the Fábrica Nacional de Motores (“National Engines Factory”) in 1942 as the first step to establish the aeronautic industry in the country as well as the Ministry of Aeronautics in 1941. There is also the initiative of “colonizing” the State of Amazon with the objective to increase the national territory occupation by means of latex exploration policy.

At that period, and working to build an identity for national unit, the federal government is committed to align the State interests with the military forces. Then, it is possible to ideologically identify the political-administrative centralization at Vargas’ government observing the restructuring, and refitting of the military forces. Thus, the strengthening of the military institutions was, in the ideology field, enhanced in the Estado Novo (“New State”). It was conceived then, according to Draibe (2004, p. 59) the “material base for military defense, national autonomy and State power”.

During the Estado Novo, it was also created and made effective in 1936, the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE (“Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics”) with the objective to promote a “progressive articulation and cooperation between the three administrative spheres in the Republic political organization” (BRASIL, 1934, n/p). The referred IBGE is a product of merging the Conselho Nacional de Estatística - CNE (“National Council of Statistics”) and the Comissão Censitária Nacional - CNN (“National Census Commission”). IBGE deals with the role of “statistic surveys and geographic research could perform in benefit of the administration of the immense Brazilian territory, soon under socio-space integration” (PENHA, 1993, p.19). This way, such action sought to centralize the Brazilian techniques of statistical services “inside a plan of inter-administrative cooperation that conjugates, for a common purpose, the efforts of Union, States and Municipalities” (O ANNO..., 1940, p. 24).

With the initial purpose of setting the affirmation of Brazilian geopolitics, the creation of IBGE was destined to mitigate the lack

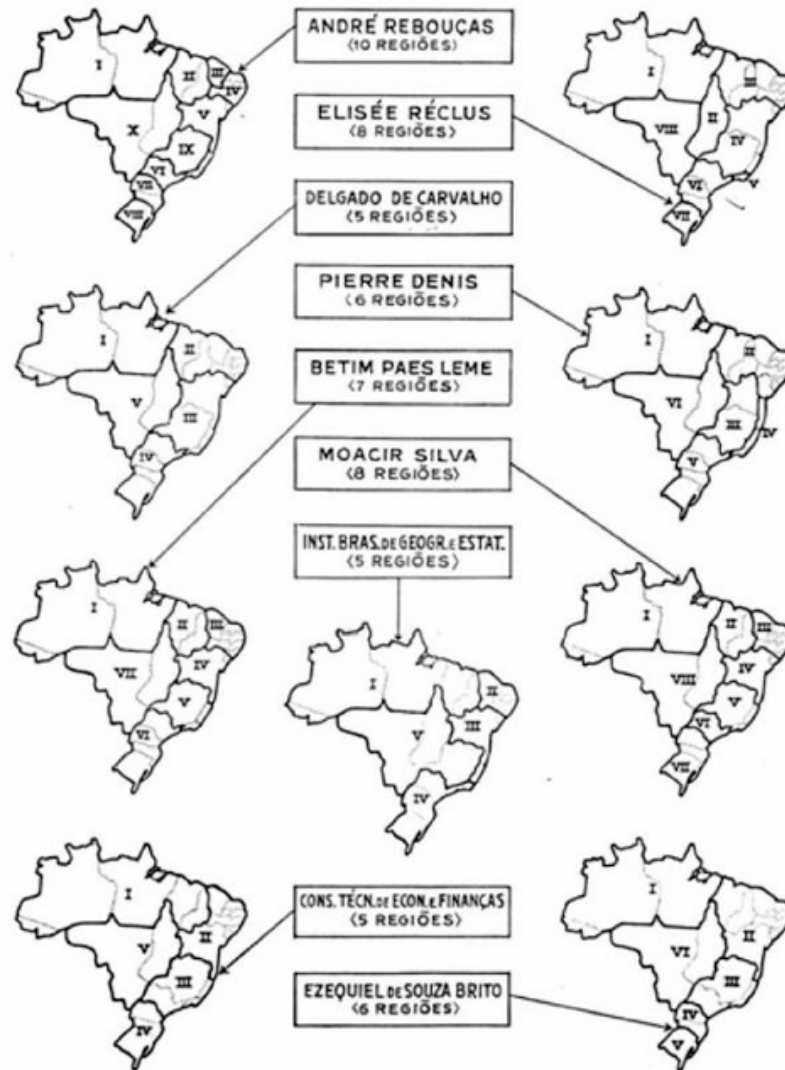
of knowledge on jurisdiction areas, which originated “enclaves to the harmony of interests and to the pace of government business in the Country” (A CANPANHÁ..., 1940, p. 129). With the initial goal to conduct a new general census of the Republic in 1940 (BRASIL, 1983) as well as to conduct a systematic survey on national statistics by means of demographic, economic and social data; IBGE also represented the Country’s administrative detachment from the regional oligarchic structure of the past century and depicted the construction of a national identity, as affirms Penha (1943, p.41):

First of all, it is necessary to highlight that the emergence of IBGE inserted it inside a historical context, characterized by a triple movement of centralization, bureaucratization and rationalization around the State sphere. This period, considered by analysts as a process of construction of the Brazilian capitalist State, meant the disruption of “State autonomies” that supported the oligarchic poles resulting in an increasing centralization of power. Such centralization manifested itself with regulatory characteristic, reaching different social sectors.

The complexity of regional formation in the Country, according to Smith (1993), presented itself as a historical phenomenon that follows an incomplete script of national formation trajectory. From that perspective, the notion of regionalization process changed significantly throughout republican consolidation in Brazil. Therefore, as a part of the national policy, Vargas’ government started to insert regional division in the set of measures aiming at reaffirming national identity. The continuity of regional conception in that period emerged influenced by Roosevelt’s North American regional planning policy and his New Deal. Thus, the search for a new regional profile for the country dominated the discourse involving the logics of Brazilian socio-space organization.

## **Considerations on Brazilian regionalization models**

A wide specter of regional propositions arose since the first Republican Constitution in 1892, until the more significant study of regional division elaborated by IBGE in 1941. Varying according to the planner’s intended objective, such propositions were presented under diverse criteria, whether orographic, botanic, climatic or economic (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1**  
Brazil's regional division according to its authors.  
Source: Guimarães (1941, p. 344).

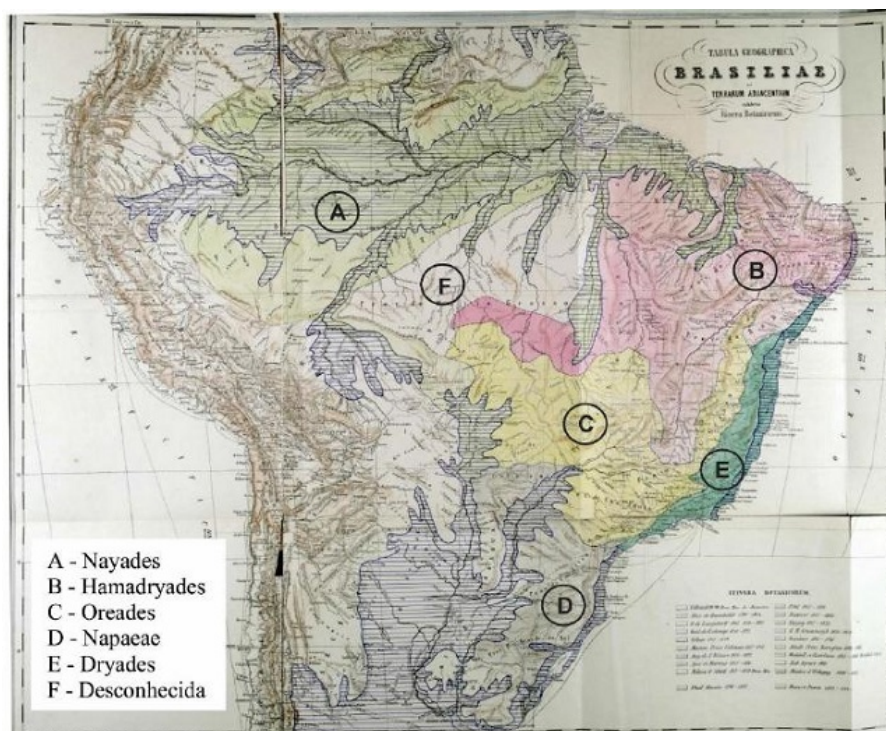
Among those divisions, stands out the one elaborated by André Rebouças in 1889, it is one of the rare studies from that time not to choose exclusively the natural region selection, exploring the division on the economic point of view. The work resulted in a regional proposition that divided the country in 10 geo-economic regions, characterized by regions comprised of only one State, in this case: Ceará, Minas Gerais, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. These regions, constituted of only one federative entity, were justified by the State's economic peculiarities, notably, cotton, coffee and charque ("salted and sun dried beef").

In the meantime, it is relevant to portrait the considerations addressed by the German botanist Carl Friedrich Phillip Von Martius in his studies when visiting Brazil during the Empire regime; at the time, he already highlighted the relevance of regional organisms as a means to slow down the separatist movement. In that case, the referred author suggested a survey from a different perspective, that is, with regard to the role of

historical relations. Such suggestion aimed especially at integrating the socio relations genesis engendered throughout the historical process, in order to search a unity of national history:

To avoid this conflict, it seems necessary to, first of all, in judiciously determined times that represent the general country's condition (...) advancing to those parts of the country which essentially differ, to be emphasized in each one whatever is truly important, significant to history. (...) So, for instance, the history of S. Paulo, Minas, Goyas e Mato Grosso Provinces converge; Maranhão history is connected to Pará's, and the wheel of events of Pernambuco constitute a natural group with Ceará, Rio grande do Norte and Parahyba's. At last, the history of Sergipe, Alagoas and Porto Seguro, is itself, Bahia's history (MARTIUS, 1844, p. 400).

It was also Martius', with August Wilhelm Eichler and Ignatz Urban, the proposition of a regional cut oriented from their botanic collections to the work "Flora Brasiliensis". Of naturalist origin, the referred study dealt with the taxonomy of 22.767 species, gathered in 15 books with the contributions of about 65 specialists. The Mapa Geral de Divisão Florística ("Floristic Division General Map" - (fig. 2) provided the divisions wit Greek mythology names, organizing the map in six regions: "Nayades" to Amazon flora; "Hamadryades" corresponding to Caatinga; "Oreades" to Cerrado; "Dryades" to Mata Atlântica; "Napaeae" referring to Mata das Araucárias and to sul-rio-grandense's fields, and another region, of unknown denomination, located between Amazon forest and caatinga (MOTOYAMA, 2004; GUIMARÃES, 1942).



**Figure 2**  
Floristic Division General Map (1858).  
Source: Martius, Eichler e Ignatz (1858).

The studies coordinated by Martius stood out concerning regional analysis, as far as they became the basis for regionalization propositions

yet to be undertaken. Following the way of thinking of environmental determinism, the main regional studies emerging at Brazil's Republic initial years, present an intrinsic influence of region's notion oriented by natural characteristics, consolidating the Natural Region concept in national planning (MATOS, 2013).

Thus, different ways to regionalizing, based on Natural Region, emerged from the approach that suggests that environment exercises a certain ascendancy on society development orientation. Under this conception, Region is a pre-conceived morphological unit, resulting from the combination in areas with nature's components (CORRÊA, 1986; GOMES, 1995). Influenced by this school of thought, regional division projects arise interconnected with the notion of natural characteristics. Besides Martius, professors Eliseé Réclus (1893) and Honório Silvestre (1922) had already turned to the basis of Ratzel's determinist school to conduct studies on Brazilian regionalization, with didactic use.

In this period, the French *possibiliste école* also starts to influence region studies. Delgado de Carvalho, one of the pioneers on scientific geography in Brazil (ANDRADE, 1999) influenced by Lablache's 'possibiliste' thoughts and Ratzel's determinism (PIRES, 2006, p. 23) portrayed the fundamental role of regional studies on the systematization of science, as a means to interpret and understand Brazil (CARVALHO, 1943). Carvalho defines the role of regional studies on science systematization itself and the search for the world's interpretation as: "the notion of region, indeed, came up as soon as Geography was no longer purely descriptive, but also explanatory" (CARVALHO, 1943, p. 11).

The referred author deals with natural region trying not to ignore the historical traditions of the country, portraying different physiographic influences such as terrain, hydrography, climate and vegetation under the context of human occupation process permeated over the Brazilian territory formation. This way, he suggested a regional synthesis that "will account for a scenario to men's action" (CARVALHO, 1944, p. 16) as far as the physical aspects exercise influence on, and are influenced by, human society. The author affirms that:

The notion of natural region is just the expression of a reality, enhanced little by little by ongoing observations. The acting causes on the globe's surface are not random and demonstrate themselves, most of the time, under a certain extension (...). So, it is considered, more and more justifiable the notion of natural region and it is understood that, it is the only notion correspondent to the continuity of the same causes producing the same effects (CARVALHO, 1925, p. 79-80)

In pursuing this goal, Delgado de Carvalho elaborated one of the most important studies about Region at that time, entitled *Geografia do Brasil* ("Brazil's Geography") from 1913. This book, with educational purpose, contributed to consolidate Geography teaching at schools, being an official model of supporting tool in the subject teaching. In this book, the concept of natural region is introduced as a category of analysis to study Brazilian space, presenting the five natural regions thought for the Country, denominated: Brasil Amazônico ("Amazon-Brazil"), Brasil Norte-Oriental ("North-Eastern Brazil"), Brasil Oriental

(“Eastern-Brazil”), Brasil Meridional (“Southern-Brazil”) and Brasil Central (“Central-Brazil”). Such regional conception, ahead of IBGE’s regionalization in 1942, divided its studies in physical and economic characteristics, as observed by Oliveira Lima:

Everything in its nature, able to cradle Brazil’s features in our country, deserves sympathy and exaltation. Brazil is historically a whole, but nonetheless also geographic. Its natural regions, themselves, do not correspond exactly to the political creations, they harmonize with each other in such a way, that the headwaters of Amazon fluvial system almost lean against the recondite interior of platino fluvial system, tending to make Brazil an enormous continental island. (LIMA, 1913, n.p.).

Carvalho’s studies, clearly influenced by Élisée Reclus’ regional analysis, sought, starting from natural region, to relieve the relations between economic-social process and regional problems of the Country, exercising, “under a veil of ‘scientification’” (MACHADO, 2008, p.59), essentially political objectives. However, the author highlighted that natural region, despite been projected from the analysis of physical space on social space, is always inaccurate, since environment is a complex scenario, comprised by “simple superimposed frames, that cannot always match (thermal frame, topographic frame, botanic frame, rainfall frame, economic frame and human frame)” (CARVALHO, 1943, p. 25).

Sílvio Frói Abreu, IBGE’s technical consultant, guided by La Blache and Deffontaines studies affirmed that “[...] the studies of the different country’s regions require knowledge of soil, geographic accidents, climate, vegetation and population; but that is not enough, it is just the base for the real interpretative meaning of geography” (ABREU, 1939, p. 68). With this regard, Abreu portrayed that the regional studies presented so far, offered a small practical contribution, because these studies were concerned only “with descriptive nature, without the necessary dosage, and mainly, without interpretative spirit” (ABREU, 1939, p. 69). This way, in spite of understanding nature’s influence, the regional studies started to consider men’s role, because of organization and culture influences to the choices involving how nature will be used (GOMES, 1995; DINIZ, BATELLA, 2005).

However, Brazilian division in natural regions was ending, because of the difficulty to materialize a section in climatic, botanic or on the terrain perspective, given the lack of studies with grater technical details on Brazilian physical environment. Moreover, the demand to present a natural regional division without federative entities segregation, respecting the State boundaries, was a barrier to overcome. About the natural region problem, Marshal Mário Travassos, in his classic work entitled *Projeção Continental do Brasil* (“Brazil’s Continental Projection”) from 1931, affirmed:

The natural region’s problem, created by geography integrative tendencies, is itself, an intricate matter. It is about, in presence of a territory, which the geographic complex has been studied, to establish the group of regions in which certain phenomena manifest themselves, leading to how to conduct the analysis’ synthesis, previously established; as shown, not an easy task (TRAVASSOS, 1931, p. 108).

The above-mentioned author, influenced by regional proposition elaborated by Delgado de Carvalho, denoted the importance of considering physiographic aspects as well as the anthropic-geographic ones in Brazilian spatial organization. Travassos asserted that due to environmental phenomena multiplicity, which was the basis for natural region definition, compelled to “distinguish which are the really characteristic phenomena, that is, the ones that must prevail as directives to groupings to be defined as natural regions (TRAVASSOS, 1931, p. 109). Besides, the technical advances brought to that period the complex idea that transportation and communication techniques “respect limits, even the most characterized ones”.

For that matter, Travassos would suggest that the existence of two “Brazils” would ensure the Brazilian geographic unity. The Brasil Amazônico (“Amazonic’ Brazil”) and Brasil Platino (“Platino Brazil”). In a smaller scale, aiming at establishing the connection between the two “Brazils”, Travassos suggested interconnection regions, denominated Vertente Oriental dos Planaltos (“eastern branch plateaus”) and Norte Subequatorial (“sub-equatorial north branch”). Characterized by the connection between Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the hydrographic and roads infrastructure, the two “Brazils” would unfold under the expansion policy of Brazil and Argentina’s areas of influence on the context of South America’s hegemony.

The Brazil ‘Amazonic’ communicates more directly with the ocean, with the Amazon River as a natural via, and its penetration capacity is wider, because the Amazon valley is the great, formidable amphitheatre collector, which curves itself from Caracas to La Paz. The Brazil Platino, despite the demand for artificial means to connect to the ocean, has ports on the coast with enough capability of attracting stimuli from the countries, which naturally react to the Prata’s centripetal force (TRAVASSOS, 1931, p. 113-114).

In view of the questionings raised on the criteria necessary for the division, and also the urgency, on Federal administration sphere to set a regional plan to be widely adopted, it was given to Fábio Macedo Soares Guimarães, head of IBGE’s section of Estudos Geográficos (‘geographic studies’), the task to elaborate a new proposal for Brazilian regionalization. The study, denominated Divisão Regional do Brasil (“Brazil’s Regional Division”) was concluded and published in 1941 at *Revista Brasileira de Geografia* (“Brazilian Geography Journal”) and adopted as the Country’s regional model with the resolution n. 72, of July, 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941.

The debate over the concept of natural region is resumed as a result of Guimarães (1941) studies. According to this author, natural regions should be characterized from Physical Geography domain. Among the human characteristics, it should be used those resulting of the physical environment imperatives, especially to “solve problems concerning the limits” (GUIMARÃES, 1941, p. 339). The physical characteristics presented the advantage of stability, when it comes to compare statistic data over time. Thus, the mentioned researcher started from the analysis

of unit conception present in regional studies so far, intending to dissociate the idea of this term from the notion of uniformity.

In this respect, Guimarães started to seek in heterogeneous physiographic characteristics in common, some general unit. As an example, the researcher presented a situation in a region with marking geographic features, which, despite enclosing a variety of characteristics such as valleys, plateaus, ridges or mountains, could be selected by the stratigraphy or some other geological peculiarity. Therefore, the logic for Unit was to find another particular unit able to articulate regional heterogeneity.

It is possible to observe in Guimarães' study the interest in a division based on natural regions with the possibility to present an advantage of a greater stability, "allowing to better study a Country's evolution throughout time, by means of comparing statistic data from different times (GUIMARÃES, 1941, p. 329). Therefore, the unit acknowledged by the author refers to a set of phenomena and not to only one in particular:

Considering a set of features demands from the geographer a great ability to select and interpret; because, evidently, it is not only about all the occurring phenomena taken indistinctly, but to consider those, which are really significant. It means to highlight those phenomena, which possess the characteristic feature (...) the ones, which represent a peculiarity of the region. (GUIMARÃES, 1941, p. 326).

The attempt to seize a group with floristic, climatic, geologic and geo-morphologic characteristics (Fig. 3), adapted, to a certain extent, the proposition of division offered by Delgado de Carvalho. Thus, regionalization divided in North, Northeast, East, Central-West and South would be the best option for the necessary stability, in which, the physical-environmental mutations would provide the convenient basis for comparison throughout time. It was established then the notion of National Unit defended by Vargas' government, to an extent that recognized regional differences. This attended the demands of the public administration as well as the systematization of geography teaching in Brazil.

Intending to alleviate the national oligarchies discomfort, as well as to respond to methodological situations of the complex regional unit, Guimarães fragmented two regions: the Northeast Region composed of Occidental-Eastern (Piauí e Maranhão) and Oriental-Northeast (Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco and Alagoas); and the East Region, constituted of Northern-East (Bahia e Sergipe) and Southern-East (Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo).

That way, the physical environment transition of the States of Maranhão and Piauí defined the fragmentation of the Northeast, which, to some extent, is similar to Amazon and caatinga biomes. In the case of East sub-division, it was noticeable the role of human characteristics as a means to resolve problems of regional limits permeating environmental units. This way, sub-dividing two of the major economic centers of that period (Minas Gerais e Rio de Janeiro) from the States of Bahia e Sergipe, provided a way to relieve the social inequality present in that region.



**Figure 3**  
Cartogram of Brazil's regional division (1941).  
Source: Guimarães (1942, p. 49).

In the following years, due to constitutional demands, the Brazilian regional panorama went through eventual modifications. New political administrative units were created, such as Território de Fernando de Noronha (Fernando de Noronha Territory) which was inserted in Northeast region in 1942. In 1943, the territories of Guaporé (State of Roraima nowadays), Rio Branco e Amapá were aggregated to the North Region. In that same year, it was created in the South-Region the Territory of Iguaçú, dismembered from the States of Paraná and Santa Catarina, and in Central-Western Region it was created Ponta Porã, dismembered from Mato Grosso State. In 1946, with the promulgation of a new Constitution, the territories of Iguaçú and Ponta Porã were extinct (BRASIL, 1946) by means of the articulation of paranaense political group on Assembleia Nacional Constituinte (“Constitutional National Assembly”).

### Final Considerations

If until the first half of the century, the Lablachian and Ratzelian School, which influenced the propositions of regionalization, guided the Brazilian geography; from the 1950 decade on, the Country encountered the epistemological influence of Theoretical-Quantitative

systematization. Therefore, the logic positivism marked the quantitative domain by proposing alleged scientific neutrality and started to exercise strong influence on the planning of a new regional conception, as well as on the physiographic zones formation.

It is interesting to observe that with the emergence of Quantitative Geography, and the convergence of this science to statistic logic, the Region is no longer a finalized product, but a means that makes possible the regionalization of the same territory infinite times, from the analysis focus point of view. For that matter, the region no longer represents a socio-environmental synthesis as in La Blache, consolidating itself according to the statistic singularity of each area, as in Hartshorne.

Thus, the scientific criteria for regional propositions developed so far, is questioned (GALVÃO; FAISSOL, 1969), bringing to the surface the notion of space uniformity achieved through characterizations of data tabulation originated from socio-economic relations. This way, new paths are inserted in regional propositions influenced by the work of regional development superintendencies.

However, it is possible to observe the important role that the development of regionalization studies, in the period here addressed, brings to regional studies. It is also possible to realize, starting from the notion of natural region in the contributions of Delgado de Carvalho and Fábio Guimarães, that the process of regionalization presents, since its republican genesis, a set of peculiarities, aiming at, in essence, to federative integration. With this regard, the institution of regions establishes a complex dialectic parameter, as far as the content remains fragmented in the search for assuring national unit.

## References

- A CAMPANHA Geográfica. O Observador econômico e financeiro. Rio de Janeiro, n. 54, p. 129-135, jul. 1940.
- ABREU, S. F. As regiões naturais da Baía (ensaio duma visão). Revista Brasileira de Geografia, Rio de Janeiro, v. 1, n. 1, p. 68-76, 1939.
- ABRUCIO, F. L. O longo caminho das reformas dos governos estaduais: crise, mudanças e impasses. In: MELO, M. A. (Org.). Reforma do Estado e mudança institucional no Brasil. Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Massangana, 1999.
- ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR, D. M. A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes. São Paulo: Cortez, 2009.
- ANDRADE, M. C. A construção da geografia brasileira. Finisterra, n. 34, p. 21-30, 1999. <https://doi.org/10.5380/raega.v3i0.18222>
- BRASIL. Câmara dos Deputados. Annaes do Congresso Constituinte da Republica. Volume I. 1890. Available in: <<http://bd.camara.gov.br/bd/handle/bdcamara/13616>> Accessed in 17 mai. 2017.
- BRASIL. Decreto-lei n. 237, de 2 de fevereiro de 1938. 1938. Available in: <<http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/declei/1930-1939/decreto-lei-237-2-fevereiro-1938-350962-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html>>. Accessed in 17 mai. 2017.

- BRASIL. Directoria do Serviço de Estatística do Ministério da Agricultura, Industria e Commercio. Rio de Janeiro, [s.n.] 1913.
- BRASIL. Nação brasilíca: 189 anos de independência (exposição). 2016. Available in: < <http://www.exposicoesvirtuais.arquivonacional.gov.br/pt-br/nacao-brasilica-180-anos-de-independencia>> Accessed in 17 mai. 2017.
- BRASIL. Constituição dos Estados Unidos do Brasil. 1946. Available in: < [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/constituicao/constituicao46.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao46.htm)> Accessed in 06 jul. 2017.
- CANDIDO, A. Literatura e Sociedade. São Paulo: Editora Nacional, 1985.
- CARVALHO, D. Geografia regional do Brasil. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1943.
- CARVALHO, D. Geographia do Brasil. Prefácio de Oliveira Lima. Rio de Janeiro: Photo Mechanica, 1913.
- CARVALHO, D. Metodologia do ensino de Geografia: introdução aos estudos da Geografia moderna. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, 1925.
- CARVALHO, D. Uma concepção fundamental da geografia moderna: a região natural. *Boletim Geográfico*, v. 2, n. 13, p. 9-17, 1944.
- CARVALHO, J. M. República, democracia e federalismo Brasil, 1870-1891. *Varia hist.*, Belo Horizonte, v. 27, n. 45, p. 141-157, Junho, 2011. Accessed in 17 mai. 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-87752011000100007>
- CORRÊA, R. L. Região e organização espacial. São Paulo: Ática, 1986.
- DINIZ, A. M. A.; BATELLA, W. B. O estado de Minas Gerais e suas regiões: um resgate histórico das principais propostas oficiais de regionalização. *Sociedade & Natureza*, Uberlândia, v. 17, n. 33, p. 59-77, dez. 2005.
- DRAIBE, S. Rumos e metamorfoses: estado e industrialização no Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2004.
- FABRIZ, D. C.; FERREIRA, C. F. O município na estrutura federativa brasileira: um estudo comparado. *Revista da Faculdade de Direito da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*, n. 41, p. 103 - 127, 2002.
- GALVÃO, M.; FAISSOL, S. Divisão regional do Brasil. *Revista Brasileira de Geografia*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 31, n. 4, p. 179-220, out./dez. 1969.
- GOMES, P. C. O conceito de região e sua discussão. In: CASTRO I. E; GOMES, P. C.; CÔRREA, R. L. *Geografia: conceitos e temas*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1995. p. 49- 76.
- GUIMARÃES, F. M. S. Divisão Regional do Brasil. *Revista Brasileira de Geografia*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 3, n. 2, p. 318-373, 1941.
- GUIMARÃES, F.M. S. Divisão regional do Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1942.
- LIMA, O. Prefácio. In: CARVALHO, D. *Geographia do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Photo Mechanica, 1913. p. 6.
- MACHADO, M. S. A contribuição de Delgado de Carvalho aos estudos geográficos brasileiros a partir da obra “Le Brésil Méridional”. In: SANTOS, M. A. M. (org.). *Geografia e Política: a contribuição de Delgado de Carvalho e Therezinha de Castro*. Col. Documentos para Disseminação: memória Institucional 16. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2008.
- MARTIUS, C. F. P. V. Como se deve escrever a História do Brasil. *Revista do IHGB*, Rio de Janeiro, t. 6, p. 381-403, 1844.

- MARTIUS, C. F. P.; EICHLER, A. W.; URBAN, I. *Flora Brasiliensis*. v. 1, n. 1, 1858. Available in: <<http://florabrasiliensis.cria.org.br/index>> Accessed in 17 mai. 2017.
- MATOS, F. O. *Formação e limitações regionais do plano de desenvolvimento sustentável da região turística do Meio-norte (Brasil)*. 2013. Tese (Doutorado em Geografia) - Centro de Ciências, Universidade Federal do Ceará, Fortaleza, 2013.
- MORAIS, A. L.; VANDRESEN, J. República Federativa do Brasil: origem histórica e a influência da Federação norte-americana no sistema brasileiro. *Acta Scientiarum: human and social sciences Maringá*, v. 25, n. 1, p. 185-191, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.4025/actascihumansoc.v25i1.2211>
- MOTOYAMA, S. *Prelúdio para uma história*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2004.
- O ANNO do Recenseamento. O observador econômico e financeiro, Rio de Janeiro, n. 49, p. 19-40, fev. 1940.
- PAVIANI, O. Dinâmica regional e os desafios para a regionalização. *Boletim de Geografia Teorética*, Rio Claro, v. 22, n. 43/44, p. 368-374, 1992.
- PENHA, E. A. *A criação do IBGE no contexto da centralização política do Estado Novo*. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1993.
- PIRES, M. R. *Representações de Brasil em Delgado de Carvalho*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação), Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba, 2006.
- RATZEL, F. *Geographie politique: les concepts fondamentaux*. Paris: Fayard, 1987.
- SANTOS, M. *Metamorfoses do espaço habitado*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1994.
- SMITH, N. *Desenvolvimento desigual*. Rio de Janeiro, Bertrand Brasil, 1993.
- TRAVASSOS, M. *Projeção continental do Brasil*. São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1931.

## Notes

**Funding:** the present work was conducted with the support of Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - financing code 001.