

CONTEMPORARY URBAN AND CENTER-PERIPHERY STRUCTURE

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Abstract

The contemporary urban phenomenon has challenged studies that seek to establish generalizations about spatial structuring, leading to continual questioning of center-periphery models. The proliferation of shopping malls towards the "peripheries" represents an important indicator capable of promoting this debate. Thus, the article analyzes the spatial structuring logic of Brazil's shopping center sector, particularly its expansion into the Brazilian Amazon. To that end, it raises two questions: Is the Brazilian center-periphery model still able to explain shopping centers' spatial distribution, considering the regions and hierarchy of the cities in which they are located? Based on the hierarchy and intra-urban space of its cities, how does this spatial distribution take place in the Brazilian Amazon? The sector's data is mapped based on information from the Brazilian Association of Malls and the Regic/IBGE/2018 study. On the intra-urban scale, it establishes three locational types (central, pulverized, fragmented) based on the uses within a 1 km radius of the malls. The study concludes that the center-periphery model has not lost its explanatory validity. However, it must be improved to capture the complexity of contemporary spatial structuring, dialoguing on multiple scales, and different socio-spatial formations.

Keywords: Contemporary Urban, Center, Periphery, Shopping Mall, Brazilian Amazon.

Resumo / Resumen

URBANO CONTEMPORÂNEO E ESTRUTURA CENTRO-PERIFERIA

O fenômeno urbano contemporâneo tem desafiado os estudos que procuram estabelecer generalizações sobre a estruturação espacial. Nesse aspecto, os modelos centro-periferia vêm sendo continuamente questionados. A proliferação recente de shopping centers, em direção às "periferias", representa um indicador importante capaz de suscitar esse debate. Assim, o artigo analisa a lógica de estruturação espacial do setor de shopping center no Brasil, refletindo especificamente sobre a sua expansão para a Amazônia brasileira. Para tanto, levanta duas questões: No Brasil, o modelo centro-periferia ainda é capaz de explicar a distribuição espacial dos shopping centers, considerando as regiões e a hierarquia das cidades em que estão localizados? Como essa distribuição espacial se processa na Amazônia brasileira, a partir da hierarquia e do espaço intraurbano de suas cidades? Para tanto, mapeiam-se os dados do setor, com base nas informações da Associação Brasileira de Shopping Centers e do estudo REGIC/IBGE/2018. Na escala intraurbana, estabelecem-se três perfis locais (central, pulverizado, fragmentado) resultantes da análise dos usos presentes nos entornos dos shopping centers, num raio de 1km. Conclui-se mostrando que o modelo centro-periferia não perdeu a validade explicativa. Porém, precisa ser aprimorado para abarcar a complexidade da estruturação espacial contemporânea, dialogando em múltiplas escalas e diferentes formações socioespaciais.

Palavras-chave: Urbano Contemporâneo, Centro, Periferia, Shopping Center, Amazônia Brasileira.

URBANO CONTEMPORÂNEO Y ESTRUCTURA CENTRO-PERIFERIA

El fenómeno urbano contemporáneo ha desafiado los estudios que buscan establecer generalizaciones sobre la estructura espacial. En este sentido, los modelos centro-periferia han sido continuamente cuestionados. La proliferación de shopping centers en las "periferias" suscita el debate. Así, el artículo analiza la lógica de estructuración espacial del sector de los shopping centers en Brasil, reflexionando específicamente sobre su expansión en la Amazonia brasileña. Plantea las siguientes cuestiones: ¿en Brasil, el modelo centro-periferia todavía es capaz de explicar la distribución espacial de los shopping centers, considerando las regiones y la jerarquía de las ciudades en las que están ubicados? ¿Cómo se procesa esa distribución espacial en la Amazonia brasileña, a partir de la jerarquía y el espacio intraurbano de sus ciudades? Mapea los datos del sector, a partir de la Asociación Brasileña de Shopping Centers y del estudio REGIC/IBGE/2018. En la escala intraurbana, establece tres perfiles por ubicación (central, pulverizado, fragmentado), según los usos presentes en el entorno de los shopping centers, en un radio de 1 km. Concluye que el modelo centro-periferia no ha perdido su validez explicativa. Sin embargo, necesita ser mejorado para captar la complejidad de la estructuración espacial contemporánea, dialogando en múltiples escalas y diferentes formaciones socioespaciales.

Palabras-clave: Urbano Contemporáneo; Centro; Periferia; Shopping Center; Amazonia Brasileña.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary urban phenomenon has challenged studies based on center-periphery logic, being especially true of those generalists who define interpretive spatial structuring models. In reality, notions of center and periphery are relativized, depending on the criteria and scales of analysis. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these models have lost their explanatory capacity over the unequal spatial manifestations of capitalist development. On the contrary, these expressions persist, although their contours are more complex, warranting detailed studies and dialogues on multiple scales and different socio-spatial formations.

This picture is accentuated by the expansion and juxtaposition of the interests of various economic agents (land, real estate, industrial, commercial, and financial) guiding the "production of space" (LEFEBVRE, 2013 [1974]) and "unequal geographical development" (HARVEY, 2005). Numerous studies have identified the effects of the proliferation of new "real estate," commercial, industrial, and service products in this dynamic, including shopping malls, which tend to redefine urban forms and content. These works point to the need to rethink the traditional idea of the periphery as far away and/or poor and the center as nearby and rich (BARATA-SALGUEIRO, 1997; SPOSITO, 2004, 2007, 2010).

According to Villaça (1998, p. 303), Brazilian cities' shopping centers are primarily located in the "region of high concentration of high-income layers." Since 1980, they have also been built in "popular regions." This trend has been consolidated and requires new studies to reveal the logic of the diffusion of this new consumer apparatus at multiple scales beyond high-income areas and metropolises. Therefore, medium and small towns and even impoverished regions such as the Brazilian Amazon should be included from the point of view of the national urban system.

This article rises to this challenge, analyzing the logic of spatial structuring of the shopping center sector in Brazil at multiple scales, reflecting specifically on its expansion into the Brazilian Amazon. Thus, two questions are posed: Is the Brazilian center-periphery model still able to explain shopping centers' spatial distribution, considering the regions and hierarchy of the cities in which they are located? Based on the hierarchy and intra-urban space of its cities, how does this spatial distribution take place in the Brazilian Amazon?

The data result from three principal sources¹: shopping centers affiliated with the Brazilian Association of Shopping Centers² (until August 2022) (ABRASCE, 2023); the Region of Influence of Cities (REGIC/IBGE/2018); and Subnormal Clusters (IBGE, 2011). It uses the following methodological procedures: a) identification, quantification, and mapping of shopping centers in the Brazilian territory; b) overlapping the location of shopping centers with the regional base of the "four Brazils" (SANTOS; SILVEIRA, 2008 [2001]) and the Brazilian urban hierarchy; c) overlapping the location of shopping centers with the urban hierarchy of the Brazilian Amazon; d) mapping shopping centers in the intra-urban space of the region's cities (using the Google Maps application); and, e) modeling the locational profile of shopping centers in these cities, indicating three types: central; pulverized and fragmented. These profiles are based on the uses in the shopping centers' surroundings, considering a 1 km radius (reasonable walking distance).

Accordingly, the text is organized into six parts. First, it elucidates the center-periphery debate in the contemporary urban fabric, followed by a contextualization of the shopping mall sector in Brazil. Next, the study analyzes the sector's expansion in the regions. Fourth, it examines this diffusion on the national urban network scale. Subsequently, it presents the particularities and singularities of the spatial distribution of shopping malls in the urban network of the Brazilian Amazon. Finally, it analyzes the sector's locational profile, considering the intra-urban scale of the different cities in this region.

CONTEMPORARY URBAN PHENOMENON AND THE CENTER-PERIPHERY LOGIC

In the debate about contemporary urban phenomenon, the notions of center-periphery, field-city, and rural-urban tend to become complex, particularly when studies find diverse socio-spatial contexts. In this regard, it should be noted that "new processes of urbanization are evident everywhere (...)" but

assume a rich diversity of forms and expressions as they become localized and located in particular geographical contexts" (SOJA, 2000, p. xvii).

Far from establishing time frames and constraints within what Santos (1977, 2008) calls "socio-spatial formation," the foundation of these transformations is known to stem from the broad process of productive restructuring: in the incomplete passage from "Fordism to flexible accumulation"; in the unequal and differentiated diffusion of the "technical-scientific-informational environment"; in the advance of the neoliberal horizon, as well as in the deepening of the "regime of accumulation with financial dominance" (SOJA, 1993; SANTOS, 2008; HARVEY, 2005; CHESNAIS, 2010).

In this context of transformations, Dematteis (1998) points out that the suburbanization of middle- and upper-income social strata, initially established in cities in the United States, has expanded around the globe and translates into a kind of "post-Fordist" urban dispersion. Regarding European cities, Monclus (1998) mentions the protagonism assumed by the "new suburban landscapes," which is much more extensive than the areas of the cities themselves. These authors warn of the need to understand new forms and urban contents, emphasizing spatial (re)structuring at the city and urban network scales.

In Brazil, Sposito (2004, 2013, 2018) draws attention to the presence of "new contents of urban peripheries," including all Latin American cities. These contents strongly favor urban restructuring and restructuring the city, deepening inequalities and differentiation in a movement that combines segregation and socio-spatial fragmentation.

In this debate, Serpa (2018) argues that it is necessary to go beyond quantitative and functional criteria. Namely, the foundations of "central locations" and the ideas of maximum and minimum spatial reach, which hierarchize centers, subcenters, and peripheries. For the author, this notion of center-periphery accurately explains inequalities but cannot fully comprehend the differences manifesting in the "spatial gaps." They represent discourses that are not necessarily hegemonic and reveal that the "popular places" of the metropolises are "central" to the daily lives of several "invisible" groups. Thus, he defends considering new "centralities" also based on the contents of urban life (culture, social movements).

By establishing relationships between inequalities and differences linked to the center-periphery debate, Sposito (2018) considers that differences, such as intellectual and political attitudes, should be understood beyond the prism of inequalities. For the author, common measurements of inequalities based on quantitative indicators fail to reveal the depth of contemporary socio-spatial reality so that

Cities and urban networks would be seen from another point of view because difference enables dialogue and contradiction as an engine of transformations, while inequality, when accentuated, can increase conflict, indifference, segregation, and fragmentation (SPOSITO, 2018, p. 133)

Far from entering into the merits of the debate on differences and inequalities and what criteria and scales should analyze the ongoing transformations, we argue that the notion of center-periphery needs to be interpreted in the totality of the movement of reproduction, the capitalist mode of production, and the reproduction of life in the broad sense of inhabiting. This entails a dialectical recognition of the unequal nature of capitalism and the widely unequal and differentiated process of spatial production. In other words, a dialogue should be established between "uneven geographical development" (HARVEY, 2005) and "production of space" (LEFEBVRE, 2013 [1974]). Part of this dialogue is the idea that the "specific geography of capitalism can be restructured, but it is never unstructured or entirely freed from a fundamental socio-spatial polarization" (SOJA, 1993, p. 136).

According to Harvey (2005, p. 52), "geographical expansion and concentration are both considered products of the same effort to create new opportunities for capital accumulation." For the author, a center-periphery relationship is established in the expansion-concentration dialectic, conforming to the impulse to foreign trade (international division of labor) and imperialism, but not limited to them, thus incorporating other scales.

From this dialectic, it must be recognized that "it is not only the whole society that becomes the place of reproduction (of the relations of production and not only of the means of production): it is the whole space" (LEFEBVRE, 1973, p. 95). Therefore, added to the strictly capitalist perspective, society produces space when producing its daily life, with centers (centralities) and peripheries that assume

diverse meanings and uses among the numerous agents or social groups. Consequently, there is an uneven and differentiated incorporation of spaces and society in the totality of the movement of capitalist reproduction and the reproduction of life. This movement has complexified the analyses, requiring more than interpretive models based on the center-periphery logic. In particular, those measured via quantitative and functional criteria are linked to the "central locations" and the economy.

Far from being disposable, these parameters reveal indispensable elements in the performance of specific agents in the interest of capitalist accumulation. However, they need to be complemented to faithfully embrace not only the result from the point of view of capitalist reproduction but also the origins and processes at complexly integrated multiple scales. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the reproduction of life, daily life, and the different meanings assumed by the center-periphery pair in locations.

In this regard, Sposito (2010) mentions that several agents relativize the notions of near and far, formulated in a given socio-spatial formation. However, no concrete conditions have been significantly changed (circulation, infrastructure, transport). In addition, he considers that the ways the near and far are understood are differentiated, considering the various social groups that are located and circulate in small, medium, and metropolis cities.

Thus, the fact that shopping centers are increasingly located in the "peripheries" does not cancel the center-periphery model in the sense of homogenization or the end of the spatial structure's hierarchy. On the contrary, the center-periphery logic is reinforced in other aspects. These consumer units represent the pulverization of the city and urban network into fragments that connect hierarchically at multiple scales, revealing inequalities and differences that deserve detailed study.

In fact, the diversity of forms and contents of contemporary urbanization requires a permanent critical review of notions, categories, and concepts. In this sense, the center-periphery debate is an essential element that must be rethought to be understood at multiple scales and different socio-spatial formations.

THE SHOPPING MALL SECTOR: WHEN THE MANUFACTURED AGGLOMERATION IS PULVERIZED

According to Kocaili (2010, p. 85), "the contemporary shopping center is the expanded version of the suburban shopping mall, which emerged in the United States in the 1950s". Initially, shopping centers were created to meet consumer desires that spread with the suburbanization process of high-income families in the United States. Therefore, the logic of this consumer apparatus consists in offering "everything in one place," manufacturing "amenities" that are uncommon on traditional commercial streets.

This form of trade has spread to several countries, including so-called "underdeveloped" ones, arriving in Brazil in 1966 with the construction of the Iguatemi shopping center in São Paulo-SP (ABRASCE, 2021). However, although established with the same logic of comfort and "all in one place," in Brazil, shopping malls' locational profiles originated in previously consolidated areas of large cities, unlike the United States (VILLAÇA, 1998). Therefore, the country's first shopping center emerged more as a novelty than a commercial solution (PINTAUDI, 2013).

Nevertheless, regardless of their commercial function, it must be recognized that shopping centers fall within the accumulation logic of land rent in urban spaces. Thus, they consist of real estate developments from which income is extracted by renting commercial rooms or services, known as "locations." According to Villaça (1998, p. 304), shopping malls reveal the real estate market's entry into market capital and the "subjection of retail trade and services" to the real estate and financial market.

From this perspective, shopping malls' locations are structured by the logic of producing several never-fully homogeneous "locations" in the same location in the city: the shopping mall land. As a result, the land is rented in portions, sliced not only to increase its owner's income but also to leverage the business of the commerce, services, and financial market sectors, motivated by this new commercial form: manufactured agglomeration.

In Brazil, shopping malls have spread rapidly to different regions and cities. Until the 1990s, the country had approximately 100 shopping malls. That number rose to more than 300 in 2000. It reached the 430 mark in 2010 and exceeded 600 in 2020 (CBRE, 2020) (Figure 1).

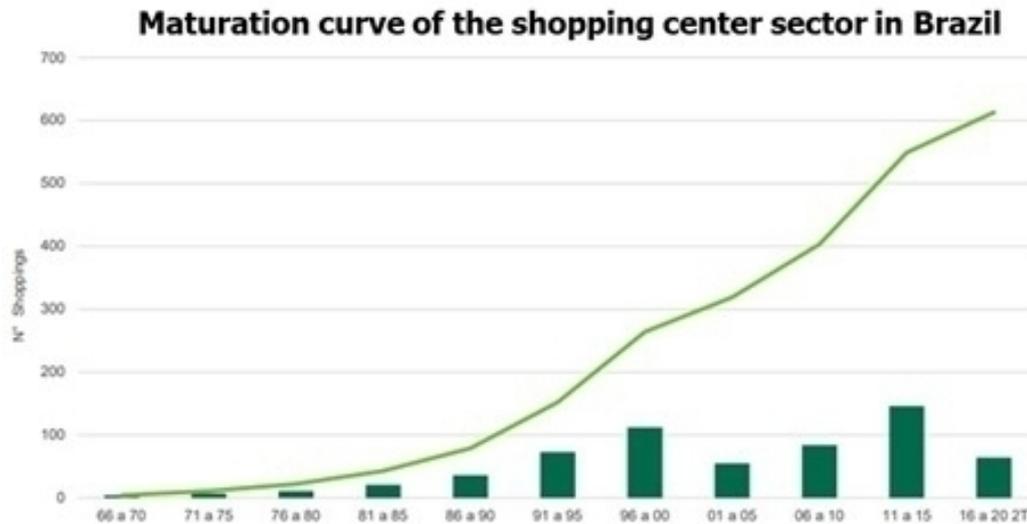


Figure 1 - Evolution of the shopping mall sector in Brazil. Source: CBRE, 2020

The overlaps between the shopping mall sector and the financial market help explain part of the accelerated process through which this manufactured agglomeration has been radically pulverized, increasingly challenging the reading of spatial structuring based on the classical understanding of the center-periphery paradigm.

Given the above, we start from the hypothesis that the creation of Real Estate Investment Funds (FIIs) (Law No. 8.668/1993), together with the historical consolidation process of the shopping mall sector's business in Brazil, enabled the direct insertion of this consumer equipment in the accumulation circuit of financial logic, leveraging the expansion of units throughout the country⁴.

The action of other factors is not excluded. However, it inserts the debate into the perspective of recognizing the "regime of accumulation with financial dominance" (CHESNAIS, 2010). Therefore, a set of new⁵ elements are included that deserve detailed studies, such as a) the performance of the neoliberal State; b) penetration of the financial market in retail trade and real estate; c) expansion of credit; and d) "urban financialization."

Over the past five years, FIIs have proliferated rapidly. In December 2017, the country had 156 FIIs listed on the São Paulo stock exchange. In December 2020, this number jumped to 301 and, in August 2022, to 414. Shopping centers are rarely absent in the portfolios presented to shareholders. The FIIs have found a broad market with both large companies in the publicly traded shopping mall sector and smaller ones. In addition to seeking the appreciation of quotas and foreign investment, this action has mainly occurred through incorporation (new shopping centers or the physical expansion of existing ones) and rent (enterprises owned by the FIIs).

Thus, shopping centers are treated as special financial assets because, regardless of their size, they represent many tenant shopkeepers. Bonatelli (2022, p. 3) states, "The shopping mall market is still very pulverized in Brazil. Together, the largest in the industry - BrMalls, Aliansce, Multiplan, and Iguatemi - have less than 20% participation." The market remains highly fertile and diversified for the performance of the numerous FIIs, although this division has shown signs of change. In 2019, Aliansce and Sonae Sierra merged, as did Aliansce and BrMalls, in April 2022.

In fact, the sector appears to be undergoing a monopolistic trend, with the merger of national companies and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), comprising dominant publicly traded groups. They

have become the owners, controllers, and administrators of shopping malls. Notably, these groups predominantly select large urban agglomerations to implement or purchase new units. This action tends to reinforce the "geographical concentration" in the national territory.

On the other hand, there is the spread of several other smaller companies without public capital. They operate in the shopping mall sector, focusing predominantly on medium and small cities. The Partege, Tenco, SFA Malls, and Saphyr groups are noteworthy. This action tends to reinforce the "geographical expansion" in the national territory.

The mapping of all these cities makes it possible to understand the locational logic practiced by the different agents at different scales and subsequently analyze the spatial structuring resulting from the sector's expansion.

THE SHOPPING MALL SECTOR IN THE BRAZILIAN REGIONS

In Brazil, a series of institutional and academic studies have been based on models of the center (better indexes) - periphery (worse indexes) type to elucidate the regionalization theme. Of interest here is to highlight two of these proposals to ascertain how shopping center locations are presented within the country's macro-structural polarizations/hierarchies.

Brazil's official current regionalization was established by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 1988. It was conducted based on the agglutination of demographic, natural, and economic criteria in line with the political-administrative limits of the states. Thus, five macro-regions were identified: North, Northeast, Center-West, South, and Southeast.

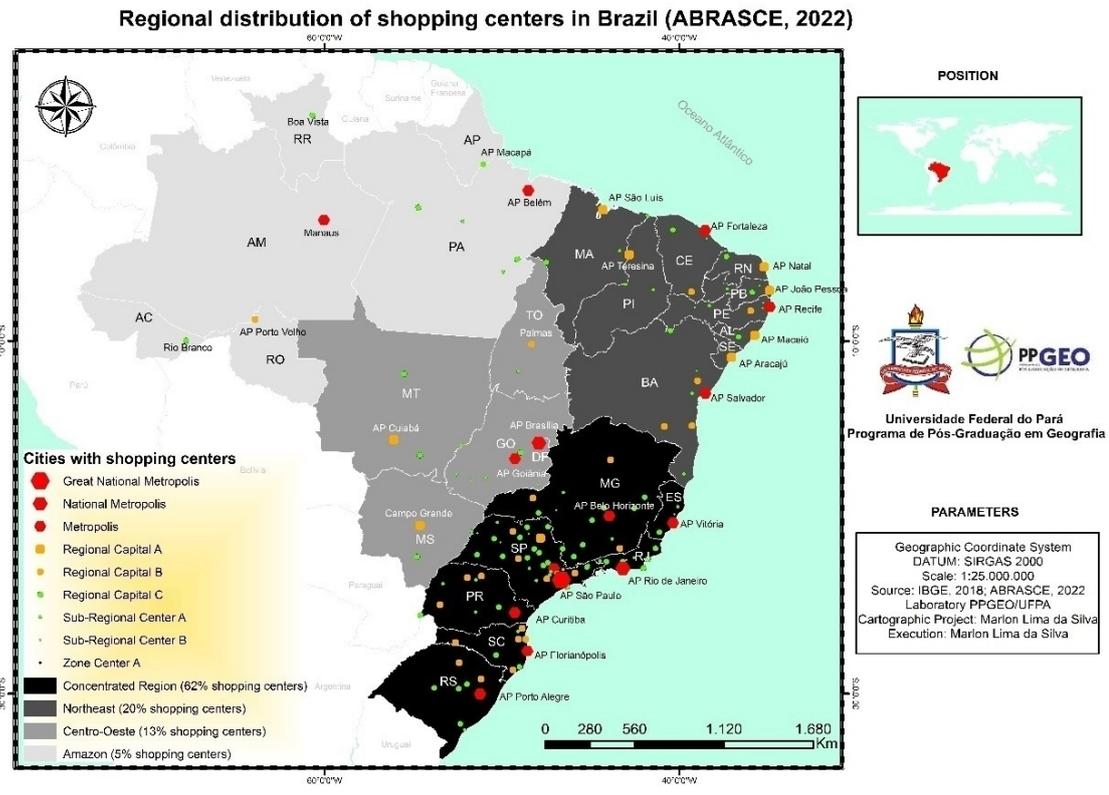


Figure 2 - Spatial distribution of shopping centers in Brazil. Source: Authors

Thirteen years later, Santos and Silveira (2008 [2001]) proposed a new regional division. To this end, the authors used socioeconomic/infrastructural criteria and found the unequal and differentiated distribution of the "technical-scientific-informational environment," resulting in four regions ("the 4

Brazils"): Amazon (Northern states, except Tocantins), Northeast (coincides with the regionalization of IBGE), Center-West (Center-Western states and Tocantins) and Concentrated Region (Southern and Southeastern states).

Data from the Brazilian Shopping Center Association indicates that, until August 2022, the country had more than 600 shopping centers distributed unevenly in the regions: Southeast (44%), Northeast (20%), South (18%), Center-West (13%) and North (5%). The location of these consumer units reinforces the existence of a spatial structuring profile of the center-periphery type. Therefore, it reaffirms the validity of the statistical procedures identified in the two regional proposals (Figure 2).

Notably, the Concentrated Region hugely dominates the others. However, it cannot be interpreted as something absolute, static, and invariable because, parallel to the concentration process, this consumer equipment has a significant dispersion trend to other Brazilian regions. In 1999, of the 155 shopping centers located in the national territory, 78% were located in the Concentrated Region (SANTOS; SILVEIRA, 2008 [2001]). In 2022, this percentage decreased to 62% from another 600 shopping centers in Brazil.

However, although the sector has been dispersed to "peripheral" regions, these actions have spatial selectivity. This fact reaffirms regional inequalities in the center-peripheral logic. With 9% of the country's population (IBGE, 2021), the Northern region has only 5% of the shopping centers, consolidating the Amazon as a kind of periphery of Brazil's urban-regional system, likewise the Northeast, which has 27% of the country's population and 20% of shopping centers. In other regions, this proportion has been reversed. The Center-West had 8% of the population and 13% of shopping malls. In the South, 14% to 18%. In the Southeast, 42% to 44%, and in the Concentrated Region, 56% to 62%.

Therefore, on Brazil's regional scale, it is clear that the shopping mall sector's expansion has revealed the uneven and combined movement of concentration and dispersion, evidencing the dialectic between "geographical expansion" and "geographical concentration" (HARVEY, 2005). Materially, it is translated into the presence of continuous and hierarchical areas or zones resulting from the sector's different capitalist accumulation strategies. Here, the spatial structuring logic of the center-periphery type is apparent, crystallizing the country's historical regional inequalities (division of labor, technical-scientific-informational environment, population, income, trade, services, industry, employment, infrastructure, and education).

Nonetheless, when analyzing the shopping center sector's spatial distribution on the scale of the national urban network, continuous areas or zones become more complex, pulverizing and fragmenting. This complexity challenges the standard reading of spatial structuring under the center-periphery logic. Therefore, the parameters which establish the hierarchy require revision.

THE SHOPPING MALL SECTOR IN THE NATIONAL URBAN NETWORK

There have been extensive studies of the national urban network in recent decades. These works converge on the data collected by IBGE, disclosed from the Region of Influence of Cities study (REGIC), due to the statistical agglutination of economic, political, and cultural criteria that enable a rich reading of the spatial distribution and the flows and fixed hierarchy in the territory.

From the classical center-periphery perspective, the REGIC/IBGE/2018 study defined urban centers and the urban network based on Christaller's "Theory of Central Locations" (1966) and Taylor's "Theory of Central Flows" (2004). Thus, considering the overlapping of different criteria, the centers commanding the urban networks were named from a gradual scale of "central places," going from the "Zone Center" to the "Great National Metropolis."

Notably, these denominations are not necessarily linked to municipal administrative-political boundaries but to "Population Arrangements." So, municipalities adjacent to a main center maintain strong links with each other, possibly including several municipal units within the same hierarchical classification. The spatial distribution of shopping centers within the hierarchy of Brazilian cities revealed a clear spatial restructuring trend. There is a need to go beyond quantitative aspects and rethink

the dominance of the center logic (profound influence) – periphery (small influence) on the scale of the urban network as more than a third of shopping malls are located outside the different Metropolises; they are not in the maximal centers of urban networks.

Regional Capitals and Sub-Regional Centers take on a prominent role in these changes. These agglomerations have been defined as the new centers of spatial selectivity of Brazil's shopping mall sector and express a pulverized locational profile of this new consumer equipment (Figure 3).

Shopping Centers registered with the Brazilian Association of Shopping Centers until August 2022

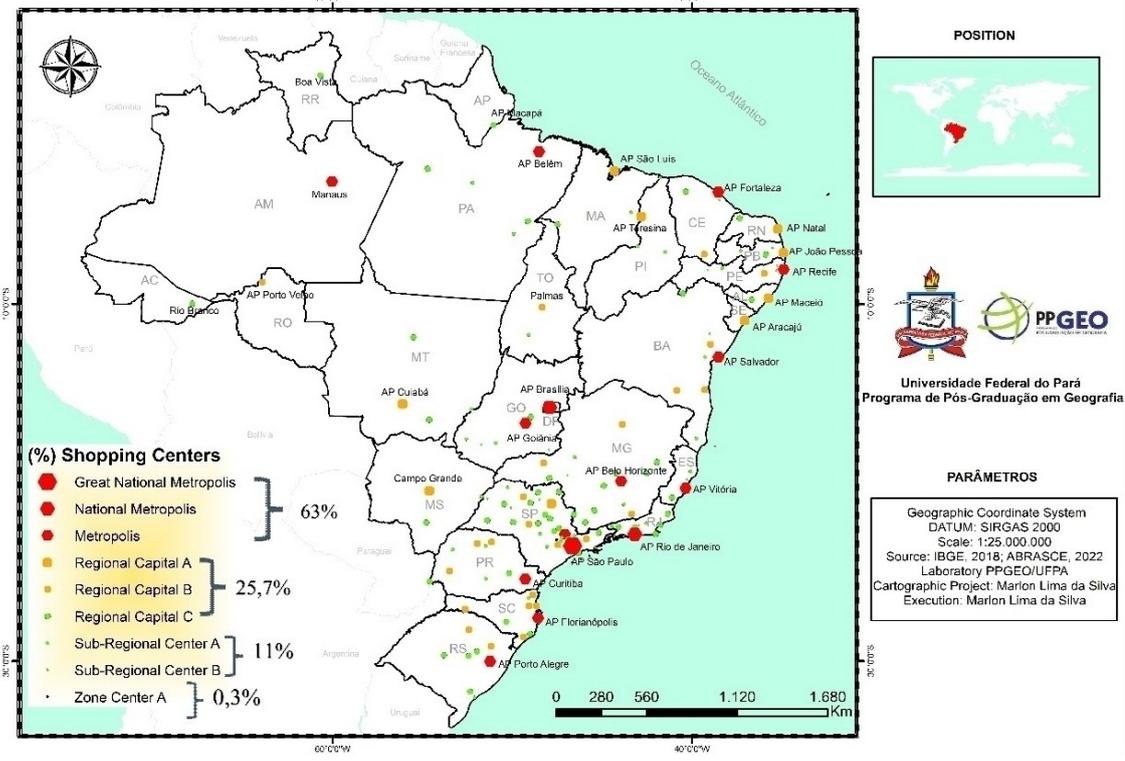


Figure 3 - Spatial distribution of shopping centers in the Brazilian urban hierarchy. Source: Authors.

In 2001, Santos and Silveira (2008 [2001]) drew attention to the recent nature of the expansion in the number of shopping centers beyond the state capitals and metropolitan regions. According to the authors, in practice, this phenomenon was restricted to the interior of São Paulo state, where high family monthly incomes facilitated their internalization, principally to cities with a population above 100,000 inhabitants.

However, the shopping mall sector's internalization has reached different regions and cities outside the metropolitan regions and far from state capitals. Some of these cities have a population below 100,000 inhabitants and/or families with low monthly incomes, compared to families living in cities in the interior of São Paulo. This framework tends to complexify the analyzes, thus requiring the researcher to dialogue beyond quantitative aspects.

For instance, a Regional Capital in the Amazon region has particularities and singularities made invisible by interpretations based on numbers alone and directed on a single scale, even if it has a population margin and offers services quantitatively similar to a Regional Capital located in the Concentrated Region. Thus, we argue that the scale of the urban network must be continuously articulated with the regional and intra-urban scales, linking them to socio-spatial formation.

These elements must be incorporated into the center-periphery paradigm, which, taken alone, has become insufficient to interpret the complexity of emerging spatial structuring. Therefore, besides observing the trend towards a new spatial selectivity in the sector, the material conditions it effectively structures in places must be recognized.

THE SHOPPING MALL SECTOR IN THE URBAN NETWORK OF THE LEGAL AMAZON

The Legal Amazon is a planning region administered by the Superintendence of Amazon Development (SUDAM). It covers approximately 60% of Brazilian territory (REGIC/IBGE/2018). In the national and international context, its economic importance has been established by large mining-metallurgical, agricultural, hydroelectric, and port projects, as well as the potential for "future exploitation" of the natural wealth present in the vast Amazon Forest, including part of the Pantanal biome. Moreover, the Manaus Free Trade Zone (ZFM) gives this municipality a prominent Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

However, from the perspective of the national urban system, the region has been marked by extremely low socioeconomic indicators, making it a type of urban-regional periphery. Given the above, the following two questions emerge: how has the shopping mall sector expanded to this region? How should the center-periphery paradigm be considered on the scale of the urban network for the Legal Amazon? (Figure 4).

Shopping Centers registered with the Brazilian Association of Shopping Centers until August 2022

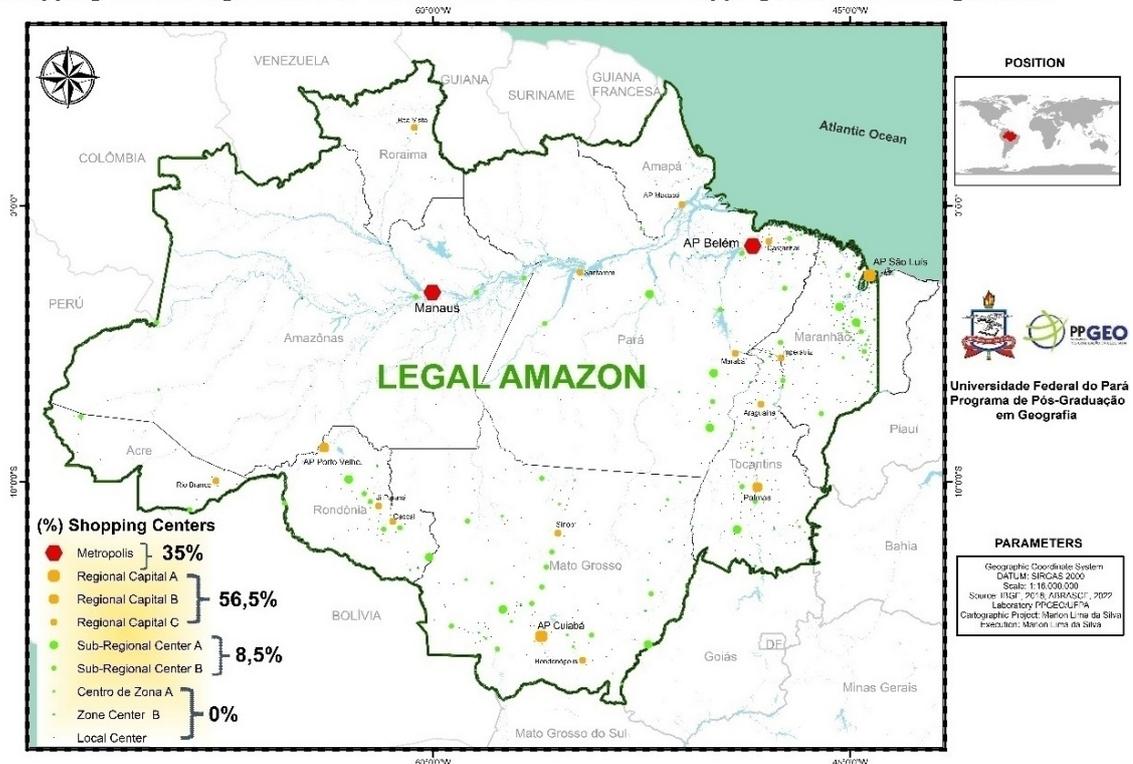


Figure 4 - Spatial distribution of shopping centers in the Legal Amazon. Source: Authors

Clearly, there is a paradigmatic inversion of the national context. In the Legal Amazon, the shopping mall sector is not concentrated in Metropolises but the Regional Capitals. In this context, the center-periphery logic changes according to the researcher's observation scale. However, this does not mean the center-periphery spatial structure has been overcome. On the contrary, it persists but takes on complex contours that cannot be observed on a single scale and by numbers-only methods.

Accordingly, even though there are only two Metropolises in the region, Belém- PA and Manaus- AM, which together account for 35% of the shopping centers in the Amazon, this data alone is insufficient to explain that more than half of the units are located in the Regional Capitals and Sub-Regional Centers. Even if Ap. São Luís (São Luís, Raposa, Paço do Lumiar, and São José de Ribamar) were treated as a metropolis, the figure would not exceed 50%. That is, it would be below the national profile of 63% of units located in Metropolises.

Therefore, a center-periphery explanation based on these elements alone is not supported. The fact is that, in the Legal Amazon, understanding the spatial structuring of the shopping mall sector results from the combination of at least four factors: a) the socio-spatial formation established an urban phenomenon with a small number of medium and large centers distributed in a vast region; b) the long distances between the main urban centers, combined with severe difficulties in the general accessibility and circulation, especially for the poorest populations; c) the expansion of the regional consumer market led by a "middle class" that derives from the maturation of large hydroelectric, port, mining-metallurgical and agricultural projects, which are not predominantly located in the Metropolis.

Thus, concerning the center-periphery paradigm, the hierarchy develops on a particular material basis in the Amazon region. Although the shopping mall sector has expanded nationally beyond the Metropolises, this movement gains contours and diversified expressions that cannot just be understood statistically. Therefore, analyses must be improved to establish mediations between the scales and include aspects of socio-spatial formation.

THE SHOPPING MALL SECTOR IN THE INTRA-URBAN SPACE OF THE CITIES OF THE LEGAL AMAZON

It is well known that, once built, shopping malls tend to create new centralities on different aspects of intra-urban and inter-urban scales: daily consumption, mobility, and sociability (FRÚGOLI, 1992; BARTOLLY, 2007; SILVA, 2017). For Sposito (2013), they represent a double movement that goes from multicentricity to polycentricity, that is, overcoming monocentricity in quantity and quality, respectively.

In the cities of the Legal Amazon, shopping centers' locational profiles indicate that the center-periphery paradigm tends to become more complex. Intra-urban spatial structuring has particular contours that deserve detailed study. To measure this complexity, we elaborated a locational typology based on the uses in the shopping centers' surroundings within a radius of 1km (reasonable walking distance).

Thus, three locational profiles were defined. 1) central (located inside the center or major centers, usually older); 2) fragmented (located inside significant plots of subnormal agglomerates⁷); 3) pulverized (located inside new commercial and residential expansion areas, including high-income, former "urban voids" or "green areas") (Figure 5).

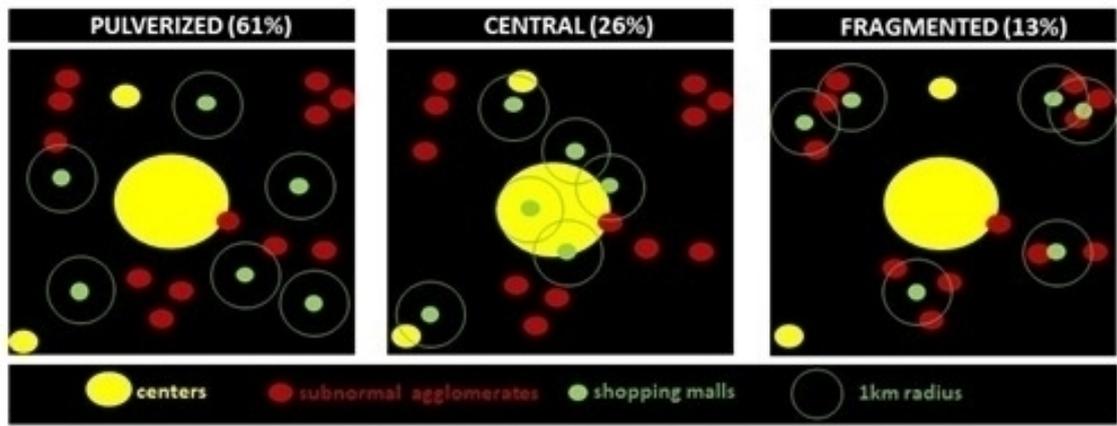


Figure 5 - Locational profiles of shopping centers in the Legal Amazon. Source: Authors

The locational profile of the 46 shopping centers linked to ABRASCE was 61% pulverized, 26% central, and 13% fragmented. From this structuring, some observations are noteworthy: a) the peripheries in the Metropolises have new contents, while in the Regional Capitals and the Sub-Regional

Centers, they start new (except for Ap. São Luís); b) although the land is cheaper in the peripheral areas, there is a selective movement on them, with an "escape" from the poor peripheral areas, which is not always possible; c) there is an uncompleted movement in the Metropolises that indicates dominance passing from the central profile to the pulverized profile.

Regarding these elements, it is noteworthy that, at the city scale, shopping centers' locations do not necessarily define their target audience. However, in some cases, it stigmatizes the venture in favor or disadvantage of its promoters. Expressions such as "malls for the rich" and "malls for the poor" reflect this context. Thus, the proliferation of the pulverized profile tends to express the search for new locations. However, the production of "new centers" does not necessarily coincide with expanding infrastructures for collective use in the surroundings, which may even hinder the daily commuting of the working class employed in these enterprises.

Furthermore, according to Silva (2017, p. 206), "shopping malls, when implemented, change the price of land, attracting other real estate investments." In this sense, constructing these consumer units increases urban land rents, even in deprived areas. This dynamic precludes the potential use for the implementation of popular housing projects or public spaces. Thus, it must be recognized that "Every improvement in a poor area makes it the theater of a conflict of interest with the expanding middle classes, not to mention the upper classes" (SANTOS, 2005, p. 125). Thus, reflecting specifically on the expansion of shopping centers, it remains to be seen who has benefitted from this "improvement," especially in the different cities of the Legal Amazon.

Several studies in Brazil indicate that these consumer units have been expanding their clientele to cover "classes A, B, C, and D." They also offer a varied range of services, including legal, health, and education (MELARA; SILVA, 2022) and even public agencies (free or not). Notably, although there is a growing popularization, shopping centers do not aspire for equality in the appropriation of their spaces (FRÚGOLI, 1992).

Not surprisingly, there are shops that "attract the poor" and shops that "attract the rich." This aspect means recognizing the presence of the center-periphery logic in the scale of the shopping centers' interior space and the conflicts established between the mix of stores and services offered to identify the users' social profiles. However, this scale of analysis should not be investigated in a watertight manner because the interests of the different economic agents are defined at multiple overlapping scales. Thus, it is necessary to conduct detailed studies to establish the fundamental mediations that consider the particularities and singularities in the locations.

CONCLUSION

Far from signifying the exhaustion of the center-periphery paradigm, the expansion of shopping centers to the "peripheries" reinforces it more complexly. This movement expands socio-spatial inequalities and differentiations since it does not take place in favor of the poor population and the working class. On the contrary, it occurs in tune with the interests of hegemonic economic agents who act at multiple scales, complexifying the analyses.

Therefore, dialogue should go beyond numbers and recognize the plural aspects in and even within the most complex socio-spatial formations. In the Brazilian Amazon, the spatial distribution of shopping centers not only materializes the deeply hierarchical and unequal center-periphery model but also reveals particularities and singularities in movements whose logics are complex, requiring reflection on new interpretative parameters.

This recognition is fundamental to promote processes of appropriation and collective use within these large consumer units, as well as guide the gains of their spatial distribution, building fairer cities.

NOTES

1- Work resulting from doctoral research developed in the Graduate Program in Geography of the Federal University of Pará.

2- ABRASCE considers shopping centers to be types with a Gross Leasable Area (GLA) greater

than 5,000 m², consisting of several commercial units with a single and centralized administration that practice fixed and percentage rentals. In this work, 533 affiliated units were mapped, considering the 628 in operation (affiliated and unaffiliated) (ABRASCE, 2023).

3- On socio-spatial fragmentation, read Sposito and Sposito (2020), Morcuende (2021) and Legroux (2021).

4- It should be mentioned that, already in the 1980s, there was a significant increase in the number of shopping centers. If, from 1966 to 1977, Brazil had only 7 units, between 1980 and 1989, this number jumped to 47. A performance influenced by the “increased availability of capital, with the entry of pension funds, in addition to CEF loans” (BNDES, 2007, p. 153).

5- This context was partially recognized on the Latin American scale (DÁVILA, 2016).

6- A population arrangement is the grouping of two or more municipalities where there is a strong population integration due to commuting movements for work or study, or the contiguity between the main urbanized spots” (IBGE, 2016, p. 22).

7- It is a set consisting of at least 51 housing units (shacks, houses, etc.) lacking, for the most part, essential public services. Occupying or having occupied, until a recent period, land owned by others (public or private) and being arranged, in general, in a disordered and/or dense way ” (IBGE, 2011)

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