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Representations of Human Development and Inequalities in Brazil based on Atlas Brasil Indicators and Indexes

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SUMMARY
This article aims to reflect on the indicators and indices of the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil - Atlas Brasil, as an instrument for the knowledge of reality. In order to achieve this objective, a bibliographical survey was carried out on the theme, covering the international and national scales, in addition to the information provided by Atlas Brasil. It is noteworthy that by making available to all citizens on an interactive platform, easy to access and understand, Atlas Brasil is an important instrument to be suitable for promotion and monitoring, from national to local scale, of human development in the country. Due to the autonomy of Brazilian municipalities to achieve their public policies / services, the knowledge of intra-municipal heterogeneities, which affect development, for example, on the scale of "neighborhoods", is useful to intervene in priority areas more precisely. This is already possible for metropolitan regions, perhaps soon for all Brazilian municipalities. Furthermore, the importance of providing and using information is ratified to increase people's choice and freedom to transform the reality in which they live.

KEYWORDS: Atlas Brasil. Counties. Indicators. Indexes.

1-INTRODUCTION

All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual (Albert Einstein, 1879 – 1955).

The idea expressed in the phrase, used in Albert Einstein's epigraph, who, in a certain way, foresaw the concept of human development of the economists Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen, shows that people must be the focus and have their capacities and freedom of choice expanded in order to develop. Currently, this assumption is consensual among scholars from different areas of science, especially those with progressive postures, who understand that people must have opportunities for development, whose social capital is essential for the maintenance of the circle of human development, reducing inequalities and environmental problems.

This perspective and other convergent ones, which are based on the creation of a sustainable environment, become essentially important in the context in which more than half (54%) of the world population, 3.9 thousand million people live in cities, whose urbanization will be maintained in an intense, fast, complex and irreversible way. As the United Nations estimates (2014) indicate, with an annual growth rate twice as high as that projected for the total population (1.8% against almost 1%), by 2030 another 4.9 billion people will be living in cities, which will represent 60% of the world population, while for the year 2050, it will be another 2.5 billion and this percentage will be close to 70%. The pressure on resources, high level of energy consumption and emissions, besides the problems that result from not meeting the demands for housing, infrastructure, employment, basic services such as education and health, etc. increase the incidence of several socioeconomic problems in cities, especially in countries of late and accelerated urbanization, such as Brazil.

However, an essentially urban reality does not invalidate reaching development, there are opportunities to achieve it, and it is usually cheaper and less harmful to the environment to provide services in densely populated areas. Nonetheless, information becomes imperative to know priorities, establish public policies and promote improvements and monitor the progress of people's living conditions. (UNITED NATIONS, 2014). In this sense, the local population needs to participate in the recognition of their priorities by relying on secondary data confronted with the reality experienced in the reproduction of life.

In general, significant advances have been achieved. In our globalized world, the advances in technology, science, education and income are important, to which are subjacent expectations of longer, healthier, safer life with physical and economic autonomy, fundamental to human development. The indicators and indexes, such as socioeconomic indicators and the Human Development Index (HDI) certify such evolution as well as highlight how much and where there is still progress to be made, helping to identify aspects to be prioritized by public policies.

In this sense, the production, systematization and dissemination of these statistics on digital platforms stand out, as does the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil, which encompasses the Atlas of Human Development in Municipalities and the Atlas of Human Development in Metropolitan Regions, allowing the entire society: scholars, researchers, public managers and civil society to know the nuances of development at different scales, from national to intramunicipal, from interactive platforms for consultation, such as the so-called Atlas Brasil . This evolution is recognized as well as the importance of continuous improvements, both considering the use of information and the incorporation of new dimensions and scales of analysis.

Given the above, the general objective of this article is to present some reflections on the indicators and indexes of the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil, in the perspective that by considering several essential dimensions to the quality of life, they are potential tools for social "empowerment" and the management of public policies, through the knowledge of the socioeconomic aspects of local reality. The specific objective is to emphasize the importance of knowledge of the reality of the place and subjects so that strategies of intervention directed to priority areas can be elaborated to disrupt centralized political-administrative structures that contribute to the maintenance of inequality.

In order to achieve the desired objectives, a bibliographic survey was conducted on the topic, covering both international and national scales. Databases of academic works (theses, dissertations, papers) were used, as well as documents, data and official studies, namely those of the Atlas Brazil- United Nations Development Program - UNDP; Institute of Applied Economic Research - Ipea and João Pinheiro Foundation - FJP.

It is important to highlight that, despite the advances in new information technologies and, consequently, in the production and availability of information, it is noted that there is still underutilization of available data, especially considering in an integrated manner the different aspects that characterize the place.

2- BRIEF RETROSPECTIVE OF INDICATORS AND SOCIAL INDEXES: from GDP to HDI

Statistics or social indicators1, besides providing empirical information and valid measurements about the situation of society considering key dimensions of human welfare, are necessary to analyze, indicate trends and define actions to be implemented. These indicators are successively transformed to offer a better understanding of the situation,

[1] The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in its *Towards a Social Report* (1969, p.97) defined them as: "[...] a statistic of direct normative interest that facilitated a concise, comprehensive and balanced judgment about the condition of major aspects of society. It is in all cases a direct measure of welfare and is subject to the interpretation that changes are in the "right" direction [...]". (STIMSON, MARANS, 2011, p.36).

moreover, they should always go beyond the boundary of description and be the basis for interventions.

> Whereas the descriptive approach asks, “What social conditions exist?” the analytic approach raises the underlying question, “Why do those conditions exist?” Analyzing the reasons for a problem is, of course, more difficult than merely pointing out that the problem exists. Yet, without a theory about the cause of a problem, a solution can rarely be found. (COBB; RIXFORD, 1998, p.2).

Monitoring the progress of society is nothing new. The Romans, for example, sought to monitor, through numbers, the degree of development of governments. According to Cobb; Rixford (1998, p.20), the use of indicators to measure social conditions dates back to the 19th century, more specifically the year 1830, when they were used as tools to analyze and seek improvements in social conditions and public health in industrial cities (in Belgium, France, England and the United States). The authors also emphasize that, in this context, the first data collection by censuses and the implementation of causal models that related diseases to poverty and the environment also occurred. However, studies with a social focus were put in second place for some years due to the effects of the Great Depression, which diverted the government's concern to conduct research to evaluate living and employment conditions, as well as business cycle indicators to prevent future crises. The context of World War II also demanded that special attention be given to economic conditions, and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was developed as a means of analyzing and organizing war production. Since the first half of the 20th century, it has been the main tool for analyzing society from the perspective of the economy.

The GDP has consolidated itself as the main tool for the analysis of the production of goods and services. However, it is increasingly recognized that this is insufficient to assess the distribution of the "mechanisms that increase or reduce inequality," as Dowbor (2014) highlights. GDP is not able to illustrate how good or bad the situation of individuals is or how wealth is distributed, i.e. places with relatively high GDPs can also present large differences between rich and poor. Moreover, even when the focus is on economic progress, GDP has shortcomings, and the analyses must be complemented with alternative indicators, as reaffirmed by NEF researcher Meadway (2014, p.1).

> GDP is an increasingly inadequate measure of progress. Over the last decade or more the presumed link between increasing GDP and rising living standards has broken down for most people, with real wages failing to rise with economic growth. So to discover what is really happening to our economy, we need to look beyond GDP. This paper sets out five indicators that allow us to better understand the short-term reality of the Coalition Government’s recovery and what it means for our economy in the long term. All five are standard economic statistics, either publicly available or based on official sources. They are: 1. Unsecured borrowing by households; 2. House prices vs. average earnings; 3. Average real earnings; 4. Output per hour worked; 5. Investment as a share of GDP.

Therefore, the understanding that economic progress does not necessarily mean good social conditions and the emergence of the "social indicators movement" has changed the perspective on indicators that have long been more economic than social. This perspective

has been strengthened in view of the recommendations for the success of societies to be measured "in terms of improving the health and welfare of citizens and their quality of life and in terms of sustainable use of resources, particularly concerning the environment and the economy" (WHO, 2012, p.1).

Since the second half of the 20th century, the social issue has been addressed by international agencies such as the United Nations (UN), which adopted the HDI created in 1990 by economists Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq to address the relationship between economic and human development. The HDI broke with the paradigm that a developed country was a rich country, by proposing human development, 'centered on people and the enlargement of their welfare', from the freedom of choice of people, considering 'their capacities and opportunities'. This requires the possibility to live a long and healthy life, to study and to have a decent income combined with guaranteed opportunities and rights. Therefore, for development, it is necessary not to increase GDP as an end in itself, but rather to create a scenario where people can develop their full potential and live 'productive and creative lives according to their needs and interests' (BOLZON, 2015).

In this context, many initiatives have emerged under different approaches, and the indicators have gained increasing space, including at the local level. At the Rio +20 Summit and the 4th World Forum of the OECD held in 2012, as well as in the strategies for Europe 2020 and within the WHO, it was reaffirmed that there is demand especially for synthesis indicators at a level of aggregation similar to GDP. Such indicators should be, as UN-HABITAT recognizes, "a set of management tools to identify urban reality, and serve as a basis for the formulation of policies, programs and projects that improve in a continuous and sustainable way". Therefore, they must be able to express society's progress in areas that are important for human development and social welfare. Synthesis indicators have the advantage of the ease of understanding by the public and policymakers, on the other hand, they have the disadvantage of being difficult to create, of selecting what is really important to address complex phenomena.

Besides, indicators should be aggregated or disaggregated to appropriate levels so that comparisons can be made between social categories of interest (by nation or region, gender, etc.) (FAHEY et al, 2003, p.10). They should also present essential characteristics such as being practical, valid, simple, feasible, relevant, reliable, understandable, dynamic, replicable and cost-effective.

For its simplicity, ease of understanding, reliability, for being a 'holistic and comprehensive way of measuring development', in short, for being in accordance with most of the criteria inherent to social indicators, the HDI has been consolidated as a 'way of understanding human development' around the world. In the Brazilian case, Atlas Brasil provides the Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI)[2], as well as other socioeconomic indicators, thus constituting an effective tool for the knowledge of reality.

[2] IDHM was launched in 1998, Brazil being one of the pioneer countries to adapt the index to its reality. (PNUD, 2014).

3- INDEXES AND INDICATORS OF ATLAS BRASIL AS BASES OF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Information, to which everyone has the right, is fundamental to know and to be informed, as stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". Furthermore, in Brazil, the Law on Access to Information ensures that, except for the confidentiality provided for by law, all information produced or held in custody by government agencies, regardless of format, is public.

Especially in the current context, technological resources, namely Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), have created and widened the possibilities of access to information, which enables the transmission and production of knowledge by individuals who can organize and articulate politically to demand social changes.

Among the essential forms of information, mainly for social participation, are the indicators and social indexes, of which statistics allow people to know their reality better and they are important tools for governance. Such information by itself is not very relevant for change, however, as it is understood and appropriated by people it acquires great value. Taking into account the importance, without disregarding the limitations of the use of indicators, Hancock (2000) reiterates the statements of Hancock, Labonté and Edwards (1999) in the Health of the Population Report of Canada, where:

> [...] indicators are only useful if the process of development and use involves the community as a whole, examining what it wants to be, where it wants to go, and what are its values; if the process provides useful and usable information to the community; and if the process increases community knowledge and power. [...]. It is also important to highlight once again that our focus is on the use of indicators by local citizens, community organizations, and local agencies and governments, rather than national and/or provincial policymakers or researchers, except to the extent that policy development and research facilitates the development and use of indicators at the community level. (HANCOCK 2000, p.9).

Therefore, in a context where everyone has access to a range of information, including indicators and socioeconomic indexes of municipalities such as those of Atlas Brasil, there are vast possibilities for local knowledge to be combined with quantifications, which provide citizens with conditions for participation. This is crucial in the context of the urban planning and management process because it is from the smallest scales (city and/or neighborhoods) that individual knowledge and actions can have the greatest contribution to the achievement of a certain desired reality.

After the launch of the Global HDI - published annually by the UNDP headquarters in New York for 187 countries and territories, decades of studies and work, it enabled the construction of indicators and the HDI, which enable the knowledge, in detail, of socioeconomic characteristics, being therefore important proxies to measure the level of development and to address, in actions and decisions, inequalities in Brazilian cities. According to the idea that the access to the knowledge produced is public and democratic, such

information is made available through data, graphs and tables, in an online platform, called Atlas Brasil, with a simple interface, easy to navigate and free of charge, which allows those interested to use its information and resources.

According to the information in Atlas Brasil, it is possible to make comparisons between the reality of Geographic Regions, States of the Federation and Municipalities3, however, because the MHDI is a methodological adaptation of the HDI for the municipal level and uses other databases, the comparison between MHDI and HDI is not possible. Though with different indicators and database, both consider the dimensions longevity, education and income. Atlas Brasil comprehends about 330 socioeconomic indicators, divided into dimensions such as education, housing, environment, political participation, population, income, health, work and vulnerability. The indicators can be disaggregated into population groups such as male/female; black/white and rural/urban. Therefore, these indicators have significant scope in terms of human development aspects.

The information provided by the Atlas allows cross-checking and analysis of the differences in the HDI and the different dimensions related to human development at different scales. From 2020, it allows dialogue with 13 of the 174 Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs, adopted in 2015 by United Nations (UN) member states through UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The information allows the creation of typologies of the municipalities and can serve as a basis and eligibility criterion for receiving national, state and municipal policies, resources and public programs. And also to search for sectorial actions, but also transversal, to the dimensions of human development. As an example, we can highlight "the efforts of the lowest MHDI municipalities in the state of Maranhão - many of them with the worst rates in the country - that organized themselves in an entourage to discuss with the Federal Government an action plan to reverse the negative scenario of human development in the region" (PNUD, 2014).

Moreover, especially in the case of the Human Development Units - HDUs, a concept close to neighborhoods5, used in the Atlas of Human Development in Metropolitan Regions and large urban centers, the intramunicipal data has great potential to aid municipal public management by providing knowledge of sectoral and spatial differences and the development of programs and actions suitable for the neediest areas. Additionally, by having access to knowledge, citizens also have the basis to claim for improvements and monitor actions in the places where they live.

3 The online platform of the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil, the Atlas Brasil, includes the Atlas of Human Development in Municipalities and the Atlas of Human Development in Metropolitan Regions, which allows to know the inequalities at the intramunicipal level, between "neighborhoods" of the same metropolitan region (ATLAS BRASIL, 2015).

4 The Atlas dialogues with the following SDGs: 1 Poverty eradication; 2 Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture; 3 Good Health and Well-being; 4 Quality Education; 5 Gender Equality; 6 Clean Water and Sanitation; 7 Affordable and Clean Energy; 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 10 Reduced Inequalities; 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities; 15 Life on Land; 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

[5] The Human Development Units (HDUs) are spatial cutouts of greater socioeconomic homogeneity within the municipalities. The units are not necessarily a neighborhood - they can be a fraction of a neighborhood, and/or the sum of more than one of them.

Especially in Brazil, where administrative decentralization assures states and municipalities the autonomy to implement their public policies and services, this possibility of knowing the nuances of heterogeneity, which affect development in small scales of the urban fabric, as in the context of neighborhoods, is quite useful to act. After all, knowing the aspects and the most vulnerable population, in a spatialized way, is important for public policies, mainly in the social, environmental and economic areas.

Therefore, at different spatial scales, the information, indicators and indexes have great significance in knowledge and basis for changing reality, serving, after all, to formulate diagnoses and, consequently, projects and more precise interventions, as well as being essential for monitoring and assessing the interventions, taking into account goals, a state that is to be achieved.

4- FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL: A look at spatial disparities from the Atlas Brasil.

Atlas Brasil gathers a series of municipal indicators built from administrative records data from several sources: Ministry of Health (DATASUS/SIM, SINASC, SIH/SUS), Ministry of Education (School Census), MapBiomas, Ministry of Citizenship (CadÚnico, Bolsa Família and BPC), Ministry of Economy (RAIS), Superior Electoral Court, Ministry of Regional Development (SNIS), IBGE (National Accounts) (ATLAS BRASIL, 2020). The information on the platform ranges from the national to the municipal scale, as it can be seen in Figures 1, 2 and 3. From 2013, when the online platform was launched, information can be viewed, analyzed and downloaded in different configurations such as tables, graphs, maps, and as raw data, which can be downloaded to make customized changes in an offline environment (without using the Internet) by various programs and resources.

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Figure 1: MHDI in Brazilian municipalities (2010).

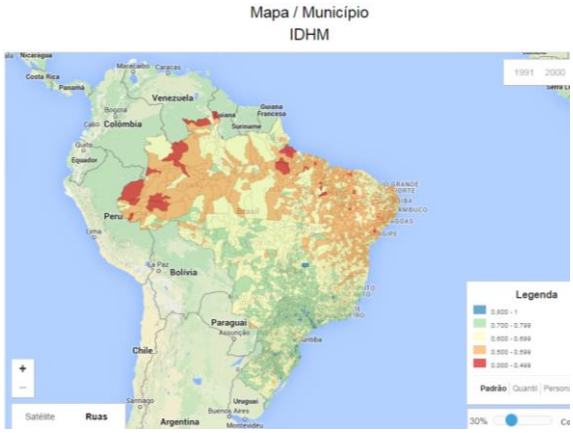


Figure 2: MHDI in the municipalities of Minas Gerais (2010).

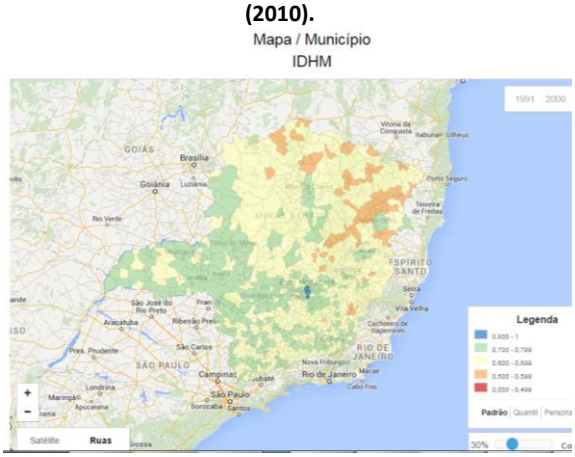
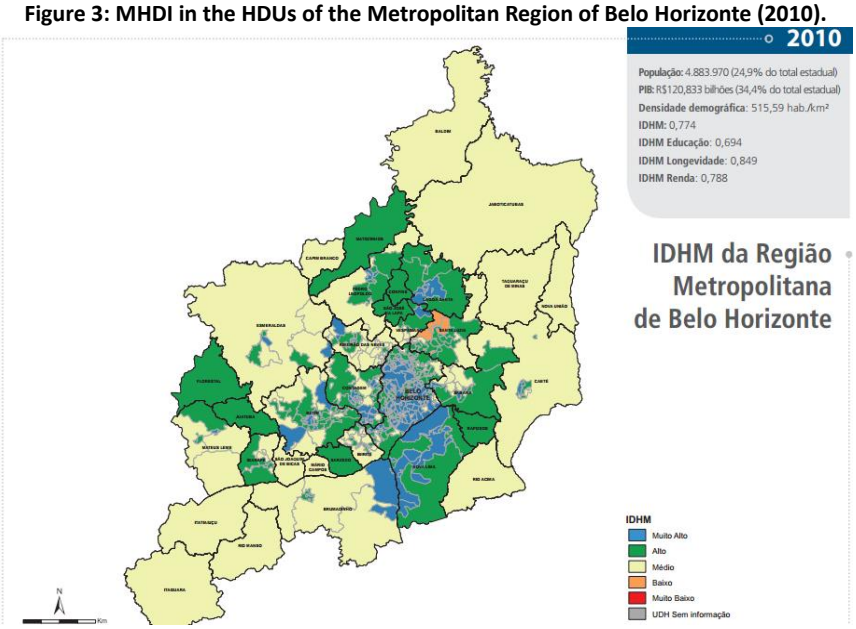


Figure 3: MHDI in the HDUs of the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (2010).



Source: ATLAS BRASIL, 2020.

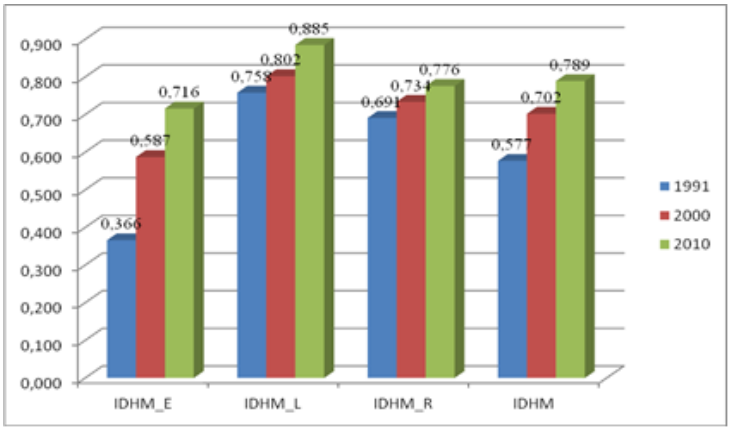
The information in Atlas Brasil can be used for several purposes, among which we highlight: scientific research, the process of planning and management of the territory and as didactic resources for various curricular contents of basic education. In the latter case, in addition to the feasibility and understanding of the contents addressed, there is the instrumentalization of students, in training for the exercise of citizenship, to use the resources of Atlas Brasil.

In the perspective of the appropriation of knowledge by citizens for the engagement in local actions, the information related to the political-administrative unit closest to daily life is especially relevant: the municipality, as well as the intramunicipal variations, between the neighborhoods, as made available to the metropolitan regions and large urban centers of the country, through the City Space Division in Human Development Units (HDUs).

Didactically, considering the places where the information is not yet in HDUs, the possibility of establishing comparisons and contextualizing the local scales is highlighted. For example, when considering a municipality that does not belong to the metropolitan region,

such as Uberlândia, located west of the Mesoregion of the Triangulo Mineiro/Alto Paranaíba in the State of Minas Gerais. In a number, which varies from 0 to 1, the MHDI of the municipality in 2010 was 0.789, therefore high (ranging from 0.700 to 0.799), ensuring, in the state ranking the third place of best MHDI, only lower than Nova Lima (0.813) and Belo Horizonte (0.810). And in the national ranking, the 71st position, 45 more than the year 2000. When analyzing the MHDI decomposed in the dimensions: longevity (MHDI_L), education (MHDI_E) e income (MHDI_R), it can be seen that the highest rates occur in income, while education presents the highest growth in the period considered, as can be seen in graph 1.

Graph 1: MHDI of Uberlândia-MG (2010)



Source: ATLAS BRASIL, 2020.

Socio-economic indicators can also be considered, for example, when considering the housing conditions in the municipality of Uberlândia, a large part of the municipality's population lives in homes with minimal infrastructure conditions. Additionally, the municipal percentages are better than the state and national ones, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: % of population according to household conditions, Uberlândia, MG and Brazil (2010)

Place	% of the population in households with:				
	piped water	toilet and piped water	waste collection	electric power	density > 2
Brazil	92.72	87.16	97.02	98.58	27.83
Minas Gerais	94.44	94.91	97,85	99.35	18.91
Uberlândia	99.52	98.97	99.85	99.92	14.50

Source: ATLAS BRASIL, 2020.

We know that one Real in basic sanitation reduces spending on diseases by four Real (R$). Therefore, besides considering the indicators, which have a significant impact on the occurrence of an individual's vulnerability situation, one can also consider and correlate with the former the indicators that attest to the effects of inadequate situations, such as hospitalizations for diseases related to inadequate environmental sanitation, according to table 2.

Table 2: % of hospitalizations for diseases related to inadequate environmental sanitation, Uberlândia, MG and Brazil (2013 -2107)

Place	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Brazil	3.84	3.29	3.09	3.05	2.28
Minas Gerais	2.12	1.95	1.83	2.35	1.47
Uberlândia	1.18	1.74	1.01	1.35	0.74

Source: ATLAS BRASIL, 2020.

Therefore, by proposing and making available indicators and socioeconomic indexes from reliable sources to all citizens in an interactive platform, easy to access and understand, Atlas Brasil consists of an important tool to be adopted by society, to check the reality in which we live from indexes, follow the evolution of environmental and social transformations, as well as outline strategies to promote human development, especially at the local level.

5- FINAL REMARKS

In a context historically marked by "unequal and combined development"[6] and by rapid and intense urbanization, there are great challenges for human development, essential to the quality of life and welfare of the population. Identifying the needs and seeking to understand them from a systemic perspective, without, however, failing to act concisely, from suitable local public policies is the way to overcome inequalities and achieve development.

In this scenario, despite powerful resistance, it stands out that knowledge of the local reality, based on what is lived, can be combined with numbers, expressed in indicators and indexes. They serve as a basis for participation, as well as for the formulation of more effective public policies, according to the wishes of local populations. In addition, public and private authorities should have their decisions and actions based on socioeconomic indicators with a multidimensional approach, to prioritize the poorest places, considering different geographic scales and specific groups. Therefore, it is worth mentioning the importance of information availability and access, made feasible by ICT resources, such as Atlas Brasil.

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