

Logistics, transportation and territory

EDITORIAL

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In this number, *Terræ* offers a contribution to the debate on logistics and transport as regards their relationship with the organization and use of territory, a subject that has been awakening an ever greater interest on the part of geographers, economists, urban planners, engineers and other professionals who deal, directly or indirectly, with strategic, regional and territorial planning.

Modern logistics consolidated its position in the second half of the 20th century (especially as from the 1970s) as a circulation strategy linked to the management of supply chains, made even more complex in the present era of globalization. The functional integration of geographically dispersed productive systems has become a practical problem of coordination, both in time and space, of material flows, whose intensity grows daily. This has generated demands for the expansion and modernization of both infrastructure and equipment, as also for new forms of the regulation of the use of these geographical objects. The objective of this new combination of objects and norms is that of improving the conditions of circulation by increasing the spatial mobility of hegemonic agents by means of selective accessibility.

In Brazil, as also in many other countries, the scale of this problem goes beyond the daily activities of the companies concerned and affects the whole of society and of national territory, requiring, therefore, considerable intervention on the part of the State on its various levels of activity. Logistics has become a key factor in national planning, in the guise of laws and forms of investment, with the justification of integrating the country competitively into international markets. A great part of the processes of privatization that took place in the 1990s sought to improve the logistic conditions of Brazilian territory; examples are

the concessions and authorizations which affected transport modalities (railroads, roads, pipelines and waterways), telecommunications and various categories of logistic nodes (ports, Customs stations, multimodal logistic platforms, and warehouses, among others). The concept of logistics is a constant today in the development plans and programs of both state and federal spheres.

In a wider sense, it may be said that logistics designates: 1) a sector of economic activity, in the shape of the rendering of services (transport, storage, aggregation of value to products, routing), consultancy, Customs dispatching etc.); 2) a branch of public and private investment; 3) a set of norms and regulations to increase selective territorial fluidity, and 4) a strategy for circulation, related, particularly, to the companies in the upper circuit of the urban economy.

In the Universities, logistics, formerly circumscribed to academic disciplines of a more technical character, has been gaining ground in other fields of knowledge, notably in Geography and Spatial Economics, becoming integrated into various theoretical approaches, from the most conservative to the most critical.

In Geography specifically, the concept of logistics has come to enrich and bring up to date studies on transport and communications and it is exactly this that has motivated this thematic issue of *Terræ*.

The studies brought together here have as their common theme the concern with geographical method and the analysis of the specific situations which arise as a result of the exponential increase in the material flows in both Brazilian and Argentinian territory in recent decades. We fully expect that these papers will make a significant contribution to the proposed theme.