

# The role of Geography in the appreciation of Science

**Fernando Nadal J. Villela**

Universidade de São Paulo.  
São Paulo, SP, Brazil

geovillela@usp.br

 0000-0002-7804-6565

e-215533

revista

Geo 

USP

espaço e tempo

Volume 27 • n° 2 (2023)

ISSN 2179-0892

## How to cite this article:

VILLELA, F. N. J. The role of Geography in the appreciation of Science. **Geosp**, v.27, n.2, e-215533, may/aug. 2023. ISSN2179-0892. Available at: <https://www.revistas.usp.br/geosp/article/view/215533>. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2179-0892.geosp.2023.215533.en>.



This article is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

# The role of Geography in the appreciation of Science

In recent years, with the encouragement of governments aligned with anti-democratic axes, there has been a massive spread of attacks on universities and academic-scientific practices throughout the world, leading to the belief that they are loaded with mistaken ideology and characterized by an indoctrinating and alienating exercise of civil society. This speech, filled with notes and fake news, was clearly based on biased interests, in a clear dispute with democracy. One of the sentences, repeated everywhere, dealt with the implausible perspective regarding the need for political and ideological neutrality in science, as if there should be a total lack of commitment on the part of professors and researchers in the academic field to the transformations of society and critical reading of their problems, always full of serious and contradictory aspects.

In Brazil, linked to the support of holders of economic forces and concentration of income, this discourse took shape, mainly, in the extinction or dismemberment of government bodies with an academic-scientific basis with a fundamental role in planning, monitoring, and deliberating ethical and rational measures aimed at improving the lives of the population, environmental conservation and preservation of unprotected communities. The examples are countless: the former federal government, disqualifying the action of the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), sought to encourage deforestation and illegal mining in the north of the country; That same government, bothered by the fires and the inevitable data demonstrated by remote sensing, preferred to attack the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), responsible for the notes, dismissing the director of the Institute at that time. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, a crucial State body in the survey, analysis and spatialization of data from the national territory, had its demographic census almost boycotted by the Ministry of Economy at the time without further explanation, apparently concerned with hiding the socioeconomic losses it was suffering most of the population due to the economic policies adopted by the cabinet.

At the state level, more examples of this intentional disengagement and disqualification can be seen, whose attacks were aimed at bodies associated with research and academic-scientific knowledge at public universities. In São Paulo, the main planning company of the largest Metropolitan Region in Brazil, the Empresa Paulista de Planejamento Metropolitano (EMPLASA), responsible for measures aimed at mitigating floods, integration between the various municipalities of the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo and joint actions in the combat emergency problems. Not satisfied, Environmental Institutes with a unique contribution to knowledge and rational use of resources extracted and transformed from Nature, such as the Geological, Botany and Forestry Institutes, were merged into one under the allegation of fiscal responsibility, subduing the development achieved, which for so many decades they were directed towards environmental conservation, towards a predatory policy centered on the economic interest of export agriculture.

This scenario could be worse only if there were not, in a contrary uprising on the part of the population and the academic community, the desire to interrupt this progressive dismantling of what is acquired only through the constant exercise of critical thinking and the search for

knowledge, showing a regretful new beginning, but different and more rational, which is part of the appreciation of Science. Data provided by research institutions began to be respected again, with analyzes applied to territorial planning. The number of professors and researchers, albeit timidly, began to be multiplied in the university sphere, increasing the much-needed critical mass. Gradually, public policies aimed at the country's growth as a democratic nation began to be put into practice again through ordinances and notices, adopting the premise of recovering from previous times.

This recovery, which does not mean null or passive activity in the face of times of so many significant losses, has Geography as a Science and academic-scientific practice one of its greatest disciplines at the forefront. Firstly, because it has never allowed itself to be influenced by the false perspective of the absence of ideology and social commitment, valuing not only Science, but also a way of doing Science, based on the quality of its analyzes and democratic principle. Secondly, because, although increasing, spatial analyzes and fact-finding have once again gained strength, interrupted illegal practices and adjusted conduct based on conservation and preservation, prioritizing the well-being of the population. And finally, Geography occupies an essential position because it has long respected the diverse aspects to which society's problems and issues are linked: ethnic-racial and cultural diversity and the multifaceted realities of places, regions, and territories, as well as the study depth of human relationships shaped in Space and Landscape, from natural aspects to those built or designed.

At the federal level, ministries related to Education, Science and Technology begin to receive the first incentives, increasing their budgets and contributing to institutes where the basis of studies permeates geographic knowledge. IBAMA once again has the power to license and control environmental quality through inspection. The MapBiomass Project, aimed at mapping and monitoring land cover and use in Brazil, in partnership with INPE, whose former director who was once fired now occupies the presidency of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), now indicates many changes in the territory in real time, allowing action and planning by government bodies. IBGE, reinvigorated in its relations with the federal government and its commitment to civil society, finalizes the most recent census with several results already published. Even recently founded and condensed from the previously mentioned extinct São Paulo institutes, the Environmental Research Institute (IPA) still carries with it the competence and commitment of its researchers, carrying out fundamental research in its Centers with the massive participation of geographers.

Therefore, it can be said that the recovery from such adverse times for science always has Geography as an inseparable accomplice in the resumption of its appreciation. This could not be any different since geographic knowledge contemplates in Space and Landscape human relationships and natural processes that are so complex and intrinsic to each other. Therefore, once again the *Revista Geosp: Espaço e Tempo* contributes to geographic knowledge with its new issue, praising academic-scientific knowledge through high-level research focused on studies of these relationships. Enjoy your reading!

Fernando Nadal J. Villela  
Editor Assistant