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TRANSPORT IN THE AMERICAS: LINKING REGIONAL SYSTEMS

On 15 and 16 December 1998, in New Orleans, United States, the third Western Hemisphere Transportation Ministerial Meeting will take place. This is part of a work programme which has been incorporated into the Plan of Action of the Americas.

The Summit of the Americas held in Santiago, Chile, in April 1998, and the adoption of negotiations mechanisms for the Free Trade Area of the Americas constitute two major landmarks of the continental integration processes this year.

The current issue of the FAL Bulletin focuses on the relationship between trade and transport in the Americas, and includes a discussion of transport systems and the supporting integration progress in the continent.

For further information on this topic, please contact José María Rubiato: Email: jrubiato@eclac.cl

In April 1998, at the Summit of the Americas, the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, ECLAC, was given the task of drawing up a profile of the region's transport systems. The comments contained in this bulletin are taken partly from that profile, which was prepared in the context of the work of the Executive Committee of the Western Hemisphere Transport Initiative (WHTI) and is to be presented at the ministerial meeting in New Orleans. The document looks at transport from the twin perspectives of (i) transport mode and (ii) services in support of the existing regional groupings' international trade.

This study deals with regional integration schemes set up under multilateral agreements, i.e. ignoring bilateral alliances, which, despite being the most common type of agreement in the Americas, in some cases relate to geographically remote areas that make it impossible to analyse the physical integration of the regional transport systems that feed them. The profile looks at transport systems from the viewpoint of their functionality and service to the corresponding integration scheme; in other words, consideration is given to the services, components and infrastructure networks that contribute to trade within the geographic area of a country grouping, as well as between it and its trading partners both in the Americas and beyond.

TRADE BETWEEN REGIONAL GROUPS

The trade patterns of the hemisphere's regional groupings show that exchange between members of the same group has been growing over time. Trade within the western hemisphere between regional groupings has also increased considerably. However, this exchange is still less than trade between the countries of the region and the rest of the world, as well as between individual member countries of each group with some of their trading partners outside it. Notable exceptions to the latter are the three NAFTA countries, each of which is among the other two's top trading partners.

Intra-American Exports in the Americas - 1996
(in US\$ million)



Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

CACM: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

Andean Community: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela

Mercosur: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay (+ Chile as an associate member)

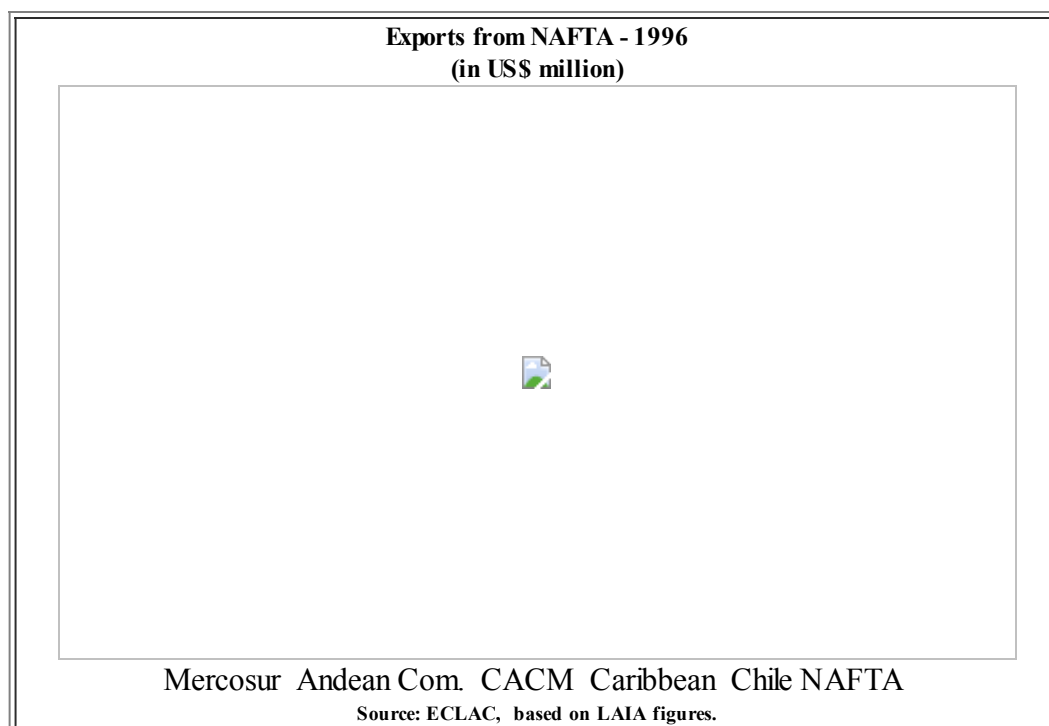
Source: ECLAC's own calculations based on data from the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), Census Bureau and Transport Canada.

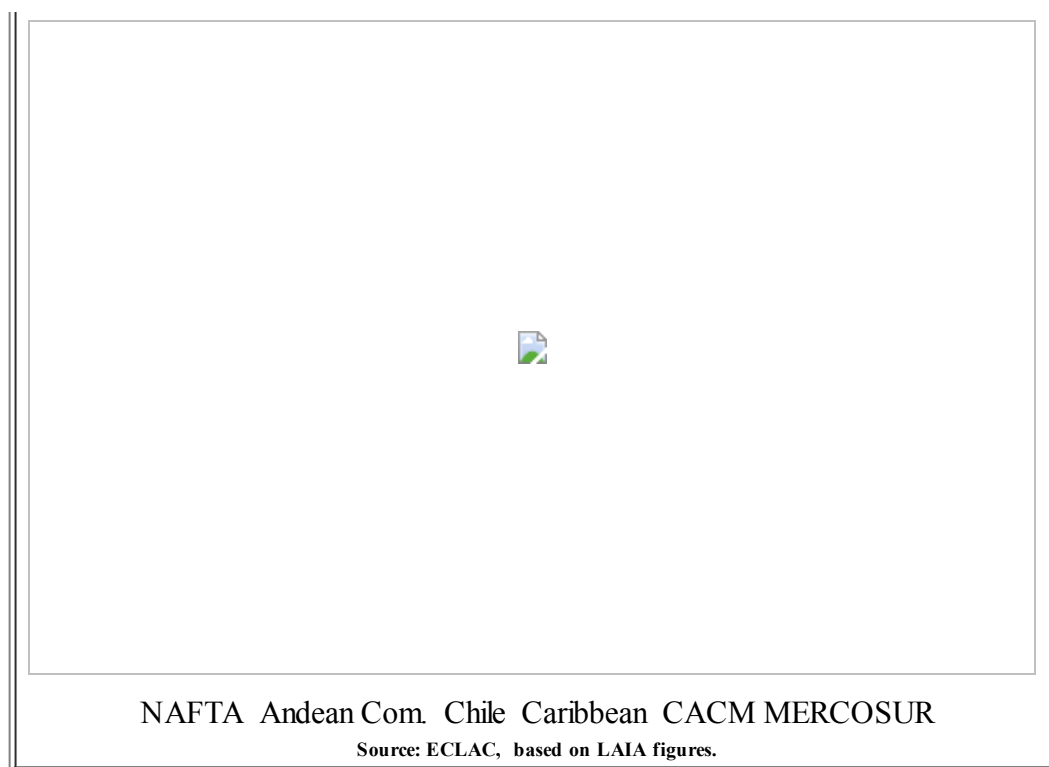
Note: In order to simplify the figure, Chile has been grouped with Mercosur and Panama with the Central American Common Market (CACM); the Caribbean countries also appear as a single group of partners.

The borders and names that appear on this map do not imply support or official acceptance by the United Nations.

INTRA-AMERICAN TRANSPORT MODES

The biggest volumes and values of seaborne trade naturally occur among the regional groups involving the largest economies -- the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur). Moreover, bearing in mind that trade with countries outside the region is still greater than that with trading partners in the Americas, in practice the maritime transport systems used in trade between the region's groupings are a subset of what the hemisphere's countries use in their trade with the rest of the world. In other words, there is an integration between regional and world systems, such that extra-regional systems have made greater development of services possible within the hemisphere.

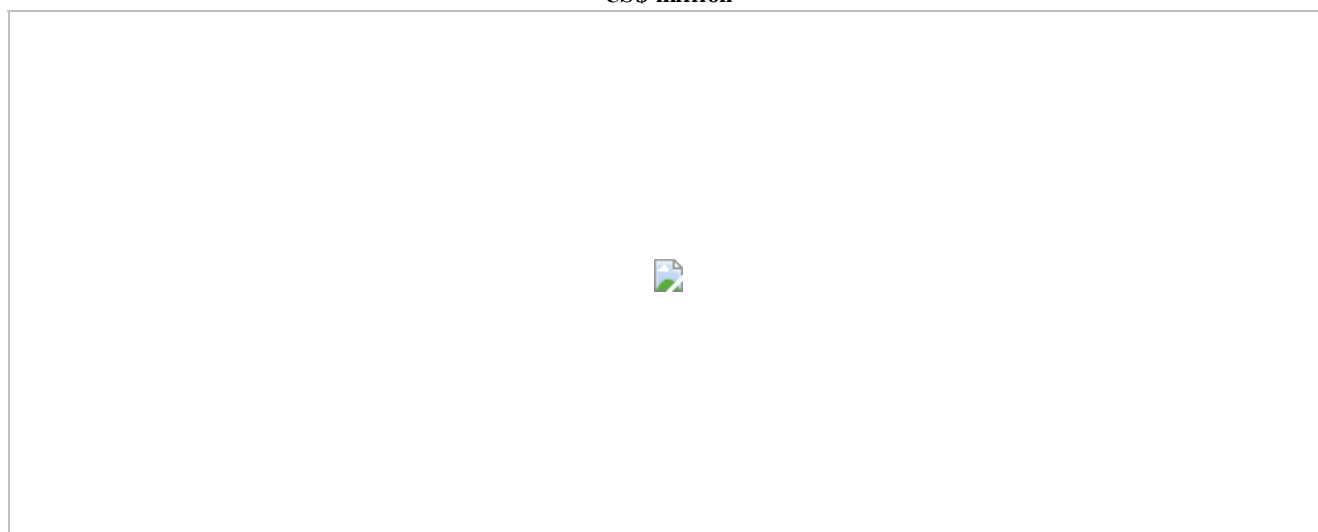




RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE BETWEEN REGIONAL GROUPINGS

The relative importance of trade between western hemisphere regional groupings, compared to total exports from each group to the region as a whole, varies considerably between groupings. In 1996, intra-trade in the Caribbean accounted for 9% of that subregion's total exports to the American continent as a whole, whereas 88% of exports from the NAFTA countries to the Americas stayed inside NAFTA. Moreover, intra-NAFTA trade accounted for 93% of western hemisphere exports to NAFTA countries, while, at the other extreme, intra-Caribbean trade amounted to only 7% of total exports from the western hemisphere to Caribbean countries. Mercosur is the most balanced group in terms of the origin and destination of its western hemisphere exports, with 50% and 42% respectively.

**Western hemisphere exports compared to intra-subregional exports 1996 -
US\$ million**

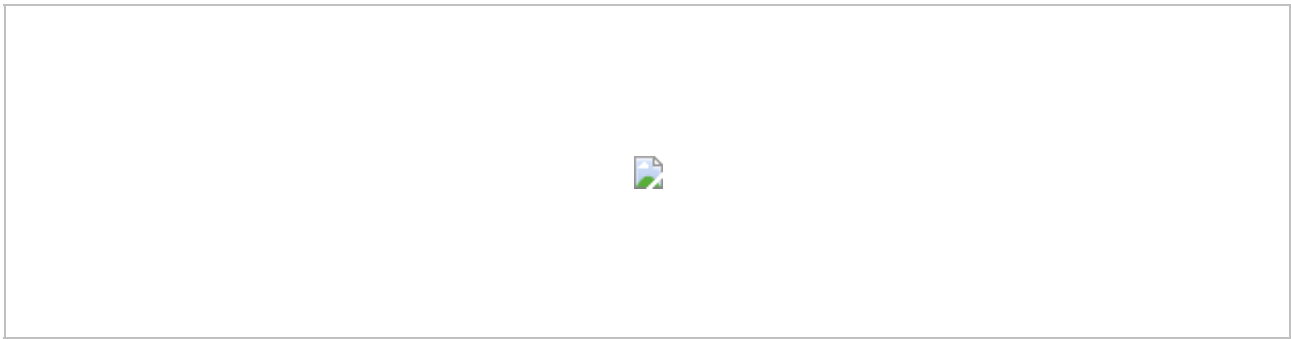


Source: ECLAC, based on figures from LAIA, U.S. Census Bureau and Statistics Canada.

BREAKDOWN OF EXPORT TRADE BY TRANSPORT MODE

Figures for the transportation of exports among regional blocs in 1996 show that maritime transport occupies a preponderant place in inter-group trade, while road transport dominates in terms of the value of goods exported. Among countries that have data on value and volume by transport mode for 1996, 79% of the volume of export trade between these countries went by sea, although this volume was only 33% in value terms. Against this, road transport, with 13% of the volume, carried 49% of the value exported.

As regards the other modes, air transport carries 6% of total value but only a minimal percentage in volume terms. The figures for rail transport are also surprising, strongly influenced by the export movement in Mexico: 10% of value to just 3% of volume. Leaving this country aside, the relation is clearly the other way round for the other countries considered. Mention should also be made of riverborne transportation in Mercosur, which is expected to keep growing in importance in the future.

LAIA countries: breakdown of western hemisphere regional exports by mode of transport 1996 - Values in US\$ million - Volumes in thousand tons					
Maritime	River	Air	Rail	Road	Other
					

Source: ECLAC, based on LAIA figures.

INTRA- VERSUS EXTRA-GROUP MODES OF TRANSPORT

The analysis of the transport-mode breakdown by export destination complements the above observations, especially in cases where extra-group trade is similar to or greater than trade within the bloc. The importance of sea transport is confirmed not only as regards volume, but also in value

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