

Presentation

*Emerging identities and threatened territorialities.
Multiple claims involving towns in the Gran Nayar*

We close Volume 39 of *Relaciones Estudios de Historia y Sociedad* with a *Thematic Section* that presents a broad array of multidisciplinary views regarding two problems that intertwine with the life of indigenous and mestizo groups in rural Mexico and, perhaps, even the rest of a world where agrarian societies –with or without constructed ethnic identities– and their territories are being assailed by neoliberal-oriented capitalism. This inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue brings me great satisfaction for it reflects precisely the orientation we have striven to bring to *Relaciones* in recent years, one that may well go against the grain of the guidelines imposed by the classification and indexation systems of academic journals currently in vogue in Mexico. But this dialogue was cemented with the publication –in the first issue of 2018– which also presented a multidisciplinary *Thematic Section*. We trust that the new editorial directors of *Relaciones* will ponder, adopt and, of course, improve these experiences –for it is vital to maintain this critical perspective–.

Relaciones is not –indeed, cannot be– a journal devoted to just one discipline, as the new tenets for the positioning of academic publications increasingly demand. From the very beginning –which coincided with the founding of *El Colegio de Michoacán*, which celebrated its 40th anniversary on January 15th 2019– *Relaciones* adopted a clear, principle mission: to provide a forum for dialogue between anthropology and history that focuses on concrete problems of real-

ity. The approach that predominated early on emphasized regional studies that analyzed realities invisibilized by the country's nationalist discourse. But more recently interest has shifted to other research topics and problems through dialogues with other ways of perceiving phenomena in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Hence, the journal's current mission is not only to publish academic articles from the various disciplines developed at *El Colegio de Michoacán* and other institutions devoted to research in these areas, but also to create spaces for dialogue and debate among them that center on concrete problems, since exchanges among distinct views will always lead to improving our understanding of social and cultural phenomena that acquire distinct geometries when observed through different lenses. Previous directors of *Relaciones*—to whom the journal owes the prestige it enjoys today—kept in mind the importance and relevance of interdisciplinary dialogue, one shining example of their laudable editorial labors. All I set out to do when I found myself raised upon the shoulders of the scholars who preceded me, and with the support of an outstanding Editorial Council, was to insist that academics who presented proposals for a *Thematic Section* stress this invitation to dialogue.

For this reason, in May 2017, when Drs. Regina Lira and Paul Liffman proposed the series of articles that make up the *Thematic Section* of this issue, there was no doubt as to their pertinence. To better understand their importance, suffice to cite part of Lira and Liffman's proposal:

Despite the diverse perspectiv(ist)s included, one of the strengths of this issue would be how each article integrates a concern with agrarian land tenure and/or the ecological crises that threaten territorialities with the question of the mediatization of the discourses or ontologies that their spokespeople present to environmentalist and indigenist audiences and institutions.

This approach places emphasis on how those discourses or ontologies circulate among the groups affected by threats to their territoriality and ecological integrity; groups that include not only the principle indigenous peoples—Coras, Huicholes, Tepehuanos— that inhabit the region of the

Gran Nayar, but also the mestizo population living in the sacred territory that belongs to these groups; namely, the Wirikuta desert in San Luis Potosí, where two globally-financed mega-mining projects have been proposed. In contrast to traditional analyses that set out from the idea that Indians have essential, immovable identities, these articles highlight fluidity and identity performativity. This explains why the title begins with the adjective “Emerging”. Despite the improvisation that this concept implies, identity and territory are continuously reinvented against the double background of the indigenist legacy of the Mexican state and the regional historical-cultural frameworks of the actors involved. At the base of this we find the inevitable specter of otherness, which also molds identities in a multiethnic region, whether through appropriation or exclusion. Thus, this issue not only transcends disciplinary boundaries, but also reflects distinct social positionings in relation to the challenges that rural territories confront.¹

The texts that make up the *Thematic Section* fulfill, indeed surpass, this insistence on dialogue and debate, but previewing each one here would entail extending this *Presentation* too far. Instead, we invite our readers to peruse them in the order in which they appear, though as in *Rayuela*, they are free to choose the approach that best suits their interests. This can also be said for the two articles in the *General Section* and the *Book Reviews*. All the texts have passed the peer review process and the critical assessment of our evaluators and editors; but, as always, the reader has the last word.

Just two more items before closing. Four years have passed since I was named Director of *Relaciones*, after four years working shoulder-to-shoulder with my dear friend and respected colleague, Thomas Calvo, as his Editorial Secretary. I learned a great deal during these eight years, while enjoying and detesting –simultaneously– the responsibilities involved, for overseeing the interesting, but sad, process of transforming a consolidated and beautifully-printed academic journal into a digital product fell to me. This transition increases *Relaciones*’ opportunities to broaden its impact in interna-

¹ Paul Liffman, Proposal letter, 27 May 2017.

tional academic circles for it means integrating the best Internet publication criteria with suitable, free-access platforms (such as *Open Journal Systems*) that give the journal greater visibility, especially once we implemented SciELO's regional proposals and began to mark each text with the relevant metadata. I am well aware that these measures spell the end of traditional, printed and bound academic journals; those born as expressions of the *republic of letters* in the second half of the 17th century, and that constituted the tools I used to learn the historian's trade, but the means of transmitting knowledge cannot continue as they have up to now, due not only to the dictates of technologies—imposed or assumed— but also to issues of culture and ecological impact. Who will continue to read objects produced in print when it is perfectly feasible to store huge libraries of information in binary electronic impulses? Well... perhaps only us, the older generation that matured towards the end of the era of books as tangible objects with their cellulose-scented pages. Sadly, it seems this is not what the future holds. Hence, the time has come to open the way to fresh young blood that will take on the responsibility of facing new challenges. Of course, during this transition we will be concerned with, and involved in, transmitting all that may be required to support the new team as it deals with the changes demanded by the technology of academic journals and ponders the decisions that need to be taken in light of foreseeable changes in policies that affect science, technology and the Humanities, and will have a very significant impact on academic journals like *Relaciones*.

Finally, I would like to thank the great team that has accompanied and supported me during my period as Director, beginning with the people who participated from the outset on the journal's Editorial Council and those who joined later: Eveline Dürr, Institut für Ethnologie Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, Germany; Gimena del Río Riande, Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliográficas y Crítica Textual CONICET, Argentina; Laura Cházaro García, DIE-CINVESTAV, Mexico; Marco Antonio Estrada Saavedra, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México, Mexico; Agapi Filini, Centro de Estudios Arqueológicos, El Colegio de Michoacán, A.C., Mexico; Virginia García Acosta, Centro de Investigaciones y Estu-

dios Superiores en Antropología Social (Ciesas-DF), Mexico; and Alberto J. Olvera Rivera, Instituto de Investigaciones Histórico-Sociales, Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico. I also thank Nemer E. Narchi for coming on board as the Editorial Secretary and, of course, the team here at *El Colegio* that makes the journal possible: Blanca Corrales and Reynaldo Rico. I am indebted, as well, to that anonymous collective which, over the Internet and at home, helped me understand and apply the most complex elements required for the leap into the digital world. In closing, I express my sincere respect for, and recognition of, those who made the journal *Relaciones* what it is today: its previous directors, editors, authors and reviewers... were it not for their efforts and dedication during these forty years I would not be writing these lines today.

Victor Gayol

*English translation by
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