

Presentation

DIALOGUES AND MULTIPLE VOICES

Exactly four years ago, the journal *Relaciones...* published a fifth issue that its Director at that time, Thomas Calvo, entitled “*Un alto en el camino*” (“A Stop along the Way”).¹ Today, as then, publishing an extra issue with varied content reflects an exceptional situation brought on—as in 2012—by conditions similar to those that Calvo elucidated in his *Presentation* to that issue in 2012;² namely, the question of physical extension (*i.e.*, long articles but limited space for publication), which produces long delays before studies finally emerge in print.³ Proposing this extra issue was conceived to alleviate this situation. A second theme that the then Director touched upon was that of the interdisciplinary nature of the contents of *Relaciones...*, which is also the focus of this *Introduction*.

Relaciones... was born, and became ever more clearly defined with the passing of time, as a multidisciplinary journal, one that encourages comparative studies and fosters interrelations among different disciplinary approaches and diverse topics. This, we feel, is, at one and

¹ *Relaciones. Estudios de Historia y Sociedad* xxxiii (132 bis) (otoño 2012).

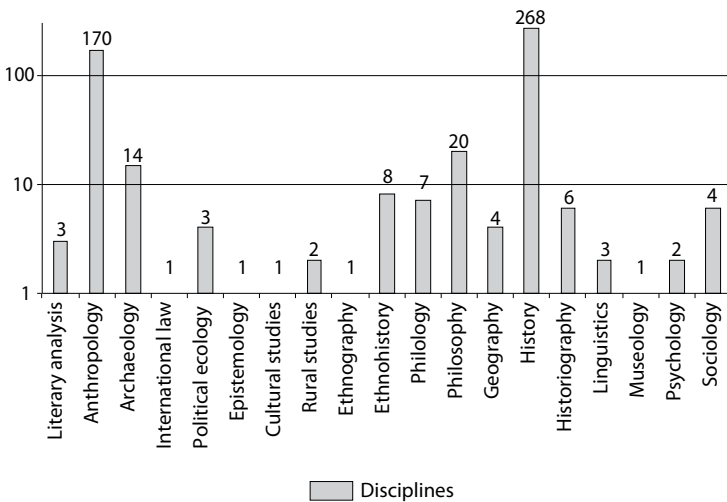
² <http://www.revistarelaciones.com/files/revistas/132bis/pdf/presentacion.pdf>

³ In reality, the work entailed in receiving the definitive versions of the articles published herein—*i.e.*, through the processes of peer review and corrections—occupied the final six months of 2014 and the first half of 2015, but it allowed us to reduce the delay to an average of two years.

the same time, the journal's greatest strength and, potentially, its most marked weakness, for its multidisciplinary focus may be easily diluted by diverse circumstances. Another criticism of what we consider its strength might sustain that in the early 21st century a journal can "lose its way" if it does not devote its time and effort to one specialized topic area, or to one sole discipline or sub-discipline. The best response to such allegations is that the multidisciplinary format allows broader academic dialogue involving encounters of multiple voices. Moreover, this has been the tone of this particular journal since its founding. Upon reviewing the contents of the earliest issues it becomes clear that the confluence of distinct disciplinary themes and focuses constitutes the connatural reflection of the development of the *Colegio de Michoacán* itself. From 1980-to-1994, *Relaciones...* published primarily studies produced by its own scholars, thus mirroring the diversity and dynamics of growth and consolidation of its four Study Centers. The year 1997 brought the creation of the format that included the *Thematic Section*, which endures today as a programmed space for comparative topics and approaches. That development coincided with a marked internationalization of the authors of the articles (including translations of contributions previously published in another language). The *Thematic Section* promised a privileged space for articulating the journal's multidisciplinary vocation; a goal clearly achieved in certain issues (especially number 72: "*El concepto de región en ciencias sociales*"), though this *Section* was more generally a repository for discussions concerning specific disciplines or approaches to specific problems (eg. number 73: "*La monarquía española*"). In hindsight, the journal's multidisciplinary prerogative came to be reflected more in the *General Section*; though without question the dialogue among disciplines and themes that emerged in those years (1997 to mid-2000) definitively marked the journal's current profile. With issue 83 (mid-2000), *Relaciones...* adopted a perspective that was more consonant with its multidisciplinary profile, thanks to a shift in editorial policy towards a relational theoretical-methodological conception regarding themes, perspectives, methodologies and approaches. That epoch constituted a 'turn' that served to define what the journal is today.

To obtain an idea of the journal's profile, suffice a bit of historical perspective. From early 1997 to late 2015, a total of 76 normal issues were published, plus one extra tome, which contain 519 refereed articles. We made a preliminary count of the disciplinary fields that the journal covered in that period, but it is important to note that in many cases the contents, topics and focuses of certain articles do not easily lend themselves to such a 'bird's-eye' classification, for they crisscross disciplines and topic areas: from studies of cultural history with methodologies adopted from anthropology, to works in fields like geohistory and economic history. Moreover, some essays that might be catalogued as rural studies were found to have a more direct relation to anthropological perspectives or historical methodologies, and so were assigned to those niches. Hence, the information that follows is but a preliminary approach based on broadly-defined, un-nuanced disciplines.

TABLE I. Number of articles by discipline, 1997-2015; total sample=519 texts⁴



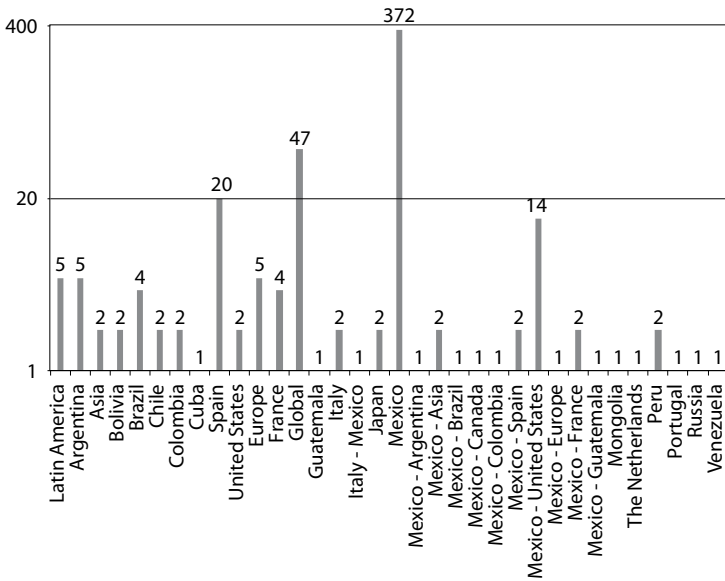
⁴ Values are represented on a base-10 logarithmic scale to simplify understanding.

As this table shows, up to 2015, *Relaciones*... published, primarily, studies in history and historiography and anthropology (268, 6 and 170 articles, respectively), followed in frequency by philosophy (20), archaeology (14), ethnohistory (8), sociology (4), geography (4), philology (7) and literary analysis (3), which together account for 60 texts. The other disciplines are represented by just one or two essays during that period. The conclusion is that the journal is, indeed, multidisciplinary, but emphasizes history, anthropology and, to a lesser degree, other disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Of course, this reflects the material that the editors receive and then enjoys a successful transit through the phases of peer review en preparation. A more detailed analysis would likely confirm not only that this is a multidisciplinary journal that includes in its pages a diverse spectrum of disciplinary focuses and themes, but also that some studies are interdisciplinary in and of themselves, and that a few issues present balanced, comparative dialogues among topics or methodologies.

Other angles to consider might be the origin of the authors and the distinct topics published in *Relaciones*... While, logically, Mexico and its neighbors comprise the geographical context for the majority of the articles published (72%, 372 of 519), other geographies and binational or frontier regions are gradually emerging. These include studies of Latin America and nations in this region (5%), of Europe and European countries (7%) and, to a lesser degree, of Asia and Japan (1%); while another 5% are texts that deal with the United States or relations among Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. Finally, the variable indicated on the graph as 'global' (9%) refers to essays that discuss theoretical or methodological problems and so lack a specific geographical assignation.

Turning to the research agendas in the Social Sciences and Humanities, these have changed quite significantly in recent years in terms of delimiting the geographical regions of interest. The affirmation that innumerable social-historical processes exist that cannot be explained without broadening our spatial frameworks of analysis means that research and debates now stretch far beyond regional and national frontiers. This is evident, first, in the activities of COLMICH'S

TABLE 2. Number of articles by geographical area



own researchers, who have not only organized academic encounters (congresses, the Annual Colloquium on Regional Anthropology and History, and diverse seminars, round-tables, etcetera), but also participated in forming research groups and collective publications in which topics are discussed and analyzed from the perspective of Spanish-America or Latin America, but also through comparative or integrative visions involving other national realities, such as migration to northern countries or transatlantic historical phenomena like the Spanish Monarchy of the 16th to 19th centuries.

Regarding topics, a first count identified over 150 different themes.⁵ But this appreciation is too immediate, and surely somewhat biased, for it is based only on titles. This is because the *Abstracts* and *Keywords* that permit a more precise classification of the contents of each essay only began to be included with issue 85. As mentioned above, some articles deal with methodological questions; indeed, it

⁵ This list is too extensive to be reproduced here.

turned out that this is the single topic most abundantly represented, with 44 of 497 texts,⁶ approximately 9% of all the essays edited in these 18 years. In relation to frequency, this theme is followed by: texts devoted to ideas and thought (4.8%), religion (3.4%), conflicts (3.2%), gender studies (2.8%), the Church, social organization, territory and power (each at 2.6%), codices and knowledge (2.4% each), government (2.2%), Mesoamerica (2%), and migration (1.8%). The remaining 140 themes appear in from 1-to-8 articles each (0.2-1.6%), and cover diverse topics: politics, identities, the social use and control of natural resources, popular culture, demography, and intercultural and interethnic relations, among many others. Clearly, the sample is varied and many of these topics are examined from distinct methodological or comparative perspectives.

This fifth issue of 2016, annexed to the final edition for this year, once again shows the diversity and aperture to academic dialogue that has long characterized our journal. There is only one section, which presents two historical articles on knowledge (Zuccato, and Vega y Ortega) that dialogue directly with anthropological analyses of the acquisition of current artisanal knowhow (del Carpio), and two distinct perspectives on agriculture in the state of Veracruz (Jiménez and Thiébaud). One of the other contributions introduces us to the cultural realities of dress and fashion during the *Porfiriato* (Bastarrica), while a second analyzes political discourse through images (Ramírez), and a third discusses modern-day religious beliefs and movements (May May).

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*English translation of the Presentation and Abstracts
by Paul C. Kersey*

⁶ For the 12 texts not included, it was impossible to gain a clear idea of their topics based only on the title.