

Presentation

Fishing policy, development and environment

Fishing is an activity as old as mankind's relationship with rivers, lakes and seas. Since time immemorial, catching fish for food has been a source of subsistence for most peoples settled near bodies of water. Of course, at some point fishing also became a leisure activity, even a sport. Casting one's line from the shore, the hook coated with tempting bait, and then waiting patiently to feel the telltale tug on the rod is an image repeated time and again along every shoreline where land descends, ends and is cut off, making way for flows of water. The idealized figure of groups of fishermen dragging their nets, or of other fishers standing in water up to their waists, creels hanging from their hips, are omnipresent images that construct a romantic vision of the relation between humans and water. But reality can be quite different; especially in northwestern Mexico.

Relaciones opens its volume 39 by examining, precisely, this multifaceted topic: fisheries, fishing policies, socioeconomic development, and their impact on the environment, in the setting of littorals in northwestern Mexico. This is no easy theme for analysis, as the first challenge is to find the adequate approach. For this reason, our *Thematic Section* is particularly rich, not only because its examination an important, current reality, but also due to the methodological proposal for interdisciplinary studies it presents. What marks the articles that comprise the section is the dialogue that emerges among them to complement the internal dialogue within each one, carefully

selected and brought together here by Nemer Narchi with the valuable assistance of Micheline Cariño. While the primary dialogue pits anthropology against history, ecology also faces off against politics, and biology takes on sociology, for the aim is not only to understand a complex situation that implies diverse realities –from the life of existing fishing communities with no other option for subsistence than exploiting fisheries in the setting of littorals dominated by desert-like ecosystems, to public policies and the impact of capital– but also to elucidate the effects of these elements on development and environmental conservation.

As an *aperitif*, the text by Micheline Cariño and Mario Monteforte places us squarely in a problem that, the more we read the more we come to understand as representative. In a long-term view, we discover that pearl-oyster fishing has undergone radical change. We were not aware that the exploitation of this resource as a phenomenon is comparable to the mega-mining projects that have provoked such intense debate in recent years, in the sense that it affects –globally– relations between humans and the environment. The key point here is the equilibrium between a historical vision and the gaze from the biological sciences. The same can be said for the text by Álvarez, Delgado, Espejel and Seingier that examines abalone and sea urchin fishing to elucidate alternative possibilities for social organization that permit sustainable management of the environment. The study by Torre and Fernández echoes these topics by analyzing the modes of organizing society in dialogue with policies, placing emphasis on environmental problems, similar to the approaches adopted in the texts by Cisneros-Montemayor and Cisneros-Mata, and Jiménez, López-Sagástegui, Cota and Mascareñas. The section closes with an excellent study of the distant horizon, for both the economy and society in general, in the face of development; what the authors, Narchi, Domínguez and Rodríguez, call ‘the end of abundance’.

Our Documents Section was organized by Víctor Hugo Medina, who presents and discusses an early sketch of the Cathedral of Mérida found among papers on a dispute over burials.

The General Section includes four studies that take us into the past. García and Trejo examine the interrelations between indige-

nous groups in the state of Sonora and the government in the mid-19th century, focusing on problems of intermediation. Jullian, meanwhile, focuses on the development of a community of people with different capacities in a local context, that of deaf individuals in Morelia. Echeverría leads us to Nahua thought in the 15th century with a finely-woven work of ethnohistory, while, finally, Punzo analyzes the iconography of rock carvings in the Guadiana Valley.

In January of this year, Dr. Nemer E. Narchi joined the editorial team in the position of Editorial Secretary. We are sure that his broad editorial experience and interdisciplinary profile will lend great support to the journal.

Victor Gayol

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