

Presentation

The publication of this number of *Estudios Fronterizos Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* (REF) marks the beginning of the fourth decade of a publishing project that has provided an important venue for the dissemination of new knowledge about national border areas.

Since its beginnings in May 1983, REF has invited academics and researchers from the social sciences and humanities to share the results of their endeavors. It has aimed to broaden and strengthen the empirical, methodological and theoretical tools such scholars use to investigate the social processes unique to border areas from various disciplinary perspectives.

In its first thirty years, REF passed through two phases. During the first phase, which lasted until 1997, the original quarterly publishing schedule was altered as the journal began publishing a number each semester, generating forty numbers. The contents of these issues included reviews of recent publications; documents of thematic interest, such as bilateral or multilateral accords, conventions and treaties; and 187 submitted articles. In the second phase, which began in 2000, thirty numbers were published, one per semester. These contained 178 peer reviewed articles approved by two academic peers.

The 365 articles published between the first number in 1983 and the July-December 2014 issue, cover a diverse range of subjects and multiple disciplinary, methodological and proposed theoretical approaches. However, these articles¹ also contain several elements that create a sense of continuity across 3 decades.

One element present over the course of the journal's existence is an interest in population characteristics in border areas. Perhaps the most illustrative examples of this theme are the studies on both the internal and international migrations that originate in, move toward, or travel through these areas. Pursuing of this theme includes analyzing migration's various impacts and implications for the demographic dynamics of borders, the need for dwellings and services, and the morphology and urban configuration of the localities adjacent to national borders.

Another thematic thread is found in articles addressing the joint impact on border areas of various measures originating in the public sector. These articles discuss exchange policies and sectorial development policies targeting border areas and perform comparative evaluations of the immigration policies adopted by various countries over the course of time.

A third element contributing to the continuity of the REF over its first thirty years is found in studies of the historic events that characterize particular border zones. Similar studies discuss the ethnic makeup, linguistic diversity, cultural interaction, bicultural educational processes, and religious diversity of these areas.

¹ See Annex. List of Articles Published 1983-2014 at Estudios Fronterizos, vol. 16, no. 31 in ref.uabc.mx

Another set of articles focuses on subjects that at the time seemed “emergent”, such as environmental issues like air quality, water availability and waste management. Several of these studies even address issues such as the involvement of nongovernmental organizations, cultural policy, levels of well-being or serious security problems.

The fifth element that can be distinguished in the scholarly contributions is an interest in the structural conditions that have shaped the socioeconomic development processes of border zones. In this group of studies, the authors address issues such as agricultural/livestock production processes, labor markets, the competitiveness of production activities in border areas, terms of commercial exchange, and the regional industrialization processes that distinguish border areas.

Of the remaining themes, a final notable element is the growing geographical diversity of the areas studied. Scholars have published works on the southern border of Mexico and the border interactions between countries in Central America, South America and those now constituting the European Union.

This theme and several of those discussed above are represented in the articles included in the REF's current number 31. For example, *Urban transborder complexes in Latin America* discusses the validity of a conceptual definition of urban transborder complexes and identifies a series of analytic variables that account for the nature of relations between component cities.

Similarly, three of the articles in this issue discuss zones of confluence between South American countries. The author of *The Colombian side of the Colombia-Brazil border: An approach from the category of area without law* examines an issue raised by the growing association between local criminality and transnational organized crime on the Colombia side of the Colombian/Brazilian border. Additionally, the author of *The incomplete Peronist re-construction of the border: An analysis from the region of Nahuel Huapi, Argentina (1946-1955)* analyzes the economic impact of Peronism in the Nahuel Huapi region, reviewing the material and symbolic aspects of this site bordering Chile. In a third study of South America, the author of *State and border in the north of Chile* suggests that transborder dynamics, dynamics of regional integration and the consolidation of a new security agenda have led to the strategic position of this territory, which has been historically isolated and marginalized.

The European perspective mentioned earlier is represented in *Revisiting the Spanish-Portuguese frontier: conflict, interaction, and transborder cooperation*. In this study, the author considers the constant evolution of European border territories, discussing past struggles and confrontations between different European sociopolitical units and projecting a future of progressive communitarian integration involving complex processes of border deactivation.

In the remaining articles, scholars examine the elements associated with Mexican borders and the various modalities assumed by migratory processes. For example, the authors of *Informal transborder commerce between México and Guatemala from a permissive border perspective* describe processes of interaction in the border zone between Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas and Tecún Umán, San Marcos. They analyze informal transborder commerce whose participants conduct social, political, economic and territorial transactions that transcend the borderline.

Migrant populations that reside beyond the border are the focus of *Mexican-Americans in San Antonio, Texas: Analysis of their insertion in formal self-employment*. In this study, the author identifies the elements that determine Mexican-Americans' employment in formally registered self-owned companies. In *Cornered by reality: the minors on the circuit*, the authors analyze a segment of child migrants comprising unaccompanied girls, boys, and adolescents who repeatedly cross the border for various reasons and associate with criminal gangs involved in human trafficking and drug smuggling. Finally, the author of *Causes and impact of the deportation of Central American migrants from the United States to Mexico* uses a qualitative methodology that includes in-depth interviews with Central American migrants deported from the United States to conclude that these deportations lead to increased violence in Mexico.

With these contributions, REF begins a new phase of activities in which it will continue to broaden the geographical range of the studies included. To this end, it has committed to increase the readership and reach of the publication and has moved its electronic version to the Open Journal System (OJS) platform to improve its management and more easily generate indicators for assessing its impact. In addition, all of the articles published on this platform will now be published in English and Spanish.

We are firmly convinced that with the support of authors, peer reviewers, readers, editorial teams and academic authorities, this fourth decade of publication will give us the opportunity to continue improving the impact and quality of *Estudios Fronterizos. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, and we will work to make it so.

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