
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This issue marks the start of *LARR*'s thirty-sixth year of publication, the twentieth year of *LARR*'s tenure at the University of New Mexico, and the beginning of the process of moving the journal to a new host institution, yet to be determined. The history of *LARR* is in some ways the history of Latin American studies as an interdisciplinary field. Before *LARR*, research on Latin America was essentially a disciplinary endeavor, carried out primarily by historians, political scientists, and faculty in literature. *LARR*'s establishment represented a declaration that the complex realities of Latin America and the Caribbean required the interaction of information and perspectives from many fields. It also reflected a leap of faith in the untested notion that those conducting disciplinary research on Latin America would be interested in research from other fields.

The new journal, housed at the University of Texas, was a success. It met with an enthusiastic response that reflected the emergence of an intellectual community ready for dialogue and discourse and, as it turned out, on the verge of establishing a conscious identity. The appearance of *LARR* was followed immediately by calls for establishing an interdisciplinary professional association focused on Latin America and the Caribbean. Within a year, the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) was founded, led by the same group of scholars who had cooperated in launching *LARR*.¹ The histories of *LARR*, LASA, and Latin American studies as an academic field are thus inextricably bound. *LARR* was the first of what are now several interdisciplinary journals devoted to Latin American studies, which together form a mirror in which Latin Americanists view, and review, their common endeavor.

LARR's contents also represent a history of the ideas and findings that have predominated at different points in time as Latin American studies evolved. This interdisciplinary field represents a huge tent covering an extraordinary diversity of preoccupations and agendas, making it no easy task

1. A more detailed account of these events can be found in my foreword to the index for 1965–1995, *LARR* 31, no. 4:iii–vii.

to summarize that intellectual history. Nevertheless, it may be useful to make a few observations about changes in the contents of the journal over the last three and a half decades. A review of back issues of the journal suggests that a broad trend exists over time and across changes of editorial teams, from the general to the specific and from the regional to the subnational.

The expansion in the volume of research on Latin America may be partly responsible for one trend: the gradual decline in the number of articles that deal with Latin America as a whole. Virtually all the articles in the first few years dealt with the entire region. The first issue of *LARR*, for example, featured articles by Sugiyama Iutaka on social stratification in Latin America, by Richard Morse on urbanization in Latin America, and by Richard Schaedel on land reform in the region. In *LARR*'s first four years (1965–1968), thirty articles were published, of which twenty-nine addressed issues couched in pan-Latin American terms. The only exception was Cole Blasier's 1967 piece on the origins of revolution in three countries (Mexico, Bolivia, and Cuba). During *LARR*'s last four years (1997–2000), in contrast, forty articles were published, of which only five were on pan-Latin American themes.

In 1969 the first country-specific research appeared in *LARR* with articles on Cuban statistics by Carmelo Mesa-Lago and on sectoral clashes in Mexico by Luciano Barraza and in Argentina by Gilbert Merckx. Subregional pieces also began to appear, such as Richard Adams's 1969 review of research on Mayan archaeology and John Murra's 1970 survey of Andean ethnohistory. By the end of *LARR*'s first decade, country-specific or subregional studies were beginning to approach pan-Latin American articles in number.

After *LARR*'s ninth year, the journal moved from Texas, where it had been edited by Richard Schaedel and then by Thomas McGann, to the University of North Carolina, where it was edited by John Martz and Joseph Tulchin. With volume 10 (1975), research reports and notes and book review essays were added as categories of publication, which increased the number of pieces on specific topics. About half the major articles were pan-Latin American in the first years at Chapel Hill, but by the late 1970s, country or subnational studies significantly outnumbered pan-Latin American or pan-regional articles. Most of the big-picture articles in this period dealt with issues of dependency (eight articles, including Fernando Henrique Cardoso's sardonic piece on the consumption of dependency theory in the United States) or with authoritarianism and military rule (four articles, among them Guillermo O'Donnell's on patterns of change in the bureaucratic-authoritarian state).

In 1982 *LARR* moved to the University of New Mexico, and the first issue edited by the new team appeared in 1983. The trend toward national or subnational research topics continued unabated. From 1995 through 2000, *LARR* published sixty articles (not including research reports and notes or commentary and debate). Five of these articles have been pan-Latin Ameri-

can in scope: pieces by Albert Berry on income distribution, Thomas Skidmore on the discipline of history, Eliza Willis et al. on decentralization, Raymond Craib on colonial cartography, and Roberto Korzeniewicz and William Smith on poverty, inequality, and growth. Twenty-four articles were country studies, twenty-two were studies at the subnational level, and nine were sub-regional or comparative case studies.

The long-term change in Latin American studies found in *LARR*'s contents is also paradigmatic in nature. In the pre-*LARR*, pre-*LASA* period of the 1950s, theoretical perspectives on the underdeveloped world in general and Latin America in particular were dominated by what came to be known as "modernization theory," which was in turn associated with "structural-functionalism." This dualist approach viewed social change in world perspective as a linear transition from "traditional" to "modern" societies. Perhaps the best-known expression of this perspective is found in Walt Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth*, an enormously popular work of the period. Popular or not, modernization theory with its vision of a single global process did not sit well with intellectuals in Latin America or with scholars studying Latin America.

Latin Americanists largely took the exceptionalist view that Latin America was simply different from North America and the United States for reasons of history, ethnicity, natural endowment, and economic relationships. This shared conviction of Latin America's special character was a motivating factor in establishing *LARR* and *LASA*. The view of Latin America as a special region was given further shape by the work in the 1950s and 1960s of the talented social scientists at the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA or CEPAL). Cepalista doctrine held that Latin America as a region was different in large part because of its economic relationship with the advanced capitalist nations. This view, a rationale for import-substitution industrialization (ISI) policy, became enormously influential in Latin American studies in various forms. Offsprings of Cepalista doctrine included sectoral-clash theory and the politically radical form known as dependency theory, which carried with it the notion of a "distorted development process" in Latin America.

While dependency theory was merely one variant of the exceptionalist view of Latin America, all the variants shared an underlying assumption: that Latin America should be viewed in regional terms rather than from the global perspective of modernization. This assumption informed, at least implicitly, the dominance of articles in the first decade of *LARR* that addressed issues from a pan-Latin American perspective.

The gradual failure of import-substitution development policies led in the 1970s to the collapse of democracy in much of Latin America and in some countries to a descent into military repression of a type never before experienced. O'Donnell's influential formulation, "bureaucratic authoritarianism," became the dominant approach to understanding this new phenom-

enon. But if military rule was common in Latin America, bureaucratic authoritarianism was not. Research on the roots of such extreme repression led increasingly to social and political factors at the national rather than the regional or global level. The replacement of pan-Latin American articles in *LARR* by country studies may reflect, at least in part, a response to the diversity of national experiences resulting from the collapse of democracy in the 1970s.

The debt crisis of 1982 marked the end of both the import-substitution model and the bureaucratic-authoritarian state as well as the start of new processes of redemocratization and neoliberal economic development. While the debt crisis was a shock experienced by all of Latin America, its aftermath has been marked by further diversity, not just of national trajectories but of regional and local experiences. The shrinking role of the national state in Latin America since 1982 has highlighted regional, local, and ethnic factors, nonstate actors, and new forms of consciousness and identity.

One explanation for the long-term trend in *LARR*'s contents toward the local and specific is simply that the field of Latin American studies has become too prolific in generating new knowledge for authors to attempt to survey research on a pan-Latin American basis. Yet while such surveys are rarer, they still appear. An alternate explanation is that Latin American studies simply reflect the broad realities confronted over time by Latin America. Those realities have included the rise and fall of the *dirigiste* ISI state in both its democratic and bureaucratic-authoritarian variants as well as Latin America's gradual incorporation into an increasingly globalized economy. While the consequences of globalization may be better understood at the subnational level than at the national level, national policies and institutions continue to be important. Variations in national or regional outcomes may lessen the rationale for treating Latin America as a coherent entity, but they increase the possibilities for comparative research across the region, and for that matter, for comparisons with outcomes in other regions of the world. The future of *LARR* can only be enriched by the intellectual challenges that continue to emerge from the Latin American experience.

LARR is on the verge of another editorial transition that will take it to a new host institution. That transition should have less to do with the future contents of the journal than the evolution of Latin American studies and the region itself. The nearly four decades of research presented in *LARR* form an impressive record of collective endeavor. That endeavor has been marked by increasing rigor, specificity, and diversity in approaches. Further improvements in the empirical quality and theoretical relevance of *LARR*'s contents can be expected in the decades to come.

Gilbert W. Merkx
Albuquerque, New Mexico