

PRESENTATION

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The articles in the *Thematic Section* of issue 116 of *Relaciones* approach the topic of fluvial basins from a comparative perspective on the basis of three case studies: the Verde River basin in The Altos of Jalisco and the Pasión River in Michoacán, the Júcar River basin in Valencia, Spain, and the Provenza canal in France. In their article, José de Jesús Hernández López and Miguel Ángel Casillas Báez show how the proposed construction of a reservoir in San Nicolás, Jalisco –part of a government project designed to assure water supplies for large urban population centers– actually undertaken several decades ago, became increasingly frustrated due, primarily, to poor planning by the government, as problems, projects, solutions and concepts were shifted from one sphere to another through a constantly changing group of short-term officials who never seemed to know exactly where they stood in this regard. In their analysis of such projects, the authors start out from such assumptions as the importance of constructing mega-basins in areas where, on the one hand, the waters of one sub-basin or basin are insufficient to satisfy the consumption demands of the populations and industries located around it and, on the other, where water is included in negotiations that sail upon seas of interests and multiple, varied difficulties.

The research on which this article is based leads to the conclusion that the case of the San Nicolás dam can be attributed to the PAN government's poor negotiating capacity and the revelation of the involvement of diverse interests, which may well constitute a real area of concern in terms of achieving effective and efficient hydraulic policies that actually resolve concrete problems related to hydric resources in Mexico, including those of access, distribution, management and consumption. By the same token, through this case the authors are able to show how grassroots organizational structures may prove capable of confronting and impeding government projects. For this reason, in the past, such state

planning and the implementation and realization of large-scale public works were undertaken only by despotic states through the use of force and the disarticulation of social movements. A distinct approach would involve taking into account social and ecological impacts from the very beginning or, at least, at some juncture along the way. As long as government projects lack seriousness and detailed planning, kowtow to private interests and are presented in a deceitful manner, informed and articulated opposition movements will continue to appear to defy state policies. This article identifies and foresees other possibilities for different approaches: for example, a new proposal called *El Zapotillo* that has been better studied and documented and has been approved by all parties involved, though it was proposed by Jalisco's private sector and the CEAS. According to those concerned, the *El Zapotillo* project would have lower political and economic costs because it would displace only a few inhabitants and is closer to the metropolitan area of Guadalajara, which would mean cost reductions. Regional reactions to this proposal will soon be heard and analyzed.

The second article, "Water Conflicts and the Limits on Participation by Irrigators on the Júcar River, Valencia, Spain," by José Luis Pimentel Equihua and Martha A. Velázquez Machuca, describes the conflicts that irrigators on the Júcar River have faced as a result of the nature of the government's hydraulic policies: first, the legal defense of their historical rights to exploit the waters of that river (in terms of diversions and volumes); second, their right to use water stored in a reservoir that was co-financed by the users themselves and the private sector; third, preserving their agricultural lands and nearby wetlands from other forms of exploitation of space (urbanization, golf courses, reservoirs); fourth, political issues such as the inclusion/exclusion of water users; and finally, though no less important, access to true quantitative information concerning the Alarcón reservoir that was built on the Júcar. The article centers on such conflicts and the limits on the participation of water-users who belong to the "Júcar Users' Union" (*Unidad Sindical de Usuarios*) in Valencia, Spain, in a context that includes both activities in the basin itself and questions of hydraulic macro-planning. This situation is analyzed from the perspective of the requirements of sustainable organizations that are responsible for the management of shared resources, and in the

scenario of scarce rainfall and water shortages that propitiate the emergence of social movements that identify the problems involved in securing sufficient supplies of water to satisfy urban, agricultural and ecological demands.

The complexity of the situation uncovered by the authors' research reveals, first, that the Spanish state fully recognizes the rights of traditional communities of irrigators and their right to organize themselves. However, in addition to those formal, organized users with legally defined rights there is also an indeterminate number of other users on the Júcar River, some of whom are involved in the clandestine exploitation of water from the *Mancha Oriental* spring, a situation that makes it necessary to evaluate the question of organizational design in the area of study. A second important element that the authors capture is that the co-management of the waters of the Júcar River is complicated by the fact that information on volumes of water and water reserves comes from one sole source—in this case the Hydrographic Confederation (*Confederación Hidrográfica*)—thus users are unsure that water is being distributed fairly and just what the final destinations of the waters from the Júcar River are. In this situation, irrigators have no direct control over information, feeds from the rivers, water levels in the reservoirs, or the reservoirs themselves, as all of these issues are managed by a bureaucratic organ of the State. This leads to problems such as monitoring the bureaucracy, accessing accurate information, supervision, and elaborating regulations on water use for all users. The case of the reservoirs is the same, as they are also beyond the sphere of participation of local water-users and, indeed, of those in the entire Júcar basin, while decision-making concerning them is the responsibility of the European Union and Spain's central government. Clearly, this is a situation that restricts participation and the democratic character of the co-management of the Júcar's waters and, in turn, makes it difficult to reach collective agreements due to the lack of participation by users in such areas as design and modification.

The starting point of Michel Marié's article is the premise that although large-scale hydraulic projects in France have been sponsored, planned and carried out by the State, neither the projects themselves nor the conflicts they trigger with those opposed to State plans have received much attention in the sociological literature. On the basis of the case of

the Provenza canal, Marié's essay analyzes the transition from a managed economy –i.e., one planned and designed by the State that fails to take into account regional dynamics– to incremental hydraulics, an approach based on local interests and resistances. Using this general framework the essay examines the role of conflict, seen not as a failure of social relations but, rather, as a normal, ever-present element that catalyzes modifications of the State's original projects and is, therefore, necessary.

As part of his argumentation, the author discusses the intramission of the French state in the region of Provenza and its efforts to divert water towards cities to the detriment of agriculture. The waters of any particular area are contained in basins, but in this case the concept of basin must be understood in the context of the government's development policies and their priority on generating electricity, regulating and controlling floods and, now, prioritizing urban supplies above other uses. Achieving this has meant introducing an economic rationality that involves water, maintenance, real estate, institutions and sociability; an ideology of planning that transforms regional hydraulics and leaves its mark on the landscape. The author affirms that approaches from the direction of the "water polemology" lead people to consider the conflicts that emerge among different users and interests in relation to water as dysfunctional to the system, but he argues that disputes are inherent in the production of social relations and, indeed, to the structuring of local power. A system without conflict is one that is no longer alive, with all the social and political implications that entails. Marié's final conclusion, illustrated with four examples, is that when analyzed from this angle conflict allows researchers to bring into the open that which is often left in the shadows: the situations of tension that characterize relations among people and groups. Tell me what your water conflicts are and I will tell you who you are!

In the *Documents Section*, María del Socorro Guzmán Muñoz presents for the first time four important documents on the multifaceted figure of a notable Panamanian personage who settled in Jalisco: Sotero Prieto Olasagarre, "a 19th-century visionary," as the title of the timely biographical sketch with which the author begins suggests. Whether on the educational, industrial, political, literary or, more generally, cultural stage of 19th-century Jalisco, Prieto Olasagarre (1805-1869) was, indeed,

one of the brilliant pioneer builders who laid the foundations, in different ways and distinct milieus, of his time and place. In fact, at about the same time as he appears as a promoter of industrial development in the state –as a founding partner of “*La Escoba*” (1841) and “*La Experiencia*” (1852), the first textile factories on Jalisco soil– we also see him introducing and promoting the ideas of utopian socialism in Mexico. Prieto Olasagarre was an active politician who experienced firsthand the upheavals of the intense political activity that marked the 19th century in Mexico and, in fact, was among the group of liberals that emigrated from Mexico at the time of the French invasion. Of course, the *Documents Section* also highlights this extraordinary figure’s influence on Mexican literary history as the devoted father of Isabel Ángela Prieto (1833-1876), the most widely recognized writer of her time; the attentive, principal designer of the intellectual formation of his first-born daughter.

In 19th-century Mexico, education for women was still burdened by many of the absurd manacles that had shackled it for centuries in the interests of a misguided misogynist morality. It was Alfonso El Sabio’s book, *Las Siete Partidas*, that established the principles that would guide women’s education in future centuries, stipulating that they were to receive instruction only in the domestic arts, and that exclusively from their parents, that they would be taught to read only enough to peruse letters and Psalters, and were to be trained in the labors of the good housewife. In this same tenor, the Valencian humanist Luis Vives, in his *Institutio Foeminae Christianae*, had proposed a practical pedagogy for women: “[who should] be trained practically for life,” or, more concretely still, for matrimony. According to Vives, “women’s only virtue” was chastity. Indeed, in the 19th century, education for women still held that the measure of femininity was the “saintly ignorance” that the Jesuit Antonio Núñez de Miranda had wished to impose upon Sor Juana Inés of the Cruz some two centuries earlier. This rupture with such traditional thought is what makes Sotero Prieto stand out in the area of education: his attitude and desire to educate his daughters in the same way as his sons, and his striving to assure that his firstborn daughter received a first-class education. A cultured man with the bearing of a leader like Sotero Prieto, so active in the cultural, political and industrial life of the Jalisco of his time, could not resist the duty and temptation of managing Isabel’s brilliant literary

career from his corner. This section presents these never before published documents to delineate some of Prieto Olasagarre's characteristics and illuminate certain facets of his life.

Born in Panamá on April 21 1805 (his Baptismal Certificate is the first of the four documents reproduced here), Sotero and his father were members of a group of "enlightened, hard-working" merchants established in Guadalajara. At the age of 17, he was a brilliant student in the *Seminario de Minería* in Mexico City (the second document dates from that period of his life), but in the late 1820s we find the Prieto family living in Spain, where Sotero decided to look for a wife. In the summer of 1830, he asked for his father's approval to wed Isabel González Bango (his letter to this effect is the third document). This letter is of particular interest as it contains Sotero's description of himself and his family. By the late 1830s, the Prieto González family was back in México where, in the 1840s and 50s, Sotero Prieto was active in several businesses, companies and activities, and even held the position of President of the Guadalajara city government (*ayuntamiento*) in 1862. The fourth and final document alludes to the figure of Prieto Olasagarre as a businessman. It is a letter he sent to Manuel Escandón, dated in Mexico City on December 29 1848. He died on May 4 1869.

The *General Section* opens with an article by Salvador Álvarez entitled "Conquest and the *Encomienda* in Nueva Galicia in the First Half of the 16th Century: 'Barbarians' and 'Civilized Folk' on America's Frontiers," which narrates how, after the fall of the Aztec capital, Indian opposition was quickly extinguished and in just a few short years the Spanish became lords of all the populations that inhabited the rich lands of the high river basins and valleys in so-called "nuclear Mesoamerica" while confronting almost no armed resistance. In contrast, however, as they approached the high-culture regions of Mesoamerica where demographic density was less, the conquerors found themselves involved in a series of interminable, extremely bloody wars. There, the Spaniards had to resort to recruiting large contingents of Indians from the civilized regions of nuclear Mesoamerica, who often served as "comrades-in-arms" of the conquerors as they proceeded with their campaigns to subjugate ever wider areas of New Spain. Later, this same process was repeated in Nueva Galicia, where the presence of contingents of tens of thousands of In-

dians from the high-civilization areas of Mesoamerica shoulder-to-shoulder with Spanish soldiers not only condemned the aboriginal populations to a long and bloody conquest that they were incapable of resisting, but ended with the total destructuring and disruption of their ancient ways of life.

The author concludes that attributing all the blame for that sad state of affairs to the Spanish conquerors, though possible, is insufficient. In Nueva Galicia, as in all areas of America, the conquest was not carried out entirely through direct warfare between “Europeans” and “Indians,” but also involved the mobilization of uncontrollable, blind forces that would finally devastate an entire system of civilization, one of which was the impact of the microbial shock. In this case, the sheer weight of numbers or, perhaps better, the irresistible avalanche of civilized Mesoamerican Indians on the warpath in neighboring lands, turned out to be just as destructive –and, at times, even moreso– than the epidemics. Thus, one can only conclude that without the participation of those “non-Spanish civilized [elements]” the conquest of areas like Nueva Galicia would surely have taken a very different path. In any case, the fact is that this resulted in sudden, definitive changes, such that by the late 16th century very few remnants of the aboriginal societies that once inhabited the territories of the nascent Nueva Galicia were left. So thorough was the process, that the memory of those –now mystical– groups has been almost entirely lost.

In the second article in the *General Section*, “In Search of Better Wages and Family Union: Crab-processors from Sinaloa with H2B Visas in North Carolina: A Found Solution or One of Desperation?,” Erika Montoya Zavala analyzes the working conditions of women from the town of Gabriel Leyva Solano, Sinaloa, with H2B visas who migrate to Pamlico and Beaufort, North Carolina, to work in crab-processing plants. The author shows that this kind of temporary documented migration, while clearly resolving the problems of the employers who require such workers and providing potential migrants with a legal means of crossing the border, generates serious issues –both personal and family-related– and is characterized by a scant respect for workers’ rights.

The first conclusion of this article is that female migration from the town of Gabriel Leyva Solano (in western Mexico) is now a highly visible

phenomenon at the level of family, community and local and international labor markets. These women migrants adopt distinct strategies to assure their safety and their ability to fulfill their objective in accepting such work: to earn money to send home or to accumulate savings. This is the case of female crab-processors who migrate with the security of a contract, work visa, fixed wages and guaranteed housing. The author argues, however, that it is imperative that we humanize migration studies, as the abuse that these women suffer in the workplace, their sacrifices, their feelings for the children they leave behind in their town of origin, and their desire for economic advancement, all deserve to be investigated profoundly in order to achieve a multidisciplinary interpretation capable of explaining to politicians and other scholars the lived reality of those migrants so that they will take action to assure more humanitarian treatment.

The author's second finding is that the town of Gabriel Leyva Solano has developed a functioning institutionally-based social network that provides support to local women who wish to migrate. The crab-processing companies offer them a no-risk opportunity to migrate temporarily to the U.S., but after arriving many of the women soon perceive the advantages of staying on illegally: mainly the income and comforts that the U.S. market offers. The main factor that dissuades most of them from taking up more permanent residence in the U.S. is, of course, the children they leave behind, though some have succeeded in reuniting their families in the U.S. Most women, however, prefer this kind of temporary migration as it allows them to return home and see their children for a certain period every year. But now those who have stayed on are forming a migrant organization with deep social ties to the town that is devoted to helping new and future migrants. It is in these ways that the documented migration of women to work in crab-processing plants has propitiated the illegal migration of men and women from Gabriel Leyva Solano to different states in the U.S. that are not among the traditional Mexican migrant destinations, such as North Carolina.

This issue of *Relaciones* closes with the article "Debates and Contributions: Studies of Masculinities in Mexico," by Óscar Misael Hernández, which reviews research on male identity, masculinity and masculinities from the perspective of the different theoretical-methodological currents

or focuses such studies have adopted. The author's reasoning is that as a result of feminist literature, gender studies, and the so-called field of *men's studies*, the decade of 1980 witnessed the emergence of analyses of men *as men* in Latin America that sought to explore the identity and crisis of masculinity. Mexico was not an exception, as research on such topics and objects of study has increased markedly since that time. Based on a review and evaluation of studies of masculinities in Mexico, the essay examines a theoretical-methodological problem related, on the one hand, to the shift in power relations and male domination due to the crisis of identity among men and, on the other, to the conceptual confusions that arise because scholars tend to be indiscriminate in their use of terms like male identity, masculinity and masculinities. Hernández also cites important ethnographic contributions to the study of masculinities whose approaches take into account such concepts as gender, power and class, regional analyses, inquiries into cultural labeling and the overlapping of masculinities with male homosexuality. Finally, he outlines important areas for future research that will probe more deeply into the construction of masculinities.

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