

The comparative method is an excellent tool for guiding research, particularly in fields in which no theories point the way. It is especially useful for exploring themes related to regional integration, starting from the supposition that similarities clear the way while differences block it. But what happens when similarities are mutually exclusive? This is the case Philip Resnick presents in his essay about original identities of the three countries of North America, given that each considers itself the reincarnation of the New Jerusalem in the New World. An interesting dilemma.

If we accept the hypothesis that homogeneity facilitates integration, we can compare the levels of development of the countries in a region. This is what Gabriela Quintanilla Mendoza does when she looks at the specific topic of electronic services offered in North America's two least developed countries. She concludes that, while the Mexican government has carried out actions to guarantee on-line user security, it has not backed it up with mandatory regulations as Canada has. This means that user data privacy is relative, and this information can be used by both the public and private sectors for promotion and sales.

Knowledge of a region also advances through monographic studies of the interaction among member countries, like in Alejandra Aquino Moreschi's reconstruction of the movement of Zapotec migrants who overcame the U.S. Senate's criminalization of undocumented workers and that of people who lent them moral or material aid. In her essay, she uses Jürgen Habermas's concept of "public space" to reconstruct the protest, showing how the migrants appropriated city buses and other public spaces to publicize their march and mobilize the feeling of moral indignation: "Take away welfare if you want to, but don't call us criminals."

Our "Contemporary Issues" section focuses first on the Canadian government's surprising decision last summer to demand that Mexican tourists take out temporary resident visas. At first glance, this could seem contradictory with the spirit of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but, examined within the con-

text of Canadian immigration policy, particularly its refugee policy, Mónica Vereá explains the reasons behind it, situating them as part of a general analysis of migration to Canada. A visa continues to be required despite Mexican requests that it be reconsidered and the negative impact on Mexican tourism in our partner country to the North.

Secondly, this section looks at the environment, taking advantage of the sixteenth anniversary of the Border Ecological Cooperation Commission and the North American Development Bank. Miriam Alfie Cohen and Óscar Flores Jáuregui have drawn an exhaustive balance sheet of the projects and actions these two bodies have carried out in the context of NAFTA, as well as sketching the prospects of what needs to be deepened in this field in coming years. They show that the relationship between environment and development is inextricable and therefore unavoidable for the countries of North America.

Thirdly, Ismael López Salas explores another contemporary issue—even if we don't know it yet! He looks at aerospace security, taking into consideration its military, environmental, commercial, and legal aspects. These matters must be dealt with regionally and internationally because of the very global nature of space; and sharing space with a super-power like the United States presents special challenges for Canada and Mexico. López Salas's comparison of the three North American countries not only reveals big asymmetries, but also grave differences about its possible militarization. It is a good thing that President Obama is promoting a new philosophy, leaving behind some of his predecessors' military solutions.

Finally, in this section's last article, John Kirton and Jenilee Guebert offer our readers a panoramic view of the health challenges Mexico, Canada, and the United States have faced and continue to face. The authors identify four main stances with regard to diseases that respect no borders: the first suggests that the challenges facing NAFTA signatories, like "mad cow disease," are an incentive for closing their borders; the second postulates that there has been little cooperation or coordination among the members because of cultural, political, professional, administrative, and legal barriers, and the scant interest in resolving them; the third position they identify suggests that NAFTA did not offer an incentive for cooperation in the field of health, although it did leave open the possibility of convergence. And the fourth position, the one the authors propose, is that, given the succession of real and perceived threats, collaboration has gradually increased among the countries: from an exclusively reactive response to events like the H1N1 epidemic, our governments have moved on to being more pro-active by suggesting preventive measures.

Our "Special Contribution" section is conceived mainly for our English-speaking readers, since it is an abridged form of a report about the state of democracy in

Mexico, developed using International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance methodology. The article is interesting because it shows the distance between the law and its application, between democratic values and their realization. Despite the information gleaned from the research, the author concludes optimistically that, while this process in Mexico is recent, the country has managed to achieve a certain level of democracy that only a few years ago was unimaginable.

In the “Reflections” section, we have, first of all, an interview with Imre Szeman about the current state of Canadian cultural studies. Szeman explains why Canadian studies have stopped being relevant for the Canadian context, though in their place, Canadian cultural studies have grown in importance. The latter no longer looks for something called “Canadian culture,” but rather analyzes Canadian culture in relation to the country’s geographic location, to the north of the United States, with its powerful cultural production, and specific post-colonial history. Ariadna Estévez, for her part, offers our readers an essay that, among other things, explains how the linguistic turn of the social sciences has changed the way in which human rights and its discourses are conceived, given that it has become accepted that the subjects of human rights are created in the very act of their being proclaimed.

This issue’s “Bibliographical Notes” section is different both in content and in format from other issues. Ruth Zavala Hernández compares and discusses the work of three authors who look at U.S. climate change policy, and concludes that given the challenge this problem poses, President Obama will have to forge a consensus among different stakeholders (businesspersons, NGOs, consumers) if he wants to move ahead on this global issue. The second article brings together several texts reflecting on two anthologies of transborder testimonies regarding September 11 to trace the development of a project begun in 2001. In the same vein of these works, the texts interlace personal reflections with theoretical problems, questions, and issues related to collective and individual identity.