Scribano, Adrián; Cena, Rebeca
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Passions, Experiences and Sensitivities: a chance for social criticism

Adrián Scribano (director) and Rebeca Cena (editor and general coordination)

With great satisfaction, we share with our readers the 15th issue of Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre Cuerpos, Emociones y Sociedad (RELACES). This issue is particularly significant because it materializes six uninterrupted years of electronic publication. Since 2009 and four-monthly, RELACES has gathered together researchers’ articles which have reflected upon the bodies, emotions and society. Today, with great pride, we present this journal’s 15th issue with articles by Italian, American, Canadian, Australian, Russian and Argentinian authors which, as a way of celebrating—just like in the 5th and 10th issues—implies renewing our effort for opening spaces for discussion and collaboration.

The historical processes in the formation of sensitivities, the embodiment of habitus, the analysis of sense policies, the plots between state and emotions, the operation of passions, the violence in racialization and the exploration of the social/brain-setting up connections call on us to keep thinking about how social studies of bodies and emotions can be a contribution to understand and transform the social world.

Since its foundation and up to the present, the publication of RELACES has supported and contributed to the spreading of scientific knowledge through its open and free electronic format. Therefore, we thank all those people who decide to publish their thoughts in our journal and those who agree to participate in the ad honorem double-blind assessment of our authors’ productions.

Joy and gratefulness inspire us to invite readers to pick up the contributions in this issue right from where we have always tried to build our disciplinary field: exploring through the familiar the unseen horizons, colouring what is seen as monochromatic and intensifying the task of asking questions, more than building closed schemes.

In this issue, the landscape of senses and sensitivities, the initial outcomes of the so-called “neurosociology”, the historical concurrence of the multiple moebius strips of feelings, body policies structured in securitization practices, sad passions at the center of social forms of evil acceptance, possible redefinitions of habitus as history made flesh and compensatory consumption as state practice call on us to keep elaborating the uncomfortable character of social sciences.

David Howes’ article “El creciente campo de los Estudios Sensoriales” (The growing field of Sensory Studies) highlights the prominence acquired by sensory studies in contemporary social research. For this, he proposes an interesting historization of the senses anthropology, laying special emphasis in the historic development and the appearance of this field of study. The social and historical division of senses (taste, sight, hearing, smell and touch) can be rebuilt, according to the author, as culture compounds. In these terms, he investigates the relationship between sensory and social orders.

Dora Barrancos, in her article “Sentidos, sentimientos y sensibilidades (1880-1930)” (Senses, Feelings and Sensitivities), reflected upon the ways in which social sensitivities can be traced among social classes and, cross-sectionally, in gender relations. She covers the period from 1880 to 1930 and focuses on the analysis of three social segments: dominant classes, middle classes from the capital and working classes. She states that in the complex order of sensations, emotions and sensitivities we find the marks of an impossible identification of different social segments and genders.

Loïc Wacquant shares with us the article named “Poniendo al habitus en su lugar: Réplica del Simposio” (Putting habitus on its place: replication of the symposium). There, he proposes moving away from the sociology of the body as a socially-built ob-
ject and towards a sociology from the body as a knowledge, power and practice vector under social construction. For this, he specifies and revises the notion of habitus from three fundamental aspects: he rejects the theological interpretations that strictly put habitus in Bourdieu’s context; he avoids confusing the formal properties of notion with its concrete characteristics in specific contexts and cases; and, finally, he makes a distinction between the rhetorical citing of his concepts (“speaking Bourdieu-like”) and the effectiveness of their display in the construction of the empirical object. As expressed in his presentation: “with its ability to embody and embed itself, habitus adds temporality, depth and desire to the analytical epicenter. It reminds us that the social world is not transparent, open and instantaneous, but endowed with gravity, opacity and asymmetry. Treating the sensitive and skilled organism as a source of social intelligence and sociological perspicacity can help the historical social science to get connected to an enactive psychology and recover the carnality of action which conventional reports of social life erase routinely.”

Elisabetta Della Corte shares with us her article “La envidia en el trabajo: entre la competencia y destrucción. Microfísica de la envidia” (Envy at work: between competence and destruction. Microphysics of envy). Here, by reflecting on the first results of her research, she states that sad passions in cognitive work have become a central element in the breaking up of collective actions and social movements. In this way, social conflicts have been affected by sad passions in a context where individualistic attacks have had a strong impact.

Angélica De Sena and Adrián Scribano, in their paper called “Consumo Compensatorio: ¿Una nueva forma de construir sensibilidades desde el Estado?” (Compensatory consumption: A new way of the State to build sensibilities?), focus on how the social aspect is dealt with by the State from the point of view of the sociology of the body and emotions. Social policies are analyzed as a central part of capitalist States since they guarantee and encourage higher levels of consumption and debt in populations. Compensatory consumption is therefore seen as the social policy par excellence in present capitalist States.

Alexander V. Shkurko and Michael Humphrey invites us to think about migration, security and transnational risk management in his article “Securitization of Migration: an Australian case study of global trends.” Through the analysis of the “security turn”, he reflects upon the ways in which the so-called securitization of migration means moving from the production of a national order to the management of a global order which is the result of the merge of national and international strategies in a globalized world. For this, the author deals with two main concepts: i) governance, as national and transnational activity, and which implies studying the domestication and securitization of Muslims and Islam in Western states; and ii) “hypergovernance” as the ability of some states to intervene in and shape other states as a “neo-imperial project through military action, humanitarian relief, religious and secular NGOs, economic aid, development assistance, education, religious evangelism and radicalism.”

The article proposed by Yulia S. Shkurko and Alexander V. Shkurko, “Emotions and Cognitions in Social Relationships: A Neurosociological Approach”, expands on the contributions of neurosociology as an approach which incorporates social and biological sciences. To do this, and from Alan Fiske’s (1992) theoretical perspective, the authors link group emotions, sociological group studies and the scope of neuroscience with the aim of understanding social relations. They state that certain social situations can be linked to the generation of basic emotions (such as happiness, anger, sadness and fear).

Lastly, this issue has chosen two reviews linked to the topic.

The first one, “Las formas de ser y sentir desde las políticas sociales” (Ways of being and feeling from social policies), was written by Victoria Sordini. The text contains a series of thoughts about a recent compiled publication by Angélica De Sena (2014) entitled “Las políticas hechas cuerpo y lo social devenido emoción. Lecturas sociológicas de las políticas sociales” (Policies that became body and the social aspect which became emotion. Sociological readings of social policies) by Estudios Sociológicos Editora and Universitas Editorial Científica Universitaria. The text offers an analysis of social policies that derives from finding out how they build, form and consolidate ways of living in society. It invites us to study, along its chapters, the incorporation of dominance which became body. In other words, how the social structuration processes under the regime of capitalist accumulation are incorporated. In the author’s words “The wealth of this book lays in the multiple perspectives it offers to deal with and understand the strategic place that social policies occupy in the regime of capitalist accumulation. From the sociology of the body and emotions, social policies are interpreted in their role as compensatory policies of inequalities, containers of social conflicts.
and producers of social structuration processes, creating subjectivities and structuring sensitivities in bodies.”

The second review was written by Valeria Bula and was entitled “La sumisión de la interioridad en el capitalismo neoliberal” (The submission of interiority to neoliberal capitalism) and it analyses the book “Capitalisme, désir et servitude. Marx et Spinoza”, by Lordon, Frédéric (2010), publishing company: La Fabrique. Mayenne, France. By reintroducing authors such as Marx and Spinoza, the text expands on the evolution of capitalism. The anthropology of passions by Spinoza complements the Marxist theory of capital/work showing other aspects from which capitalism can be analyzed. From the production and social imposition of wishes, capitalism is able to produce and reproduce itself. And it is due to this desire management that “some men called masters can drag many others into their desire and to be activated by and for them.” In the author’s words, “neoliberal companies discovered that, through affection, they can manipulate and get to the accumulation ends of capital and, more precisely, through happiness they can turn individuals into clockwork oranges absolutely aligned to the desires of their master and willing to obtain certain “goods”.”

To conclude, we are pleased to say that in this issue we begin the publication of articles written in English. The decision to do it (which, by the way, was difficult) is based on three reasons: a) we consider it necessary that our journals become places where all world researchers want to and are able to publish; b) since we demand, and will keep on demanding, in different forums that the Spanish and Portuguese languages are used because they are our native languages, we understand that hearing other voices implies using English as a communication tool. For this reason, from now on we have decided to accept up to two articles written in English per issue; and c) we hope that the incorporation of authors from other parts of the world gives the chance to Spanish-speaking authors to be read, shared and criticized more widely.

As we have been stating for some time, all of RELACES’ editorial team and editorial council believe it is necessary to take each one of our articles as a node that allows us to continue in the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social and political task in order to attain a freer and more autonomous society. Therefore, we would like to thank all those who see us as a vehicle to open the aforementioned dialogue.