

HISTOIRE & MESURE

Call for Papers Special Issue of *Histoire & Mesure*

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Statistical and Cartographical Practices in Latin America (mid-18th to mid-20th-Century)

The journal *Histoire & Mesure* launches a Call for Papers for a special issue planned for June 2017 on the theme of “Statistical and Cartographical Practices in Latin America from mid-18th till mid-20th-Century”.

Largely driven by advancement in the social sciences, the considerable development over the past fifty years in our understanding of the history of measurement has given rise to a veritable social history of measurement or, what Alain Desrosières has termed a social history of quantification. In particular, the contributions of European and North American researchers have helped to elucidate the role of numbers in what we might label the North of the Western world.

However, significant research into the history of measurement has not been confined to Europe and North America. The planet-wide development of state configurations, state structures and institutions, has stimulated studies in various parts of the world on both this or that territory controlled, to varying degrees, by the State (e.g. mapping of the country, topography, delimitations, identification of natural or administrative regions, etc.) and the operations applied by the State to the territory in question (various inventories, censuses, surveys, classifications, etc.).

In the contemporary context, national geography and statistics are thus viewed as academic disciplines which are constructed within learned societies and universities with the dual purpose of improving our knowledge of the country in question *and* also as instruments for acting in this country, and, in a certain way, creating it. Benedict Anderson’s celebrated book, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, well illustrates this central role of maps and numbers in constructing national identities and national space.

Notwithstanding important differences in their respective historical experience, the countries of Latin America, share a number of common features. They have all experienced one or other form of colonialism; almost all of them managed to end formal colonial rule relatively early, and were then faced with the task of creating a new national bureaucracy. The most important and urgent tasks of the authorities (colonial or post-colonial) and of the bureaucracy consisted in establishing the boundaries and the subdivisions of the country, in developing a clear understanding of the size of the country’s population and of its composition, geographical disposition, economic activities, and the various lines of cleavage within it. Such core state-building activities provoked reactions ranging from the enthusiasm

to strong opposition, even resistance. Moreover, these forms of measurement with national territories could not be totally disassociated from colonial conquest, and thus involved more than a purely scientific enterprise.

As early as the beginning of the 19th Century, certain areas of Latin America saw the appearance not only of tables of population and economic statistics (the *mapas de população*), but also of various “signes avant-coureurs de la cartographie thématique, qui correspondent à des regards nouveaux sur l’espace géographique”. Firstly, instead of attempting to construct “l’inventaire du monde” via an exact and meticulous description of the territory in question, some “cartes singulières” portray a specific phenomenon (geology, hydrography, road networks), in an approach that is more analytical than cumulative (G. Palsky). Sometimes, moreover, it is a question of representing something other than visible space, e.g. statistical data on demography, the economy, health or public education. Finally, some graphic or cartographic representations provide the basis for territorial reorganisation projects, including electoral reforms that take into account quantitative and occasionally qualitative demographic data.

The publication of graphs, charts and statistical maps multiplied in the period following the creation of national states in Latin America. Similarly, commemorations of national independence frequently became an occasion for the release of census results, graphic books and atlases.

The history of statistical and cartographic reasoning in Latin America has been studied in the countries of the Americas, in Europe and elsewhere. But much of this research has been published in Spanish or Portuguese, and is little known to the French- or English-speaking public. One of the objectives of the special issue of *Histoire & Mesure* is to bring this research to the attention of a wider audience. Our other objective is, of course, to generate collaboration work on some less studied aspects of these issues. Thus, while several studies have already highlighted the links between the construction of national identities and the production of topographic and political maps of Latin American countries (and their different "local homelands"), the relationship between the various "nationalisms" (and "regionalisms") on one hand and cartography and statistics (graphic or otherwise) on the other hand, seems less well established.

Since the United States and, to a lesser extent, Canada have been the subject of easily available publications in English and French, we have limited the geographical area to be covered in this issue to that part of the Americas known as **Latin America**, that is to say, the territories south of the US-Mexico border.

We invite proposals for articles dealing with **statistical, cartographic and topographic practices in Latin America, from the mid-18th to the mid-20th-century**. Proposals might deal with one particular country or period, or might take a comparative and/or diachronic approach. As far as possible, proposals should be oriented around the relationship between the collection and use of numerical data or of measurement (in all its various senses) and the evolution of the society or societies in question.

While all relevant material will be considered, we are particularly interested in proposal for papers on the following themes:

- Forms of presentation, and the roles and uses of numerical data in colonial Latin America, including, *inter alia*: enumerations and inventories for tax purposes, general censuses, carried out by the civilian or ecclesiastic powers; spaces of reference taken into account (parish, city, other districts).
- Statistics for action: the role of numerical data in administrative and/or territorial reforms; the emergence of the concepts of population, of population density and their representations.
- In the post-independence period: the role of statistics, of statistical cartography and of graphical statistics on the building of the image of the nation and of " regional homelands ".
- The producers of data: the emergence of agents and institutions specialized in statistics and geography (statistical bureaus, etc.).

Characteristics of the proposals and deadlines

Proposals for papers in French or in English should be received by January 15, 2016. The proposal should not exceed 7,000 characters and should specify the theme, the geographical area and the time period to be discussed, as well as the sources to be used and the hypotheses and assumptions raised by the proposal.

Proposals should be sent to the coordinators of the special issue as well as to the editorial board:

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On the basis of the proposals chosen by the selection committee of the review, the full papers must be sent no later than September 15, 2016. These will be submitted to an expert evaluation whose conclusions will be returned by the fall of 2016, for a publication of the articles selected in June 2017.