

Globalization of Latin American Studies: Perspectives from East Asia (Commentary)

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ABSTRACT

Globalization of Latin American Studies: Perspectives from East Asia (Commentary): This commentary is about new approaches, proposed by three scholars from East Asia, to address the globalization of Latin American Studies through networked-research and academic cooperation. Based on the institutionalization in the twenty-first century of Latin American Studies in East Asia and of Asian Studies in Latin America, there is a need to promote joint-research projects among academics on both sides of the Pacific with emphasis not only on economic and international relations but on broader studies that highlight the increasingly relevant global role of East Asia and Latin America. Initiatives like the East Asian Network of Latin American Studies and the Pacific Studies Research Center of the University of Guadalajara, which is presented here, can be exemplars of platforms to achieve such goals.

Keywords: Latin America, East Asia, Networked-research, Globalization

Given the dynamism of Asia-Pacific in the past decades, the 21st Century is considered to belong to Asia-Pacific. And in this context, relations of Latin American countries with Asia have become more relevant not only in economic terms, but in cultural, diplomatic, and academic exchanges. The three papers included in this issue by Nobuaki Hamaguchi, Yun-Joo Park, and Guo Jie, present an innovative perspective to address, from East Asian approach, the “globalization” of Latin American studies. Networked-research, as it is presented by Hamaguchi’s paper, is probably

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the best way to globalize the study of Latin American from an Asian perspective. Moreover, Hamaguchi and Guo coincide in their respective papers that to achieve globalization of Latin American Studies from East Asian perspective imply not only to broaden the scope of the studies but to strength academic cooperation with Latin American scholars by establishing networks of research.

In this regard, in the past few decades more academic institutions at both sides of the Pacific have established research-centers focused on Asia and Latin America and as a consequence, a great deal of academic research has been produced including a reevaluation, from a historical perspective, on the influence of Asia on the Americas from the 16th to the 18th centuries through the voyage of the Manila Galleon that not only was the mean of exchange of merchandise but also of persons and ideas between the two sides of the Pacific.

Academic events such as the 57th Annual Conference of the Japan Society of Social Science on Latin America (JSLA), at which was held the mini-symposium on “Globalization of Latin American Studies: Perspectives from East Asia” promoted by the East Asian Network of Latin American Studies (EANLAS), have proliferated also, with the participation of researchers from both sides of the Pacific. Moreover, we have witnessed an increased exchange of students and academics between institutions of North East Asia mainly and some of the Latin American countries, namely, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina. And this tendency will be facilitated by the current boom, a side-effect of the Pandemic, of online work that is making easier the exchange of ideas as has been demonstrated by the wealth of academic-webinars all around the world in 2020.

The institutionalization of Latin American Studies in East Asia in the 21st Century has been very dynamic in China, as pointed out by Guo’s paper while in Japan there has been a slower pace on Latin American Studies as Hamaguchi brings under attention and in South Korea stands out the Latin American Studies Association of Korea (LASAK). In Latin America, as relations with East Asian countries have become more intertwined, more educational institutions are promoting Asian studies. Regional organizations such as the Latin American Association of Asian and African Studies (ALADAA in Spanish) have also promoted the spread of knowledge on Asia through the organization of congresses both at regional and at country level. In Mexico there are already at least 10 research centers specialized on Transpacific and Asian studies at various

universities.

As an example of the networked-research and cooperation that is getting its way in Mexico on Asian Studies let me introduce the case of the University of Guadalajara (UdeG), in which I had been working for the past three decades, and its relations with East Asian academic-institutions. At UdeG, the second largest university in the country, three out of fourteen University Centers that conform the University Network, have special programs dedicated to the studies of Asia-Pacific while at the same time UdeG has signed thirty academic agreements with Asian universities. This internationalization policy has promoted the exchange of students and academics, mainly with Japan, South Korea and China.

At the University Center of Social Sciences and Humanities (CUCSH) there are currently three programs related to Asia: a collaborative program with the Korean Foundation and the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, that give access to students of International Relations to online-courses on Korean studies; an agreement with the Government of Shanghai to exchange language professors to teach Mandarin at CUCSH and, since 1990, it was established the Pacific Studies Department (DEP) that has evolved to be recognized as an outstanding center on Asia-Pacific Studies in Mexico.

DEP hosts the first Japanese Studies Center (2016) in Mexico that focuses on teaching the language, research and diffusion of Japanese culture through academic events. Until now about 3000 Mexican-students have taken Japanese language courses and some of them attend Japanese-universities to improve their language skills and/or to do research. DEP further contributes to the formation of human resources as it established, in 2018, the Master Program on *Global Politics and Transpacific Studies* with three areas of specialization: China, Japan and North America.

Furthermore, to spread the knowledge about Asia-Pacific, DEP publishes, since 1998, the *Journal México y la Cuenca del Pacífico (MyCP)*, that aims to contribute to the research, from a multidisciplinary perspective, of society, culture, economy, environment and politics of the Asia-Pacific economies as well as the regional integration processes in the region. It is a quarterly journal, published in digital format since 2012, and a pioneer in its genre in Mexico and Latin America. Of the more than one-hundred articles from scholars from both sides of the Pacific published in the past eight years, 52% were concentrated on China, Japan and

South Korea (<http://www.mexicoylacuendelpacifico.cucsh.udg.mx/index.php/mc>).

Hence, in Mexico as well in other Latin American countries, there is an increasing academic interest in Asian studies as the sprout of Asian studies research-center attest. This new tendency is an opportunity to develop networked-research with East-Asian academic counterparts.

In conclusion, to consolidate the globalization of Latin American Studies through a networked-research, there is a need to promote joint-research projects among academics of both sides of the Pacific with emphasis not only on economic and international relations but on broader studies that highlight the increasing relevant global role of East Asia and Latin America. As Hamaguchi and Guo point out, the current global issues of environment, growth and governance models, regional integration, geostrategic challenges, poverty, gender, Global Value Chains and the New Normal with the Pandemic are topics where scholars from both sides of the Pacific can contribute, by cooperating, to improve the knowledge about them. Furthermore, as Park states, “outsiders-within”, referring to East Asian scholars, can bring “creativity and novel perspectives to the Latin American Studies” that can be enhanced by cooperation and networked research. And initiatives like the East Asian Network of Latin American Studies and the Pacific Studies Department at UdeG can be platforms to achieve such goals.