

**Nuevos actores en América del Norte.
Seguridad, energía y medio ambiente
(vol. 1)**

(New Actors in North America.

Security, Energy and Environment [vol. 1])

Edit Antal, ed.

CISAN-UNAM

Mexico City, 2005, 248 pp.

North America has stopped being perceived merely as a geographical area. It can no longer be understood as a whole by solely taking into account the operations of the North American Free Trade Agreement and its consequences for the region's economy and production. Today the region cannot be understood without analyzing the influence of its *actors*. And this is precisely the theme of *Nuevos actores en América del Norte* (New Actors in North America), a collective work edited by CISAN researcher Edit Antal.

Volume 1 of this book, with its multi-disciplinary approach, deals with a new socio-

economic make-up of North America based on the existence and action of different political, economic and social agents reorganized in institutions, industries, groups, networks and movements. Thus, an unprecedented dynamic has been born that reflects a regional governance characterized by crisscrossed interests, expectations and perceptions of the state and non-state, trans-governmental and trans-national arenas.

This book offers a kind of conceptual cartography accompanying the analysis of the new actors in North America, situating the reader in the coordinates of the current debate about issues of security and energy, industrial reconfiguration, citizenship and environmental networks and institutions.

In his article "La integración energética de México con Estados Unidos" (Mexico's Energy Integration with the United States), Víctor Rodríguez-Padilla analyzes the possibilities and risks of energy integration in the region. Looking at the U.S., Canadian and

Mexican energy markets and policies, the author underlines the centrality for the U.S. of energy security, which makes it a Bush administration priority. He also highlights the convergence of the three governments around the emergence of a “North American focus” on energy supply expressed more in the integration of the coal and natural gas market but with great difficulties regarding oil and electricity. In this scheme of things, Mexico and Canada are very trustworthy partners for the United States despite the differences in energy models, particularly Mexico’s which is not completely liberalized.

Mel Kliman reviews “Comercio de energéticos entre Canadá y Estados Unidos” (Energy Trade between Canada and the United States) and this market’s importance for both countries. These sales are a considerable percentage of Canadian exports, while for the U.S., the purchases are an essential component of its energy security.

Rafael Friedmann develops an interesting view of the risks involved in North American energy integration in his essay “La crisis del sector eléctrico de California” (The Crisis of California’s Electricity Sector). He documents the negative consequences of a deregulation model that did not ensure the competitive reproduction of the model itself or create a socially responsible governmental policy. Friedmann emphasizes the dangers of an indiscriminate opening in which the federal and local governments exercised no control over market forces, causing financial crises, zero planning, excessive price hikes to consumers and deteriorating service.

Raúl Benítez analyzes the “Avances y límites de la seguridad hemisférica” (Advances and Limits of Hemispheric Security) and the importance for the debate of updating security accords because most are inoperative when faced with new threats. In North America, the issue is clearly vital for the United States, particularly after 9/11. The author emphasizes that the U.S. is maintaining a dual view

linking its security strategy with its trade partners, Mexico and Canada, through smart borders and, also a hemisphere-wide focus. In any case, a new security model is being created for the twenty-first century which includes the contradictions and differences regarding the region’s security priorities.

José Luis Piñeyro looks at the vulnerabilities and risks of “La seguridad nacional de México a inicios de siglo” (Mexico’s National Security at the Beginning of the Century). Starting from a concept of security defined as the way in which the population’s cultural and material needs are met by the state given internal and external threats, Piñeyro outlines Mexico’s weaknesses, saying that its vulnerability lies in the Fox administration’s “low profile” foreign policy.

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Silvia Vélez and Argentino Mendoza’s article looks at another aspect of security: cooperation strategies in the fight against drug trafficking. The study of the High-Level Contact Group as a means of institutionalizing a policy to control drugs in Mexico-U.S. relations demonstrates the difficulties in establishing an *ad hoc* institution given the differences in the two countries’ anti-drug bureaucracies.

In “La industria biotecnológica en América del Norte” (The Bio-technology Industry in North America), Alejandro Mercado talks about the emergence and development of the industry in the region and how it has become an important economic agent because of its potential for technological transformation. At the same time, and as a result of skimpy regulations, society’s response has contributed to the creation of a new social actor in the guise of environmental and consumers’ movements.

Mercado says that bio-technology's importance lies in its constitution as an economic space that is not only redefining productive processes, but also the social actors who participate in the broader political and social sphere. The author puts forward the need for society to play a more active role to contribute to acceptable regulation for bio-technology, limiting the risks and promoting its rational use.

Another sector that has been profoundly changed because of NAFTA is the auto industry. Elizabeth Gutiérrez describes this market's characteristics in Mexico and the international relations between the Mexican state and U.S. automobile multinationals. Similar strategies by both of them not only fostered the reformulation of production, but also created a broad network of economic actors

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like multinational auto parts corporations and maquiladoras to more profoundly integrate the North American auto industry.

Despite their apparently being outside the book's general profile, the next two articles look at the novel issues of "Producción translocal de actores antieconómicos" (The Translocal Production of Anti-economic Actors) and the "Binomio ciudadano-consumidor en las democracias contemporáneas" (The Citizen-Consumer in Contemporary Democracies). Steven Flusty examines the creation of militant movements against free trade in a context of two kinds of globalization: the first linked to multinational economic integration and the second to daily translocal interactions. In the latter, a lateral globalizing circuit is created as the basis for the generation of anti-economic actors who use means like the Internet to protest and express their

rejection of the image of human action subsumed in the sphere of economic action. Juan Guzmán, for his part, presents an interesting debate about the new kinds of civil rights defenses linked to consumption and service provision, as well as public participation in decision making and the demand for better management.

Edit Antal deals with actors, networks and environmental institutions from the perspective of the construction of environmental discourses and the social risks linked to the environment. In her article, "Redes y discursos de las ONG en la zona de Tijuana-San Diego" (NGO Networks and Discourses in the Tijuana-San Diego Area), Antal, also one of the book's editors, starts off from the premise that networks play a very important role because of their ability to link up the local and the global to create spaces for cooperation to solve transnational environmental problems. The case of the border area between Tijuana and San Diego is significant because it portrays a very specific environmental problem and because of the severe asymmetries of the two environmental movements in their bi-national context. The author situates several discourses that the two movements have appropriated based on a new way of linking the environment, culture and politics, which seek to solve problems in a given political context, achieve sustainable development or radicalize the environmental struggle. In any case, these networks and movements' dilemma lies in their effective action in changing political circumstances in regional spaces that are increasingly plural.

In "Riesgos y redes ambientales en la frontera México-Estados Unidos" (Environmental Risks and Networks on the Mexico-U.S. Border), Miriam Alfie puts forward the existence of new actors and forms of reorganization along the local-global axis in contexts of risk and social demand. A space has been created in North America where new identities and social interactions that make

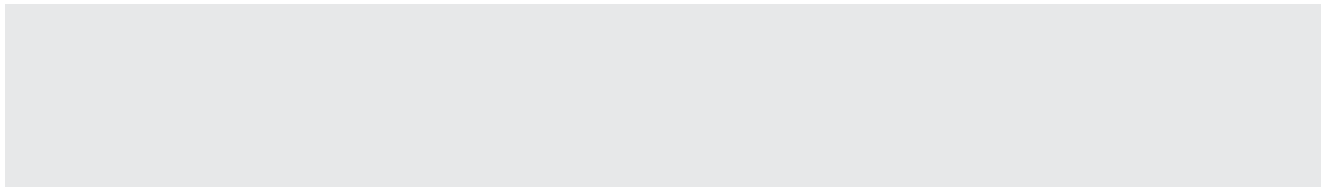
possible the proliferation of networks of environmental organization, knowledge and information can be seen. In this parameter, Alfie analyzes environmental groups and networks' participation and influence all along the Mexico-U.S. border.

Lastly, María Teresa Vázquez looks at the issue of "La planificación bilateral México-Estados Unidos" (Mexico-U.S. Bilateral Planning) from the standpoint of creating institutions and their interaction with border communities. She points to how planning has changed because of greater participation and links among local actors along the border since it

is these local planners who are the mediators for agreements in bilateral environmental planning.

As we can see, *New Actors in North America* deals with timely issues in order to understand not only how new actors come into being and their interactions based on their specific interests, but also the expectations that these actors engender in the constitution of North America as an asymmetrical, plural, complex region. ■■

Bibiana Gómez and Esther Ponce
International affairs specialists



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