

Presentation

IN THIS ISSUE, **INTERdisciplina** focuses in the study of the social processes that determine the conditions to allow certain groups to be called indigenous. Paula López Caballero, guest editor, suggests that the term ‘indigenous’ alludes to multiple meanings that are understandable only through the study of the social and historical processes in which they were created. The connotation of “indigenoussness”—associated with positive judgements, like cultural enrichment, or negative ones like expressions of primitivism, for example—is a social construct marked by power relationships not necessarily associated with ethnic type identities.

Its contingent and contextual nature is expressed in the divergent experiences observed in different environments in which, for example, the indigenous condition is the object of legal recognition, along with emancipatory practices regarding other social spaces in which this condition confers a certain supremacy and legitimacy in the exclusion of other members of the population, viewed as migrants or foreigners.

Based on the category of “indigenoussness”, which rejects any essentialist vision of that which is indigenous, we can perceive the recursiveness that defines who or what is indigenous, as this definition is the product of specific social relationships which, in turn, are the expression of indigenous otherness.

This implies a shift in the way we approach the understanding of these identifying processes, that contains a deep political significance, because our attention is now concentrated on the interactions which make the “indigenous-non-indigenous” distinction relevant, instead of prioritizing only one element of this polarity. In this sense, this theoretical contribution enables us to define not only who is indigenous in determined historically constituted contexts, but also what it means to be indigenous.

This conceptual framework is key to the interpretation of hegemonic and anti-hegemonic postures in this interaction of opposites because, depending upon the social and cultural context, the call for the rights of indigenoussness can give rise to political processes that can promote equality or accentuate situations of domination. In any case, the precision of the term “indigenoussness”—which takes into account its relational and historical dimensions—enables us to recognize heterogeneous expressions in the relationships between indigenous populations and the State.

The critical approach to the study of the generation of otherness presented in this issue aims to trigger a process of reflectivity within disciplinary knowledge (especially in the field of anthropology), pinpointing the interdependence

that exists between the specific sociocultural contexts in which the disciplines of the social sciences and their study subjects are established as historically built domains. This allows us a better comprehension of the emergence of the indigenous individual as a subject of knowledge. ■