Latin Americanists of Denmark

Fiona Wilson∗

Curiosities in the Royal Collection

Historically, Denmark had virtually no interest in Latin America. The nearest Danes came to the region was as a minor colonial power in the Caribbean, in possession of three small islands (St Thomas, St Croix and St Jan), later known as the Virgin Islands, and making money through the slave trade. In the light of this indifference, it is all the more surprising that two of the most remarkable, eloquent and complex pictorial documents from colonial South America of the first half of the seventeenth century landed up in that country. The explanation lies not in an involvement in the region but in the circulation of curiosities around the noble houses of Europe and the reluctance of the Danish royal house to part with what it had got. At an unknown date and through unknown channels, the royal collection came to contain the autograph version of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala’s, Nueva crónica y buen gobierno, completed in c.1615 and sent to the king of Spain; and a Danish king was given a set of eight full-length portraits of men and women of different social and ethnic origins: savage and domesticated natives, African slaves and mestizo half-castes, painted by Albert Eckhout, in 1641 in celebration of the Dutch colonisation of Northeast Brazil.

Guamán Poma’s chronicle recounts through Andean eyes the history of Andean society from the beginning of time and the deepening crisis in society as a result of Spanish colonisation. The manuscript is kept in the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books of The Royal Library, but though not accessible to the public, following its recent digitisation it is now available worldwide on the internet.1 Eckhout’s paintings, in contrast, depict a thoroughly European view of colonisation, seen as the triumph of civilisation over barbarity, the portraits being set in landscapes that blend symbolism and botanical information. Currently they have been taken out of their corner in the South American collection in the National Museum and placed on prominent display; but due to insecurities of air travel, they have not been loaned again to Brazil where they should have been exhibited in Recife, their place of origin. Some of the paintings have been shown earlier in Brazil: Rio in 1968, São Paulo in 1991 and again in 1998, when they were seen by some 300,000 Brazilians during their three-month stay. In Denmark, they have been objects of fascination but mostly for a handful of scholars interested in Latin America.

∗ This article could not have been written without the assistance of Jens Lohmann, journalist, writer and teacher. He has provided many insights, helped gather the material, filled in gaps and commented on the draft text.
The ‘Peculiarity’ of Denmark

When taking stock of the history of Latin American studies in Denmark, one is struck by the following three features: the greatly shifting attention paid to Latin America in different periods of time; a more consistent concern with language/culture compared to a more volatile history of social science; and the general failure of Latin American studies to build institutional footholds in the academic community. These features taken together perhaps make Danish experience different from elsewhere in Europe. One could start by trying to pin down the peculiarities of this history by surveying and summarising the main scholarly works contributed by Danish authors. Since the bulk of this material (especially from earlier years) is published in a language inaccessible to virtually all readers of this journal, this would certainly have some point in terms of improving communication. Yet a review of Danish texts disconnected from a wider discussion of trends and influences would not reveal that much. Therefore the conclusion reached was that it would be more illuminating to explore the personal, intellectual and institutional contexts in which particular approaches, theories and topics were chosen, caught on and possibly disappeared.

Rather than going to the library and studying the printed word, the research on which this article is based was conducted with the people producing the texts. In other words, the focus is on Danish Latin Americanists in an attempt to systematise the life/professional histories, thoughts and reflections that came through in interviews and conversations and in memoirs, CV’s and publication lists sent over the e-mail. Material has been contributed by more than 20 people. They were drawn from a spectrum of disciplines and represent wide ranging interests. Almost all share a background of political engagement in Latin America and found it intriguing to look back and reflect on the place of Latin America in their lives. The main criterion for the selection of contributors was that they had worked on Latin America after finishing their master’s degrees, and that this work has involved research and publication in academic journals. But this group is only the tip of the iceberg. A great many who feel themselves Latin Americanists are not employed in academic institutions: they have found work in connection with development cooperation, and as high school teachers, journalists, free-lance writers and filmmakers. Many have continued to write professionally and insightfully on Latin America, producing consultancy reports, textbooks, travel and literary works, some of which blur the dividing line between the ‘academic’ and ‘non-academic’.

A Periodization of Latin American Studies

Latin American studies began in earnest in Denmark in the 1960s when headway was made along two main intellectual tracks: culture/language and political economy. These two fields came together and interacted in exciting and dramatic ways in the 1970s. Students from a much wider range of disciplines were inspired to focus on Latin America when writing their university theses and to seek to continue their interest after graduating. But the early fervour and energy tended to drain away for several reasons; one was a shift in the theoretical debate within Marxism, another was the conservatism of the academic establishment. In the
1980s, although it was not exactly downhill all the way, as a specific focus of intellectual interest Latin America suffered an eclipse. There was loss of élan, fragmenting of interests and a harder, often dispiriting, struggle to get resources for research and find tenured academic appointment. Some more optimistic signs of change can be noted in recent years. From the mid 1990s, one has the impression that more Latin Americanists (including those of an older generation) were at last achieving tenured positions and receiving research funding. Not unconnected with this, one sees some revival of interest amongst the young. But the new liberal-conservative government that came into office in November 2001, in cahoots with an extreme right-wing party, is cutting back on state funding going to research and the universities, as well as state support to environmental issues and overseas development assistance. The outlook for research is looking bleaker.

Collecting Culture

An early interest in the cultures of Latin America can be linked to the ethnographic collections found in Danish museums, as well as to a middle-European disposition for ‘collecting’ culture. Artefacts and cultural goods had been brought back to Denmark by travellers where they augmented the treasures from the royal collections. This is a society where museum work is valued, and seen as a prestigious occupation. Throughout the period, museum ethnographic departments have employed leading ethnologists and anthropologists specializing in Latin America and especially the Andean region (Inge Schellerup, Berete Due, Inger Sjørslev), who have regularly organized exhibitions to present different facets of the region’s culture and history.

The study of Latin American cultures ‘in the field’ came to be associated with two pioneering approaches that were taking shape in the 1940s: one centred on language/linguistics, history and religion; the other was grounded in the ethnographic description of ‘primitive’ societies.

The first course on Central American Indian Language and Culture was offered at Copenhagen University in 1949. Its initiator, Ernst Mengin, was a scholar of German/French background whose research had focused on the Aztecs, their language and the challenge of deciphering texts surviving from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the 1960s, a growing number of students were attracted to the field and they pressed for a more structured and formalized programme. A greater measure of institutionalization took place under the leadership of Arild Hvidtfeldt, Professor of the Sociology of Religion, whose doctoral dissertation had dealt with ancient Mexican religion. To the university authorities (then and now), the argument made was that due to the uniqueness of the Mesoamerican cultural area and the need to work with the abundant written sources, this subject that combines religion, ethno-history, archaeology and language is not suitably placed as a sub-branch of either ethnology or archaeology. Emphasis had to be given to area of specialization for there is no single scientific or theoretical approach. The Department of American Indian Languages and Cultures, with its focus on Central America and specialization on the Nahuatl language, was born and was expanded with the appointment in 1970 of Una Canger, a specialist in Mam and Nahuatl languages along with historical and cultural studies.
The discipline of ethnography-anthropology began in Denmark in 1945 as a research field specializing in ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ peoples within the ethnographic department of the National Museum. Danish ethnographers and geographers had travelled in the Amazon region in the early 1940s but the development of Latin American anthropology in the university was largely the work of Niels Fock. In the 1950s, Fock had done fieldwork research in (then) British Guiana and written an ethnographic monograph on an Amazon group, the "waiwai", living on the border with Venezuela. He then shifted research attention to the Andean region, where he worked first on ecology and environmental adaptation in the Amazon lowlands and later focused increasingly on issues of ethnicity, culture and identity in the Andean highlands, especially of Ecuador. In the early 70s, the Peruvian anthropologist, Salvador Palomino Flores was invited to Copenhagen University where together with Fock, he taught courses on Andean ethnography and gave classes on Quechua. This, and the new, growing interest for the reform experiments in General Velasco Alvarado's Peru and the growing social and political struggle in the Andean region, prompted many students to take up Andean studies.

Under the ‘old’ university system, anthropology belonged under the faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science, reflecting its place as an exact science. Though there was little formal teaching, lecturers taught what interested them most – and this made for exciting encounters. With anthropology becoming increasingly popular in the late 1960s, students flooded in and it was necessary to systematize the teaching as well as make priorities as to what should be taught. In the effervescent times of student revolt, students demanded the right to have more say. According to one student of anthropology in the mid 1960s (Lisbeth Overgaard), the demand grew for a different kind of study: ‘we were tired of only reading monographs about remote, primitive, exotic peoples.’ In the increasingly politicised atmosphere in 1968, a small group of anthropologists concerned with the plight of indigenous peoples and the abuse of their rights, especially in Latin America and the Arctic, founded the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). The group, led by Helge Kleivan, became internationally famous as a documentation and advocacy centre and came to employ a number of Latin Americanists. IWGIA gave me my first job in Denmark in 1980, where I worked as editor and translator producing the Newsletter and Documents published in English.

Following the early, somewhat esoteric, interest in Central American and Andean languages, it was realized more widely that a more thorough knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese was needed as a prelude and to unlock the field of Latin American cultural studies. Amongst young anthropologists (though this disciplinary label was not yet in use), Spanish began to be taught informally, sometimes by fellow students who had lived in Latin America. But the main boost to the study of the Spanish language and contemporary Latin American culture, politics and society came in 1970 when Jens Lohmann was employed part-time as teaching assistant in the Institute of Romance languages. Lohmann, brought up in Mexico, spoke Spanish like a native. Since the mid 1960s he had worked as a journalist and writer, and was communicating a new and strongly politicized interpretation of Latin America to the Danish public. In the language classes he taught for the next decade, he presented students with a heady cocktail that laced contemporary Latin American literature (Asturias, Borges, Carpentier, Garcia Marquez, Arguedas) with
the politics of anti-imperialism. Having to make a living from many part-time jobs, during the 1970s, Lohmann also gave courses on Latin America at the new university of Roskilde (set up in opposition to Copenhagen University) and at the universities of Aarhus (the second largest city) and Odense (the third largest city). This activity paved the way for the great political leap forward!

Theories of imperialism and dependency

At the same time that interest in Latin American languages and culture was gathering momentum in the university milieu, Latin American-inspired theories of imperialism and dependency burst on the scene. These explosive debates spread rapidly. Critical works on Latin America’s political economy, published in Swedish in the early 1970s by Sven Lindquist and Claes Brundenius, were widely read in Denmark. In his book, *Imperialismens ansikte – 400 år av underutveckling i Peru* (Face of Imperialism: 400 years of underdevelopment in Peru), Brundenius drew upon his discussions with Latin American scholars who were living in Paris in the late 1960s to write a history through the lens of the new theoretical language of dependency. Published in 1972, this book appeared at an opportune moment; and was followed by works written in Danish, such as Lohmann’s (1975) *Latinamerikas byrde* (Latin America’s burden).

In addition, extracts from the texts written by leading Latin American *dependencyistas* were translated, published, commented on and debated in Danish left-wing journals; the work of André Gunder Frank was to become the most accessible and widely read. The international development studies journal, *Den Ny Verden* (The New World), which began publication in 1964, carried translations of writings by Furtado in 1964, Petras in 1970, dos Santos in 1972, Sweezy in 1972 and Sunkel in 1973. This led up to the translation of Ernest Feder’s (1973) *Latin-amerika*; a three volume collection of texts, *Udviklingsprocessen* (The development process), translated and edited by Jens Lohmann, Bjørne Forde and Christian Hejlskov Rasmussen (1975) and to a number of weighty theoretical works presenting and debating *Afhængighedsteori* (Dependency theory). But not many academics working within a dependency framework at the time were engaging in longer-term, fieldwork-based research on Latin America. One of the few substantial case studies undertaken in the period was by political scientist, Georg Sørensen, whose work culminated in a book published in 1983, *Transnationale selskaber og udviklingsprocessen i perifere samfund: med en case studie af Brasilien* (Transnational companies and the development process in peripheral societies: a case study of Brazil), which was later published in English.

The growing body of theoretical material on imperialism and dependency was taken up for close scrutiny and serious debate in left-wing circles and discussion groups that were springing up. Some groups emerged in connection with a particular publication in the New Left (like *Politisk Revy*) or a Marxist publication (like *Kurasje*), others were launched as alternatives to the stuffy, conservative universities, as in the case of the Third World Evening School and Nordic Summer University.

For young economists, according to Jens Erik Torp, dependency theory offered an attractive antidote to the neo-classical bias of the university economics faculties
with their emphasis on equilibrium models, in that it opened up for a political analysis of social structure. Students were learning the importance of linking theory with histories of development/underdevelopment and to appreciate the differences between Latin America and African colonial experience. The effects of dependency theory were felt across the board. Young anthropologists were also eager to learn about imperialism and its influence and read the exciting new theories that were pouring out: on satellites and metropoles, underdevelopment theory, Karl Marx and Chayanov, peasants and capital. As anthropologist Lisbeth Overgaard commented: ‘When I look at the old bibliographies with titles from the 60s and 70s, I can still feel the breathe of freedom that swept through the discipline, the sense of a world opening up, when we could begin to see the connections’. According to Elizabeth Kiørboe, then a student of Spanish, the connections between studying Latin American literature and radical politics were strong, and students fought to establish Latin American studies institutionally.

Politics and solidarity

The new theoretical debates were associated with stronger political commitment and for many students, greater possibilities of travelling in Latin America. Many students were fascinated with revolutionary utopias, and with the example set by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. But some, as Julius Lund recalls, were more interested in going to Latin America to confirm their prejudices than in making grounded enquiries into Latin American cultural and social phenomena. Students from a number of different disciplines (sociology, economics, ethnology, anthropology, languages, cultural geography, political science) set off. Some were rucksack tourists; others intended to stay longer and write on Latin America in their theses as well as in articles to enlighten the Danish public. In particular, they were drawn to Peru to study the land reform implemented under Velasco; to Chile to observe and hopefully work for socialism under Allende; and to Brazil where Danish business interests were the most intense. Those joining Latin American universities often encountered a far more stimulating intellectual environment than in the university institutions back home. Experience of Latin American society opened up new, much more complex, and much less dogmatic, worlds and this pressured some to abandon their original projects and absorb themselves in new topics.

Let’s take three examples. Though Gurli Jakobsen had set out to compare the agrarian reforms of Chile, Peru and Cuba, once she had become associated with the Catholic University in Santiago, Chile, she participated in a research project documenting popular political movements in the slums. A few years later, her copy of the material was unique, as all other copies had been destroyed at the time of the coup. A chance visit to the Peruvian Amazon led Søren Hvalkof to abandon his plan of writing a textbook on agrarian reform based on the co-operatives of the coast. Instead he came to research conflicts over land and resources waged between indigenous groups and colonists in the Peruvian lowlands and to develop concepts of political ecology and ethno-development. New debates back home also pressured students to change course. A growing fascination with social movements and feminist anthropology, led Inger Sjørslev to leave Andean ethnography in order to concentrate on Afro-Brazilian religion, religious syncretism and possession
cults in Bahia, Brazil. But apart from some fortunate anthropologists, not many others could count on getting much guidance from their supervisors as to how to think about or analyse the topics they had selected. Completing master’s theses could take a very long time.

Back in Denmark, there was a strong move on the part of the young and highly motivated Latin Americanists to form study groups outside of the universities. One study group on Latin America organized at the Centre for Development Research attracted more than 100 participants; Latin America had now become more popular than China for young radical Danes. In 1973, the first Scandinavian association of Latin Americanists, Nordisk Samfund for Latin Amerika Forskning (NOSALF), was established. From the start, it was an arena of violent political confrontation. The organizers were divided into two camps; in one camp were the ‘aristocratic’ academics from the universities, and in the other the mass of young radicals who were determined that NOSALF would be an open, more radical and critical, and less academic organization. While the Danish representation in NOSALF was clearly dominated by the radical young, the composition of the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish sections was different. There were constant fights over leadership and for many years the situation resulted in a kind of stalemate where the conservative academics managed to win the key position in control of the economy. The NOSALF secretariat was based in Stockholm at the Institute of Latin American Studies, and the Director of the Institute automatically became the Secretary. Those having full-time posts at universities saw NOSALF primarily as an academic association and they feared that its reputation would be compromised should a radical hold the office of President. Thus, as Jens Lohmann notes, although he was one of NOSALF’s founders and a board member since 1973, he was never considered suitable for the post of President. Only in 1986 was a Danish president elected for a two-year period; and not long after that the association became moribund.

The politicization of Latin American studies was reinforced on account of the Chilean coup in 1973. Solidarity with Chileans fighting for their lives pushed all other issues aside. Many students stopped their academic work in order to engage full-time in practical solidarity work and political activity. The arrival of refugees not only from Chile but also from Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Bolivia gave a new impetus to political debate and also a new familiarity with Latin Americans, who for the first time were living in Denmark. For a time, as Elizabeth Kiørboe recalls, solidarity work brought different political parties and the trade unions together, and even though groups did not agree politically there was a sense of common struggle against authoritarian regimes and abuse of human rights. But later acrimonious fights did break out between Chilean solidarity groups belonging to opposing political factions. In general, though, the political actuality of Latin America and struggles against dictatorship carried great appeal for the young. In the gymnasium (high school), teachers were introducing material on Latin America and dependency theory into their teaching. This, in turn, stimulated a new generation of youngsters to involve themselves in politics, Spanish, and Latin American culture.

In the early 1980s, the focus of political engagement and research activity shifted away from the Southern Cone to Central America (primarily Nicaragua and
El Salvador), but there were clear parallels to the earlier Danish involvement in Peru and Chile. Solidarity group work was taken up by a younger generation who also strongly opposed US foreign policy in the region. The victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua provoked much attention, especially on the question of what kind of development the Sandinistas could instigate (Thure Hastrup, Charlotte Mikkelsen, Ulrik Sparre). But there was also a critical voice (led by IWGIA) as to the Sandinistas gravely mistaken policy with respect to the Miskitos of the Atlantic coast. El Salvador was also a focus of solidarity and research activity (Hans Aalborg), but surprisingly the civil war in Guatemala received much less attention until the period after the peace accords.

During the 1980s while the political commitment to Latin America remained, academically Latin American studies tended to lose ground. After such an ebullient early phase, why was this the case? I suggest that three main reasons can be put forward.

First, the old universities were not generally supportive of interdisciplinary or regional studies in the social sciences (with the exception of anthropology, which was treated as a social science in Copenhagen and part of the humanities in Aarhus). Through the student movement of the late 1960s, two new universities had been established but they were not particularly open to Latin American studies either (for reasons dealt with in the next section). Valiant efforts were made by a group of humanists at the Institute for Romance Languages (Jørgen Schmitt Jensen, Claudio Bogantes and Sven Lindhardtsen) to establish a Centre for Latin American Studies at the University of Aarhus. It involved Latin American and Danish scholars with expertise in languages, literature, history and cultural studies, but the influence of the Centre remained limited with respect to social science and it closed in the mid 1990s.

In the decade of the 1980s, the employment situation in all universities deteriorated. As many young academics discovered, there were no new posts and they faced a difficult choice. If they continued working on Latin America, they would almost certainly be relegated to unstable, untenured positions and possibly have low priority when it came to competing for research funding. Many were tempted to look elsewhere. Some of those staying in academia changed their research field, such as to Africa or Eastern Europe. Others kept their political engagement in Latin America and moved from solidarity work at home to development co-operation, taking posts with Danish NGO’s in particular that endeavoured to channel support in the fight against authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone and Central America.

There was a second reason for the eclipse. From the mid 1970s, radical political debate in Denmark took a new turn, with inspiration coming especially from German Marxism. ‘An enormously tedious university-based Marxism took over’ (as Lisbeth Overgaard put it); written texts counted for little if they were not stuffed full of German quotations and annotated with a hundred footnotes. The school of capital logic built abstract theories and models in isolation from the mess of everyday life. There was no place for the old Latin American political theories here. Marxist journals (like Kurasje) were co-opted by the capital logic group, and at joint Nordic events, like the Summer University, it became increasingly clear to the other Nordic leftists that many of their Danish comrades were now in the grip of a vehement Marxism that sought to displace and disqualify all other interpretations.
Capital logic came to have a hold on several university departments, including in the new universities established in the 1970s. This was particularly frustrating and alienating for radical Latin Americanists returning to Denmark; for many, their experiences had made them highly critical of the simplistic definitions and abstract models. As a reaction they tended to look outside Denmark for theoretical inspiration and a more congenial academic environment.

A third reason following on from the previous two was the lack of sufficiently forceful leadership. Strong leaders who knew their way about university politics and bureaucracy were necessary if Latin American studies were to carve out an institutional place in the universities. Some had managed to do this in an earlier period, such as Hvidtfeldt and Fock who had established the fields of Mesoamerican religion, language and culture, and Andean anthropology respectively. Also coming into this category was the charismatic Norwegian, Helge Kleivan, founder of IWGIA. In the history of the old universities, the regional studies that existed had been defined as a result of the creation of a founding chair. But as Henrik Rønsbo pointed out, as the social sciences became progressively formalized, this was not linked to either regional studies or to fusions that crossed disciplinary borders. Given far more kudos was abstract theory-driven Marxism, which found general support among teachers and students alike. As a result, Latin American studies was left hanging in the air, occupying an institutional grey zone, or bereft of institutional affiliation. This had a further effect, for it denied continuity. Students, many of them radically inclined, continued to find inspiration in Latin America but most could only draw on a relatively weak and inconsistent body of scholarship from their home faculty. Topics under study were highly diverse, often linked to immediate social and political concerns, rather than to longer-term research problematics. This tended to exaggerate a sense of disjuncture: between disciplines and also between generations.

Research in a cold climate

One indication of the declining interest in Latin America as a regional specialisation is the diminishing number of articles on Latin America carried in Danish scholarly journals. Taking Den Ny Verden (the New World), house journal of the Centre for Development Research, we find in the period 1964 to 1973 that 30 per cent of all geographically based articles dealt with Latin America (compared to 41 per cent on Africa and 29 per cent on Asia). In the following period, 1974 to 1989, articles on Latin American dropped to 19 per cent (compared to 53 per cent on Africa and 28 per cent on Asia), and in the period 1990 to 2001, to 13 per cent of articles (compared to 54 per cent on Africa and 32 per cent on Asia). The bulk of the Latin American articles had appeared in regional Special Issues: on Latin America (1979), Brazil (1980), Nicaragua (1985/6), and Mexico (1985/6). But one must underline that this is a journal of development studies and the share of articles devoted to Latin America in later years is not wildly different from the share of Danish development aid directed to the region. Though indicative of the low priority of Latin America in the aid budget of the Danish state, the figures are also highly misleading. For Danish Latin Americanists have felt themselves pressed to publish increasingly in international ‘peer-reviewed’ journals, in English and Span-
ish, partly on account of their insecure employment situation and partly due to the regrettable decline in the prestige of Danish language publications.

Where then have the research efforts of later years been concentrated? Despite disparity, can one point to a clustering of research activity and the development of a distinct Danish position in the research undertaken? We can start by defining three rather diffuse thematic areas that have involved researchers from different disciplines over the past 20 years, though they have not necessarily worked in any collaborative way. One thematic area centres on industrialisation, labour and trade unions, with case study research concentrating on the more industrialised parts of the region (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Bolivia); this has involved economists, political scientists, sociologists, geographers, languages and business studies. A second thematic area focuses on movement, livelihood and conflict, with research concentrating in the Andean countries (Peru, Bolivia) and Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador). Taking part in this research area have been cultural sociologists, cultural geographers, and anthropologists. A third thematic area to emerge centres on political culture, and it has crossed and blurred the borders between humanities and social science. Finally a smaller cluster can be discerned of Andean/Amazon cultural and environmental studies.

The earliest work on industrialisation, labour and trade unions focused on transnational corporations in Brazil (Georg Sørensen) and was developed in relation to trade unions and labour conditions especially in Danish-owned enterprises (Jens Erik Torp); and Brazil’s economic linkages (Jørgen Dige Pedersen). Connections between processes of technological change and industrial policy were explored in Mexico’s capital goods sector (Anne Lorentzen), and in relation to the mining sector in Chile and Peru (Claes Brundenius). Another branch of research focused on issues of enterprise and employment in the ‘informal’ sector: with focus put on the implications of the rise of workshop-based industry in Mexico for gender and class relations (Fiona Wilson), formation of industrial districts (Ulrik Vangstrup), and how women’s employment in formal or informal enterprises affects household relations in urban Bolivia (Julie Koch). The history of trade unions seen as a social movement has been explored in Argentina and Bolivia (Anne Marie Ejdesgaard Jeppesen) and in Chile (Jørgen Anker), and the potential for worker-controlled co-operatives especially in relation to industrial learning, studied in Argentina and Venezuela (Gurli Jakobsen).

Much of the research clustered under the heading of movement, livelihood and conflict has been inspired by recent theories that have problematised the concept of mobility and the social/spatial fields brought into existence through movement. Research undertaken in an earlier phase included studies of the movement of refugees displaced by violent conflict who crossed borders between Guatemala and Mexico (Finn Stepputat); members of Peruvian communities belonging to both rural and urban worlds and who crossed borders nationally and transnationally (Karsten Pærregård); and transnational migrants of Caribbean origin whose networks and movements drew localities in North America and Europe into the same transnational social field (Karen Fog Olwig, Ninna Nyberg Sørensen). In a later phase, most of these researchers collaborated in a longer-term research programme (co-ordinated by Fiona Wilson and Bodil Folke Frederiksen) where focus was put on livelihoods, identity and organisation in situations of conflict with case studies.
undertaken in El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and different parts of the Peruvian highlands (Fiona Wilson, Finn Stepputat, Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Henrik Rønsbo).

The multi-faceted work dealing with political culture has mostly emanated from Institutes of Romance Languages and cultural studies. Research has included the sexual politics of Castro’s Cuba and human rights under authoritarian regimes (Julius Lund); political corruption in Mexico (Hans Krause Hansen); girls’ schooling in Mexico (Maribel Blasco); national culture and identity in Mexico (Pablo Cristoffanini); shifting Mayan identities (Peter Hervik); municipal democracy in Nicaragua (Thure Hastrup); farmers’ organising practices in relation to the environment in Nicaragua (Helle Munk Ravnborg); ethnic politics on the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast (Ken Henriksen); ideological roots of the Sandanista movement in Nicaragua and relations between church and dictatorship in Chile (Hugo Cancino); and ‘the savage and us’, the politics of identity in Latin America (Jan Gustafsson). The political culture of development is also being interpreted along Foucauldian lines as technocratic rationalities informing projects to develop the Brazilian Amazon (Afonso Moreira) and in the new discourse of managerialism in Mexico (Hans Krause Hansen).

Throughout the period, research has continued to concentrate on indigenous societies and culture in the Andes and Amazon regions, though concepts and theoretical frameworks have changed greatly over time. Some research on the Andean highlands has focused on ecology and material culture (Inge Schellerup) as well as on the resistance and survival of Andean culture (Karsten Pærregård). In the lowlands, research has concentrated on issues of environment and political ecology, identity and struggles over land (Søren Hvalkof, Hanne Weber, Andrew Grey, Jakob Kronik). Their ethnographic work has had consequences for the direction of Danish development policy, partly through collaboration with IWGIA, Danish NGO’s and the state development agency, as in the case of indigenous land titling projects.

When one looks at changes over time, university teachers who have specialised in Latin America note a general shift in student interests, away from politics and political economy and towards studying culture, democracy, social movements, and development. Languages and cultural studies as well as anthropology are still popular, though anthropology students are no longer so concerned with ‘exotic’ places and want to learn about issues nearer home. Teaching in both business studies and international development studies has clearly taken a cultural turn. In the business schools, new courses have been launched on Latin American language and thought. In these, students may once again discover the classic texts of Latin American development theorists, from Prebisch to Escobar. In development studies, the priorities of Danish aid agencies can be seen to mould the choices made by many students, although Latin America maintains its fascination for some and attracts the best, and most radical minds. The Centre for Development Research has in recent years included more Latin American research; and this common engagement with Latin America has done much to build interdisciplinary bridges between the humanities and social sciences that still seem so difficult to accomplish in the university world. Since formal teaching on Latin America is so patchy, Latin American researchers and students suffering institutional isolation have been motivated to re-start a Latin America study group, this time under the name of Network
for Latin America (NETLA), which keeps people in touch through regular seminars and an occasional large conference.

If one were to point to the distinctive flavour of Danish research over time, then it would be the subtle and not so subtle ways in which politics and scholarship have inter-twined. Some of this has been fairly obvious, as in the association between political solidarity, choice of research topic and site and choice of research partners. Yet the repercussions of this have sometimes been damaging and unexpected. In his path-breaking case study on Brazil in the 1980s that traced the international dimensions of industrial links, Jens Erik Torp working in collaboration with the Danish and Brazilian trade unions encountered great opposition in Denmark with respect to his analysis and conclusions. That Danish firms could be shown to be contravening Brazilian legislation, and be doing so to a greater extent than other foreign companies was a finding that political and business circles in Denmark wanted suppressed. The research centre where he worked at the time was threatened with closure. In sum, one can say that there has often been a grey zone as to what can be said, when and where, that has affected in particular those employed in research centres dependent on government funding. This has led to a degree of self-censuring that outsiders find surprising in democratic Scandinavia. This underlying sense of threat, though, is surfacing again under the present liberal-conservative government, and this is exemplified by the ham-fisted attempts to dissolve or bring to heel Denmark’s independent Centre for Human Rights.

* * *

**Fiona Wilson** is Senior Researcher at the Centre for Development Research in Copenhagen and has lived in Denmark since 1980. Her knowledge of the Danish research scene comes from posts in research management and teaching in international development studies and from being member of the Danish Social Science Research Council for the last four years. Current research interests include post conflict situations and state formation in the Peruvian Andes. A recent publication is ‘In the name of the state: schools and teachers in an Andean province’, in Stepputat and Blom Hansen (eds), States of imagination: ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state, Durham, Duke University Press, 2001. <fwi@cdr.dk>

**Notes**

1. This can be accessed at www.kb.dk/elib/mss/poma, see Adorno, Rolena, 2001, Guaman Poma and his illustrated chronicle from colonial Peru, Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen and The Royal Library.
2. My very grateful thanks to the following who gave me their views and also the material on which this article is based: Claes Brundenius (economics), Hugo Cancino (history), Una Canger (linguistics), Pablo Cristofanini (languages), Søren Hvalkof (anthropology), Gurli Jakobsen (sociology), Anne Marie Ejdesgaard Jeppesen (languages), Elizabeth Kierboe (languages), Hans Krause Hansen (languages), Anne Lorentzen (political science), Julius Lund (languages), Jørgen Dige Pedersen (political science), Karsten Pærregaard (anthropology), Henrik Ronsbo (anthropology), Inger Sjørslev (anthropology), Finn Stepputat (cultural sociology), Georg Sørensen (political science), Ninna Nyberg Sørensen (anthropology), Jens Erik Torp (economics), Lisbeth Overgaard (anthropology).