

UNACH's PhD in Regional Studies: Its Importance 18 Years Later

Jorge Magaña Ochoa¹
jorge.magana@unach.mx
ORCID: 0000-0002-9424-2814

1 DOCTORATE IN REGIONAL STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE CHIAPAS.

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In any research, there is a strong emphasis on establishing a thorough theoretical framework—or a robust debate regarding its construction—from which to anchor and launch the discussion that will serve as the foundation for the research proposal itself; this framework is understood as the set of subjects, concepts, and techniques used to approach an analytical project (Ragin, 1999; Magaña, 2012) and which the researcher constructs and employs to study the problem at hand.

In essence, a researcher knows only what their own theoretical framework allows them to know, that is, the researcher does not see or perceive the world as it really is, but rather views it through the lens of the categories—which are otherwise necessary — contained within that framework. Therefore, simply reading a vast number of books or articles considered relevant for this purpose is not enough, fundamental as it may be; it is necessary to reflect and analyze in depth the ideas under those categories previously argued and thus be able to understand what the author or authors are stating on the matter. It is within this interaction with ideas is the essence of the theoretical framework lies —and, therefore, of any social research. From the perspective of Regional Studies, this has been a strong concern for all the professors and researchers who are part of the Doctorate in Regional Studies (DER) at the now Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas (UNACH).

In this regard, research has identified conceptual misunderstandings and different approaches to regional analysis, as well as the coordination of all aspects, aspects, forces, and actions necessary to ensure that a region possesses a structure that allows it to sustain itself and develop through its own means; economic and political dependence on a developed country or one in an advanced stage of industrialization; the need for and factors related to strengthening a sense of belonging to one's own environment or economy, whether focused on the production, distribution, and consumption of income, or on development oriented more toward human fulfillment; these have constituted a large part of the practical application of their *expertise, theoretical framework, and reflections in their research*.

All of this leads us, at this time, to thank the journal *Espacio I+D: Innovación más Desarrollo* for turning its attention to the work being carried out at our university and for dedicating a special issue to publicizing some of the research being conducted by faculty and doctoral students; especially now that, as of the publication date, we can mark the 18th anniversary of the program's existence, with results that are considered positive, as shown in the following figures:



UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE CHIAPAS

DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y POSGRADO

FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES, CAMPUS VI

DOCTORADO EN ESTUDIOS REGIONALES



LIST OF GRADUATES BY COHORT

COHORT	STUDENTS			% DEGREE HOLDERS	% PENDING DEGREE
	GRADUATES	DEGREE HOLDERS	PENDING DEGREE		
First 2009 - 2011	16	16		100.00	
Second 2010 - 2012	18	18		100.00	
Third 2011 - 2013	18	18		100.00	
Fourth 2012 - 2014	17	16	1	94.12	5.88
Fifth 2013 - 2015	14	14		100.00	
Sixth 2014 - 2016	21	21		100.00	
Seventh 2015 - 2017	19	18	1	94.74	5.26
Eighth 2016 - 2018	19	19		100.00	
Ninth 2017 - 2019	16	16		100.00	
Tenth 2018 - 2020	12	10	2	83.33	16.67
Eleventh 2019 - 2021	20	19	1	95.00	5.00
Twelfth 2020 - 2022	14	11	3	78.57	21.43
Thirteenth 2021 - 2023	18	12	6	66.67	33.33
TOTAL	222	208	14	93.69	6.31

Fourteenth 2022 - 2024	15	0	15	0.00	100.00
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THE FOURTEENTH COHORT IS LISTED AS PENDING DEGREE COMPLETION (100%) BECAUSE THEY GRADUATED IN 2024 AND DUE TO ALL THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES THAT MUST BE COMPLETED, THEY HAVE UNTIL OCTOBER 31, 2025, TO FINISH THIS PROCESS

Figure 1

15 YEARS DOCTORATE IN REGIONAL STUDIES

years

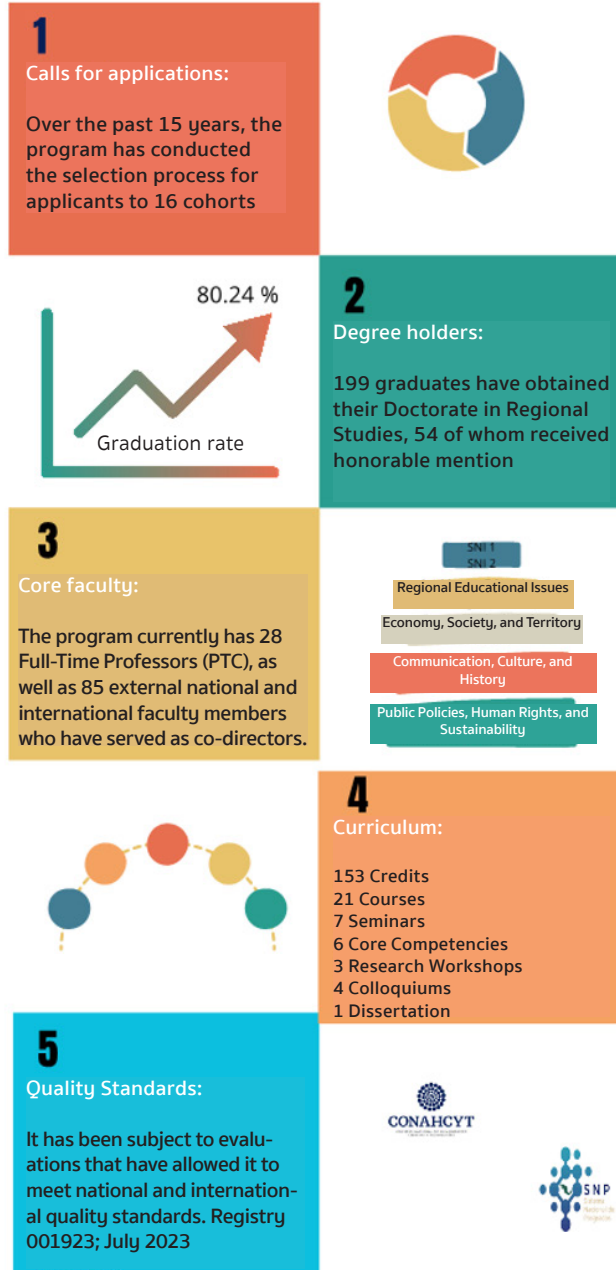


Figure 2

Nonetheless, I would like to pause briefly here and quote the enthusiasm which Dr. Ángel Rene Estrada Arévalo (2023), former rector of UNACH, refers to the recognition of the creation of the DER¹, since we are, I reiterate, celebrating:

Within the framework of the core functions of public universities, the social relevance of research is an indispensable characteristic. The problems related to social development in Chiapas, within the national context, are numerous and complex; addressing these issues and proposing solutions must be integral to the scientific, technological, and humanities research conducted at UNACH, and the results of such research must necessarily contribute to development; therefore, one of the tasks of the General Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies (DGIP) is to develop the mechanisms and tools that enable ongoing evaluation and assessment of its impact. (...) It is necessary to have programs recognized by the Padrón Nacional de Posgrado (PNP), with the necessary quality parameters to be classified as "high level" and "internationally competent".

(...) Our admission to CUMEX (Consortio de Universidades Mexicanas) took place near the end of my administration; the fact that we had graduate programs recognized by the PNPC and CONACYT for the first time contributed to our admission to CUMEX. With a titanic effort by many people, led by the General Directorate of Research and Postgraduate Studies, we managed to enroll five educational programs included in the PNPC, for the first time in history. We didn't enroll just one, we enrolled five! The Doctorate in Regional Studies, a master's degree and three specializations². (pp. 278, 288)

Regional Studies, as noted above, is a discipline that, in general terms, focuses on examining how human relationships develop at different geographical scales and operate with varying intensity at each of these scales. It does not view society solely in terms of spatial location, but also in terms of political, social, and economic dimensions. It strives to understand why regions exist, how they function, what influence they have on society, and how they relate to other regions. Interestingly, the most controversial concept in regional studies is that of the region, yet it is also the most widely used. A region is a geographic area that comprises units (towns, cities, etcetera) that have specific relationships with adjacent units and, as a result, are relatively homogeneous in size, characteristics, and structure. The region can

1 The Doctorate in Regional Studies was the first postgraduate program between academic units of the UNACH (2009). The members of the Sistema Nacional de Investigadores del Campo de las Ciencias Sociales y las Humanidades [National System of Researchers in the Field of Social Sciences and Humanities] and the body of scattered doctors were brought together and articulated in the Consortium of Social Sciences and Humanities. For the first time, institutionally, teachers were able to move with the University's academic units due to their participation in a program that quickly, and not without difficulties joined the SNP as a newly created program. <https://www.der.doctorados.unach.mx/>

2 Bold emphasis added.

be defined in relation to any dimension; among the regions frequently defined in political and economic terms are continental, national and micro-regional regions; specific areas that define free trade, the European Union or Mesomerica. Another example would be to understand the environmental organization of the territory, that is, to highlight the arid regions of Latin America or protected areas, watersheds, or the connections between communities that sustain, among other factors, cultural roots and linguistic ties. But these studies also contribute to the development of research in an integrated, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary way, geared towards specific social problems.

- Perceive the analysis of intermediate-sized spatial aggregates as an essential tool for the study of the real world and its problems.
- It is aimed at studying the fundamentals of the discipline, the methodology for its analysis, the particularized analysis of specific regions, as well as the drivers, consequences and problems associated with economic and financial globalization.
- It is designed to train researchers capable of adequately explaining and analyzing the realities and problems of specific regions and counteracting certain contemporary ills stemming from interdependence.

In that sense, the Doctorate in Regional Studies, through

The various lines of research (LGAC) in this program and which are those that are cultivated by the CAs affiliated with the academic units that make up the DES Social Sciences and Humanities of UNACH, which correspond to the areas of training of the DER and allow each student to position themselves within one of these areas based on their research topic:

- A. Communication, Culture, and History: This section covers the following topics: Communication and Information; Social History of Literature, Art, and Culture; History of Regions, Societies, and Cultures.
- B. Economy, Society, and Territory: This section covers the following topics: Globalization and Economic Restructuring; Marginalization, Poverty, and Migration; Local Development.
- C. Regional educational problems: This section covers the following topics: Curriculum, didactics and evaluation; Education, training and development; Subjectivity and educational processes.
- D. Public Policy, Human Rights, and Sustainability: This section covers the following topics: Social and Economic Rights; Strengthening the rule of law; Politics and Democracy (UNACH, 2026). (<https://www.der.doctorados.unach.mx/>)

It seeks to equip students in Regional Studies with basic tools that specific analysis modalities require; combine them to solve concrete regional problems; and foster regional research through student-guided research proposals and with the creation of an interest group dedicated to the discipline. In fulfillment of these objectives, the curriculum offers subjects in the theoretical basis of Regional Studies, in the quantitative and qualitative perspectives of its research, in the particularized analysis of specific regions and in the examination of the phenomenon of globalization, with the possibility of expanding training through studies in regions and other academic entities.

Finally, we could say that the Doctorate in Regional Studies of the now Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, has a unique objective, which is to train researchers capable of carrying out groundbreaking work for different areas of regional development and provide excellent advice in the field. In essence, regional studies serve as the foundation for any research conducted, whether in planning, public policy, economics, administration, history, geography or any other discipline; therefore, the constant social demand for rigorous analysis to support decision-making entails a growing demand for experts in this area, specializing in territorial peculiarities and possess a strong sense of ethics.

That is why it is and must be a permanent effort of all of us who participate in the DER, to have an institution capable of training human resources for the incessant development of the discipline, such as our University.



Figure 3



Figure 4

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