

Queer Aging in Mexico: Subversive Life Courses and Geographies of Resistance

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Summary

Nearly 50 years after the first gay, lesbian, and trans* mobilizations in Mexico and Latin America, the generation that paved the way and won initial visibility has now aged. Far from leaving discrimination behind, this population faces cumulative inequality across their life courses, where violence, precarity, and neglect continue to reproduce almost as a historical condemnation. In their youth, queer older adults confronted authoritarian and dictatorial regimes whose lingering repercussions—stemming from state persecution and marginalization—shape today their ways of inhabiting space, navigating daily life, and confronting systemic barriers to fundamental rights such as employment, housing, food security, and caregiving.

Within this framework, this keynote address traces theoretical, methodological, and epistemological pathways to analyze aging from a queer perspective, drawing upon case studies in Mexico. It posits that the vulnerability and precarity experienced by dissident older adults result from cumulative exclusion across their life courses, manifested in three axes of structural violence: state omission regarding non-cisheteronormative life trajectories in health, employment, and pensions; the precariousness of care and marginalization in retirement homes following a history of familial and social discrimination; and intra-community ageism perpetuated by younger LGBTIQ+ generations.

However, far from being reduced to passivity, queer aging emerges as a political and subversive force capable of producing dissident spatialities that disrupt heteronormative mandates. This agency demands the dismantling and reformulation of integrationist public policies that, through assimilationist frameworks, continue to obscure the complexity of older life courses in Mexico and Latin America.

Short Bio

Dr. David Román Islas Vela is a Human Geographer and Professor-Researcher in the Department of Sociology at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. He holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. He is a member of Mexico's National System of Researchers (SNII) and an active committee member of the Interdisciplinary University Seminar on Aging and Old Age (SUIEV) at UNAM.

His research sits at the intersection of cultural geography, sociology, and urban studies, focusing on queer/LGBTIQ+ geographies, critical aging studies, sociology of sexuality, urban violence, and contemporary dynamics of secularization. At UAM-I, he teaches courses in Cultural Geography, Queer Geographies, Social Science Methodologies, and Sociology of Gender, while leading the research project *"Territorialidades queer en la Ciudad de México: agencia, espacio y poder"* (*"Queer Territorialities in Mexico City: Agency, Space, and Power"*).

Dr. Islas Vela has delivered keynote addresses and specialized workshops at various national and international academic institutions. He is the author of the books *¿Volver al clóset? Geografías del envejecimiento contrasexual* (*Returning to the Closet? Geographies of Countersexual Aging*) (SUIEV/UNAM, 2024); and *Gerontoespacios LGBTIQ+ en la Ciudad de México: transgresión, agencia y discriminación* (*LGBTIQ+ Gerontospaces in Mexico City: Transgression, Agency, and Discrimination*) (COPRED, 2025).

His recent publications include *"Aging Geographies: Epistemologies and Ontologies of Gerontospaces"* in the *Journal of Cultural Geography* (2026), *"Queerification and Gentrification in Santa María la Ribera, Mexico City"* (2024), and *"Desigualdades y envejecimiento"* (*"Inequalities and Aging"*) (2025).

And in 2026, He wrote the book chapter *"Gerontología Queer"* (*"Queer Gerontology"*) in the commemorative volume for SUIEV's 15th anniversary.