PROPOSAL FOR A WORKSHOP AND EDITED VOLUME ON THE POLITICS OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FORD-LASA Special Projects – Third Cycle

Felipe Agüero
University of Miami
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Objectives and Proposed Activity

This proposal seeks funding for a small workshop on corporate social responsibility in Latin America from a comparative social science approach, with a special focus on the cases of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. The workshop, to be held in September or October 2006 at the University of Miami, involves transregional collaboration by bringing together eight authors of chapter drafts and two discussants from the aforementioned countries and the U.S. The outcome is an edited volume to be published in Spanish (most of the drafts will be written in Spanish). Translation from Portuguese and English will be required for a few of them. A book manuscript would be ready for submission to a publisher in late Fall 2006.

The authors are currently at different stages in the preparation of the manuscripts (two drafts and one preliminary outline have already been submitted). This proposal assumes that a face-to-face meeting of the authors of country chapters in which all drafts would be discussed by all participants and commented by two discussants with expertise in the field, stationed in the Miami area, would greatly enhance the quality of the publication, especially its coherent integration and comparative character. In addition, the meeting would permit discussion of the next phase of research by this group. The authors have not met before around a discussion of their work for this project, and this meeting would more clearly establish it as a collaborative group around a well delineated research agenda.
Background

Initial research on this subject started as a report on corporate social responsibility that I prepared for the Ford Foundation in 2001. A subsequent project allowed me to organize workshops with scholars working on this subject in 2002-2003 in Santiago, Chile; Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro. An initial publication from this research was Felipe Agüero, “The Promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility in Latin America,” in Cynthia Sanborn and Felipe Portocarrero, Eds. *Philanthropy and Social Change in Latin America* (Cambridge: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies — Harvard University Press, 2005). Currently I am finishing a 2005-2006 fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars where I am working on a book manuscript. At the same time, I arranged for a group of scholars from the region to work on more focused aspects in this area as country and industry cases. This proposal seeks to bring these scholars together in a workshop to discuss chapter drafts in preparation for an edited volume.

Organizing ideas for the research involved in this project

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), an idea long established in Europe and the U.S., arrived recently in Latin America. Organizations set up by business specifically to promote CSR have taken off and expanded vigorously across the region. These initiatives are engaging state agencies, international governmental organizations, donor and other type of foundations, civil society organizations and a vast network of think tanks and some academic centers around activities that express new forms of business social insertion as well as the idea of the centrality of business in addressing societal problems and imbalances. These initiatives are likely to influence business-state-society relations, as well as ideas on social policy and business legitimation in market economies.

However, this has not yet been the subject of systematic social science study. The most solid literature on business has concentrated mostly on explaining problems of collective action and differences in organizational features of business associations; patterns of relations with the state; their role in supporting or opposing government economic policy; their role in democratic transitions, and the way they have contributed in adjustments to global economic changes or regional crises. Other works have begun to describe business ethical
orientations or developments in corporate governance, mostly from a business or management perspective, or philanthropic activities with an emphasis on “third sector” development, non-profit organizations, or volunteerism. While some of this literature is relevant to this project, much of it does not really share the same focus, or is more an activist than an academic literature. Only in Brazil has there begun to emerge a literature that pays closer attention to the activities of business involved in social responsibility, although still devoid of a comparative perspective.

Rigorous study of the nature, depth and expanse of CSR is indispensable in gaining a fuller understanding of the motives, strategies, and interactions of business actors in Latin America’s complex social and political scenario. By accounting for the emergence of CSR and its differences across countries this project fills a vacuum and contributes to the literature on business and its relations to politics and society in the context of democratization and its discontents.

What accounts for the recent developments in the social orientation of sectors of the business elite? What is their real magnitude and significance? This edited volume will account for the recent expanse of CSR in the region, which occurs in the context of a relatively weaker state, the social impact of sluggish and uneven growth, and the inegalitarian consequences of economic reform. Institutional and economic reforms of the past two decades have strengthened the private sector relative to the state, raising the visibility of business and its leaders and, with it, issues of legitimacy and accountability that were not as much a concern in the past. Viewed in this way, CSR provides companies a defensive buffer against the threat of social and consumer discontent. On the other hand, it may be argued that a stronger and wealthier business sector is now freer to think beyond its corporate boundaries and to consider taking on responsibilities that were previously the exclusive domain of the public sector. At the same time, economic internationalization has been accompanied with features of globalization such as the development of transnational networks and movements demanding ethical behavior and social responsibility on the part of firms. These networks facilitate the dissemination of ideas and their reflection in international norms that have influenced the expansion of CSR promotion in Latin America. In fact, a distinctive feature of the recent wave of social responsibility promotion is its internationalized origin and the tightly knit international network it has developed to advance common platforms for the region.
A clear feature of the recent development of CSR in Latin America is the difference in scope and depth between Brazil and the rest. A significantly larger proportion of Brazilian companies are engaged in some form of CSR. Also, the ways in which it is conceived—addressing, for instance, issues of human rights and transparency in the financing of politics—go much farther than in the other countries. The volume will explain the differences in the nature, expanse and depth of business and its organizations and activities in this area across the region.

Participants in the proposed workshop

The proposed participants are the chapter authors that come from diverse backgrounds in the study of business, civil society, philanthropy, and democratization:

Felipe Agüero, Department of International Studies, University of Miami. Author of introductory chapter and co-author of Chile chapter.

Eduardo R. Gomes, Department of Political Science, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro. Author of the Brazil chapter.


Gonzalo de la Maza, Centro de Estudios Universitarios, Universidad de Los Lagos. Author of case study chapter on Celulosa Arauco, in Validvia and co-author of the Chile chapter.

Enrique Peruzzotti, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires. Author of Argentina chapter.

Angelika Rettberg, Department of Political Science, Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá. Author of Colombia chapter.

Cynthia Sanborn, Centro de Estudios, Universidad del Pacífico, Lima. Author of Peru chapter.

Martín Tanaka, Centro de Estudios Peruanos. Author of case study on mining companies in Yanacocha and Antamina.
Two discussants from the University of Miami or other universities in the Miami area would be included in the workshop.

**Budget**

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round trip air travel to Miami @ 800/ticket</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel (150 night x 2 nights x 7)</td>
<td>2,100</td>
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<td>Per diem (55/day x 2 x 7)</td>
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<td>Honorarium discussants (250 each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>3,500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,470</strong></td>
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(The author of this proposal is based in the University of Miami, where facilities would be provided for the workshop. It is also logistically easier and relatively less expensive to have everybody travel to Miami).