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PRESENTATION. SPECIAL ISSUE

**Co-responsibility in building the public good in Latin America
and the Caribbean**

Daniel Barragán, Anabel Cruz & Susan Appe*

Building on our last special issue on the third sector and third sector organizations in *Gobernar: The Journal of Latin American Public Policy and Governance* (volume 2, Issue 3; Appe, Barragán & Cruz, 2018) we present a new collection of articles, most of which were presented at the 12th International Society for Third-Sector Research's Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Medellín, Colombia in July 2019.

The special issue¹ is a reaction to the current situation in Latin America. The region as a whole has gone through a series of important changes in political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions. The field of third sector studies and governance more generally has a role in producing knowledge about these changes. The questions that emerge generate discussion about the role of all sectors in the conceptualization and achievement of the public good. For academics, we can scrutinize the changes as they have demanded new responses and new rules, laws, and regulations –that is, governance structures– that will affect societies generally and, in particular, affect the third sector.

The overarching questions that drive this special issue are: **How does co-responsibility in building and working towards the public good happen in the region?** How might collaborative governance take charge in the provision of public goods and services? What governmental incentives and policies are relevant in this context and how do they affect or promote the third sector?

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¹ The call for papers for the special issue was written in part for the 12th annual conference by the Academic Committee, see <https://www.istr.org/general/custom.asp?page=LAC> for more information.

Co-responsibility and collaborative governance

Co-responsibility and collaborative governance have drawn in multiple actors and various arrangements such as private-public partnerships, community-based collaboration, and civic engagement—with the objective to serve the public good and interest—that is, promote the wellbeing of the general public and society (Box, 2014). Indeed, addressing public problems and serving the public good by civil society has a rich history in Latin America. For example, new governance models such as now well-known participatory budgeting originated in the region, in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. The model involves citizens in the allocation of resources in the budgets of local governments. It has now been adapted by over 1500 cities in both the global South and global North with the aim to render more democratic decision-making processes in budgeting actively drawing in citizen and third sector organizations (Pinnington, Lerner, & Schugurensky, 2009; Ganuza, & Baiocchi, 2012; see also Lewis, 2014).

Additionally, Latin American experiences have informed community development theory and practice through interventions such as micro-credit, micro-finance, and lending circles (Brancaccio, 2016). Several of these innovations have been adapted to contexts outside of the region, such as new “social protection” programs like Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) (Lewis, 2017) as well as Paulo Freire’s seminal work on adult education for social change (Gaventa, 2002; see also, Horton, Friere, Bell & Gaventa, 1990). The region’s active corporate sector has become known for its corporate social engagement and has informed older models of corporate social responsibility used outside of the region (Salamon, 2010; Appe & Barragán, 2017). Likewise, models of knowledge production out of Latin America have been celebrated. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a research methodology that originated in Colombia and combines research and theory with political participation in order to solve economic, political and social problems. It has experienced widespread use in both the global South and global North (Fals Borda, 1987; Gott, 2008).

Across co-responsibility schemes and collaborative governance, however, the involvement of citizens can vary considerably in the region. In Latin America, citizens and the third sector can be passive or they can engage actively in collective decision-making processes. Across the region’s diverse countries, frameworks and processes like open government are further changing governance practices. For example, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (which addresses key governance issues in the extractive industries) and the Escazú Agreement (the first environmental human rights treaty in the region) are clear instances that advance collaborative work between the state, third sector, higher education institutions and the private sector.

Given this regional environment, we ask what is the nature of relationships between third sector organizations and other sectors? Are third sector organizations connecting and working towards a common goal of building the public good? If so, how is this happening?

The Contributions of the Special Issue

The International Society for Third-Sector Research and *Gobernar* started a partnership in 2017 with the aim to demonstrate that understanding governance in the fields of public administration and public policy requires that we include the study of the third sector and civil society in the region. Therefore, we now turn to the contributions of this

special issue². We have empirical contexts across the region, including Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia as well as a comparative study across the region. All the contributions relate to the third sector and its interaction with governance and the public good, broadly defined.

The special issue starts in Mexico. Apocalipsis Raquel Aguilera Troncoso and Mauricio Hernández Estrada's article, *Financiamiento Público e Isomorfismo Institucional en las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil en Yucatán, México*, addresses funding relationships across government and the third sector. Specifically, it examines federal and state level funding granted to civil society organizations in the region of Yucatán, México. Theoretically, the authors draw on institutional theory, namely institutional isomorphism, to better understand these governance and funding relationships across government and civil society. Through its empirical study of funding allocations, the article is able to illuminate the at times blurred lines between government and the third sector in the provision of public goods and services. For example, it explores the role of "GONGOs" which are government-organized non-governmental organizations in Mexico and their role in Yucatan. As the sectors that govern our communities work increasingly together, these boundaries we have come to accept are challenged and changing.

From Bolivia, we have the contribution of Maria Renee Barreal, Roland Pepermans and Michael Doods, *NPOs and Their Stakeholders' Psychological Contracts: The Value of Implicit Expectations in Bolivia*. Their article is about balancing nonprofit organizations' stakeholders and their interests. Centering on the stakeholders of volunteers, employees, and donors, they introduce the construct of Stakeholder Psychological Contracts and its three currencies (relational, transactional and ideological). Deriving Stakeholder Psychological Contracts from an extensive survey across Bolivian nonprofit organizations, the authors provide evidence that nonprofit organizations serve stakeholders in multiple ways. Further empirical work with the construct can allow for further understanding about how nonprofit organizations can manage stakeholder interests to further align and serve organizational missions.

Also in the Andean region, we have two articles that come out of Ecuador drawing on the roles of the third sector and how social innovation and social capital influence its sustainability. Eulalia Flor, Jairo Rivera and Wilson Araque's article, *Proceso de Innovación Social en las Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil Ecuatorianas: Avances y Desafíos*, builds on their previous work (Flor, Rivera & Araque, 2018), by assessing the role of social innovation within the third sector in Ecuador. Collecting data through on-site research and interviews, they argue that civil society organizations in Ecuador are engaging in a multitude of strategies related to social innovation, mostly due to challenges related to survival and sustainability. In Ecuador, funding is diminishing and inequities are increasing, essentially increasing the demand for services by civil society organizations. This article identifies ways in which civil society organizations are responding through social innovations.

María del Carmen Zenck Huerta, Ingrid Ríos Rivera and Maribel Rodríguez Zapatero's contribution also addresses sustainability of the third sector in Ecuador. Their

² Contributors to this special issue use a variety of terms to describe organizations in the third sector, including third sector organizations, nonprofit organizations, nongovernmental organization and civil society organizations, etc. We have kept the terms consistent to how each contributor uses them when discussing their work.

article, *Capital Social y Sostenibilidad en el Tercer Sector*, focuses on public services in the health field. They examine the regulatory framework, local level options on the ground as well as networks that are created for the provision of health care services. They focus on social entrepreneurial aspects of organizations and how accumulated social capital in the organizations themselves influence the services provided. They provide recommendations to how social enterprise can be further fomented in Ecuador.

Our last country case comes from Colombia but highlights North and South relations. The article, *La Participación de los Actores en la Concepción de Proyectos de Desarrollo Internacional. El Caso de un Proyecto Canadá – Colombia*, by Olga Navarro-Flores and Luis Hernando Sánchez takes a socio-political perspective and applies the Actor Network Theory (ANT) to better understand international development aid flows across the North (Canada) and the South (Colombia). The empirical study seeks to understand further participation in the design phase of development projects. Given the more participatory models that have been inserted into traditional North-South development, their work contributes to understanding better ways in which to manage power asymmetries and collaborative governance strategies that serve the project's objectives.

Our final contribution presents a comparative regional study about volunteering. Arelis López Concepción, Ana Isabel Gil-Lacruz, and M^a Isabel Saz-Gil's article, *Voluntariado en Latinoamérica: Aproximación a las Diferencias Entre Países*, uses World Value Survey data. They start their study with the premise that there is little understanding about volunteering outside of Anglo-Saxon and European countries. The article seeks to explain the decision to volunteer in Latin American countries. The research provides initial evidence about the relationships across key variables that allow for deeper understanding about volunteering in the region. Like other contributions, the authors contribute to ideas about participation, social capital and relations with government. Volunteering is one further way in which co-responsibility occurs and helps to serve the public good in the region.

As a collection of scholarly work, these articles add to a rich history of Latin American civil society and third sector activities in governance and inform scholarship and practice in the region and beyond. Consistent to our first *Gobernar* special issue in 2018 on topics about civil society and the third sector, we have three objectives for this special issue. First, we seek to highlight diverse and international researchers who are focused on Latin America and who are developing knowledge on regional civil society and the third sector. Second, we are committed to encouraging more researchers of the region to engage with issues related to civil society, the third sector, and governance. This issue highlights major themes in governance studies, such as the public good, the provision of public goods and services, co-responsibility, and collaborative governance. Third, we hope to further promote the dissemination of this research in an effort to engage third sector organizations and practitioners in activities that support democratic governance in Latin America. Please enjoy the contributions of the special issue: Co-responsibility in building the public good in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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