

PREFACE

THE COMPILATION OF ARTICLES IN THIS BOOK originated in papers delivered at a two day workshop that took place in San José, Costa Rica, in March 2007¹. This workshop is part of the Africa/Asia/Latin America Scholarly Collaborative Program jointly undertaken by APISA-CLACSO-CODESRIA with the generous support of ASDI. This Program is designed to serve as a research forum for the generation of fresh and original comparative insights on the diverse problems and challenges facing the countries of the South. In doing so, it is also hoped that the activities will contribute to the consolidation of cross-regional networking among Southern scholars, foster a scholarly culture of Southern cross-referencing, and contribute to a type of theory-building that is more closely attuned to the shared historical contexts and experiences of the countries and peoples of the South. Participants from all three continents in equal numbers are invited to each activity. Each scholar is exposed to the socio-historical contexts of other regions of the South as an input that will help to broaden their analytical perspectives and improve the overall quality of their scientific engagements.

1 Four papers that were presented at the conference were not submitted by their authors for publication: Habib, Adam “South Africa: Conceptualizing a Politics of Human-Oriented Development”, Prakash, Aseem “Social Collectives, Political Mobilization and the Local State” and Mukhopadhyay, Surajit “Participation and Local Politics in West Bengal”, Nnaemeka, Obioma “Gender, culture and democracy in the Age of Globalization”. However, they participated actively in the workshop’s discussions. By doing so, they contributed to the ideas presented in the introduction.

Dialogue among scholars of the South is not easy. At the most basic level, there is not a common language. English has been defined as the *lingua franca* for these encounters, since no other language has such a broad coverage, and translation into the variety of languages of the “South” would be not be viable and financially impossible. This decision excludes some of the regions’ most prominent scholars who do not have a working knowledge of the language. Besides, even for those that do, English is usually not their native tongue, which makes comprehension of different uses and accents very difficult. However, linguistic difficulties are only the beginning of the communicative problems. In general, scholars from the South have a weak knowledge of the other regions’ history and theoretical developments. Contexts have to be made explicit to foster understanding and concepts frequently have to be defined as there are different uses of the same words. These factors make this enterprise so challenging and the San José workshop so interesting.

As all endeavors of the kind, the organization involved the participation of many people. The workshop was jointly organized by the South-South program of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO) and the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales of the Universidad de Costa Rica (IISUCR). Gladys Lechini coordinator of the CLACSO South-South Program until February 2007 and Ciska Raventós of the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales coordinated the organization during 2006 and January 2007, with Victoria Mutti and Silvia Tordoni’s support. Hari Singh, general secretary of APISA coordinated the call for Asia, while CODESRIA did the same in Africa. Gerardo Hernández, then at the Colegio de México, collaborated with the organizers in the selection of the participants from Latin America. The African selection was made by CODESRIA. The post workshop follow up was made by Victoria Mutti with Gladys Lechini’s support. Lucas Sablich and Victoria Mutti coordinated the editorial process. Elizabeth Clarke did the English grammar correction and editing.

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