

NEWS FROM LASA

The Mellon-LASA Seminar Series Workshop Awards

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The first of three Mellon-LASA Seminar series workshop competitions elicited an impressive response from the membership. Forty-five eligible proposals were submitted in response to the call circulated following the Rio Congress, seeking one of three grants to be awarded during this cycle of the competition, which will be repeated after each of the next two LASA Congresses. The applications revealed a wealth of innovative research being carried out in ways that reflect the priorities of the Mellon-LASA program: in addition to a number of projects that explore comparisons and connections between Latin America and other world regions, we received proposals that engage cutting edge trends in discipline-driven scholarship and that envision incorporation of non-Latin Americanists into studies of phenomena that affect the region.

A preliminary review of the submissions yielded a short list of nine projects that were debated by the full selection committee. This process narrowed the pool to four consensus finalists, discussions of which generated a final list of three awardees and one alternate. A summary of these projects follows, and we look forward with enthusiasm to hearing about the results of their efforts at LASA panels that will be convened during the October 2010 meeting in Toronto.

Grant recipients include:

“Subnational Democratization: Latin America, Russia and India in Comparative Perspective,” organized by Jacqueline Behrend, post-doctoral fellow, CONICET, Argentina

Drawing on methodological and theoretical perspectives that combine multiple traditions in the social sciences, and on empirical studies of subnational politics across several world regions, this initiative will strengthen an incipient network of researchers analyzing subnational democratization as a key yet under-theorized component of broader processes of political change underway across much of the developing world. Participants are carrying out research that is shaping our understanding of federalism, clientelism and center-periphery interactions. An April 2010 conference in Buenos Aires will generate a series of papers that, following revision and presentation in Toronto, will be submitted for publication by the new year.

“Can Latin America Escape from the Middle-Income Trap? Policy Lessons from a Transregional Comparison,” organized by Eva Paus, Department of Economics, Mount Holyoke College

Economists agree that a pervasive challenge facing developing countries is how to move economic activities up the value chain so as to enhance opportunities for prosperity in increasingly competitive and globalized markets. Few countries manage to overcome the barriers to success, and identifying paths toward more knowledge-based development is a priority for both scholarly and practical constituencies. This project brings together experts on Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Singapore, Ireland and Jordan to explore strategies for economic diversification and

upgrading in countries that lack the size-based advantages of other late developers in Latin America, Asia and Europe. A workshop at Mount Holyoke in early 2010 will be followed by presentation of results at the LASA Congress in October and at a conference in Costa Rica in early 2011. A book manuscript will be prepared subsequently.

“Bridging Conservation and Development in Latin America and Africa: Changing Contexts, Changing Strategies,” organized by Marianne Schmink, Department of Anthropology and Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida

Latin America and Africa share rich natural resource endowments, frequently weak governmental institutions and growing exposure to international markets. How best to draw on ecological resources without undermining environmental sustainability or community needs is a common challenge, about which scholars and practitioners in both regions have begun to articulate innovative solutions. This project will convene a January 2010 conference at the University of Florida at which experts from both regions will exchange information about empirical trends and elaborate common methodological frameworks for analyzing the intersections between natural resource abundance, community cohesion and economically sustainable development. Following presentation of preliminary results of their efforts at the Toronto LASA Congress, an edited manuscript will be prepared for publication during 2011.

The committee also selected one alternate project, to be funded in the event that one of the awardees were unable to complete the proposed initiatives:

Other Americas/Otros Saberes II Report

by RACHEL SIEDER | CIESAS Mexico | Rachel.Sieder@sas.ac.uk

The Political Economy Challenges of Development Based in Mining,” organized by Rosemary Thorp, Oxford University

Analyzing the complex interplay of institutions, politics and natural resources, this project aims to illuminate the factors that have impeded governments from effectively managing mineral wealth. Drawing on economic theory as well as detailed historical research by Latin Americanists and Africanists, the project will unpack micro-macro interactions, at both the economic and political levels, that have shaped outcomes in developing country settings where mining has played a central role in economic growth. Building on field research currently underway, the project envisions a March 2010 conference, a panel at the Toronto meeting, and a subsequent collaborative publication. ■

The second phase of *Otros Saberes* was launched in February 2009. This initiative provides grants to support research on *justice and citizenship-rights issues* undertaken by members of civil society organizations working collaboratively with university-based scholars. The call for proposals was sent out prior to the Rio Congress and elicited an impressive response, with nearly one hundred applications received. Dissemination of the call for research proposals was crucial: in addition to established LASA networks, there was a concerted effort to distribute the call through existing networks of civil society-based organizations associated with justice and citizenship rights.

The applications point to an enormous dynamism in research on rights and justice-related issues across the Americas, and to cutting-edge, interdisciplinary work that draws on the methodologies of a variety of fields such as sociology, anthropology and political science. Proposals were received from fourteen countries in the Americas. Over a quarter came from Colombia, more than double the number of applications submitted from any other country. Significant numbers of applications also came from Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. Topics addressed included indigenous rights, environmental and land rights, access to justice, violence against women, and reparations for gross human rights violations.

A long list of twenty-two proposals was drawn up by the selection committee and reviewed in detail over two days at a meeting in Mexico City in July. The committee agreed that many of the research proposals received were excellent and had important policy implications, but gave priority to those that met the *Otros Saberes* criteria for innovative collaborative research methodologies. In the end, grants of

approximately US\$20,000 were awarded to each of four teams. The funds will support basic research expenses over the period of one year. A summary of the selected projects follows:

Legal Mobilization and Political Impact of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Movement in Colombia.

Mauricio Albarraacín, Colombia Diversa COLOMBIA

Colombia Diversa is an NGO that engages in political, legal and social campaigning for LGBT rights in Colombia. The organization has carried out strategic litigation in association with the Group of Public Interest Law at the University of the Andes and with the Centro Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad (Dejusticia). The research project will systematize, analyze and evaluate the legal and social mobilization strategies Colombia Diversa has pursued in order to secure rights for same-sex couples from the Colombian Constitutional Court. It aims to contribute to academic debates about processes of legal mobilization in favor of the rights of marginalized groups, and also to help develop more effective campaign strategies to guarantee the rights of the LGBT community in Colombia.

Human Rights Trials and Access to Justice in Peru.

Jo-Marie Burt, Coordinadora Nacional de DDHH. PERU

Although the recent conviction of former president Alberto Fujimori suggests important progress in efforts to prosecute those responsible for grave human rights violations during Peru's internal armed conflict, hundreds of cases remain backlogged in Peru's legal system. This