

The Civil Sphere in Latin America

Social thinkers have criticized Latin American development as incomplete, backward, and antimodern. This volume demonstrates that, while often deeply compromised and fragmented, Latin American civil spheres have remained resilient, institutionally and culturally, generating new oppositional movements, independent journalism, rebellious intellectuals, electoral power, and critical political parties. In widely different arenas, dissidents have employed the coruscating language of the civil sphere to pollute their oppressors in the name of justice. In the 1970s and 1980s, political thinkers heralded the resurrection of Latin American civil society, envisioning a new world of freedom and stability. Corruption, inequality, racism, and exclusion become pressing and urgent “social problems,” not despite the promises of democracy, but because of them. The premise of this volume is that Latin American civil spheres are powerful, even as they are compromised, creating challenges to anticivil culture and institutions that trigger social reform. It is the first of three volumes that place civil sphere theory in a global context.

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To our children, their children, and our students

Let us continue to strive together for a more inclusive, democratic, and peaceful future for us all.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This project grew out of two decades of collaboration between the editors, an intellectual relationship that began in a graduate seminar in cultural sociology at UCLA, percolated at the University of Konstanz, and crystallized over extended visits at Yale. Yale's Center for Cultural Sociology was the petri dish within which these latter meetings were nourished. Editors and contributors to *The Civil Sphere in Latin America* met for two intensive days of presentation and discussion at Yale's Whitney Humanities Center in June 2016. We were able to exchange frank responses and to generate a real spirit of intellectual cooperation. The editors wish to express our gratitude to the organizations that made this face-to-face meeting possible: The Macmillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale and the Corporación Visionarios por Colombia. Special thanks go to Henry Murraín, Executive Director at Corpovisionarios, who engaged Tognato in passionate discussion about the intellectual vision and theory that underpins this book.

Anne-Marie Champagne, a Yale doctoral student, has been an invaluable assistant throughout this process. Nadine Amalfi, Administrator of Yale's Center for Cultural Sociology, organized the June 2016 meetings in every detail. We thank Bernadette Jaworsky, Associate Professor and Director of The Center for the Cultural Sociology of Migration at Masaryk University, for her skillful editing of the final manuscript.

Alexander's commitment to learning about and learning from Latin America was generated over the course of many years of extended stays in Mexico as well as in Brazil, and by his work with doctoral students from the region. Tognato's interest began with his move to Bogota in 2002, which marked the beginning of many years of practical and intellectual engagement in Colombia and most recently in the academic milieus of the peace process.

During Fall 2015, in the months after Alexander and Tognato began planning for the present volume, Tognato laid out the institutional vision for a school of civil society that would take upon itself the mission of training civil

sphere leaders throughout Latin America. He was soon joined by Nelson Arteaga Botello, professor of sociology and director of research at FLACSO Mexico, and Jorge Giraldo Ramírez, dean of Humanities at Universidad EAFIT in Medellín and Member of the History Commission on the Conflict and its Victims, which the Colombian Government and the FARC established on the occasion of the beginning of peace talks. Together, these scholars have nurtured their shared vision, and Alexander has been part of this conversation. In December 2015, Alexander, Tognato, Arteaga Botello, Giraldo, and Murraín participated in the VII International Research Seminar that Tognato organized in Bogota on “Civil Society in Post-Conflict Colombia” with the Center for Social Studies at the National University of Colombia, which he then directed, and with *Corpovisionarios por Colombia*, a civil society organization whose mission was to give continuity to the initiatives on civil culture that Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogota, had carried out during his two terms in 1995–1998 and 2001–2004.

The present volume is the first in a series devoted to “de-provincializing” civil sphere theory. It will be followed by *The Civil Sphere in East Asia*, *Breaching the Civil Order: Radicalism and the Civil Sphere* and *The Nordic Civil Sphere*. Alexander wrote more than a decade ago that the civil sphere is a project. So is civil sphere theory.