

CUBA IN TRANSITION

Volume 19

Papers and Proceedings of the

Nineteenth Annual Meeting
of the

Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE)

Miami, Florida

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PREFACE

This 19th Volume of *Cuba in Transition* contains the proceedings of the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE), held on July 30–31 and August 1, 2009, at the Miami Hilton Hotel, Miami, Florida. Scholars and experts presented studies on a wide range of economic, political and social issues affecting the country and engaged in discussions with interested audiences. This meeting upheld ASCE’s long-standing tradition of respect for academic freedom and high professional standards.

The general theme of the meeting was “Cuba in a World of Uncertainty” and included papers representing a mix of new and traditional topics and approaches. There were presentations on the Cuba-U.S. relations and its prospects; Island-Diaspora interactions, including remittances; and migration and narcotics. In line with the theme of uncertainty, the impact of the global and financial crisis on the Island was discussed in detail, analyzing balance of payments, external finance, and tourism developments. Current and future economic reforms were assessed looking through the lens of historical experiences of liberalization in centrally planned economies and also through analysis of initiatives taken and promised by Raúl Castro as well as financial and agricultural reforms.

There were a number of sessions dedicated to methodological and sectoral issues. The measurement of Cuban GDP and consumption was the topic of one session and other papers presented during the conference discussed the economic and social balance after 50 years of revolution and the challenges for economic measurement and policies in a bi-monetary economy. Sectoral sessions covered topics such as investment and entrepreneurial experience; agriculture; legal issues (including legal issues involved in ending the U.S. embargo), economic effects of natural disasters; trade in Cuban artwork; the health sector; and developments with respect to politics and civil society.

The 19th meeting of ASCE benefited from the participation of members of the Association of Cuban Engineers and of the Cuban American Association of Civil Engineers, who organized two very interesting panels devoted to infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation and electricity). The student papers session covered a range of topics including historical, legal, macroeconomic, and engineering topics.

Special activities included the showing by the Cuba Study Group of the documentary “Under Cuban Skies: Workers and their Rights” and presentation of two papers from Cuba prepared by Oscar Espinosa Chepe and Dagoberto Valdés read by ASCE members Joaquín Pujol and Silvia Pedraza, respectively. The keynote address was delivered by Tom Gjelten, senior correspondent from National Public Radio and author of the book *Bacardi and the Long Fight for Cuba: The Biography of a Cause*.

I want to thank the University of Miami’s Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies for acting as the secretariat of the conference.

On behalf of ASCE's Board of Directors and its membership I also want to thank Jorge Pérez-López for his outstanding and consistent dedication to organizing the annual program of the conference and editing this volume. I wish to recognize too the essential contribution of Joaquín Pujol to the organization and logistics of the meeting. Their efforts, covering the span of the entire year, have become essential to the success of our annual meetings.

It must be emphasized that ASCE's most important contribution is the production and distribution of knowledge on the Cuban economy and related issues, something achieved through the dedication of a large number of researchers with a high level of professionalism who engage in a forum for objective dialogue and study. It is also important to point out that ASCE's papers circulate in Cuba and are made available to interest parties despite current obstacles. All this, and the fact that our members are concerned about Cuba and its future, give ASCE a valuable vantage point. We hope you will find that these proceedings contribute to the Association's goal of expanding the dialogue and increasing the level of understanding on Cuban affairs to promote and facilitate the evolutionary forces operating in the island searching for a free and humane society with opportunities for a better life for all.

Jorge A. Sanguinety
President