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2009 : February 2009 - Author Commentaries : Mauro Guillen - Interview

**AUTHOR COMMENTARIES - 2009**

**February 2009**



**Mauro Guillen**

Featured Scientist from *Essential Science Indicators*<sup>SM</sup>

According to a recent analysis of Essential Science Indicators data from Thomson Reuters, the work of Professor Mauro Guillen has entered the top 1% of scientists in the field of Economics & Business, with 10 papers cited a total of 232 times between January 1, 1998 and October 31, 2008. Prof. Guillen's work also appears in the top 1% in the field of Social Sciences.

Prof. Guillen hails from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is Director of the Lauder Institute and the Dr. Felix Zandman Professor of International Management.

*In the interview below, Prof. Guillen talks with ScienceWatch.com about his highly cited work.*

**SW: Would you tell us a bit about your educational background and research experiences?**

I did my undergraduate in political economy and management in Spain at the University of Oviedo. Then I obtained my Ph.D. in political economy in 1991. Simultaneously, I studied at Yale for my Ph.D. in sociology, which I finished in 1992. I have been a researcher since, focusing on international questions.

**SW: What would you say is the main focus of your work?**

My research is always international in nature. I develop theory and test it with international, cross-national, or comparative data. I am primarily interested in how country-level institutions affect economic and business issues, and how globalization is changing country-level institutions and dynamics. I have explored a number of topics ranging from foreign investment to business groups, and from the global diffusion of innovations to entrepreneurship in different country contexts.

*"One of the distinctive aspects of globalization in the last 30 years has been the international expansion of firms."*

**SW: Your most-cited Economics & Business paper in our database is the 2002 *Administrative Sciences Quarterly* article, "Global competition, institutions, and the diffusion of organizational practices: The international spread of ISO 9000 quality certificates." Would you talk a little bit about this review and perhaps speculate on why it has attracted so many citations?**

This paper is the first to establish that the diffusion of innovations or new organizational practices is driven by global forces in addition to domestic ones. A unique aspect of the paper is that we formulate a novel theory about the impact of the structure of relationships among countries on the diffusion of innovations between them. We make an important distinction between cohesion and equivalence in network effects, and find that the two explain very different processes. I think the paper has also attracted attention because we use data on ISO 9000

quality certification to test our theory, which is a very popular topic.

**SW:** Another of your highly cited papers is the 2000 *Academy of Management Review* article, "Business groups in emerging economies: A resource-based view." Please tell our readers about this paper, its findings, and its significance for the field.

Business groups in emerging economies tend to be very large and very diversified by industry. Some of them operate in fields as diverse as agriculture, textiles, automobiles, electronics, real estate, and finance, for instance. Normally, competition would reduce the incentives for such diversification and encourage firms and business groups to be more focused. In this paper I advance a new theory of business groups which does not rely (like previous theories) on transaction costs or on culture as explanations. I focus the attention on asymmetries in trade and foreign-investment policies across countries and how they provide business groups with resources to diversify. I use data from several emerging economies and find support for my resource-based theory, while only sporadic support for previous theories.

**SW:** Several of your other papers deal with the foreign expansion of firms. Would you discuss this aspect of your research?

"I am primarily interested in how country-level institutions affect economic and business issues, and how globalization is changing country-level institutions and dynamics."

One of the distinctive aspects of globalization in the last 30 years has been the international expansion of firms. I have devoted a great of attention to trying to understand this phenomenon not only from an economic but also from a managerial and political perspective. I have done so examining and explaining aggregate patterns of international expansion, and also firm-level decisions. My contribution has primarily to do with the theory and finding that home country-level institutions and policy shape the pattern of international expansion of firms. For instance, Korean, Taiwanese, Argentine, or Mexican firms expanded abroad following different templates because of fundamental differences in their home-country institutions and policies.

**SW:** One of your more recent papers is from the *Strategic Management Journal*, "Risk and the strategy of foreign location choice in regulated industries," (Garcia-Canal E and Guillen MF, 29[10]: 1097-1115, October 2008). Please tell us a little bit about this work.

This paper advances the novel argument that firms in infrastructure industries prefer different kinds of governments when it comes to managing political risk during the negotiation phase and the operational phase. In the former, they prefer to deal with a government that is not institutionally constrained by other branches (e.g. judiciary, legislative) because then they can negotiate special, more advantageous conditions. In the second phase they prefer just the opposite, i.e. constrained governments. This creates a dilemma, because one cannot have it both ways. We test the theory with data on the foreign investments of Spanish firms in Latin American infrastructure industries.

**SW:** What would you like the "take-away lesson" about your research to be?

One cannot understand in either theoretical or empirical terms what globalization is all about (as well as its effects) without taking into consideration the impact of national-level institutions and policies on actors, firms, and industries.■

**Mauro F. Guillen**  
Director, The Lauder Institute  
Dr. Felix Zandman Professor of International Management  
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Philadelphia, PA, USA

**Mauro Guillen's current most-cited papers in *Essential Science Indicators* in the field of:**

**Social Sciences:** Guillen MF, "Is globalization civilizing, destructive, or feeble? A critique of five key debates in the social science literature," *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 27: 235-60, 2001, with 74 citations

**Economics & Business:** Guler I, Guillen MF, MacPherson JM, "Global competition, institutions, and the diffusion of organizational practices: the international spread of ISO 9000 quality certificates," *Admin. Sci. Quart.* 47(2): 207-32, June 2002, with 72 citations.

Source: *Essential Science Indicators* from Thomson Reuters.

Keywords: globalization, international business, international economics, ISO 9000, organizational practices emerging economies, foreign expansion, country-level institutions.

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