Serendipities
Journal for the Sociology and History of the Social Sciences

BOOK REVIEW

Fernanda Beigel (ed.) The Politics of Academic Autonomy in Latin America

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This edited volume deals with the autonomy of the social science academic field in Latin America in 60s and 70s: historical formation, structural factors boosting or creating hurdles for the consolidation of this field. Through more than 30 years, it explores a current phenomenon – not only because most of the interviewees are still alive, but also because those past structures continue to play an active role today. It is the outcome of a successful research project with the participation of 12 authors from Argentinian universities. This concentration of researchers led sometimes to a reflection which is Argentinian centered and did not take into account specificity of some Latin American countries such as Brazil. These four sessions and 13 chapters have subtly combining theoretical reflection and empirical studies deploying ethnographical field investigating life stories, prosopography and statistical analysis (using primary and secondary data).

The four sessions and 13 chapters question much dichotomist opposition: central vs periphery and "internal" dynamics vs "exogenous" forces that shape intersections of the academic field with other social spaces. In the introduction, Beigel distinguishes three empirical levels of the notion of "academic autonomy".

The first level is the "institutionalization and the effective specialization found in the construction of "academics," largely manifest in full-time teaching and/or research positions at universities. At the same time several cross-section phenomena occurred, such as massive university enrolment, "feminization" and "modernization" of universities. Regional academic centers, graduate schools and research institutes also date back to this period, largely supported by foreign aid".

This level is thus associated with university autonomy– a long-established tradition in Latin America, featured in many national constitutions, starting in 1918 with Argentina's university reform movement.

The second level of academic autonomy refers to the existence of a set of beliefs and narratives that separate the academic world from other cultural realms. Professors in universities shared certain values such as altruism, loyalty, and "teaching freedom", that Bourdieu (1999) labels as "illusio," which he views as a specific aspiration shared by academics engaged in a field and in the search for peer recognition.

The third level of academic autonomy refers to the effects of "internationalization" and the fact that several forces participate in the professionalization process. Fernanda Beigel discusses the "internationalization" process in order to show a heated debate about the ability of peripheral intellectual communities to create innovative knowledge and to craft their own research agendas. International networking is seen as an asset by a part of the authors while others sustain it creates "intellectual dependency", this time not vis-à-vis an external force such as the State but Western power.

Part of the internationalization is transfer of material and symbolic resources – financing selected research agendas or introducing theoretical and methodological models. Fernando Quesada in his chapter (8) challenges the simplistic view that considers these activities as "unilateral transfer" that undermined the recipients' autonomy. For him, the Rockefeller Foundation funding the University of Chile research cannot be understood as an institution replicating North American political dominance over the periphery. This perspective denies self-determination of the beneficiary institutions and assumes that they enter into philanthropic relationships with "zero degree of historicity," as if they emerged socially solely only upon receiving funds.

The term "academic dependency" refers thus to domination scenarios stemming from the Latin American national field's positioning in the international academic system. While the book discusses this uneven structure of the system and how it affects knowledge production in the periphery, it rejects the temptation of central/periphery theory and its deterministic view which argues that "structure determines practice which reproduces the same structure" and argues for the emergence of *peripheral centers*. For Fernanda Beigel and her colleagues, the position in the structure determines the social strategy, and the determinisms applying to a given position operate through the complex filter of dispositions acquired and articulated over the whole social and biographical trajectory of the academics in the social science, and of the history of their structural position in social space.

Since the second half of the 1970s, many studies formulated a theory on the international structure of uneven academic exchanges (Arvanitis and Gaillard 1992; Altbach 1977; Díaz et al. 1983; Gareau 1988). Nonetheless, according to Beigel, the fall of dependency analysis and the theme shifts of social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s from academic dependency analysis to a more complex scheme eventually casted this issue aside. Nowadays, talking about "cultural imperialism" is deemed old-fashioned, and not even Bourdieu could rally attention to it.

In the area of the history of social science, these analyses have reviewed the role played by technical assistance policies and aid programs instituted by international agencies and private foundations (for a review in Latin America see Feld et al. 2013). As a result, the notion of "internationalization," which had been virtually left behind in globalization studies was revisited. There is no consensus in the available literature on possibilities and paths to overcome dependency, largely because there are scarce empirical studies on academic professionalization in the periphery. Keim (2011) believe social sciences in peripheral countries can yield anti-hegemonic traditions. Her study of South African sociology enables her to plot an autonomous academic development process that follows a

pattern: a) it starts with the emergence of a public sociology, as social scientists shift their attention from international concerns to locally relevant issues; b) it continues with the dawning of a critical sociology, followed by a professionalization process; and c) it finally leads to an integrated community that interacts with the international community on more egalitarian and even terms. This process resulted in "disconnection" with the North Atlantic dominance and enabled the emergence of an autonomous tradition that "completes local sociology" (2011:131). Keim views this path as more conducive to autonomy than the strategies depicted by Jacques Gaillard (1996) as "catching-up" strategies through internationalization strategies brought about by individual. Nonetheless, as a recent survey on international collaborations driven by Gaillard and Arvanitis (2013) shows, "the asymmetrical relations in the main sectors of international scientific collaboration, which was highlighted as a burning issue in the 1970s and 1980s, have turned into a more equal partnership between [Europe and Latin America]." This is empirically visible in the way scientific activities and interests in cooperation as well as advantages and disadvantages of such collaborations are perceived by scientists in the two regions.

Fernanda Beigel advocates for the study of "cultural transferences" which in her view proved to be fruitful, as they focus on mediation processes (and mediators) involved in the international circulation of ideas: publishing (and publishers), translating (and translators), libraries, intellectual networks, and scientific missions, among others. For the most part, the analysis of cultural transferences tries to overcome the limitations of traditional comparisons that identify national cultures as isolated entities, rather than exploring their interactions.

For her a typical transference is "scientific missions" of Europeans and North Americans that proved to be particularly interesting since it became a relevant phenomenon in peripheral centers from the second post-war period until the 1960s. Also the national UNESCO commissions and leadership disputes within this organization to show that these agencies were instrumental in the creation of an academic regional circuit bred in the 1950s (see Chapters 2 and 3).

The use of a center-peripheral approach in social studies of science may lead to the assumption that a dependent economy goes hand in hand with an equally subordinated knowledge production "state," which, in turn, means that peripheral contributions to international scientific development are expected to be null (Kreimer and Zabala 2007). At the very end, these categorizations tend to have a counterproductive effect in the history of science, preserving images of a universal science supported by symbolic violence.

The treatment of international knowledge circulation through the notion of "import–export", is a simplistic approach, ineffective in analyzing notional and intellectual exchanges from the perspective of the periphery. It mainly reinforces the very idea that there is a dominant science, grounded in European or American traditions, that wields "originality," rendering the peripheries as passive scientific spaces necessarily "lacking originality", and merely consuming imported knowledge. Many debates on "intellectual dependence" according to Beigel prove to be rather fruitless, as they rely on a "nativist" benchmark that assumes the existence of *national* knowledge based on a unique "indigenous" outlook. We can also add to her acute analysis that a very similar debate was triggered in Latin America and Worldwide on technology transfers, that was initially based on the theory of dependence and had arrived to a dead-end, that was overcome only by changing the perspectives by introducing the analysis of technological in-house developments of firms, and the consequent spreading of new sociological and economic ideas in the continent (De la Garza, 2010). As Arvanitis (2010) mentions, the dependence theory as well as its opposition (for

example with the notion of 'technological learning') both appeared in Latin American and were genuine local theoretical constructions.

So we are now in front of a problematic issue which is more complex than the classical Foucaultian problematic of power. Working the nexus between power and knowledge in the case of Brazil, Cláudio Costa Pinheiro (2010) brought two compelling examples: first, the case of French demographer Alfred Sauvy who introduced the idea of the "Third World", developed in Brazil and published first in 1951 in a prestigious Brazilian academic journal. Nonetheless, the notion became a 'universal' concept only after it was published the following year in the French magazine *Observateur*. "Third World" theory obliterated Brazil from the debate. For Costa Pinheiro, the development of social theories reproduce the cleavage between the North (theory developer) and the South (theory consumer) and the memories of this debate were erased from the wider narrative of the concept – "Third World" – and its consequences. However, in contrast with the transitivity of "Third World" theory, Pinheiro gave an example of "dependency theory" that was able to directly travel from Brazil to the global south and north. So "dependency theory", whether we agree or not with some of its explanations, is an example of the originality of the South and the possibility of a theory to move from there to become international. Yet, for the North, this theory was blamed as being an "ideology" although it was a truly intellectual movement with a largely shared problematic by most economists in the continent. Pinheiro is in line with our thesis defended here, as well as with Losego and Arvanitis (2008) who argue on the existence of a multi-staged and multi-centred world with strong hegemonies. In the international Sociological Association's conference «Sociology in an Unequal World» (2009), there was a sort of consensus on the existence of a type of domination of Western sociologies over the national ones, although it did not amount to a Hegemony, in the sense of Antonio Gramsci. The conference also painted a more complex picture than the mere existence of a Centre and dependent peripheries, because it considered that there are peripheries at the center, and centers in peripheries, or semi-peripheries (e.g. Australia). To understand this multi-leveled World system (as was proposed quite early by a Chilean sociologist in France Polanco 1989), one needs to render the "invisible" knowledge "visible" in each national sociological traditions. This organic form of knowledge has the ability to unfold the colors of reality and the historical development in each context, although it does not preclude cooperation between the North and South nor does it impede the search for new social theoretical directions.

We predict (maybe imprudently) the decline of the waves of post-modernism and post-structuralism that shattered most thinking without theory, and the return to a more central role for social theory, yet a flexible theory allowing pluralism and able to include the empirical variety that is feeding constantly our literature. Hence, Singaporean sociologist Sayed Farid Alatas calls for the "Indigenization" of social theory. He invokes the example of how to take theoretical advantage of Ibn Khaldun's thoughts about the development and 'asabiyya, and not just in cosmetic and folkloric way (to show that one is proud of the Arab social thought tradition). Having pointed out that this Indigenization is part of the process of universality, it is not in the name of specificity (Alatas 2010). Alatas call is therefore very different from the calls for the Islamization or Judaization of knowledge, advocated by some scientists in the Islamic world and in Israel. These latter calls have not only led to an ideological eclectism in social research but to a sterile attempt of reading, even the local reality.

Militant academicism

Beyond this dear idea of debunking the center/periphery theory, the book of Beigle delves into the empirical observations to gain a better understanding of the historical trends of academic autonomy in Latin America, namely the politicization and return of exilic social academics.

In Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus* we saw the close relationship between science and politics at the university. Politicization served as a "compensating strategy," which enabled an "escape from university or scientific market's specific laws" (Bourdieu 1984: 34). This politicization especially emerged in times of crisis (such as May 1968), driven by conflicts of interest over positions held in the field, a time when the political division principle prevailed over other criteria formerly polarizing groups in university life (Bourdieu 1984: 244–5).

This politicization in LA does not concern only professors but also students. The militant dispositions and skills and student engagement were greatly influenced by primary Catholic socialization. A phenomenon that we find in the Arab world, but with the influence of Islamism and sometimes leftist movements.

For Beigel, it is in the 1960s, during second-generation reform movements that this reconversion fueled the expansion across university bodies with this new kind of symbolic capital that changed the "illusio," career-building paths, and academic recognition sources. Thus, the student movement laid the foundation for a "militant academicism" that spread across universities in certain times. Thus, in the 1960s militant capital turned into academic capital and vice versa. This prevailing collectivism largely explains the assembly-like operations within many research institutes, the politicization of regional centers, and new forms of "militant academicism" sometimes disguised with anti-academia motions but rarely venturing outside universities.

Regionalization

What I found extremely interesting is how the exilic scholars become the force of LA scientific community integration. The Christian Democrat candidate won the 1964 presidential election and Chile underwent a process of deep social change, including land reform. Military coups in Brazil and Argentina consolidated Chile's leadership within the regional academic circuit, because hundreds of exiled intellectuals escaped to Santiago. Most of them were young Brazilian social scientists that were also involved in student activism and had taken part in the student movement at the National University of Brasilia.

Many had participated in the resistance against the dictatorship, and some of them had been arrested. They became affiliated to CEPAL, FLACSO, the University of Chile, and the University of Concepción, making a major contribution to social sciences and to the "Latin-Americanization" of Brazil.

With Chile's military coup in 1973, Latin America's social science circuit hub moved to Mexico, along with a sizable share of the South American social scientists who had resided in Chile. This constituted the second big wave of regional academic exile. The Southern Cone's military regimes brought about an increasing segmentation process at universities, with the creation of tiered, isolated consecration circuits. A deliberate social sciences "de-institutionalization" policy was pursued, with visible repercussions lasting until the present.

Part of the process of regionalization is the backing home of Chilean exiles with the help of The World University Service-United Kingdom (WUS-UK) Return Program. This was the object of the Chapter 11 of Paola Bayle.

WUS-UK become later on the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) and played a major role for relocating the Chilean exile scholars and their backing home. Bayle's study reveals that Chilean exiles' return to their homeland's labor market was driven by organizations and individuals willing to contribute to the struggle for democracy in Chile and, accordingly, the extent to which politics and academia have been historically linked in this particular phase of Chilean history.

WUS-Chile's labor inclusion policy for returning Chilean exiles was meant to complete the rescue cycle for academic agents and institutions initiated in 1973 by AFC and WUS-UK in the UK. This program brought together scholars from several political affiliations which came together in a single, progressive movement that sought to help exiles to rejoin Chilean society. I hope Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan scholars will learn from the Chilean experience in backing home.

Conclusion

The only criticism I would have is that Fernanda and the other contributors did not account for the importance of the constitution of research teams. One cannot discuss institutionalization, professionalization and internationalization without addressing the role of research team consolidation on that. This is very crucial for the academic autonomy and scientific community.

The book of Fernanda is more than an empirical investigation of Latino American academics in 60s and 70s. It is an attempt to provide an experimental demonstration for the necessity and potency of a genuinely reflexive sociology: Beigle's and her colleagues' aim is to show that sociologists can overcome the antinomy of objectivist explanation and subjectivist understanding and account for the very world within which they live. This process involves reflecting on their own practices and positions using scientific tools for objectivation that they routinely employ upon others so as to neutralize the biases inscribed both in the contemplative relation between the social observer and her object and in the fact of occupying a particular location in the universe under investigation.

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