



Culture and the periphery: Nomadic wanderings in the Argentine sociology of culture

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Abstract

This work presents both a history and an overview of current production in the Argentine sociology of culture. Based on the so-called double periphery – the peripheral location of Argentine sociology in the western social sciences, but also of cultural research within local sociology – the author seeks to analyze the emergence of this subdiscipline. It owes to both the concern for mass culture and its relationship with populism at the end of the 1960s. At that time, these studies were being done by researchers with training in literary criticism, researchers who approached cultural phenomena as a political concern, in a way similar to what occurred when British cultural studies were born. At the end of Argentina's last dictatorship (1976–1983), the reappearance and growth of a sociology of culture expanded into Nomadic terrains and into varied themes and institutions: this was due to a proliferation of studies in social communication and new university departments, but it can also be attributed to the influence of Brazilian anthropology. Another factor is the delayed creation of graduate programs and their clearly multidisciplinary nature. Today the field is testing its potential while undergoing both quantitative and qualitative growth. However, it is essential to re-examine the field's sociological aspects as it moves along this path.

Keywords

Agenda, anthropology, mass culture, Nomadism, sociology of culture

Nomadisms

One of the most noteworthy features of contemporary social sciences is what has been called *Nomadism*: their tendency towards shifts, exchanges and hybrids, the transgression

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of disciplinary and methodological borders. In the case of research on culture, this can be seen at a glance, mainly through the hefty contribution of Anglo-Saxon cultural studies since the mid-1970s and through the academic success of such research since the 1990s. Although research varies according to each local context, it has clearly become impossible to study culture from a closed disciplinary framework or by using a single methodological tool. The field of the sociology of culture has transformed into just one starting point defined by its objects; however, the end point may not necessarily be clear.

In the case of the Argentine sociology of culture, this feature is particularly evident and it is also marked by its condition that has been dubbed the double periphery. First of all, the Argentine sociology of culture is included within the margins of western academia. In spite of the fact that Argentine sociology still has an important place in Latin American sociology, the social sciences of the subcontinent remain at the periphery of western production, as measured by the indicators of their impact and their presence in the international academic journals. In this regard, it is important to note the absence of English-language translations of many of the most important works in Argentine sociology: the dominant US publishing market only chooses *Latin Americanist* works by researchers from American universities who write in English.

The second peripheral condition of Argentine sociology of culture is related to its position within the field of Argentine sociology. The center of this field is comfortably occupied by political sociology. Due to the fact that the discussion of democracy, Peronism and authoritarian regimes has been so critically important, the studies on politics in Argentina have traditionally hegemonized sociological production. Demographic studies and research on social structure have benefitted from their status as *rough sociology*, that is, sociology based on statistical data and strict methodology. In this terrain, the Argentine sociology of culture, which came into being relatively late – as we will see – and which was accused of weak methodology and excessive interpretation, seemed doomed to be perpetually relegated to the periphery.

However, we hypothesize that the research on culture in Argentina is in excellent health, has rich explanatory potential and has experienced major growth in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The field is being enriched by the incorporation of more young researchers and by new research teams and projects which are producing articles and books of institutional renown. This research is mainly characterized by the Nomadism we have already mentioned: the Argentine sociology of culture is a sociology with few sociologists but with a theoretical spectrum that has transformed it into a field best defined by its cross-disciplinary nature. This breadth and expansion of the field are the topics that we wish to analyze here.

Inventions: The foundations (1960–1976)

While Argentine sociology is relatively young, cultural research is even younger. It wasn't until the 1960s that this specific area of inquiry appeared, mainly in relation to literature and mass culture.

Argentine sociology was born in the 1940s as a scientific discipline, although no specific university department of sociology existed until the 1950s. The founding of this department was closely associated with the modernization of Argentine society at the

end of this decade, a modernization in which, at least in theory, sociology was expected to play a fundamental and more specifically 'modern' role. Yet this birth is also connected to Peronist populism, a crucial phenomenon that must be taken into account in any discussion related to what is social. Perón governed Argentina from 1946 until 1955, when he was overthrown by a military coup which proved unable to eliminate his political influence (which continues even today): Peronism had developed a populist and progressive movement of the masses that garnered the unconditional support of the working class. This is why this topic is highlighted in the country's first sociological investigations, which mainly focused on local social structure in an attempt to explain the success of populism in the analysis of class. Two works are critical in this regard: the work of Gino Germani (1955) and the classic *Estudios sobre los orígenes del peronismo* (Studies on the Origins of Peronism) by Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Portantiero (1987, originally published in 1971). Along with these topics, the latest European trends (especially from France) appeared in Argentine research, including structuralism, which led to translations and intensive study of the works of Saussure, Lévi-Strauss and Barthes, among others. This, in turn, led to the gradual incorporation of semiotics, followed by the first works to analyze the mass media. These areas, however, were not considered critical within the institution of sociology, which was centered on the degree program and the Institute of Sociological Investigations of the University of Buenos Aires.

Thus cultural research was born as a sociology without sociologists. On the one hand, this is owing to the fact that the first *professional* sociologists only began receiving their degrees in the 1960s; they were marked by the functionalist research begun by Gino Germani. On the other hand, it is also because – except for a study on cultural audiences done in 1961 (Grimson and Varela, 1999) – the attention to the symbolic sphere mainly arises from the critical study of literature. These researchers eagerly incorporated the latest French trends while simultaneously developing an interest in the sociology of art, literature and mass culture. This is where semiotic research merges with the first steps toward a sociology of literature and the investigation into mass culture. Peronism functions here as a central theme, one which led some of the researchers to examine the role of mass culture in the political awareness of the popular classes and led others to orientate toward a political-cultural work on the relation with the masses in this connection between culture and awareness. The field of Argentine intellectuals was wrought with political tensions in those years due to the leftist leanings and the Peronization of the middle classes, which is from where the intellectuals originated. Thus research was seen as intrinsically connected to political activism.¹ For many reasons, understanding mass culture is akin to understanding Peronism, including its plebian component and the anti-intellectual nature of populisms, a feature that is used as a form of manipulation and subjugation within the conflict with 'official' culture. At the same time – as can also be seen by the production from these years – it is a critique of imperialism, which is also interpreted as cultural.

It is important to emphasize two aspects of the foundation of cultural research: the first is that it took place outside sociology as an institutional field. The second is that the sociology of Argentine culture arose as a sort of echo of British cultural studies, although it was more than a mere replica, and while publications on the field occurred at almost the same time in both Great Britain and Argentina, the British production would not

become available in Argentina until a few years into the 1980s, when the cycle of Latin American dictatorships finally came to an end. The reasons for this correlation (see Alabarces, 2008), then, are related to the times themselves and to a certain theoretical climate – with texts by Gramsci as the common foundational pillar. It is also due to biographical occurrences that were relatively similar in the case of both Argentina and Great Britain: the class origin of certain intellectuals, the passage through education for adults. However, the connection between cultural studies, the labor movement and the British left is replaced in Argentina by a connection with Peronist activism or leftist activism (with varying degrees of Marxism) on the part of intellectuals.

Reappearances: The cycle of transition after the dictatorship (1983–1995)

The extinguishing of Argentine academia during the second half of the 1970s as a result of the dictatorship led paradoxically to an intense theoretical renewal – albeit clandestine and limited in circulation. This renewal would only become fully visible after democracy returned in 1983. It was mainly due to the work of Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano, the directors of the magazine *Punto de vista*. Around 1980, Sarlo and Altamirano published the first reading of the work of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, as well as the first interpretations of the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Although these readings are marked by their interest in a sociology of literature, this original nucleus would ultimately expand toward the sociology of culture.

The return of democracy in 1983 allowed work on the sociology of literature and mass communication to continue. At the University of Buenos Aires (the most important university in Buenos Aires since the 19th century), great efforts were aimed at training new intellectuals at the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy. In the case of the sociology of culture, this would be centered at the new Faculty of Social Sciences, opened in 1988, which joined the old Department of Sociology with the new Department of Communication Studies, where research into mass culture would unfold.

Some of the foundational texts date to this period. In 1980, Altamirano and Sarlo released *Conceptos de sociología literaria* (Concepts of Literary Sociology) followed by *Literatura/Sociedad* (Literature/Society) a few years later (Altamirano and Sarlo, 1980, 1983). In 1985, a work by Sarlo was published, *El imperio de los sentimientos* (The Empire of Feelings), where the author employs tools from literature criticism and cultural sociology to analyze the popular romantic serial novels of the first decades of the 20th century (Sarlo, 1985). That same year, Ford, Rivera and Romano put together their *Medios de comunicación y cultura popular* (Media and Popular Culture), a critical text in the ‘Peronist’ tradition of cultural analysis that had arisen during the previous decade (Ford et al., 1985). Finally, in 1994, a research team formed in 1990 by Mario Margulis and comprised of students from a lecture on the sociology of culture published its first volume, *La cultura de la noche* (Night Culture) (Margulis, 1994). These works provide insight into the breadth of the field at that time, showing how it incorporated both new theories and novel topics of study (Bourdieu and the British cultural studies as well as Gramsci, Foucault, Benjamin, Bajtín and others).

During these years, the first works on popular music also appeared. Although this area had been briefly investigated by Ford et al. (1985) – who were particularly interested in tango – it was definitively introduced in 1987 with a seminal text by Pablo Vila. In this period, Vila researched the meanings of the so-called ‘National Rock Movement’, approaching it as a social movement and as a type of resistance to the dictatorship (Vila, 1987). The interest in popular music would later reap many fruits, as we will see further on. It is useful to note here that the volume edited by Margulis in 1994 returns to Vila’s interest in rock while introducing for the first time studies on popular musical genres like *cumbia*, though the attention was focused on the audiences and not on the products.²

This first sociology of culture suffered from an institutional limitation: the expansion of the departments of communication and journalism after the return to democracy. The phenomenon, which was not limited to Argentina but spread throughout Latin America, brought a wave of students and the gradual rise in specialized research. Thus topics such as popular music were disputed (or shared) by researchers and the supporting literature tends to overlap: bibliographies of both Bourdieu and Williams are frequent in both fields.

One final but necessary space in this overview must be given to the sociology of religion, which would go on to play a relatively important role in the field of sociologies of the symbolic world. It was not only because these sociologies provide important knowledge about popular beliefs (which had been largely overlooked by academia until then), but also because within this sub-field of studies something new and very important would occur. To counter the dominant research production – focused at the University of Buenos Aires and with a strong influence from French sociology – at the end of the 1990s, new researchers marked strongly by anthropology begin to expand their dialogue with Brazilian academia and with Latin American researchers more generally.

An intersection: The influence of anthropology

Although anthropologies and sociologies coexisted for nearly two decades (until the coup that marked the beginning of the dictatorship in 1976) at the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), we could say that the ‘sociologization’ of anthropology did not occur until democracy was restored. Anthropology was extended into other fields outside of its traditional realm, leading to the production of social and cultural anthropology. The differences between this anthropology and sociology were mainly based on the reclaiming of ethnography as a method. However, this process occurred much more slowly in Argentina than in, for example, Brazil, where the 20-year dictatorship (1964–1985) did not have such a severe impact on educational spheres, which in fact underwent radical renovations before the dictatorship came to an end (see Lovisoló, 2000). After the return to democracy in both countries, the exchange between Argentine and Brazilian academics increased significantly. One important factor in this exchange was the lack of graduate programs in Argentina and the strength of these programs in Brazil. UBA’s new Faculty of Social Sciences, for example, did not offer a doctorate program until 1999, and the program did not attract the interest of prospective students until 2004 – the year when three other doctorate programs in the social sciences were introduced, all in the city of Buenos Aires or the metropolitan area. As a

result, from 1984 until 2004, a great number of Argentines went to universities in Porto Alegre, San Pablo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia to get their degrees and then doctorates in sociology and anthropology. Once in Brazil, many chose anthropology, whose prestige and quality was clearly on the rise. In addition, Brazil provided excellent scholarships which made studying there quite accessible for Argentines. This trend thus led to a consequent and opposing process: sociology was ‘anthropologized’, which revealed the seduction of ‘post-modern’ anthropology and the ethnographic temptation.

In these complex interdisciplinary relations – which merit a more extensive study – there is a fundamental figure: Aníbal Ford (1935–2009). Ford had studied literature in the 1960s and later began to research the phenomena of mass culture. Dismissed from the university during the dictatorship, he remained on the periphery of academia until 1988, when he was asked to give the Theory of Communication and Culture class at UBA’s Department of Communication. There Ford proposed a process of theoretical renewal along with a major update of the field and an intense debate that showed the many paths along which he moved. Although he was still strongly linked to the ‘Gramscian vein’, Ford claimed that studies on culture (and on communication, because that was his field and his anchor) were inevitably trans-disciplinary in nature. The influence of certain contemporary epistemological discussions led Ford to a radical level of disciplinary creativity: his work program included Carlo Ginzburg of the clue paradigm; the school of Palo Alto (Ford was very familiar with Bateson’s work); and British cultural studies, especially Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Ford was also seduced by interpretive ‘post-modern’ anthropology, especially Clifford Geertz, whose reclaiming of interpretation and literature Ford appreciated. The fact is that this program was an arsenal with vast methodological and interpretive potential: first and foremost, because it proposed combining tools that were subject only to the demands of the object and not to the guidelines of a single discipline. Thus it could move from an analysis of discourse to participatory observation or an ethnographic interview. Second, it reclaimed cultural analysis as an interpretation of clues (as proposed by Ginzburg) and as a way to establish hypotheses, which marked a return to the importance of the analyst as a *critic and interpreter*.

Ford was one of the great supporters of Geertz in Argentina and the one who introduced the work of two decisive Latin Americans in the field from the 1990s: the Mexican-Argentine Néstor García Canclini and the Brazilian Renato Ortiz, both of whom *became* anthropologists.³ This relative weight of anthropology in his work had a major influence on a generation of researchers.⁴

We can say that the 1990s was a decade in which the field of research in the sociology of culture and its offsprings gained a certain autonomy, even in terms of its combinations and connections with anthropology and communication. Fundamentally, this became the training ground for the new generation who would play the central roles in the field during the first decade of the 21st century. Considering the diversions we have examined, one of the most outstanding features of the field is its intersection with anthropology. In this regard, we must mention the publication in 1990 of *Culturas híbridas* (Hybrid Cultures) by García Canclini, a book that would have a strong effect on the research orientations over two decades.

The consolidation cycle (1995–2005): Graduate studies, publications and grants

The 1990s was the decade in which graduate programs in the social sciences began to appear, albeit timidly at first. It was for this reason that the field would transform so quickly during the following decade – that is to say, the following century. One of the first graduate programs to appear was a Master's in the Sociology of Culture and Cultural Analysis, created in 1995 at a private institution. Directed in its first years by Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano, the program would later be transferred to a public university. The decision to emphasize the name of the discipline ('sociology') was softened by the intentionally open addition of 'cultural analysis'. Both Sarlo and Altamirano understood that the label 'cultural studies' lacked a certain rigor in the field in Latin America: the fact that it was considered a 'theoretical fad' meant that it could not be introduced in the title as a graduate program.⁵ The Master's program attracted young professionals (between the ages of 25 and 35) from fields such as literature, sociology, anthropology and history; some of the most active researchers of the last decade are alumni from the past 16 years of the program.

In our argument for a sociology without sociologists, we should emphasize yet another feature. Sarlo and Altamirano both studied literature. When they stepped down as the directors of the Master's program, the post was filled by José Emilio Burucúa, a scholar of cultural history and art who had studied history. In 2006, Burucúa was replaced by Alejandro Grimson and Sergio Caggiano, both with degrees in communication and doctorates in anthropology. In short, the only graduate program in any Argentine university specifically referred to as a program in the sociology of culture has yet to be headed by a sociologist.

This moment in which the field was institutionalized thus reflected the breadth of its foundations: it was impossible to re-sociologize what had never been sociologized in the first place. The team led by Margulis, as we mentioned earlier, was isolated within UBA's sociology degree program; the real investigation exceeded this framework and the institutions began to give expression to these decentralized and transdisciplinary structures, albeit slowly.

The same occurred in terms of publishing. The most important work of this period was published in 2002: it was a collected volume organized by Altamirano and entitled *Términos críticos de sociología de la cultura* (Critical Terms of the Sociology of Culture). The work selected categories – without attempting a dictionary or an all-inclusive encyclopedia – and crucial problems of the field, thus contributing to its definition. The writers who collaborated on the volume belonged to two generations – the founders and the new actors – which meant that the book also took on this rite of passage. In the prologue, Altamirano notes that the works included in the volume are influenced by Bourdieu, Williams and Geertz, as we have already indicated. However, he also reclaims the Latin American position. 'Our countries [referring to Latin America] did not remain oblivious to the movement of ideas and theoretical proposals that nourished the different stages of the sociology of culture. However, what they did [and continue to do, we may add] is make their own contribution to its development' (Altamirano, 2002: xiv). A contemporary review of the book adds: 'In this regard, perhaps the choice of the field can also be

interpreted as the response to the hegemony of cultural studies (especially in the United States) and as taking a stance in a discipline with important historical weight' (Porrúa, 2003: 3).⁶

The volume closes this period by establishing a work agenda, one that can be seen as a critical moment in the passage from the first generation to the next, as we have noted. However, the agenda is also evident in the categories chosen for analysis in the volume: hegemony, hybridization, popular cultures, mass media and youth – which may be the category that will achieve the greatest level of autonomy in the next decade. Altamirano's volume also maps the specific sociologies that had been integrated into the agenda of the sociology of culture by including them as book entries: the sociology of art, knowledge, literature, music and religion.

By the end of the 1990s – and with growing strength in the first decade of the 21st century – graduate programs expanded at Argentine universities, but none of the new programs took on the 'sociology of culture' label. Departments of communication tended to create programs in 'communication and culture' and sociology departments, 'social studies', though frequently with a specifically Latin America tone. As for the doctorate programs, which have also grown vigorously since 2004, they labeled themselves as interdisciplinary, especially within 'Social Sciences'.

After Argentina's economic and social crisis, which lasted from 2001 to 2003 –we return to this period a bit further on – the process of institutionalization was aided by a new player, the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (National Scientific and Technical Research Council, CONICET). Dating back to the 1950s, the council is structured around research positions – which investigators apply for – with salaries for its members, positions that allow researchers to also teach at universities. At the same time, it funds research projects, though the grants are not particularly generous. For several years, CONICET had provided some grants for young researchers. In 2004, however, these grants were multiplied fourfold – going from 400 to 1600, and they now total more than 3500 for all scientific disciplines – and they are exclusively reserved for students under the age of 30 who are seeking a doctorate. In the social sciences and humanities, this produced a wave of doctoral students with five years of funding as they worked towards their PhD. Interestingly, sociology was one of the areas that experienced the largest growth, and the entrance of a second generation of investigators in the researcher degree program brought both renewal as well as an expanded disciplinary scope. This can be seen in the rising numbers of graduates with a degree in communications who were incorporated first as grant recipients and later as doctoral researchers, the result of this expansion of the theoretical base. Other grant recipients included anthropology graduates, who found that the field of sociology was more receptive for topics which, though peripheral, were considered legitimate: basically, *cultural* topics – the mass media, religions, sports, dance and popular music.

Current developments: Strong trends

Today the field is experiencing such enormous growth and potential – springing from its fertility, from its institutionalization and from the continually renovated education of young researchers – that it is impossible to provide a comprehensive map of the field.

This growth is due to both disciplinary and institutional changes – which we have already addressed – but also to political questions. The transition to the 21st century, a transition that witnessed both a generational shift as well as an increase in the studies we have mentioned, was marked by the Argentine crisis of 2001–2003, which ended a decade referred to as the ‘neoliberal stage’. The crisis, which was economic, social and political – and which wrought poverty among broad sectors of society, mainly the popular classes – brought with it a new agenda of studies in Argentine sociology, an agenda aimed at analyzing the social and cultural consequences of the crisis. This agenda covered everything from existing and new forms of popular protest (see especially Schuster, 2005) to the return of the old paternalistic-populist economy, which replaced the savage capitalist reorganization experienced by Argentine society (see, among others, Svampa, 2005). In 2003, a leftist, populist branch of the Peronist Party won the presidential elections in a process similar to what occurred in the rest of South America, and this led to a rethinking of everything. The sociology of culture and its parallel and supplementary areas discovered an urgent agenda: to understand the transformations of sociability and identities, where existing political identities were replaced by associations with territory, sports or media. This was especially marked by the transformation of the symbolic maps where the weight of cultural industries became critical. Besides the linguistic shift described by cultural theory (see, for example, Alexander, 1992), there was a sociocultural reality in which the structural and socioeconomic explanations gave way to more subtle interpretations: without this level of detail, which was aimed at understanding the everyday importance of *cumbia*, football or mass television, Argentina would be simply inexplicable.

We list here the study outlines which we consider most important, most indicative or most visible within the field of the sociology of culture. However, it is important to note that it is difficult to find works that fall specifically within the category of the sociology of culture and within the specific categories listed below. Most of the production falls in the outlying areas: the research in mass communications, cultural-literary studies and the research into popular music and cultures.

Studies in communication

Associated with specific departments, these studies are associated with the traditions that were consolidated in the 1970s. The topics addressed are varied: the history of the media, the way such media were received by audiences, the social semiotics of mass communication and critical theory. Some researchers have addressed the question of youth, an area which, as we have already indicated, has gained a high level of autonomy and one which is nourished by production related to communication (see Elizalde, 2011; Saintout, 2006) or the production in anthropology (see Cháves, 2010).

Cultural studies (associated with literature)

In this work, we can identify a new generation of researchers, all of whom are under the age of 50, studied literature and were highly affected by the figure of Sarlo and/or by North American graduate research. The topics addressed include research on cinema (see

Aguilar, 2006; Oubiña, 2011) and the comparative research of Argentine and Brazilian culture (see Garramuño, 2007).

Studies on popular culture and music

Here several strong areas of research are evident: first, the invention of studies on popular music which can be attributed to Vila (1987), which have already been cited, and those which continue to the present day, especially those done in collaboration with Semán (Semán and Vila, 2011; Vila and Semán, 2011). On the other hand, there has been important work on popular culture such as the traditional research by Ford et al. (1985), which had been continued and critically revised (especially in terms of its populist components) by Alabarces and Rodríguez (2008). Finally, in this area we can include the research on sports, research which was begun at the end of the 1980s by Eduardo Archetti (see especially 1999), another sociologist who became an anthropologist, and taken up again by Alabarces in the mid-1990s (see Alabarces, 2002, 2005).

This area shows the important resurgence of the popular culture category after its partial displacement in the 1990s, with a strong emphasis on popular music.⁷ This is a truly Nomadic space: it brings together the traditions of analyzing literature (Alabarces, 2002; Kaliman, 2004) or social semiotics (Díaz, 2009) with ethnographic emphases (Blázquez, 2008; Martín, 2011; Vila and Semán, 2011). It is produced by sociologists, anthropologists or cultural critics who studied literature; it brings together national institutions with foreign ones (Vila works in Temple, USA; Martín at the University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Semán moves regularly between El Colegio in Mexico and the University of San Martín, Argentina). This is one of the areas where a new generation of researchers is most visible; many are in their early thirties (while their thesis directors are in their forties or fifties) and they receive grants and doctorates while analyzing objects previously overlooked or considered unworthy of study: in short, football fans, *cumbia* fans and music, soap opera addicts and listeners of romantic music, rugby players, television comedy, television journalism and many others.

The possibilities of the field of studies in the sociology of culture are thus found at the meeting point of all of the areas we have described. They are also found in their common features: in Nomadism, daring topics, new methodologies; in the renovation of 'researchable' objects; in the continuous generational renewal; and in constant updating of theory and bibliography. We would also add: in the intervention of public, political and cultural debate. In other words, once again, in staking a claim for a sociology with few sociologists, but with as much creativity and irreverent interpretations as analytical and methodological rigor.

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Notes

1. For a general panorama of intellectual production in these years, see Terán (1993), Sarlo (2001) and Altamirano (2001). On the populist invention of the studies on mass culture, see Alabarces (2008). One good example of the relationship between intellectuals and politics as a statement of activism can be found in Ford (1985).
2. For itineraries of the research on popular music, see Alabarces (2009).
3. García Canclini studied philosophy; Ortiz, sociology.
4. In Ford's work, see especially 1985 and 1994.
5. Beatriz Sarlo, personal communication, 2004.
6. The author notes that Payne's dictionary (2002), published the same year as Altamirano's volume, completely overlooks Latin American production in the field.
7. Research on popular music has become an important space for examining phenomena such as identity construction – a place where factors such as gender, class, ethnic group and age can be discussed simultaneously.

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Author biography

Pablo Alabarces has a PhD from the University of Brighton. He is Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires and Principal Researcher at the National Council for Scientific Research (CONICET); he has created and coordinated the Popular Cultures Studies Group (UBA, 2003–present) and the Sport and Society Group (CLACSO, 1999–2003). He has been Visiting Professor in Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay and England. His research focuses on cultural analysis and, specifically, on popular cultures, and includes studies about popular music, youth cultures and football cultures. In this context, he is considered to be one of the founders of Latin American sociology of sport. His recent books are *Fútbol y Patria* (2002), *Futbologías* (2003), *Crónicas del aguante* (2004), *Hinchadas* (2005), *Resistencias y mediaciones. Estudios sobre cultura popular* (2008, ed.) and *Peronistas, populistas y plebeyos. Crónicas de cultura y política* (2011).

Résumé

Ce travail porte à la fois sur l'histoire et l'état actuel de la production de la sociologie argentine de la culture. Fondé sur ce que l'on définit comme une double périphérie — la périphérie de la sociologie argentine dans les sciences sociales occidentales et la recherche culturelle dans la sociologie locale — on cherche à analyser son émergence sur le terrain. Cette situation s'explique par la préoccupation pour la culture de masse et sa relation avec le populisme à la fin des années soixante. A cette époque, ces études étaient menées par des chercheurs issus de la critique littéraire qui abordaient les phénomènes culturels du point de vue politique, de manière comparable à ce qui a eu lieu lors de la naissance des études culturelles britanniques. A la fin de la dernière dictature militaire argentine (1976-1983), la réapparition et l'expansion de la sociologie de la culture déboucha sur des terrains nomades et sur des thèmes et des institutions variés: cette situation était due à la prolifération des études de communication sociale et des nouveaux départements universitaires, mais elle peut également être attribuée à l'influence de l'anthropologie brésilienne. Un autre facteur est la création tardive des

programmes de mastère et de doctorat et leur nature éminement multidisciplinaire. Actuellement, cette discipline expérimente son potentiel tout en étant en pleine croissance en termes quantitatifs et qualitatifs. Il est donc essentiel que cette discipline réexamine les aspects sociologiques de son parcours.

Mots-clés

Sociologie de la culture, anthropologie, culture de masse, nomadisme, programme

Resumen

El trabajo recorre simultáneamente una historia y un balance de la producción actual de la sociología de la cultura argentina. Partiendo de lo que se define como una doble condición periférica de la misma –periferia de la sociología argentina en las ciencias sociales occidentales, pero también de la investigación cultural en la sociología local–, se analiza el surgimiento del campo, derivado de la preocupación por la cultura de masas y su relación con el populismo a finales de los años sesenta del siglo XX. En ese momento, la fundación de los estudios estuvo ligada a investigadores con formación en crítica literaria, que se acercan a los fenómenos culturales como preocupación política –de modo similar a lo que ocurre en la fundación de los estudios culturales británicos. Tras la clausura de la dictadura argentina (1976-1983), la reaparición y expansión de una sociología de la cultura se despliega en zonas, temáticas e institucionales, variadas y nómades: la explosión de los estudios y departamentos en comunicación social, por un lado, y la influencia de la antropología brasileña, por otro; así como la creación tardía de los estudios de posgrado y su carácter marcadamente multidisciplinario. Hoy el campo experimenta una potencia explicativa y un crecimiento cuantitativo y cualitativo de envergadura; aunque en ese camino deba repensar, justamente, su condición sociológica.

Palabras clave

Sociología de la cultura, antropología, cultura de masas, nomadismo