
Politics and academy in the Argentinian social sciences of the 1960s: Shadows of imperialism and sociological espionage

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Abstract

Social sciences in Latin America experienced, during the 1960s, a great number of debates concerning the very foundations of different academic fields. In the case of Argentina, research programs such as *Proyecto Marginalidad* constituted fundamental elements of those controversies, which were characteristic of disciplinary developments within the social sciences, particularly sociology. Mainly influenced by the critical context that had been deepened by Project Camelot, Argentinian social scientists engaged in debates about the theories that should be chosen in order to account for 'national reality', the origins of funding for scientific research, or the applied dimension of science. In this sense, the practices of philanthropic organizations like the Ford Foundation stimulated considerably the ideological passions of that period; those practices also contributed to fragmentation in various academic groups. In this way, the problem of American imperialism, and its consequent economic and cultural dependencies, were present in the controversies of academic fields whose historic evolutions cannot be fully understood without considering their strong links with national and international politics.

Keywords

Argentina, the Ford Foundation, history of the social sciences, imperialism, marginality

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Argentina, social sciences and its times

During the 1960s, social sciences in Argentina were embroiled in a series of debates that broadly transcended their theoretical concerns and reflected several aspects of the so-called 'national reality'. One of the main problems that was highly characteristic of this period involved the so-called 'ideological passions', to use Oscar Terán's (2006) terminology. Such ideological passions could be defined as the group of ideas that 'spread in the universe of the left within a radicalized scenario that was heir to the cultural and political climate of the 1960s and showed certain totalizing features that gave supremacy to the energetic political practice of a revolutionary will' (ibid.: 205). A prominent catalyst of these debates had to do with the forms of imperial penetration that were ascribed to several projects and initiatives in the scientific and intellectual fields that were conducted by governmental or non-governmental organizations of the United States. Project Camelot was probably the most well-known case, and it contributed to crystallizing a highly influential interpretative framework that would feed powerful conspiracy theories on the future of Argentinian social sciences. This project involved a plan of 'sociological espionage' aimed at developing counter-insurgency in Latin America (Galtung, 1968; Gil, 2011; Herman, 1995, 1998; Horowitz, 1967; Navarro, 2011).¹ This and other secret projects, carried out by official American organizations, made manifest specific attempts to coopt the scientific elites in Third World countries, and thus obtain detailed information for eventual counter-insurgency programs.

This article will analyse the impact generated by the Ford Foundation (hereinafter referred to as FF) in its subsidy policy in Argentina, taking into account one particular case known as *Proyecto Marginalidad* [Project Marginality], which provoked an unavoidable debate in the history of the Argentinian social sciences. Above all, the impact generated by the FF's subsidy policy in Argentina can be placed in a wider context whose account will enable us to understand the logic of the fragmentation experienced in the Argentinian social sciences in the 1960s. In Latin America, that subsidy policy constitutes a symbol of an era marked by a progressive political radicalization of the intellectual field and increasing revolutionary fervor among wide sectors of the population. The case that will be analysed here is of course one of the consequences of the foreign policy of the USA during the Cold War, which seriously affected the social sciences. In fact, it changed the working methods in social sciences and disseminated new controversies about diverse aspects such as scientific ethics or the practical and political dimensions of scientific activity (Isaac and Bell, 2012; Nugent, 2008; Price, 2003; Wakin, 1992; Wax, 2008). This article proposes to relativize the conspiracy theories and show how they helped weaken the progressive institutionalization of social sciences in Argentina. Indeed, after the scandal provoked by the revelation of Camelot's objectives, the intellectual field in Latin America was characterized by the general assumption of an 'accusatory logic' (Guber, 2006) that would be applied not only to specific research projects financed with foreign funds (basically from the United States) but also to the very theoretical foundations of social research.

Within this context, North American philanthropic organizations were identified as agents of imperial penetration, or as actual *cuñas neocoloniales* [neo-colonial wedges],² which were not only capable of intervening in the scientific fields, but also of promoting

sociological espionage. This general conception about philanthropic organizations also implied strong criticisms of *cientificismo* [scientism], which turned out to be one of the main organizing axes of the controversies in Argentinian social sciences at that time. *Cientificismo* appeared ubiquitously in the debates among Argentinian social scientists. Having been coupled with several meanings, it later crystallized as a stigma that not only questioned the 'scientific' production of the so-accused *cientificistas*, but also denigrated them morally. Indeed, since it was presented as a shameful condition, the term *cientificismo* was stigmatized as profound immorality on behalf of those who were associated with it. Roughly speaking, *cientificismo* was used as a synonym for 'reactionary', 'accomplice of imperialism', 'neo-colonialist', 'enemy' and even 'corrupt'. The accusation of *cientificismo* also allowed the formulation of cognitive categories related to operations that classified and composed oppositions and organized a hierarchy for possible actions within the social sciences. That interpretative framework gave rise to a cognitive scheme that established what would count as transformational and liberating vis-à-vis any Argentinian social scientific research project. Such critiques of *cientificismo* helped shape a moral imperative that established the honorable conditions for carrying out empirical research, and thus it emerged as a key organizational principle for the social sciences in Argentina during the 1960s and 1970s.

In particular, from the beginning of the 1960s, Argentinian social sciences experienced strong fragmentations and rivalries among actors belonging to different positions, generations and theoretical and political affiliations. However, within this context, the social sciences in Argentina – certainly sociology, and anthropology to a lesser degree – had reached a stage of definitive institutionalization, as they already had undergraduate programs taught by full-time professors and researchers specialized in their respective areas. Specialized journals and research centers were also created (Blanco, 2006a). Thus, Argentinian social sciences already had solid foundations that might have favored important future developments. Specifically, it might be expected that potential developments would allow for a significant national and international expansion and increasing relative autonomy of disciplinary fields (in number and quality of professionals); more systematic support from government agencies and private entities; the strengthening of academic activities (such as the establishment of new institutions, undergraduate and graduate programs in the country); the consolidation of transnational networks of research; the development of areas of publishing; and even the stabilization of national styles of disciplinary practices (Vessuri, 2007; Kreimer and Thomas, 2004).

Nonetheless, not even the academic projects that had previously shown relatively high levels of development, international reach and also consensus, such as the ones carried out by the Department of Sociology of the University of Buenos Aires, were immune from the rise of discord. One of the main clashes concerned the possibility of public universities and other research centers accepting funds from North American philanthropic foundations. A very important sector of the critical intelligentsia severely questioned, with different levels of hostility, the use of funds provided by such organizations, the FF being one of the most prominent among them. In particular, since the beginning of the 1960s, certain confidential projects of counter-insurgency implemented by US official dependencies had involved many social scientists, and those scholars started to debate the agreement (which existed among anthropologists) concerning the

legitimacy of studies focusing on processes of cultural change that addressed agricultural, educational, or health issues (Foster, 1992).

During the first years of the postwar period, as the Cold War unfolded, diverse state agencies (many of them connected to the armed forces), as well as business corporations by means of their foundations, directly financed research projects in areas that had been war scenarios, particularly in the Pacific, but also in other regions such as Latin America. The funds awarded by programs that aimed at financing field research projects flowed copiously, like never before, and they provided an increasing number of graduate students in anthropology (together with their departments and programs) with indispensable financial support. Additionally, the US government provided direct financial support to research centers at different universities, such as the Russian Studies Center at Harvard, directed by Clyde Kluckhohn. All these official plans and directives might have limited the subjects and the geographical areas to study, by means of the consolidation of procedures that offered relatively accessible opportunities to those who needed financial assistance in order to carry out field research projects. Price (2003) even states that the efforts by the anthropological establishment to constrain this political influence were frankly scarce, and he questions the supposedly radical political beliefs of many famous anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict or Margaret Mead. This author indicates that the following were some of the most important institutions that took part in that complex system of financial support: the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, the National Institute of Mental Health and the Pentagon itself. Although Price admits that some reformist and radical scholars could develop studies that criticized this system of financial support, some of them were not supported for that very reason, while other researchers could not renew their subsidies because they had presented results that were incompatible with the interests of the participants that served as the sources of financial support.

Probably one of the most significant phenomena in the Argentinian context produced by the intervention of the US secret services has been the series of controversies surrounding the policy of the international philanthropic organizations. For example, organizations such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations were objects of the same accusatory logic, according to which every institution and every individual participating in a research project financed with 'dollars coming from the Empire' were considered dangerous and suspected of engaging in espionage. It is likely that the financial support provided by the Ford Foundation to important public and private institutions in Argentina synthesizes the ideological controversies of the 1960s (Gil, 2011). With different levels of hostility, some of the critical intelligentsia severely questioned the very use of funds coming from organizations that provided important financial aid to Latin American countries, including of course Argentina, one of the most important beneficiaries of such policy. According to many reports from that period, the Ford Foundation was the main target of such harsh attacks which, in addition, affected institutions and projects as well as scholars accepting its financial support. Philanthropic institutions and official American agencies played an active and influential role (particularly by means of intelligence-oriented projects like Camelot) both in the financial assistance they provided and in the controversies they motivated. Within this context, they helped create powerful imaginaries with respect to relevant political dimensions such as imperialism,

the liberation of Third World countries, and more specific issues concerning the development of science in Latin America and the rest of the world. In this sense, social sciences in the Americas, which were clearly affected by local and global politics, were engaged in debates regarding the practical dimension of science. Thus, revolutionary utopias were incorporated into the social sciences, mainly in sociology and anthropology. While such utopias were prominent all over the Americas, they were strongly influenced by the specific context of each country. In this way, Argentinian social scientists became involved in ethical and epistemological dilemmas (with different levels of engagement, within a context of a relatively early and fast process of institutionalization) that ended up producing serious ruptures within a field that had not yet consolidated. Because of that, certain fundamental agreements and common projects rapidly fell apart.

Indeed, in order to analyse dynamics and conflicts within the social sciences during that period it is necessary to understand ambiguities and paradoxes, such as the strong support given to the social sciences and its subsequent impact on the production of creative research techniques and theoretical proposals in different disciplines. Definitely, this article could be viewed as exploring a case of one of those ‘sites of “Cold War”’ (Isaac and Bell, 2012: 4), where it is possible to transcend any tendency to propose monolithic approaches to studying the specificities and complexities of a case connected to a continental periphery in social sciences.

The Ford Foundation and its subsidy policy in Latin America

From 1960 onwards, the FF offered systematic financial contributions to Latin American countries. By the early 1960s, Argentina, Brazil and Chile were selected for the implementation of such programs. The type of subsidies given to these countries aimed systematically at supporting scientific research, technological development and human resources. Even though the FF was not the only organization of its kind operating in Argentina, it was clearly the most publicly present in the social sciences in Latin America during the period under consideration. According to contemporary evidence gathered from different texts, this organization became, in a very short time, the main target of attacks and suspicions that eventually affected the institutions, academic projects and even researchers that were beneficiaries of the funds provided by the FF.³ The mathematician Oscar Varsavsky was, undoubtedly, one of the most prominent and harshest of critics participating in the debates over science and society in Argentina. Beyond his general criticisms of *cientificismo*, Varsavsky also questioned the ‘business spirit’ that universities were progressively adopting. Along these lines, this influential and controversial Argentinian scientist emphasized that these organizations had the capacity to reconfigure the scientific field due to the economic power and social prestige that such funding bestowed on recipient researchers and institutions.

The FF’s criteria for providing financial support in Latin America, and particularly in Argentina, were explicitly stated in their organization’s documents. The clear developmentalist and reformist guidelines of the FF matched the academic and scientific projects that represented the forefront of modernization after the fall of Juan Domingo Perón’s government in 1955. After the *coup d’état* that overthrew Perón’s constitutionally

elected government, the new military government focused on the modernization and *desperonización* [deperonization] of Argentina. One of the main methods for the latter process consisted in banning not only any political propaganda related to Perón but also every single mention of his name. Within this context, universities played a central role and were characterized by a generalized optimism that conceived economic development and scientific progress as fundamental instruments aiming at attaining progressive social change as well as a complete democratization of the country.

Some paradigmatic examples of these projects are those from the Department of Sociology of the University of Buenos Aires, the School of Natural and Applied Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires, and the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) [National Council of Scientific and Technical Research].⁴ As Miceli (1993) has already pointed out in his analysis of the Brazilian case, it is important to clarify that, even though government institutions were not eliminated in their role as interlocutors, the privileged beneficiaries of financial support were generally personalities distinguished in their own fields (artistic or scientific) – as, for example, Gino Germani (1911–79) in the field of sociology – and the support provided to the specific programs was centered on those distinguished personages (Estébanez, 2010). From 1962 onwards, the other icon of the cultural modernization process in Argentina, the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (hereinafter referred to as ITDT) began to appear among the grantees of subsidies by the FF. Sigal (1991) considers the Di Tella Foundation (one of whose institution members was ITDT) as a case of ‘modern sponsorship’ in opposition to ‘aristocratic patronage’. According to the same author, the ITDT was vital in defining new professions that also acquired high social prestige, thanks to their privileged working conditions and high remunerations. Particularly as regards the social sciences, the ITDT was fundamental in the education of a group of researchers who were imbued by the criterion of international validation of intellectual work, such as publications in scientific journals or completion of postgraduate studies in foreign countries (*ibid.*). From 1962 to 1972, the ITDT received very large subsidies from the FF, mainly earmarked for setting up the school of economy and the school of social sciences and for launching postgraduate studies.

The ITDT and *Proyecto Marginalidad*

By the end of the 1960s, one of the subsidies provided by the FF for a project carried out at the ITDT produced one of the main controversies in the history of Argentinian social sciences. This project aimed at studying ‘marginal populations’ and in 1968 it was granted US\$194,000 by the FF. Commonly known as *Proyecto Marginalidad*, it was the cornerstone of an effervescent worldwide controversy which brought back to life the phantoms of Camelot as maybe no other investigation has ever done. A group of Argentinian sociologists was in charge: the team was led by José Nun, with the aid of Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Marín. The aim of this group was to study the problems of structural unemployment and urban and rural poverty in Latin America. Originally, *Proyecto Marginalidad* was to be carried out in Santiago de Chile, also under the direction of Nun, but sponsored by the Instituto Latinoamericano de Planificación Económica y Social (ILPES [Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning]),

as well as the Centro para el Desarrollo Económico Social para América Latina (DESAL [Center for the Economic and Social Development of Latin America]). It must be emphasized that this project received financial support from the FF.⁵ According to the testimony provided by the director of the project,⁶ he was able, at the very beginning, to impose a series of non-negotiable conditions (endorsed by contract) as prerequisites for taking charge of the investigation: the election of his collaborators (the whole research team and the two other scholars in charge, Murmis and Marín), as well as the definition of the theoretical framework and control over the data. The tension between the research team and the representatives of the sponsoring institutions led to the speedy presentation of a preliminary report by those in charge of the investigation in which they spelled out the main theoretical guidelines of the budding project.

That preliminary report would lead to breaking off the relationship between the researchers in the project and ILPES and DESAL. In that same report, the three principal investigators (Nun, Murmis and Marín, 1968) explicitly stated the problematics constituting the investigation, established the state of the art concerning those problematics and posed a series of objectives to be carried out in the urban and rural spheres of different Latin American contexts. Nevertheless, as will be analysed later on, the final results of their work expanded on, and even substantially modified, the issues outlined in the initial phase. The introduction to that report already evidences the existence of serious differences with the dominant points of view of ILPES. Specifically, the text began by stressing the ‘ambiguous character of the notion of *marginality*, caught halfway between an empirical generalization and a theoretical construction’ (ibid.: 4). After describing different situations of marginality in the continent, both in rural and urban settings, the authors sustained that

... when it comes to applying it [the category of marginality] to the condition and social behaviors of certain aggregates of society, those marginal situations are wrongly placed in the same level of observability and [researchers] proceed by mere inference, using, for example, indicators of situational variables as if they were at the same time behavioral variables. (1968: 6)

These ideas allowed them to question certain developmentalist concepts that defined a ‘particular situation of marginality’ (ibid.: 11), rather than proceed to refine the theoretical concept. Then, calling attention to the need to use Marxist concepts (such as reserve army of labor and social classes), the report elegantly distanced itself from those developmentalist concepts, arguing that the project would specifically study the most disadvantaged social sectors, which are commonly referred to as the marginals. With direct quotations from Marx on the processes of capital accumulation, exploitation and surplus population, the report goes on to define the theoretical standpoints that would be stated much more explicitly in the final publications of the three people in charge. They claimed that ‘there is no such thing as general marginality, but different kinds of marginality which, according to the setting of the context, might be more or less prevailing. At the same time, as mentioned before, it is possible to find, in certain situations, marginal people at various types of qualification’ (ibid.: 54). Towards the end of the report, they ventured to try to establish certain distinctions between working-class sectors – which

were committed to long-term political perspectives – and *marginales*, who were easy instruments of political clientelism. Even though later they did not treat this problem in depth – and neither did the Argentinian social sciences of that period – they presented the opposition between a genuine political class movement – of the working class proper – and populism, upheld by electoral clientele.

The conceptual foundations that formed the basis of *Proyecto Marginalidad* were incompatible with the main postulates sustained by ILPES within the general framework of CEPAL. From the very beginning, the crucial concerns in that institution had centered on the following issues: technological development, poverty, social inequality, sustainable development, and democracy. From the 1940s, the intellectuals of CEPAL, with Raúl Prebisch as one of their main representatives, turned out to be influential not only in Latin American thought but also in the public policies of several countries in the continent; for example, by means of the plans of import substitution industrialization and long-term developmentalist programs. Such policies aimed at contributing to solve the ‘slow’ development of the region and the damages caused by the commercial exchange with central countries. Although CEPAL did not abandon its main theoretical and methodological lines, some additional concerns and perspectives gained importance over the following decades, namely a ‘structuralist’ and historical approach that focused on center–periphery relationships, the insertion of Latin American countries in international markets, the structural constraints of economic development, and the possibilities of implementing public policies that might contribute to the situations previously mentioned. At the time of the birth of CEPAL, industrialization was the most recurrent issue; during the 1960s the institution was to pay more attention to political reforms that led to the obstruction of industrialization. At that moment, the notion of dependency became fundamental both for the treatment of issues concerning international politics and for the objective of reducing the vulnerability of peripheral countries. Because of that notion, CEPAL highlighted the following topics: agrarian reform; income distribution; enhancement of local markets; and specific economic, technological and political reforms aimed at activating local economies and at reducing dependency relations.

After the sudden breaking-off brought on by the release of this report, the project was launched from the ITDT. In addition, the permanent council of renowned researchers such as Eric Hobsbawm, Alain Touraine and Michael Apter was approved. Furthermore, Ernesto Laclau, Néstor D’Alessio, Marcelo Nowerstern and Beba Balvé started work as assistant researchers. But whereas in Chile the research project did not generate any serious controversy in the scientific field, in Argentina it revived various conspiracy theories inspired by criticism of projects such as Camelot. These accusations were especially maintained by student sectors and by young recent graduates who rejected *sociología científica* [scientific sociology] and fervently defended a type of sociology that they defined as *nacional* [national]. According to their perspective, such *sociología comprometida* [committed sociology] was engaged with the national reality and with the genuinely popular project that aimed at transforming social reality. Indeed, the appearance of a project financed by a North American philanthropic organization whose main objective was studying structural poverty not only revived the phantoms of Camelot, but also catalysed tensions within the notoriously fragmented social sciences.

'Data' in *Proyecto Marginalidad*

The results of *Proyecto Marginalidad* were published in the *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología (RLS)*, edited by the ITDT, alongside other articles that did not form part of this investigation proper. In the introduction, Nun defined the object of their investigation as: '(a) The development of a theoretical framework for the study of marginality in Latin America; (b) the historical analysis of processes of marginalization in different national and regional contexts; and (c) the comparative study of typical situations of marginality in Argentina and Chile, on the basis of secondary materials and field work' (Nun, 1969a: 410). With respect to the fieldwork, the project director stated that three types of marginality had been analysed: (1) marginality related to 'backward rural contexts' (ibid.: 411); (2) marginality that arises as 'a consequence of the migration of the population to big urban centers' (ibid.); and (3) marginality that emerges within urban concentrations as a result of the 'chronic reduction of the industrial labor market' (ibid.).

Probably the article produced within the framework of *Proyecto Marginalidad* that had the greatest impact⁷ on Latin American social sciences was the one written by José Nun (originally published in the above-mentioned issue of the *RLS*). Almost 40 years after their birth, the texts authored by Nun have remained surprisingly valid and still constitute an obligatory reference on the subject. Back then, he developed the *teoría de la masa marginal* [theory of the marginal mass] in direct opposition to the sociological and economic concepts of development that connected (and continue to do so) Latin American poverty and inequality with underdevelopment. In his engagement with several passages from Marx, he maintained that:

... the unemployed could be, at the same time, a reserve army of labor for the competitive sector and a marginal mass for the monopolistic sector. In addition, the surplus workforce related to the latter is not necessarily unemployed, since it may be working within the other sector. This means that a low rate of unemployment is perfectly compatible with the existence of overpopulation in relation to the big industry, which can be categorized as a reserve army of labor or as a marginal mass. (Nun, 2001: 89)

Nun postulated a double hypothesis according to which (1) monopolistic transnational capital generated processes of 'dissolution' and (2) the protagonists of those processes were economic agents that generated less and less employment. Nun did not use the term 'excluded' and preferred to use 'marginal mass'. This term makes reference to the dysfunctional part of the reserve army of labor with respect to the ties established between the surplus population and the hegemonic productive sector: in other words, a mass of individuals that will never find a job. In this manner, the author described a process of permanent extraction of surplus value from Third World metropolises that transmuted from 'open pillage into foreign trade further down the line' (2001: 109). At the same time, the author pointed out that

... the local beneficiaries of this schema have diverted a considerable portion of the surplus from industrial investment: in the case of groups with the highest income, the surplus was diverted to foreign countries and assigned to conspicuous consumption, financial

speculation, and real estate business; in the case of a widespread *lumpen-bourgeois* parasite, it was consumed for its own benefit. (2001: 109–10)

The agents that benefited from this scheme transformed into a lumpen-bourgeoisie that only worried about self-preservation and neglected to invest in true industrial development. Along these lines, the author questioned the state policies he called ‘asymmetrically protectionist’ because he considered that they subsidized ‘import substitution industries while preserving the structural causes of their inefficiency’ (Nun, *ibid.*: 117). It is in this context that a marginal mass emerged; ‘in contrast to the classic reserve army of labor’, such marginal mass ‘shows the low rate of “system integration” due to an unequal and dependent capitalist development. When different processes of accumulation are combined in a context of chronic stagnation, this development generates a relative overpopulation which is not functional with respect to the dominant productive forces’ (*ibid.*: 137). First of all, this marginal mass is composed of a portion of the workforce that is not employed by competitive industrial capital, that is, workers employed in the tertiary sector with a very low income, the unemployed and ‘the entire workforce directly or indirectly “fixed” by commercial capital’ (*ibid.*: 134). The problems for big companies appear when this marginal mass surpasses a ‘certain limit’ (*ibid.*: 138) and becomes ‘non-functional’ with respect to production, and ‘dysfunctional’ with respect to consumption, ‘because it does not constitute a market for products that could be massively produced, with bigger scale economies’ (*ibid.*). By the end of the article, Nun described ‘the misery of the Latin American peoples’ (*ibid.*: 140) which could be summarized as the oppression suffered by landless peasants, land workers in servitude, rural migrants, the unemployed and underemployed urban population, and inhabitants of shanty towns, among others.

In another important article, Miguel Murmis and Carlos Waisman started out by observing that

... the development of the sugar industry in Tucumán is a clear example that discredits the all-too-comfortable notion of structural dualism, by exhibiting a contra-position between modern, steadily developing regions and traditional poor regions. The Tucumán context makes manifest that poverty and marginality are not mere survivals; instead, they can be created by the very process of development. (Murmis and Waisman, 1969: 344)

After dismissing marginalist theses due to their ‘latent evolutionism’, the authors emphasized the historical and structural determinations of marginality which are configured by

... the ‘oligarchic protection’ obtained by the northern oligarchy in exchange for their participation in the conflicts with which the *Litoral* region managed to ‘solve’ the problems of the countryside. In contrast to other regions of the country, Tucumán can therefore continue creating wealth, wealth that lands in the hands of the oligarchy. (Murmis and Waisman, 1969: 349)

Tucumán hence emerges as a mono-productive area that enjoys state protection and that also involves a series of ‘industrial activities with relatively high levels of diversified

employment' (Murmis and Waisman, 1969: 350). Therefore, relatively stable agro-industrial productive processes were established that, based on a seasonal rate, 'gave rise to the existence of four types of workers: stable factory workers (permanent factory-employed; PF), seasonal factory workers (temporary factory-employed; TF), stable agricultural workers (permanent land-bound; PL), and seasonal agricultural workers (temporary land-bound; TL)' (ibid.: 352). Apart from the basic differences that could be established among the four groups of workers (factory/agricultural, stable/seasonal), the authors postulated that the levels of training, education and standard of living of the permanent factory workers were higher than those of the temporary factory workers, who were less qualified (although they had had a similar standard of living) and came from other provinces. However, as the authors pointed out, these differences did not prevent both groups from sharing 'unifying elements that led to the emergence and maintenance of a working-class culture' (ibid.: 356).

On the other hand, independent sugar plantation workers were described as small producers who owned their land, while a smaller portion (a sixth) worked 'in the rural area either as small traders or as workers of other sugar plantation owners' (1969: 362). However, the province's conventional scenario showed a growing tendency towards concentration, by closing down the weakest sugar factories consolidating others, mainly those which belonged to a long-established family, a powerful industrial firm, or a foreign company. The authors pointed out that the key problem had to do with inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth rather than with 'backward' models of work, in contrast to the 'modern' models which would have allowed for social development. Thus, as a 'relatively developed area' (ibid.: 344), Tucumán evidenced a pattern of unequal distribution that concentrated wealth within a context characterized by a deficient handling of the interests of a working class that could not organize effectively to fight for its own rights.

The work of Juan Carlos Marín, also originally published in 1969 in the *RLS*, focused on the '*fundo* form', a unit of exploitation characteristic of the Chilean large estates. In these estates, the overexploitation of rural workers was implemented through different modes of employing the workforce of the rural proletariat (tenants, *obligados*), who offered their workforce as wage earners and not as serfs. Marín combined a synchronic and a diachronic approach to show how the forms of exploitation in the Chilean large estates had evolved historically. These forms of exploitation 'were the result of a long-term constitutive process realized through the *family form* and its relation to the diverse forms of *land possession*' (2007: 26). The author also stressed that the capitalist expansion led to a double process of rupture and radicalization that, on the one hand, generated 'a political crisis within the dominant historical group and, on the other, increased social struggles' (ibid.: 27). Therefore, 'during the 19th century, the *fundo* became the business that could satisfy the demands of the large expansion of the worldwide cereal trade', with the resulting territorial monopoly of the large estates (ibid.: 31). According to the author, the main goal of his research was to 'unravel and understand the meaning of a social order that was dominated, hegemonized, and institutionalized through what was known as tenancy' (ibid.: 25–6).

In order to get a close look at the situation, Marín carried out several interviews with social actors themselves involved in the exploitation relation so that he could focus on

localizing different identities that composed rural life, in which ‘the *fundo form* constituted the mode of social existence and reproduction of a sector of the dominant historical group in Chilean national life’ (2007: 26). As the *fundo* emerged as ‘the dominant productive form of the Chilean agricultural structure’ (ibid.: 29), it managed to establish the limits and possibilities of the insertion of the active workforce within the rural sector. Specifically, the *fundo form* allowed for the crystallization of the tenancy as the institution that installed a ‘permanent workforce’ (ibid.: 31). The tenant, who acted as a subsistence producer, sold his own workforce to the owner of the large estate under *obligation*: he undertook and offered an ‘overwork’ not only in the production corresponding to the *fundo*, but also in the land which was rented to him under the institution of *royalty*. Such tenancy thus imposed upon rural workers the obligation to work for the *fundo* as well as for their own land, which was exploited in the form of *royalties*. It is clear that royalties encompassed the worst lands which, thanks to the work of the tenants, were greatly improved as regards productivity, thus contributing to the increase of capitalist income. In addition, the evolution of the *fundo form* led to the emergence of the *volunteer worker*, a social actor who arose from the relationship in which ‘the “access to the land” would no longer be the formal counterpart to “obligation”; it would express a specific way of buying workforce and monopolizing it’ (ibid.: 36). In contrast to the tenant, this volunteer worker acted, in actual fact, as an ‘intermittent’ worker. The scene that configured the sale of workforce in rural areas was completed with the *outsider*, who was part of a ““seasonal” or “temporary” group that was not bound to the *fundo* through “obligation” but sold its workforce for a salary. *Outsiders* mainly came from a small rural property, in conditions of subsistence. The rest were the children of all the other insertion alternatives of the rural productive system’ (ibid.: 39). Finally, Marín’s work identified ‘two strata of wage earners’ (ibid.: 47): the “quasi-plotter” proletariat’ (ibid.), described as permanent workers who acted as subsistence producers, and the rural proletariat affected by instability within the labor market, who were *seasonal* workers. Marín concluded that this situation created the conditions for an intensification of the proletarianization of the peasants who were affected by continuous unemployment. At the same time, it generated ‘a permanent monopolization of a surplus workforce that formed part of subsistence production and constituted a “reserve army of labor” for the *fundo form*’ (ibid.).

Proyecto Marginalidad and its context of reception

The confrontations between different actors in the Argentinian social sciences that arose from their clashing political and theoretical convictions led to severe ruptures. Many of these controversies revolved around the interpretations and evaluations of the period corresponding to the presidency of Juan Domingo Perón (1946–55). During that period, the intellectual field maintained a highly conflictive relationship with the *peronista* government. After the elections of 1946, the new government constrained the autonomy of the universities and produced a massive renovation of the teaching staff: more than 1,200 professors abandoned their jobs; 800 resigned and 423 were fired. According to the doctrine imposed by the *peronista* party, the university was still a bastion of ‘the children of privilege’ (Buchbinder, 2005: 151). Sigal (1991) considers that the *peronista* approach

was 'anti-intellectualist' regarding both 'high culture' and universities. Sigal also claims that the *peronista* government did not implement 'a strategy of its own' aimed at intervening in the intellectual field because 'the cultural policy was simply and essentially authoritarian' (ibid.: 45). Along the same line, Terán (2004) argues that the *peronista* regime (beyond certain bureaucratic requirements related to party affiliations) demanded from the universities a mainly passive attitude. Government intervention thereby usually occurred when some oppositional representatives made manifest their viewpoints. During the presidency of Arturo Frondizi (1958–62), who had been elected in restricted elections that banished the *peronista* party, some important intellectual groups believed that they were going to recover the leading role that they had lost almost 100 years previously. In addition, the developmentalist theory embraced by the government of Frondizi and his party seemed to join 'the ideological principles that the fall of the Peronist regime had separated' (Sigal, 1991: 168). However, the disappointment of intellectuals and left-wing sectors was going to have a big impact on a whole generation and 'it left perdurable marks both in the ideological dimension and the organizational systems of critical intelligentsia' (ibid.: 171). The certainties established after Perón's fall promoted rising fragmentation among intellectuals, who found it very difficult to express political ideas through the existing parties.

In the case of the social sciences, and particularly in sociology, the innovative work developed by the Italian-born sociologist Gino Germani allowed for the crystallization of the figure of the scientific sociologist, in direct opposition to the *sociología de cátedra* [chair sociology], which was practised by social thinkers who were practitioners of the essay style (Blanco, 2006b). With the definitive institutionalization of sociology by the end of the 1950s, and mainly on the basis of the inauguration of degree courses at the University of Buenos Aires, Germani was able to impose the objective of constructing a real scientific community able to take control of sociology. Thus, sociological research fundamentally focused on the political and social aspects of Argentinian modernization and development. These new empirical research projects were very demanding: the sociologists involved had to work full-time and also had to learn new theories and techniques that were certainly not part of the competence of the *sociólogos de cátedra*. The search for supposed historical generalizations was explicitly abandoned and, instead, the emphasis shifted to the study of concrete cases, relying on much more refined data collection techniques, the analysis of correlations, and the formulation of models, within a framework in which reflections on *peronismo* and the anti-fascist intellectual attitude were the most important characteristics of this new way of doing sociology (Blanco, 2006a, 2006b). The antagonism between *sociología científica* and *sociología de cátedra* was not the only tension within the field of social sciences in Argentina. A wide variety of taxonomies was developed around themes related to intellectual traditions that were being vindicated (structural functionalism, neo-evolutionism, Marxism, phenomenology, structuralism); references to the discipline or to disciplinary styles (national sociology, critical anthropology, committed anthropology); and even political commitments (*peronismo*, national left-wing parties, socialism and revolutionary groups).

Although most of the antagonisms that developed within the university sphere turned into fierce struggles for controlling diverse departments and professorships, they also

affected other areas such as private research centers. In addition, the dynamics of national politics exacerbated those tensions, thus provoking institutional ruptures, such as the intervention of the universities in 1966,⁸ which caused a significant turnover of professors and researchers in the social sciences at many universities. In addition, the above-mentioned criticisms of *cientificismo* and the growing revolutionary fervor that characterized an important sector of the intellectual field created favorable conditions for the emergence of a significant controversy around the preparation, development and implementation of *Proyecto Marginalidad*. The three people in charge of the project expressed their shared viewpoint in different interviews and ascribed most of the harsh condemnations they received to ‘personal issues’. These issues were linked to the internal divisions of the Argentinian left, since some of the participants (such as Ernesto Laclau) were politically active members of groups that clashed with other antagonist groups. Those responsible for the conflicts mentioned usually attributed the tenor of these controversies to groups who supposedly seized the opportunity provided in order to ‘exploit their personal and political resentment’. Above all, one of the keys to understanding this moment is the movement of *national professorships* and its proposal regarding *national sociology* [*sociología nacional*]. This movement was not only to define an era but it also serves as a window onto the development of social sciences in Argentina and the *ideological passions* of the period.

After the definitive institutionalization of sociology in Argentina, with the creation of specific courses of studies at institutions such as the Universities of Buenos Aires and La Plata, the development of so-called *national sociology*, which originated as a response to the foundational work of Gino Germani, introduced further fragmentation. In that sense, social sciences experienced with great intensity direct influence from political processes, in the framework of which the university – as well as all disciplines – came to be regarded as another instrument through which to achieve the much longed-for ‘national liberation’ (Barletta and Lenci, 2001; Pucciarelli, 1999). This *national sociology* mostly found its expression in the *cátedras nacionales* [national professorships] that aimed at ‘creating new theoretical statements and categories that allowed for generating new proposals not only to understand, but also to transform, national reality’ (Buchbinder, 2005: 197). Most of the criticisms made by *national sociology* were directed at the use of science, its hidden objectives and the final destination of the results of its investigations. All of these were critical axes for debates, and were animated by the work of the FF and its policies for financing scientific investigation. By taking elements from revisionist history⁹ and from *pensamiento nacional* [national thought], this *national sociology* condemned the pantheon of national heroes of official Argentinian history. It also went back to questioning *cientificismo* and to categorically challenging the most important sociological schools, especially structural functionalism. In this manner, this revolutionarily *ciencia social comprometida* [committed social science] was opposed to a *sociología anti-nacional* [anti-national sociology], defined as such because of its alleged inability to concern itself with the problems of the societies in which it was inserted and its lack of interest in so doing.

A wide range of intellectuals is encompassed under the label *pensamiento nacional*, and they exerted a great influence on the Argentinian cultural field, especially during the 1960s. The *pensadores nacionales* [national thinkers] proposed to go beyond colonized

ways of thinking and move towards interpretative frameworks of national history and the present with a liberating, anti-imperialist stance. One of the obligatory references within this context is Juan José Hernández Arregui, who maintained that the *peronista* movement, along with its proletarian and provincial political base, was one of the social forces that represented the national spirit, as a prolongation of the 19th-century federal leaders [*caudillos*] and their battle tactics [*montoneras*]. The criticism put forth by Hernández Arregui was aimed at imperialist penetration and ‘the anti-national consciousness of the colonized classes’ (2004: 342), which had been combated historically by forces that exhibited a national consciousness and were of a native origin such as *peronismo*, a genuine representation of the industrial and rural proletariat. The main targets of his nationalist attack were the Argentinian universities and those intellectuals who only defended their undeserved privilege and their own values ‘while the people of Argentina suffered hunger, while there was electoral fraud, and while the country was handed over to foreign governments or foreign companies’ (ibid.: 359). Although he also condemned the political groups of students that had supported ‘the sinister forces of a colonized nation (ibid.), but without understanding the problem in all its complexity, he considered that the students had been developing (during the *peronista* era) some level of national consciousness. According to him, the university had to transform the system in order to fight against the oligarchy and foreign interests.

Arturo Jauretche is another prototypical member of this nationalist essayist vein, who always appealed to the opposition between cultured persons and real people [*hombre culto vs. pueblo verdadero*] and was to be celebrated for many years by various Argentinian intellectual and political groups. From revolutionary left to nationalist right parties, Jauretche’s writings had a powerful impact on those with very different, and sometimes irreconcilable, political positions. The reason for that must have been his criticisms aimed at Argentinian society and at the most naïve versions of Argentine national history. Although he said that he was ‘on the shore of science’ (2004: 7), he was considered an authority in the *cátedras nacionales* and his usually vague notions were applied as if they were rigorous analytical categories. Jauretche claimed that supposedly cultured men (whom he also called derogatively ‘*intelligentsia*’) were just the result of a ‘pedagogic colonization’ practised by schoolteachers, journalists, artists, writers and scholars.

National sociology and its exponents

Undoubtedly, one of the leading exponents of this *national sociology* was Roberto Carri. He endorsed a ‘global historical’ method which, in line with the arguments of revisionist history, allowed for contrasting two types of policies: a national and an anti-national one. One favored an autochthonous development of production, while the other favored the expansion of imperialism and dependence. Carri positioned the dominant *sociología científica* as a mere reproducer of that ‘imperialistic’ way of thinking, because it preserved the system instead of transforming it. He considered *cientificismo* as only some kind of intellectual imposture and consequently tried to restrain the inevitable struggle ‘against foreign and oligarchic domination’ (Carri, 1970: 148). By this he meant that national history should define the task of social science which, in its search for the

national conscience, confronts imperialism in order to conceive the tools needed to construct a new society, thus linking it to the collective knowledge of the people. During the second half of the 1960s, Carri published articles in several paradigmatic journals of the time, such as *Antropología del Tercer Mundo* [Third World Anthropology, hereafter referred to as *ATM*]. In his writings, Carri recurrently raised topics in relation to which *cientificismo* was a dominant issue. In the first issue of *ATM* from November 1968, he directly linked *cientificismo* to developmentalist ideology, which he characterized as the local, sociological variant of neo-imperialism. He then questioned the use of formalism in social sciences, which he defined as an ‘uncritical empiricism’ (Carri, 1968: 2) that is nothing less but ‘an already given knowledge of the world by an individual who is powerless in the face of the “confusing”, external, and coercive material world that limits the *practical possibilities* of knowledge’ (ibid.). Similarly, he argued that modernizing ideas entailed a concept of development that ‘is not a revolutionary transformation of the current order’ (ibid.); he therefore proposed ‘a critical reassessment of popular culture, incessantly produced by the people, a collective reassessment that acts as a driving force – a dynamic aspect – of the process of revolutionary transformation’ (ibid.: 4). In that same line of interpretation, ‘the factual quality is a fetish that dominates scientific thinking and determines its evolution’ (ibid.: 5). This led the author to conclude that ‘science becomes a bureaucratic occupation closely linked to the task of administration’ (ibid.). The conclusion states that ‘*the scientist is the manager of knowledge in imperialist society*’ (ibid.).

As it has been shown previously, the theoretical guidelines of *Proyecto Marginalidad* were neither structural-functionalist nor developmentalist. On the contrary, the scholars in charge of the project openly used analytic categories coming from Marxism and postulated an interpretation of structural poverty in Latin American countries which was very different from the marginalist theses that were dominant at the time. However, several representatives of the *national sociology* considered Marxism as a new alternative to *cientificismo* and imperial penetration. For example, Gonzalo Cárdenas, another representative of this trend, severely questioned those – directly alluding to the members of *Proyecto Marginalidad* and other similar investigations – who used Marxism as a theoretical tool, while receiving money from the FF. He criticized them for being unable to capture the ‘fundamental contradiction and, in the neo-colonial era, they use Marxist concepts and categories that are adequate to the era of free market capitalism. But this is done by recurring to a functionalist language and, especially nowadays, to a structuralist language’ (Cárdenas, 1970: 137). In general, the author deemed that *sociología científica* in Argentina – turned into an ideology – was neither capable of capturing, studying, or comprehending the new insurrectionary movements nor of joining the revolutionary struggle embodied by the ‘nationalist mass movements’.

Even though Marxism was an inspiring source for many of these authors, it never ceased to represent the universalist *cientificismo* that was considered dominant. That also imposed a barrier to analysing and operating on those national realities. At the same time, it was maintained that Marxism had systematically confronted the interests of the people, which seemed to be confirmed by the vernacular variants that had opposed *peronism* for ‘not understanding it’. Alcira Argumedo confronted Marxism with a *revolutionary nationalism* that would constitute an all-encompassing perspective.

Consequently, the political perspective of liberation had to incorporate Marxist contributions in order to be able to formulate a revolutionary synthesis in the Third World. Therefore, Argumedo promoted a controversy with traditional Marxism that began by debating 'its specific political manifestations – of its current historical materialization in all its different expressions at the national and international level – in order to reach, at a later moment, the formulation of principles, the conception of the world' (1970: 95). Similarly, Juan Pablo Franco criticized Marxism because of its universalizing aspiration that did not consider the specific characteristics of Third World countries. Therefore, he likened 'critical sociology' (Marxism) to 'academic sociology' (structural functionalism), since the two of them leaned towards accepting 'universal scientific elements and only postulated a criticism of the ideological use that distorts those universal principles of the scientific method. They ultimately refrained from questioning "science", the scientific method, the institutional and cultural reality inherited, or sociology as a historical product' (Franco, 1970: 120). The sociologist pointed out that following those trends implied reproducing 'the division between "science" and "society", and between "reason" and the "social practice of the peoples"' (ibid.). Franco, when questioning this 'passive conception of knowledge' (ibid.), which did not pose a 'practical-critical activity of transforming society' (ibid.), insisted on, as many other authors of the time did, the omnipresence of imperialism as a central axis for any analysis of national reality.

Nevertheless, many public interventions went against the assumptions of *national sociology*, both on behalf of those representing scientific sociology and those adhering to what was occasionally called Marxist sociology. For example, Eliseo Verón proposed that ideology constituted a certain level of reading social discourse, instead of a specific type of message, since it was related to the conditions in which messages were produced. Therefore, 'the ideological contents are phenomena of connotation or meta-communication, that is, they derive from the *decisions* applied by the speaker to the construction of messages' (1970: 171–2). In this way, Verón categorized *cientificismo* as an ideology that posited absolute neutrality. Verón also discussed the origin of funds granted for conducting scientific investigation. Far from flatly condemning the origin of those funds, he called attention to the subaltern role played by local specialists in relation to foreign specialists and in the definition of the specific topics to be researched. In line with these observations, he pointed to the necessity of scientific autonomy, which 'does not necessarily consist in the elaboration of new concepts or the creation of techniques' (ibid.: 185). What he considered important about scientific work was the unity of the process, specifically, whether the investigator was in control of the intervening factors, which would mean that the autonomous development of sociology would be possible if the proper conditions existed for 'the construction of theories and techniques, in close connection with empirical investigation' (ibid.). That is why the author stated that national sociology was a mere 'illusion of autonomy; theory, methodology, and investigation can be closely linked to the development that takes place abroad. This will undoubtedly happen if the investigator is of a high level and he is up to date as regards information' (ibid.: 186). Consequently, ideological criticism could be maintained only for the case of 'denying *cientifismo* the paternity of the scientific method, and at the same time revealing the ideological use *cientificismo* made of the scientific method' (ibid.: 196).

The details of a controversy

Nonetheless, arguably the most important and widely felt critique of *cientificismo* – in this specific case focusing on *critical sociology* – resulted from an article in the Uruguayan weekly cultural journal *Marcha* by the Argentinian biologist Daniel Goldstein, and titled ‘El proyecto Marginalidad. Sociólogos argentinos aceitan el engranaje’ [Marginality Project: Argentinian Sociologists Grease the Skids]. It was published on 10 January 1969 and it consolidated the accusatory logic that surrounded the project. Goldstein attacked the project very harshly, labelling it as a version of ‘sociological espionage’. In addition to characterizing the surveys carried out during the project as a ‘police interrogation’, the author pointed out that neither the Pentagon nor the CIA had the need to support it directly, since ‘the only thing they do is finance it – through the FORD Foundation – and of course, profit from its results’ [1969a: 15]). Goldstein framed this investigation within imperial attempts to stop ‘the black people’s rebellion and the Latin American guerrilla’ [ibid.] in order to avoid

... the total ruin of the system. Since North American people are aware that the struggle will take place in the American continent, they desperately need to get to know their enemy. The type of war they use against black people and Latin Americans requires social and ideological information about their enemy, every step of the way. (1969a: 15)

In this anti-imperialist tirade, Goldstein argued that:

The Ford Foundation became the unofficial agency of the United States government destined to solve the problem of insurrection in US cities. Its policy consisted in financing the black people’s movement and progressively isolating the military groups; it also aimed at subsidizing sociological investigations and social action projects in ghettos; and it attempted to formulate emergency reform policies in order to avoid new outbreaks. (Goldstein, 1969a: 15)

In line with many contemporary views that have already been mentioned (Arnove and Pinede, 2007; Roelofs, 2007), the author pointed out that the FF’s involvement in ‘progressive’ causes simply aimed at “‘cooling down” the conditions propitious for rebellion and neutralizing the black people’s revolutionary movement’ (1969a: 15). Along the same lines, he argued that:

At present, the Ford Foundation is a para-governmental organization dedicated to formulating the civil counterinsurgency tactics for both Americas. The Ford Foundation has actually become a new intelligence agency dedicated to the social problems of the neo-colonial peoples, with the objective of collecting information and proposing lines of counterrevolutionary action. (Goldstein, 1969a: 15)

Although Goldstein admitted that *Proyecto Marginalidad* could be considered ‘scientifically irreproachable’, he still condemned it for the illegitimacy of its origin (financing) and for the obvious purpose of its results: ‘to offer the political power the necessary information to start superficial reforms that, without even scratching the structure of

exploitation and without modifying power relationships, could avoid the violent emergence of rebellious acts' (1969a: 15). Finally, Goldstein concluded that 'social scientists should not participate in investigations sponsored or subsidized by organizations that can, as the objective of the study, exert pressure and influence on human beings. Social scientists should not agree to collaborate with the enemy' (ibid.). Many of the *national sociologists* shared this point of view, as they also stressed the need for social sciences to promote a liberatory spirit, specifically in order to put social sciences to the service of revolutionary ideals that would bring the bourgeois order to an end.

The response of the researchers in charge of *Proyecto Marginalidad* was immediate. A week later (on 17 January), José Nun defended the ethical parameters of those involved in the project in a letter titled 'Las brujas que caza el señor Goldstein' [The Witches that Mr Goldstein Hunts] (1969b: 15). On the one hand, he charged against 'the sequels of Stalinism, and against the petty-bourgeois tendency towards a pretendedly moralizing form of making accusations, on the other' (ibid.). After qualifying as 'disloyal' the job of a 'prosecutor' that Goldstein took upon himself, Nun detailed the problems the project had with the institutions that originally sponsored the study. He also communicated the recent ending of economic support from the FF. Just as he had expressed it earlier in an open letter to students of the University of Buenos Aires, Nun admitted that 'the policy of subsidies to scientific investigation is part of a global strategy of imperial penetration in Latin America' (ibid.). At the same time, he argued that:

(a) in a neo-colonial context, it is at least naïve to place all the bad ones 'outside' and thus exclude from the attack the financing provided by organizations legitimized by the system, which leads to a straightforward discussion of the very feasibility of scientific investigation within the current institutional frameworks; and (b) to speak of a law of tendency can never entail not recognizing the existence of specific contradictions and of the particular historical situations that divert from that tendency, without invalidating it. (Nun, 1969b: 15)

Towards the end of his letter, Nun questioned the 'declaratory ultra-leftism' that refused to admit that 'the need and urgency to elaborate a thorough knowledge of Latin American reality that would allow us to change it is sufficiently important so as not to flatly dismiss any serious opportunity that would help to achieve that change' (1969b: 15). And with respect to the 'legitimate fear' of an undesirable use of the data and results of the investigation, he concluded that:

Within the limits that political caution and professional ethics must dictate to a researcher, it is a necessary calculable and necessary risk. Had this risk not have been assumed by all progressive intellectuals, who authentically put their faith in the growing vigor of the popular movement, leftist thought would have not advanced much. Nowadays, just like one hundred years ago, truth is always revolutionary. So, by refusing to get to know it one becomes an advocate for reactionism and obscurantism. (Nun, 1969b: 15)

The controversy did not quiet down with Nun's response, since a group of intellectuals also intervened in the debate. On 31 January, the writer and essayist Ismael Viñas led a group letter titled 'Sociología e imperialismo' [Sociology and Imperialism], which

was signed mainly by sociologists as well as by some economists and anthropologists, including Hugo Rapoport, Eduardo Menéndez, Carlos Bastianes, Daniel Hopen and Santos Colabella. In the letter, Viñas emphasized the role of ‘instruments of imperialism in our countries’ played by institutions such as the FF, the ITDT, CEPAL, ILPES and DESAL. He also considered proven beyond doubt the direct links between the philanthropic organizations and the US government, on the one hand, and the specific interests of the imperial power in investigations such as the one in question, on the other. Even though the authors admitted the possibility that such investigation might show ‘results that are useful for the left’, the authors asserted that ‘such an investigation could have just as well been carried out without relying on imperialist funds and without the need to give imperialism access to such kind of data’ (Viñas *et al.*, 1969: 3). The authors concluded the letter by writing that ‘working in this type of investigation inevitably corrupts the intellectual who participates in it’ and accused Nun of being an ‘instrument of corruption’ (*ibid.*). These statements were consistent with the arguments set out by Oscar Varsavsky. During the same period, he expressed the need to develop a ‘poor science’, carried out by ‘rebel scientists’ who were to ‘form, as a team, an organization that would allow them to choose the problems first, and then be able to reorganize their team as they made progress, in light of their successes and failures and, above all, in light of the social situation and its perspectives’ (1994: 150).

The person in question, of course, once again exercised his right to defend himself from the ‘malicious lies’ of ‘Viñas and his friends’ and ‘sidekicks’. In another letter published in *Marcha* on 28 February 1969 (1969c), Nun went on to clarify certain aspects related to the project, but did not restrain himself from questioning his detractors on ethical grounds. Specifically, Nun accused them of overestimating ‘the integrative capacity of imperialism’ and of underestimating ‘the increasing power of the popular movement’ from the point of view of ‘the speculative tranquility of the petty bourgeois who calls himself leftist and, while taking a warm bath, thinks that workers will be corrupted if they have water to wash their hands’ (1969c: 18). Nun also satirized the accusations of those who had signed the letter by asking them to contact the institutions that had refused to finance the investigation in order ‘to make them understand how useful our work is for imperialism; this way they might come to their senses and decide to give us their sponsorship back’ (*ibid.*). Along the same lines, Nun announced that – owing to his public opinions against North American foreign policy during his stay as a visiting professor at Berkeley – he was banned from entering the United States. On the other hand, he maintained that ‘several of the signatories (Bastianes, Colabella, Hopen, Menéndez and Rapoport) had been working, whenever possible, with imperialist funds, without any of the guarantees that had been given to *Proyecto Marginalidad*. What is more, they had been working on investigations that were not precisely dedicated – like ours – to examining the mechanisms of neo-colonial exploitation that operate in Latin America’ (*ibid.*). Near the end of his new letter, Nun reiterated that:

The team *Marginalidad*, by contract, has exclusive control of the data collected; consequently, the information we will ‘place in the hands of imperialism’ will only be what we publish. In other words, no imperialist agency, whether working openly or covertly, will know our results before the general public. (1969c: 18)

On 28 February 1969, Daniel Goldstein also had the chance to reply. In his rejoinder to Nun's arguments, Goldstein sustained his previous arguments and elaborated on the aspects related to 'sociological espionage'. He estimated that 'actually, only a minimal portion of this type of project is surrounded by the mystery and the security measures typical of conventional espionage. Most of the sociological espionage is done openly because its academic prestige helps to camouflage it. Once the scientific "objectivity" of a project like this is shattered, the Americans generally abandon it' (1969b: 19). This is closely linked to the problems posed by Price (2002) in relation to the *unintentional-indirect* interface between social sciences and espionage, in which the researcher would become an unsuspecting employee of the secret services. Within this non-conformist imaginary, the FF was nothing less than a covert arm of US intelligence that intended to coopt Latin American social scientists – most of the time, without their being aware – behind the *scientific* façade of those research projects.

Conclusion

This article was written as an attempt to contribute to knowledge about the debates that marked an era, on the one hand, but also determined the future course of an academic field that would later on be subject to unprecedented persecution and repression in the second half of the 1970s. The long and complex task of reconstructing in detail the path social sciences followed in Argentina, paying special attention to disciplinary specificities and institutional contexts (as well as to the relationship between the two) is work still pending. This article set out to analyse a specific problem that conditioned the disciplinary fields of social sciences from the beginning of the decade of the 1960s. The US philanthropic foundations and official agencies (especially the intelligence agencies involved in projects such as Camelot) promoted powerful imaginaries, not only through their direct actions through subsidies, but also for the debates they generated. They crystallized images that revolved around political dimensions such as imperialism or the liberation of Third World peoples. They also referred to more specific problems – though linked to the previous ones – concerning the dynamics of science within and outside Latin America. In addition, the course of action of these foundations confronts us with the ominous power that the sources of financing exert over research: they set the topics, impose specific perspectives and establish circuits of legitimation that favor an international division of scientific labor that reproduces the center–periphery antinomy. At the same time, their practices demonstrate that there are wide margins for the creativity of researchers who, although working under the rules of the scientific field, can appeal to their own criteria and work professionally within the theoretical and epistemological parameters they follow, independently of the fact that the origin of the funds for their work came under scrutiny.

The FF, as possibly no other international institution could, provides an excellent window on understanding the ideological passions that characterized the 1960s. These passions determined the path of social sciences in Argentina. In this sense, social sciences in the whole continent, clearly influenced by local and global policies, were involved in debates related to the applied dimension of science. Sociology and anthropology were incorporated into the revolutionary utopias of the time and, conditioned by

the political specificities of each country (in Argentina, the influence of peronism was a key factor), they entered the logic of a world strongly marked by the *Cold War* and by concepts such as *ideological frontiers*. Argentinian social scientists thereby became involved, with different degrees of commitment and in the context of a relatively fast and early complete institutionalization, in ethical, ideological and epistemological dilemmas. These dilemmas generated strong fragmentations in a field not yet consolidated, whose constitutive agreements and common projects rapidly fell apart. Intellectuals from all over Latin America explicitly reflected upon the consequences that the sources of financing (national states, private centers, philanthropic foundations and foreign intelligence agencies) had on scientific and intellectual production. Academic discourses were imbued with suspicions, accusations and statements of principle to the extent that scientific research was left with guilt that had to be cleared. This removal should take place on the basis of a careful justification that might dispel any doubts about the legitimacy of the origin of the financial support for the projects, the investigation objectives, the destination of the data and the use of that information. The political radicalization took these debates to such an extreme that not only were conventional forms of scientific practice condemned, but also science as a field was subordinated to much more general objectives, such as the transformation of society and the elimination of social injustice. Any research (or postgraduate program) that was not able to demonstrate beyond doubt its pure origin and its transforming objective was destined to fall prey to accusatory logic that pushed it closer to (or even equated it with) the *enemy*. A clear example of this was the ‘purity bath’ (the conditions accepted by the sponsoring institution) alleged by the director of *Proyecto Marginalidad*, who could not avoid the proliferation of interpretations that installed that project as a continuation of Project Camelot.

Of course, some arguments simply cannot be ignored, such as those that position subsidies from foreign foundations as key tools for consolidating criteria imposed by international research centers. These organizations do not necessarily have the sensibility to detect the importance of certain national or regional topics, or of simple stylistic variations of a discipline within a national context. Dealing with those constraints, some state institutions (such as CONICET) and private centers (such as the ITDT) played a crucial role in establishing the meritocratic criteria (postgraduate studies abroad, publications in international scientific journals, peer evaluation) that were questioned for their elitism, another component of the native version of *cientificismo*. Thus, the Argentinian social sciences of the following decades were characterized by ‘poor science’, which implied the almost total absence of postgraduate studies in the country, and the lack of scientific journals, relevant research and consolidated networks. On the other hand, the heavily questioned *Proyecto Marginalidad* is still an obligatory reference that, more than 40 years after its implementation, has a remarkable current relevance as an attempt to explain the conditions of poverty and marginality in Latin America. It was a project that entailed, for a sector of that generation that did not agree with the accusations, a possible opening in how to operationalize analytic categories offered by Marxism to understand the national reality. Some young scientists could have also adhered to the postulates of revolutionary movements, but trusted the epistemological principles of their respective disciplines. In general terms, *Proyecto Marginalidad*, alongside many other research

projects carried out in more conservative theoretical frameworks (such as the work of Gino Germani), constitute an important benchmark. However, above all, they show that even within the parameters of the highly contested *cientificismo*, Argentinian social sciences had already developed the practice of dealing with the national reality in terms of creative conceptual frameworks (Blanco, 2006a, 2006b). Since they were flatly denied, the new critical and revolutionary schools of thought put their ideological convictions before the argument in disciplinary terms that generated debates that transcended the era.

The conspiracy theories that circulated during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s have been refuted in this article. If this refutation is correct, it may have wider relevance, because such conspiracy hypotheses still have a powerful impact on contemporary interpretations, both in central and peripheral contexts. On the contrary, what *Proyecto Marginalidad* makes manifest is that the struggles in the academic field and the ideological passions they involved weakened the foundations on which the social sciences in Argentina had attained their definitive institutionalization. Thus the case that has been analysed shows how some of the tensions that characterized Latin American social sciences, within a context of political instability, produced institutional ruptures and genealogical impossibilities (Guber and Visacovsky, 1999). Because of this discontinuity, research projects and curricular programs (without any PhD program at any Argentinian university) were unstable or incomplete. The mere possibility of achieving some sense of stability or continuity was going literally to disappear in 1976, when the new military government explicitly repressed (among many other things) the development of the humanities and social sciences.

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Notes

1. *Project Camelot* consisted of a 'scientific' research project that was financed by the US Department of Defense and the US Navy and was addressed to counter-insurgency in Latin America. The Special Operation Research Office (SORO) prepared this study in order to detect processes related to the formation of *guerrillas* in the majority of Latin American countries, including Argentina.
2. 'Neo-colonial wedges' is a rough translation of the term *cuñas neocoloniales*. Such rough translations for this type of native concepts will be placed in square brackets. However, original expressions will be maintained in italics since they belong to the category of actors whose conceptual systems and behaviors this article attempts to explain in a contextual manner. Guillermo Gutiérrez, director of a paradigmatic journal of the time, *Antropología del Tercer Mundo* [Anthropology of the Third World] (Barletta, 2001; Barletta and Lenci, 2001), explicitly defined the term *cuña neocolonial* as 'an aspect of imperial penetration' that is produced in the culture of countries that, although 'formally independent', are nevertheless victims of 'cultural dependence' (1969 [n.p.]).
3. Different authors should be consulted in order to get a general sense of the debates over the work of the philanthropic foundations. Some authors have been very critical regarding the

impact of such organizations on academic fields (Arnove and Pinede, 2007; Feldman, 2007; Fisher, 1980; Roelofs, 2007; Wax, 2008). In contrast to ‘conspiratorial’ interpretations, some other authors (Bulmer, 1984; Cueto, 1994; Miceli, 1993; Platt, 1996) have played down the importance of these foundations’ capacity globally and mechanically to manipulate – according to their own interests – the policies of scientific investigation, both within and outside the United States.

4. The Department of Sociology of the University of Buenos Aires obtained the sum of US\$210,000 thanks to a FF grant in 1960 for the purpose of ‘expand[ing] teaching and research’. This subsidy was disbursed over 5 years (US\$16,000 in 1961; US\$40,000 in 1962; US\$113,000 in 1963; US\$37,500 in 1964; and US\$3,500 in 1965). The funds allowed the Department of Sociology to hire experts and foreign professors (US\$100,000), to give scholarships and training in foreign countries (US\$55,000), to set up a library (US\$30,000) and to buy equipment (US\$15,000). In addition, during those years, the Department of Sociology received a complementary grant of US\$35,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation.
5. ILPES was an organization that had emerged within the framework of the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), and had been promoted by the Argentinian economist Raúl Prebisch. At that time, ILPES was directed by the prestigious Spanish sociologist José Medina Echavarría, who was exiled in Mexico. DESAL was a Catholic research center that received regular financial support from the FF. The Jesuit priest Roger Vekemans (who had graduated from the Catholic University of Louvain) was a prominent member of this institution.
6. The details of the testimonies provided in personal interviews by the directors of the project have been elaborated in a separate text (Gil, 2011).
7. The distinguished Brazilian sociologist Fernando Enrique Cardoso started a discussion with José Nun after their confrontations on the occasion of the elaboration of *Proyecto Marginalidad*. In 1970, Cardoso wrote an article for the *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (2001) in which he stated that Nun had ‘misread’ Marx’s work and had misinterpreted the *Grundrisse*, Marx’s complementary writings on capitalism. Cardoso also accused Nun of being contradictory in his own statements, such as regarding the consequences of development and the capacity of monopolistic capitalism to create employment. In 1971, Nun’s reply appeared in the same journal. Apart from maintaining that Cardoso had made a ‘compendium of misunderstandings that clearly avoids any discussion of the deeper issues I presented’ (Nun, 2001: 185), the director of *Proyecto Marginalidad* accused his opponent of manipulating Marx’s quotations as well as quotations from his own text, which originated the polemics.
8. After the military *coup d’état* in 1966, a series of repressive measures was applied. For example, security forces burst into university buildings and teachers resigned en masse.
9. Historical revisionism is a historiographical movement that arose in the early 20th century as a reaction to what is commonly known as ‘official history’. It questioned the interpretations of scholarly history and the creation of the pantheon of national heroes. According to Halperín Donghi (2005), this critical position revolves around two fundamental aspects: the rejection of political democratization and the insertion of Argentina in the world. On the one hand, political democratization is interpreted as placing the country in the hands of leaders who were capable of manipulating the electoral machinery. On the other hand, Argentina’s integration to the international market was summed up in the unequal relationship with Great Britain. Therefore, every successful political process in Argentina was seen as a betrayal of the national and

popular interests, with only some specific exceptions; for example, federal *caudillos* of the 19th century.

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