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US Foundations, Cultural Imperialism and Transnational Misunderstandings: The Case of the Marginality Project

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Abstract. This article analyses the failure of the Proyecto Marginalidad (Marginality Project), which the Ford Foundation financed in the 1960s, and the political and academic conflicts that it provoked. It takes into consideration the viewpoints of the principal actors involved (the director of the project, the Ford Foundation, and its critics). The original aim of the Marginality Project was to study the conditions of marginality of urban and rural populations in various Latin American countries, but it generated few results. The article shows that this outcome resulted from a series of 'structural misunderstandings', due to the fact that the different actors did not share what, in the words of Marc Angenot, might be called 'social discourse'. In other words, their assumptions about what was thinkable and sayable in the Latin American context in the late 1960s and early 1970s diverged significantly, giving rise to a series of conflicts about the objectives and conduct of the project.

Keywords: Argentina, Ford Foundation, sociology, marginality, cultural imperialism

The failure of the Proyecto Marginalidad (Marginality Project), which originated in Chile in 1966 with funding from the Ford Foundation and aimed to investigate the conditions of marginality of rural and urban populations in several countries in the region, was, due to its international impact and repercussions, a 'defining moment' in the development of the social sciences in Latin America during the Cold War period. The project, which had an initial budget of US$ 250,000, did not produce the results expected, but instead generated serious political and institutional conflicts among different actors in various countries. Those responsible for the project found themselves in a very delicate political position. For the Ford

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Foundation, the project was an academic as well as political and financial failure that forced the officials involved to reconsider the criteria they used to award grants in Latin America. In the words of one of the people involved in the administration of the project, 'No other grant in Latin America has been as costly in terms of the Foundation's credibility, its relations with the scholarly community and its ability to assist research on important and sensitive issues.'[1] What were the reasons for this multifaceted failure?

On the basis of a close ethnographic reading of the sources available, this paper attempts to reconstruct the actors' conceptualisations of the 'Marginality affair', demonstrating the ways in which their conceptual universes diverged. This will shed light on more general phenomena surrounding intercultural links and allow us to approach transnational history from a different perspective.

Over the last few decades transnational history has established itself as an important subfield in historiography, giving rise to debates, publications, collections and dictionaries.[2] This way of understanding history emphasises the migrations and flows of ideas, individuals, and both material and symbolic goods beyond cultural and national boundaries. Although the best works on transnational history focus specifically on the processes of reception and appropriation of systems of thought or symbolic goods – 'the texts circulate without their context', as Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out[3] – in general emphasis is placed on the homogenising aspects of these movements.[4] This article, by examining one specific case, provides a different perspective on the

[1] Nita R. Manitzas to Peter D. Bell, 'Terminal Evaluation. Torcuato Di Tella Institute. Research on Marginal Population (PA 68–143)', 4 April 1973, Ford Foundation Archive, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York (hereafter FFA).

[2] See, for example, Akira Iriye and Pierre Yves Saunier (eds.), *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), or the books in the same publisher's Transnational History series. For a discussion of 'the transnational' as an analytical methodology and a property of the subject of study, see also 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History', *American Historical Review*, 111: 5 (2006), pp. 1441–64.

[3] 'The fact that texts circulate without their context, that they do not import with them the field of production ... and that the recipients, who are themselves inserted in a different field of production, reinterpret them according to the structure of the field of reception, generates formidable misunderstandings': Pierre Bourdieu, 'Las condiciones sociales de la circulación de ideas', in Bourdieu, *Intelectuales, política y poder* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1999), p. 161, my translation.

[4] See, for instance, Iriye and Saunier, *Palgrave Dictionary*. Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth emphasise the differences that exist in the reception of certain forms of knowledge and practices in several Latin American countries, but claim that these processes of reception reproduce in the region struggles for the appropriation of symbolic capital ('palace wars') that take place in the 'central' countries. This generates homogeneity in the process of reception. See Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth, *The Internationalization of Palace Wars: Lawyers, Economists and the Contest to Transform Latin American States* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

process of transnationalisation of the social sciences in Latin America. The events generated around the Marginality Project, including its transfer from Chile to Argentina, allow us to break into a universe of 'structural misunderstandings', which Bourdieu discusses in relation to the international circulation of ideas, albeit from a different perspective.[5]

Marc Angenot defines 'social discourse' as the discursive forms included within the historical limits of what is thinkable and sayable in a given moment and cultural space. In this context, we might define 'structural misunderstandings' as the differences that are produced in diverse cultural spaces between the respective 'social discourses' and, particularly, between the 'irreducible assumptions of what is considered to be socially plausible, to which all those who participate in the debates refer, in order to establish their discrepancies and disagreements'.[6] In other words, we would encounter structural misunderstandings when communication between different actors becomes difficult, or even impossible, because they do not share the same universe of what is thinkable and sayable at a given moment. Thus, I will attempt to analyse the Marginality Project and the problems and conflicts emerging around it from the perspectives of the actors involved, trying to reveal the 'irreducible assumptions of what is considered to be socially plausible' and analysing the extent to which they really were irreducible.[7]

The Modernisation of the Social Sciences in Latin America and the Cold War

From the 1950s, the social sciences were institutionalised in Latin America. New university departments and programmes in sociology, economics and anthropology, together with updated networks for the circulation and publication of ideas, emerged in the majority of countries in the region.[8]

[5] Bourdieu, 'Las condiciones', p. 161.

[6] Marc Angenot, *El discurso social: los límites históricos de lo pensable y lo decible* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2012), pp. 38–9.

[7] The Marginality Project has usually been interpreted as a case of cultural imperialism, even by otherwise sophisticated pieces of scholarship on Latin American cultural history in the 1960s. See, for instance, Claudia Gilman, *Entre la pluma y el fusil: debates y dilemas del escritor revolucionario en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003). Recently, Adriana Petra published an excellent paper on the Marginality Project, focusing on its local dimension: see her 'El Proyecto Marginalidad: los intelectuales latinoamericanos y el imperialismo cultural', *Políticas de la memoria*, 8/9 (2009), pp. 249–60. Gastón Gil analyses the role of the Ford Foundation in Argentina in a more general way, and devotes one chapter of his recent book to the Marginality Project, also concentrating on the local dimension of the 'affair': Gastón Gil, *Las sombras del Camelot: las ciencias sociales y la Fundación Ford en la Argentina de los 60* (Mar del Plata: EUDEM, 2011); see also Carlos Belvedere, 'El inconcluso Proyecto Marginalidad de América Latina: una lectura extemporánea a casi treinta años', *Apuntes de Investigación*, 1 (1997), pp. 97–115.

[8] An exception is the case of Brazil, where the social sciences became institutionalised as a result of the creation of local universities during the 1930s. It could be said that Brazilian

This process was strongly linked to a climate of ideas associated with the concepts of *desarrollismo* (developmentalism) and modernisation, understood to be 'unifying myths' for reformist intellectuals and politicians in Latin America.[9] The 'new social sciences', which were disassociated from the old essayist tradition in Latin America, particularly in Argentina, were, above all, of US inspiration.[10] After the Second World War, the principal centres for the production and circulation of social knowledge moved from Europe to the United States. This was not simply a geographical transfer; it was also linked to the establishment of new methodological paradigms of a more empirical nature and, perhaps more importantly, to the emergence of new mechanisms of legitimisation within the field. This phenomenon has been defined as one of the clearest demonstrations of the globalisation of the academic world.

The role played by US philanthropic foundations was a novel element in the consolidation of the modern social sciences and the circulation of ideas. Throughout the 1960s, in the context of the Cold War, intensified in Latin America by the Cuban Revolution, these foundations began to finance the modernisation of the social sciences, as they had previously done in Europe.[11] The foundations fulfilled a fundamental role in the institutionalisation and 'Americanisation' of the social sciences. This process has been considered both as a welcome renewal of forms of knowledge that were regarded as indispensable for modern society, and as an attempt to impose a type of cultural imperialism which, in many cases, was associated with other, less

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universities, which were created much later than universities elsewhere in Latin America, were 'born modern' and quickly inserted into a dense transnational network: see Sergio Miceli (ed.), *Historia das ciências sociais no Brasil* (São Paulo: Vertice, 1989).

[9] Carlos Altamirano, *Bajo el signo de las masas (1943–1973)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2001). For a comparative study of developmentalism, see Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[10] Alejandro Blanco, *Razón y modernidad: Gino Germani y la sociología argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2006).

[11] In 1959 the Ford Foundation created its Latin American and Caribbean Program. It established offices in Buenos Aires and Bogotá in 1962, in Santiago in 1963, and in Lima in 1965: see Sergio Miceli (ed.), *A Fundação Ford no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Sumaré, 1993), and Nigel Brooke and Mary Witoshynsky (eds.), *Os 40 anos da Fundação Ford no Brasil: uma parceria para a mudança social* (São Paulo: EDUNSP, 2002). The US foundations, particularly the Rockefeller Foundation, had a long history of operations in Latin America, focused especially on medical issues: on the Rockefeller Foundation in Latin America, see Marcos Cueto, *Missionaries of Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994). See also Robert Arnove (ed.), *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism: The Foundations at Home and Abroad* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980); Donald Fisher, *Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1993); and Inderjeet Permar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

subtle, forms of imperialism. The Ford Foundation, which invested the largest amount of money in Latin America during this time, contributed significantly to the development of these two contradictory perspectives.[12]

On many occasions the foundations adapted their actions to US foreign policy objectives, particularly in relation to Latin America in the context of the Cold War.[13] Following the Cuban Revolution, Latin America became a priority in US foreign policy and this resulted in an abundance of federal funds that became available for Latin American studies and the creation of numerous area studies centres and programmes in the US academic world focusing on the region. Between 1958 and 1970 the number of university courses in the United States dedicated to Latin America doubled. By 1968, some 200 institutions in the country belonged to an umbrella organisation, the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs.[14] At the highest levels, the connections and networks between the administration of the foundations and the US government were evident.[15] As an internal document of the Ford Foundation recognised, one of its main responsibilities was that 'the training [provided by the Foundation] ... advance either directly or indirectly, United States interests abroad'.[16]

The establishment of the 'new social sciences', as well as the role of the foundations, generated strong resistance amongst the most radicalised sectors within the intellectual communities of individual Latin American countries.

[12] The Ford Foundation funded almost two-thirds of all the projects abroad financed by the 200 most important US-based foundations between 1971 and 1975. It awarded grants totalling US$ 50 million for social science projects in Latin America between 1959 and 1980: see Robert Arnove, 'Foundations', in Arnove (ed.), *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism*, p. 307.

[13] The Ford Foundation, in particular, provided funds to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, renamed the International Association for Cultural Freedom after it became public knowledge that it had received large amounts of money from the CIA. This was a transnational network of progressive anti-communist intellectuals formed in 1950 with the supposed aim of defending freedom of thought and expression: see Benedetta Calandra, 'La Ford Foundation y la "Guerra Fría cultural" en América Latina', *Americanía*, 1 (2011), pp. 8–25.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[15] There are numerous examples of high-ranking officers of foundations with strong links to the US government and to US business. John McCloy was successively assistant secretary of defence, chairman of the board of Chase Manhattan Bank, president of the World Bank and a member of the board of trustees of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Robert McNamara was president of Ford Motor Company, president of the World Bank, secretary of defence and a member of the board of trustees of the Ford Foundation, of which McGeorge Bundy (national security adviser to presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson) was president between 1966 and 1979.

[16] Ford Foundation, International Training and Research Papers, Board of Overseas Training and Research Meeting, 15 Sep. 1953, quoted in Edward H. Berman, 'The Foundations' Role in American Foreign Policy: The Case of Africa post 1945', in Arnove (ed.), *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism*, p. 208.

They denounced the supposedly objective and apolitical social sciences proposed by academic centres and foundations in the United States as forms of imperialism in disguise.

The Ghost of Camelot

In some instances the funding of research projects related to social sciences in Latin America was directly connected to political and even military decisions. Such was the case of the Camelot Project, which the Pentagon initiated in 1964 through the Special Operations Research Office located on the campus of the American University in Washington, DC. The project had a budget of over US$ 6 million, making it probably one of the best-funded social science research programmes in the United States up to that point. Its aim was to establish parameters by which it would be possible to foresee and control potentially revolutionary situations in the third world. Many important Latin American social scientists participated in it, without knowing about the origins of the funding. They included, as a consultant to the project, Gino Germani, widely considered to be the founding father of scientific sociology in Argentina and a recipient of funding from Ford and other foundations. The project ended in abrupt failure when a Norwegian researcher, Johan Galtung, revealed its origins and objectives in Chile.[17]

One can draw two conclusions from this episode. First, and most obviously, the US government was using its resources to fund supposedly scientific projects with political goals; second, the very existence of this project revealed an unusual faith in the social sciences on the part of the US government. This confidence was not new. During the Second World War the US government had employed a range of social scientists, ranging from economists and sociologists to psychoanalysts, to help them better understand enemy societies and plan their future after victory. However, the Camelot Project was probably the first example in which they used the social sciences as the

[17] Louis Horowitz, 'Vida e morte do Projeto Camelot', *Revista Civilização Brasileira*, 1: 8 (1966), pp. 25–48; Louis Horowitz (ed.), *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot: Studies in the Relationship between Social Sciences and Practical Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967); Ellen Herman, 'Project Camelot and the Career of Postwar Psychology', in Christopher Simpson (ed.), *Universities and Empires: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences during the Cold War* (New York: New Press, 1998); R. A. Nisbet, 'Project Camelot: An Autopsy', in Philip Rieff (ed.), *On Intellectuals: Theoretical Studies, Case Studies* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969). For a more recent analysis that focuses on the consequences of Camelot in the United States, see Marl Solovey, 'Project Camelot and the 1960s Epistemological Revolution: Rethinking the Politics-Patronage-Social Sciences Nexus', *Social Studies of Science*, 31: 2 (2001), pp. 171–206. For the impact of Camelot in Chile, see Juan José Navarro, 'Cold War in Latin America: The Camelot Project (1964–1965) and the Political and Academic Reactions of the Chilean Left', *Comparative Sociology*, 10: 5 (2011), pp. 807–25.

principal, although indirect, means to achieve objectives for which, on other occasions, detachments of marines had proved to be the most efficient instrument of policy.

It would, however, be rather simplistic to suggest that the US government was working from the shadows to manipulate the foundations providing funding for the development of 'modern' social sciences in Latin America. The interconnections among US foundations, the interests of the US government, Latin American governments and social scientists from the North and South have been (and still are) part of a very complex structure that we can scarcely begin to discern. On the other hand, one can state that in the majority of cases the foundations based in Latin America were quite receptive to the local conditions in which they had to operate, and the views of staff in the region quite frequently diverged from the official policies of the organisations that employed them.[18] Thus, for example, it is known that while the US government was supporting the coup d'état in Chile that overthrew President Salvador Allende in 1973, the Ford Foundation, which was funding both left-wing and moderate researchers in the social sciences, literally helped to save the lives of many academics and activists.[19] In the same way, in 1977, during the last military dictatorship that devastated Argentina (also with support from the US government), the Ford Foundation awarded significant subsidies to help academics expelled from their universities for political reasons.

The Marginality Project

In 1966 the Ford Foundation awarded a grant of US$ 250,000 to Chile's Centro de Desarrollo Económico y Social de América Latina (Centre of Economic and Social Development in Latin America, DESAL) in order to undertake a research project to provide empirical information about social marginality in urban and rural settlements in various Latin American countries. UNESCO would provide co-financing for the project. From the outset, the nature of the institution receiving the funding caused friction within the Foundation itself. DESAL was directed by Roger Vekemans, a Belgian Jesuit priest resident in Chile since 1957, who, at the end of the 1950s, had organised the school of sociology at the Universidad Católica de Chile (Catholic University). This centre soon became one of the bastions of 'modern' and 'scientific' sociology in the country. Moreover, Vekemans, a

[18] See Claudio González Chiaramonte, 'Expandiendo paradigmas, rediseñando fronteras: la diplomacia cultural norteamericana y la búsqueda de una comunidad interamericana de académicos', *Revista Esboços*, 20 (2008), pp. 223–43.

[19] Calandra, 'The Ford Foundation'.

strong anti-Marxist, had himself become one of the ideologists of Chile's *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Christian Democratic Party).[20] Through the Universidad Católica he organised a 'cultural promotion' programme, intended to integrate marginal social groups through neighbourhood meetings, mothers' centres and other civil organisations, until the victory of Salvador Allende and Popular Unity led him to move to Colombia in 1971, where he founded the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo e Integración de América Latina (Centre of Studies for the Development and Integration of Latin America, CEDIAL).[21] However, the most controversial aspect of the appointment of Vekemans and DESAL was the (apparently true) rumour that the Belgian Jesuit had previously received money from the CIA.[22]

At this time, and again in tune with the softer aspects of US foreign policy, the Ford Foundation's strategy in Chile was, in the words of one of its leading officials, 'highly supportive of the Christian Democratic Administration, and the Marginality Project was constructed within this framework'.[23] For this reason, Vekemans' project seemed attractive, given that its aims were not only to provide information and analysis but also to advise the Chilean government on where and how to focus its resources in order to aid the integration of marginal groups into Chilean society.

However, it was also recognised that Vekemans' previous record provoked a degree of concern amongst some of the Ford Foundation staff, above all due to the possible association with the Camelot experience that the new project might produce. With the aim of 'counteracting' and 'balancing' the ideological slant and, above all, the image that the project might have in view of its association with DESAL, Ford Foundation officials decided that DESAL would share responsibility for it with the Instituto Latinoamericano de Planificación Económica y Social (Latin American Institute of Economic and Social Planning, ILPES), an organisation that Raúl Prebisch had created within the Economic Commission for Latin America (Comisión Económica para América Latina, CEPAL).[24] The nomination of Fernando Henrique

[20] Petra, 'El Proyecto Marginalidad'.

[21] On Vekemans' ideas on marginality, see Roger Vekemans, *Marginalidad en América Latina: un ensayo de diagnóstico* (Barcelona: DESAL/Herder, 1967).

[22] Apparently, when Ford Foundation officials asked Vekemans about his relationship with the CIA, he strongly denied the existence of any association. However, Vekemans later acknowledged the existence of a German foundation through which the CIA had channelled funds to DESAL, although he claimed this was an isolated case that would not be repeated: Kalman Silvert to William D. Carmichael, 'Marginal Populations in Latin America – Torcuato Di Tella Institute (PA68–143)', Inter-Office Memorandum, 26 June 1973, FFA.

[23] Manitzas to Bell, 'Terminal Evaluation'.

[24] After the creation of CEPAL and the establishment of other international organisations such as the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, FLACSO), Santiago had become a magnet for Latin American social scientists, especially as other countries in the region fell under military rule in the 1960s. On the role of

Cardoso of ILPES as co-director of the project complemented all of this, as did the appointment of an external full-time director of research; this post was offered to José Nun, a young Argentine lawyer and political scientist with Marxist leanings who had trained with the renowned sociologist Alain Touraine in France.[25] Cardoso had arrived in Chile after the military coup that ended João Goulart's government in Brazil in 1964, and was quickly appointed as deputy director of ILPES. Nun in turn brought in two young left-wing intellectuals from Argentina, Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Marín, who had been active political militants both within and beyond the university, as full-time researchers.

The project would also have an international advisory committee. Its members were Florestan Fernandes (Brazil), José Silva Michelena (Venezuela), Alessandro Pizzorno (Italy), Kalman Silvert (the United States) and a Spanish exile, José Medina Echavarría, all of whom were indisputably outstanding international figures in the social sciences. By including left-wing Latin American researchers, the Ford Foundation was attempting to distance itself completely from the 'Camelot syndrome'. This inclusionary policy should also be considered in the wider context of 'double contamination', which came to exist between the foundations (particularly Ford) and Latin American academics. In effect, while the US foundations were trying to export the US social sciences model, turning it into a global one, the foundation officials based in Latin America, who were in close contact with the local universities and academic world, were not immune to the processes of politicisation to which they were witnesses (and sometimes involuntary protagonists), and which often ended up radicalising their world views. As an Argentine sociologist, Torcuato Di Tella, pointed out with reference to the officials of the US foundations who had worked in Latin America, 'those good, old liberals ... moderate and progressive in their country ... were surprised by the generalised rejection that they received from Latin American intellectuals'. In response to this situation, 'they themselves became increasingly left-wing ...; they bought into the myth of the radicalised Latin American groups and pushed their projects through the Foundations' bureaucracies'.[26] Some of the foundation officials had formed part of the so-called 'red diapers' generation, while others, such as Nita Manitzas, had sympathies with the Cuban experience.[27]

Raúl Prebisch as an 'intellectual caudillo', see Joseph Hodara, *Prebisch y la CEPAL: sustancia, trayectoria y contexto institucional* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1987).

[25] When the Ford Foundation got in contact with him, Nun was a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

[26] Quoted by González Chiaramonte, 'Expandiendo paradigmas', p. 239.

[27] See David Barkin and Nita Manitzas (eds.), *Cuba: camino abierto* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1973).

The Ford Foundation's attempt to generate a system of 'ideological checks and balances' quickly failed. The ideological, theoretical and personal differences between Nun, Vekemans and Cardoso soon became apparent.[28] In July 1967 DESAL and ILPES dismissed the Argentine researchers (Nun and his collaborators) and simultaneously withdrew from the project, apparently as a result of their differences with the orientation that Nun was trying to impose on it. Finally, and after exploring other possible options, the Ford Foundation decided to continue with a limited version of the project, using the funds that remained from the original budget. It was therefore transferred to the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires, a think tank which already had an important history of grants from the Ford Foundation. Nun remained as director and Marín and Murmis as the principal researchers.[29] According to some Ford Foundation officials, the choice of researchers was not necessarily due to their previous academic careers. In the words of Kalman Silvert, who was very involved in the project:

> No one of the principal investigators (Nun, Murmis, Marín) has ever completed a large-scale piece of research. No one of them has completed a doctorate. Among them, they have not published sufficient articles to make up one book-length series of essays. Since past performance is *statistically* (not necessarily *logically*) the best indicator of future performance, any reasonable man would have doubts as to their ability to conclude this proposed research.[30]

Not only was Nun appointed director of the project, but he also managed to reconstitute the advisory committee, which had been dissolved, with internationally renowned academics with whom he had strong personal connections. The new committee comprised Alain Touraine, with whom Nun had studied in Paris and struck up a close personal relationship; David Apter, his mentor in Berkeley when Nun was a visiting professor there; and Eric Hobsbawm, then a reader in history at Birkbeck College, London, and a

[28] Interview with José Nun by Mariano Plotkin and Federico Neiburg, Buenos Aires, 11 Nov. 2001.

[29] Other researchers involved in the project also had a trajectory of political activism: they included Ernesto Laclau, director of *La Lucha Obrera*, a journal published by the Socialist Party of the National Left; Beba Balvé, a militant of the Argentine Socialist Vanguard Party; and Marcelo Nowerstein, a leader of the Student Revolutionary Socialist Tendency and militant of a Trotskyist party, Política Obrera. On the Instituto Di Tella, see Federico Neiburg and Mariano Plotkin, 'Los economistas: el Instituto Di Tella y las nuevas elites estatales en los años sesenta', in Neiburg and Plotkin (eds.), *Intelectuales y expertos: la construcción del conocimiento social en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2004).

[30] Quoted from a letter from Silvert dated Aug. 1967, in Manitzas to Bell, 'Terminal Evaluation', emphasis in original. Manitzas does not provide any additional comment. Kalman Silvert was a prestigious political scientist with a brilliant academic career. He was the first president of the Latin American Studies Association in the United States and a consultant to the Ford Foundation for Latin American issues.

leading British Marxist historian who had developed an interest in Latin America.

The conflicts did not end there, however. Although the Ford Foundation had made it clear from the start that there would be no additional funding other than that remaining from the original budget (US$ 194,000, supplemented by US$ 15,000 for the expenses of the new advisory committee),[31] Nun apparently insisted that he would need the total amount that had been originally allocated in order to complete the research. According to Nita Manitzas, the Argentine researchers were not prepared to make even minimal budgetary savings and insisted that their salaries should remain at international levels even though they were now living in their own country. At the same time they employed a large number of research assistants to undertake the fieldwork.[32]

A series of confusing disputes occurred between Nun and the Foundation over the problems of finance throughout the months that followed. The outcome promised, a sizeable volume presenting the conclusions of the research, never appeared, despite the optimism shown by the members of the advisory committee (at least officially, as we shall see). In July 1969 Touraine wrote that the committee was sure that Nun and his team would deliver a series of research reports totalling some 800 pages before the end of the year. However, according to Ford Foundation officials, the file on the project could not be closed until 1973 because Nun never delivered the final report.[33]

In 1968 the situation became even more complicated when a nationalist student group from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (School of Philosophy and Literature) at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), where the project's researchers held teaching positions, denounced the Marginality Project as a form of espionage and a direct continuation of the Camelot Project. This report, the content of which will be outlined below, was simply the initial spark that detonated an explosion, as the uproar from different sectors of the Left – both those linked to the traditional left-wing parties and to the newer independent ones – multiplied. It also became internationalised. Two Cuban periodicals, *Granma* and *Casa de las Américas*, as well as *Marcha*, a weekly magazine published in Uruguay, echoed a polemical debate that was becoming increasingly virulent and in which ideological questioning became mixed up with *ad hominem* accusations.

[31] Petra, 'El Proyecto Marginalidad'.

[32] According to Manitzas to Bell, 'Terminal Evaluation', Nun also managed to have his salary paid tax-free and in the United States. This apparently contradicted the Foundation's standard policies.

[33] Peter Bell to William D. Carmichael, Inter-Office Memorandum, 9 April 1973, FFA.

The Misunderstandings

The local critics

In order to understand the nature of the criticisms that those on the Left formulated with regard to the Marginality Project and the men in charge of it, it is necessary to take into account the main characteristics of the way in which the Argentine academic world and the country's broader intellectual community operated during the 1960s.[34]

Following the overthrow of the Perón administration in 1955, universities in Argentina went through a process of modernisation that would result in a period remembered nowadays, perhaps with a shade of hyperbole, as the 'golden era' of the national universities. In particular, this process of modernisation was linked with the democratisation of the universities and their redefinition as spaces dedicated to the production of knowledge as well as its circulation and, above all, to the creation of social sciences programmes in subjects such as economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology and education. Between the end of the 1950s and the military coup of 1966, the Argentine public universities constituted, and were perceived as, 'democratic islands' in a country where there was otherwise very little democracy.

With regard to sociology, one must highlight the central importance of Gino Germani and his strategy to 'refound' the discipline. Whereas in other countries, like Brazil, the new social sciences began on the basis of an existing local tradition linked to essayism, which was both defended and criticised,[35] in Argentina, a country polarised by the experience of Peronism, Germani opted to construct his science from scratch; in other words, he presented himself as a total innovator, a real inventor, who did not recognise any valid predecessors amongst the local intellectuals.[36]

The sociology that Germani proposed was an empirical, transnational social science connected to the availability of international and, above all, US funding. However, in the highly politicised context of that period, such a configuration of the social sciences incurred fierce criticism from those who

[34] See Oscar Terán, *Nuestros años sesenta: la formación de la nueva izquierda intelectual en la Argentina (1956–1966)* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991); and Silvia Sigal, *Intelectuales y poder en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991). See also Mariano Plotkin, 'La cultura', in Plotkin (ed.), *Argentina: la búsqueda de la democracia* (Madrid: Fundación MAPFRE, 2012).

[35] Florestan Fernandes, for example, declared himself an heir of Euclydes da Cunha and Gilberto Freyre: see Florestan Fernandes, *A sociología no Brasil: contribução para o estudo de sua formação e desenvolvimento* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1977), *passim*.

[36] On Germani, see Alejandro Blanco (ed.), *Gino Germani: la renovación intelectual de la sociología* (Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2006); and Blanco, *Razón y modernidad*. See also Federico Neiburg, *Los intelectuales y la construcción del peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Alianza, 1998).

wanted the intellectual to be an agent of revolutionary change. In fact, two lines of argument against the type of research in the social sciences that had been created in the 'centre' developed in Latin America. The main advocates of the first, more moderate line of thought did not deny the importance of methodological contributions from 'the North' (Europe and the United States), but believed that these contributions should be made subordinate to forms of knowledge generated locally. Raúl Prebisch, an Argentine, and Orlando Fals Borda, a Colombian, are examples of this type of thought. The second, more radical line rejected outright the possibility of using methodologies, participating in projects and, above all, receiving funding from the United States. From this perspective, researchers who did so automatically became accomplices of imperialism. Writing in *Marcha* magazine, a Uruguayan critic, Angel Rama (who paradoxically later took up exile in the United States), argued that 'the problem is not the extent to which science has progressed – as if that abstract entelechy had ever existed – but the extent to which our liberation has progressed'.[37] This second line of thought, promoted by sectors closely linked to both Marxism and nationalism, was particularly strong in Argentina, where the term '*cientificismo*' was used, in a derogatory manner, to define any attempt to defend the autonomy of the scientific field from politics – with the term 'politics' here being understood as actions aimed at achieving 'national liberation'.[38] As Beatriz Sarlo points out, the term 'cientificismo' made reference to those 'positions that severed the links between scientific policies and politics while vindicating the autonomy of scientific research'.[39] In reality, as Gastón Gil demonstrates, the term related to two interconnected issues: on the one hand, it referred to the idea of maintaining a certain degree of autonomy in research with respect to politics (an idea that the radicals rejected), but on the other, it also referred to a particular way of establishing hierarchies within the academic field, which included adhesion to international research agendas and foreign sources of funding.[40] In general, those who wielded the charge against cientificismo were those excluded from international systems of validation and legitimisation of research.[41]

Belonging to an 'international academic circuit', even in the case of researchers who openly declared themselves to be Marxists, was thus seen as suspicious. The example of the Cuban Revolution and of

[37] Angel Rama, 'El amo y el servidor', *Marcha*, 20 May 1966, p. 31, quoted in Petra, 'El Proyecto Marginalidad'.
[38] On the idea of cientificismo, see Beatriz Sarlo, *La batalla de las ideas (1943–1973)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2001); see also Gil, *Las sombras del Camelot*.
[39] Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 89.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[41] See Bourdieu, 'El campo científico', in Bourdieu, *Intelectuales*, pp. 75–110.

intellectual-activist-martyr figures like Camilo Torres – a Colombian priest who died fighting for the guerrillas and who, incidentally, had been one of the founders of the 'modern' sociology programme at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, together with Orlando Fals Borda – provided clear examples of the place that intellectuals in Latin America were expected to occupy in their fight against imperialism. In this context critics understood imperialism, in linear fashion, as a structure without any fissures or nuances, in which the CIA and the Ford Foundation, the Marginality Project and the Camelot Project all played a similar role. As two opponents of the Marginality Project stated bluntly, 'the revolutionary changes that progressive intellectuals in dependent countries desire must inevitably be achieved through political activities and, in such a light, must include the replacement of current professional or intellectual work that takes place within the current institutional framework and in its service'.[42]

In Argentina, where the Peronist experience had become a collective trauma for left-wing intellectuals, who were disconnected from the working class, the politicisation of the intellectual arena in the 1960s and 1970s was very intense. The repressive policies of the civil and military governments that were in power after 1955, and particularly the dictatorship established in 1966, added to this. Their actions ended up uniting workers and intellectual critics, both groups that were victims of state repression, thus ending a long period during which the distance between intellectuals and workers, and, therefore, between intellectuals and Peronism, had increased.[43] Perón and Peronism became legitimate political actors for a significant number of left-wing intellectuals who gradually became identified with them. These changes produced a strong overlap between the intellectual and political arenas, and this in turn provoked, in the words of Silvia Sigal, a 'weak capacity for managing differences and controlling conflicts, due to the fact that their [the intellectuals'] forms of organisation were lacking in shared and stable cultural references', in contrast to other countries such as Brazil or Mexico.[44] In Argentina, perhaps more than in other Latin American countries, ideological beliefs became a central element in the construction of the intellectual arena, often replacing internal academic systems of validation and hierarchy.

[42] Daniel Hopen and Carlos Bastianes, 'Réplica a la carta abierta de Nun', April 1969. This is a 40-page document that includes an appendix reproducing the survey used by the Marginality Project in the Chaco. The document was not formally published but had a wide circulation. The copy used for this research is held in the 'Dossier Marginalidad' at the archive of the Centro de Documentación e Investigación sobre la Cultura de Izquierda (Centre for the Documentation and Investigation of the Culture of the Left, CEDINCI) in Buenos Aires.

[43] Carlos Altamirano, *Peronismo y cultura de izquierda* (2nd edition, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2011).

[44] Sigal, *Intelectuales y poder*, p. 106.

The criticisms of the Marginality Project that came from both nationalists and leftists must be understood in this context. Furthermore, within these criticisms there were constant tensions surrounding the different ways of understanding the legitimacy of the social sciences and their internal mechanisms of validation. These peculiarities of the Argentine intellectual arena sometimes gave rise to curious, specific and generally short-lasting alliances, such as the one that developed in this case between the nationalists and the leftists who opposed the Marginality Project. As Juan Marsal, a Catalan sociologist who was then living in Buenos Aires, pointed out in 1969, on many occasions 'traditional "national" knowledge [became joined] together with the radical left wing, populists and revolutionary fascist youth. They were all united together, somewhat uncomfortably and rather briefly, against foreign and "imperialist" cientificismo.'[45]

The major criticism focused on the position of the Latin American intellectual in the face of the advance of imperialism, which manifested itself, in the case of the social sciences, in the foundations' grant policies. These seemed to be designed to recruit local social scientists, who, acting as spies, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, would provide the imperial power with the information it needed to be able to take political action. In the best-case scenario, the imperial power would use this to promote reformist policies of integration; in the worst, it would employ the information in support of repressive policies. Thus, in the case of the Marginality Project, the Marxist credentials that Nun and his team members boasted seemed of little importance.

In response to an open letter from José Nun to the sociology students at UBA, which will be discussed again below, two sociologists and left-wing militants, Daniel Hopen and Carlos Bastianes, wrote a long and apparently unpublished document which nonetheless circulated widely in university circles.[46] They argued that it was essential to differentiate the Marxism of those who 'take genuine anti-imperialist revolutionary positions' from that proclaimed by those who, 'whether invoking the name of Marxism or not, objectively act in the interests of the system'. It suited imperialism to conceal itself behind 'progressive' institutions and individuals so as to awaken less suspicion in its potential victims, above all in the wake of Camelot. 'Let us make it clear', Hopen and Bastianes continued, 'that in our opinion, the grants policy is a component of the global strategy of imperialism, and its primary function lies in reinforcing the scientific and technological dependency of our

[45] Juan Marsal, *Sobre la investigación social institucional en las actuales circunstancias de América Latina* (Santiago: CLACSO, 1969), quoted in Gil, *Las sombras del Camelot*, p. 112.

[46] Hopen was also a leader of the Frente de Trabajadores Antiimperialista de la Cultura (Anti-Imperialist Cultural Workers' Front, FATRAC).

countries.'[47] In this context it was clear that the Marginality Project should be rejected outright, given that it, in their words,

> 1) forms part of the type of research project planned and financed by imperialist organisations ... in order to collect data about dependent countries which North America [*sic*] requires for its political and military strategy in the continent; [and] 2) forms part of a system that imperialism is establishing with increasing efficiency ... to attract and make use of political cadres, workers and intellectuals, enticing them with a vast system of grants.[48]

From this perspective, the kind of information collected by the project was more important than the methodology used for it or even the ideology of the researchers. For this reason, the part of the project that they questioned most was the survey, which, according to the critics, would be used for the same purposes as the survey carried out by the Camelot project years before. 'What we maintain is that the character of the "Marginality Project" is determined not by its theoretical framework (Marxism), but by the survey', wrote Hopen and Bastianes.[49] Opponents thus argued that imperialism considered the researchers' ideology to be of little significance, given that the important point was not the methodology but rather the data that the survey provided. After reproducing some of the questions included in the questionnaire, a biologist, Daniel Goldstein, writing in *Marcha*, stated that it was odd that the questionnaire had been compiled not by the police but by a group of supposedly leftist Argentine intellectuals. Goldstein went on to emphasise his point further: 'The Ford Foundation has actually become a new intelligence agency dedicated to the social problems of neocolonial populations, with the mission of collecting information and proposing counter-revolutionary lines of action.'[50]

Goldstein's article provoked a strong reaction from Nun, which in turn sparked a heated debate in *Marcha*, involving Antonio Morel and a group of sociologists led by a prestigious leftist intellectual, Ismael Viñas. *Granma*, which accused the Ford Foundation of being an accomplice of the US government, and *Casa de las Américas* echoed the debate a short time later. The Sociedad Argentina de Artistas Plásticos (Argentine Society of Plastic Artists, SAAP), the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Movement, MLN) political party and other left-wing organisations also participated in the polemic. All coincided in denouncing the Marginality Project and its participants.

[47] Hopen and Bastianes, 'Réplica'.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] Daniel Goldstein, 'Sociólogos argentinos aceitan el engranaje', *Marcha*, 10 Jan. 1969.

Non-Marxist nationalist groups criticised the project on similar grounds, but from a different angle. If, for Goldstein, the Marxist credentials that Nun and his team pompously claimed were not enough to prevent them from turning into agents of imperialism (whether voluntarily or not), for the group of students belonging to the Fuerza Nacionalista Revolucionaria (Nationalist Revolutionary Force, FNR), who had started the debate with a document that circulated amongst students at UBA, it was precisely those Marxist credentials that confirmed the alliance that Nun and his team had formed with imperialism. Both Nun and the members of his team belonged to the 'imperialist Left', which, since the time when the Left had united with the Unión Democrática (Democratic Union, UD) to oppose Perón in 1945, had remained constantly linked to imperialism in order to consolidate its own anti-national plans.[51]

At the same time, Gonzalo Cárdenas, who together with the priest and sociologist Justino O'Farrell had created the *cátedras nacionales* (national chairs), established after General Juan Carlos Onganía's coup in 1966, concluded categorically in a 1968 article entitled 'Imperialist Penetration of the Social Sciences' that 'one is either with the people or against them. To make it clearer: either on the side of neo-imperialism or on that of the Argentine people.'[52] The cátedras nacionales were closely linked to Peronism, and promoted a 'national sociology' in response to that characterised as *cientificista*.

The lines of political debate became clearly defined; the denunciations coming from the Left and from revolutionary nationalism at times converged. One might say, again following Angenot, that despite the ideological differences which in many cases ended in outbreaks of extreme violence, the Left and the nationalists shared a series of assumptions of 'what was considered to be socially plausible', a common conceptual ground that was also expressed through a common language.

In a careful reading of the texts, however, one encounters other motives for attack. The institutionalisation of sociology had generated new systems of hierarchy and methods of validation within the discipline, and this had created systems of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, it is perhaps not by chance that the criticisms that came from nationalist students included one which questioned the fact that the team in charge of the project comprised 'the cream of official sociology, a true academy that manages more funds than public

[51] FNR, 'Espionaje yanqui', undated, Dossier Marginalidad, CEDINCI archive.

[52] Gonzalo Cárdenas, 'La penetración imperialista en las ciencias sociales', unpubl. document, undated, Dossier Marginalidad, CEDINCI archive. Extracts from this document can be found at www.filosofia.org/hem/196/96810pg1.htm.

research institutes and which, above all, influences the greater part of the [academic] job market and sociological prestige'.[53]

José Nun, in search of lost legitimacy

In response to the denunciations arriving simultaneously from the nationalists and Marxists, Nun wrote several articles in *Marcha* and, most importantly, an extensive 'Open Letter' directed at sociology students after he was stopped from speaking at a student conference in November 1968 which he had attended in order to clarify the nature of the Marginality Project and his own role. It became evident that Nun felt forced to resort to multiple ways of legitimising his project and his position: he justified it in terms of the procedures of modern social science on the one hand, and its political and ideological purity on the other. In effect, in one way the project was legitimised by its total scientific and academic autonomy with regards to the funding body; in other words, by one of the basic characteristics of modern science. However, Nun also recognised other forms of legitimisation for his project that ought to have dissipated the doubts of his critics. First, there was his own Marxist conceptual framework. In opposition to the ideas about marginality associated with DESAL's 'paternalistic culturalism' or CEPAL's 'developmentalist economicism', both of which viewed policies for the 'inclusion' of marginalised people as their practical corollary, Nun proposed a concept of marginality with Marxist roots. For him, it was a phenomenon inherent in the double system of exploitation imposed by the capitalist system and the dependent nature of Latin American countries. In Nun's vision, marginalised people were 'unemployed and underemployed workers in the countryside and in the city, and their respective family units, victims of the double exploitation resulting from a capitalist and dependent system, in the context of chronic stagnation ... which provides evidence of the distortions of a neocolonial labour market that marginalises ever larger sectors of the population'.[54] According to Nun, therefore, marginality was a structural component of the dependent economies of Latin America.[55]

Up to this point, it was Nun the Marxist (although heterodox) social scientist who was speaking. However, the criticisms he received forced him

[53] FNR, 'Espionaje yanqui'.

[54] Nun, 'Carta abierta'. The debates between Nun and Cardoso can be found in Nun, *Marginalidad y exclusión social* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001).

[55] It is worth noting that when the project passed to the Instituto Di Tella, Enrique Oteiza, its director, appeared to use, in his letter of intent to the Ford Foundation, a conceptual framework that was closer to the functional developmentalism that the Ford Foundation officially promoted. For him, marginality referred mainly to 'those urban and rural sectors for which the traditional communities are losing their meaning, but which do not yet belong to the modern society': Enrique Oteiza to John Nagel, 30 Nov. 1967, FFA.

also to resort to other arguments for its legitimacy. Thus, besides his discussion of methodological issues, Nun also had to clarify that the project was receiving support not only from academic groups that had openly opposed the Camelot Project, but also from many Dominican *comandos civiles* that had resisted the US invasion of 1965, from trade unions, and from 'the boards of many popular political groups that [had been] consulted'. The fact that Nun claimed to have carried out these so-called 'consultations' illustrates the existence of a circuit of legitimacy for the project that was very different from that of the academic world in the United States which the Ford Foundation supported.

However, perhaps more significant in terms of the ideological complexities that existed amongst the criteria being used to justify the project was the fact that Nun also felt obliged to mention that he had personally interviewed General Juan Domingo Perón in Madrid, and had explained the project to him in great detail. The veteran leader, who by then had been converted (at least in the collective imagination of many sectors of the Left) into a revolutionary leader, had given the project his full approval. Tactically using some of the arguments of his nationalist critics against those from the Left, Nun argued that the 'so-called Left' that was opposing him was the heir to the 'sepoy Left' of the dogmatic Marxists who had always been on the opposite side to the people, as the Fuerza de Orientación Radical de la Joven Argentina (Force for the Radical Orientation of Young Argentina, FORJA) movement and intellectuals like Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz had claimed in the 1930s. This appeal to a nationalist and populist non-Marxist tradition is very revealing of the complex paths that Nun had to negotiate in order to legitimise his project.

However, as if the double (political and scientific) forms of legitimisation did not suffice, Nun also represented himself as a hero-victim or, in any event, an outsider in the face of the Ford Foundation's supposedly shady manoeuvres. In fact, according to Nun's version of the story, when ILPES and DESAL withdrew from the project, apparently due to the theoretical-ideological leanings that Nun and his team were intending to impose upon it, the Foundation, through Kalman Silvert, offered to bring the project to an end in exchange for 'very generous personal compensation including two years' worth of salary payments plus travel and subsistence expenses for wherever each researcher chose to go'. Of course, Nun had angrily rejected this offer just as he later continued to reject offers from the Ford Foundation's official in Buenos Aires to receive money from the Foundation 'informally and discreetly'. At the same time, in 1969 Nun suggested to one of the Foundation's officials that he and his colleagues could live for a year taking on small editing and translating jobs, pointing out that 'after all, the pioneers in the social sciences never received salaries for their work'.[56]

[56] Nun, 'Carta abierta'.

According to Nun, the anger of the critics was caused not only by ideological motives but also by 'subaltern grudges held by those who were not hired for the project'. As we have seen, the nationalist students had referred to the funds managed by the members of the project, who, furthermore, made up a 'professional aristocracy'. In the document, Nun reminded his readers (and he did so again in a personal interview with the author decades later) that one of his major critics, the prestigious left-wing intellectual Ismael Viñas, had initially asked him for a position in the project for one of his protégés. Moreover, Nun was obliged to defend the political credentials of his close collaborators, pointing out that Miguel Murmis, who had also been a target for the critics' anger,

> was one of the few professors at the University of Buenos Aires who in 1964 paid homage to the guerrillas who died in the north of the country, was expelled from the Faculty of Arts (UBA) in 1966 ... and, at the request of the Confederación General del Trabajo (Paseo Colón) [General Labour Confederation, CGT] he has just produced a brave report about the situation of the sugar plantation workers in Tucumán.[57]

If the tone of the 'Open Letter' was highly defensive, then in the article published in *Marcha* Nun seems to have decided to double the stakes by attacking his critics from the left. While his opponents claimed that the US government would use the results of the project to carry out 'aid programmes' and social reintegration with the aim of avoiding the creation of revolutionary situations, Nun rebuked them because they

> not only distrust the revolutionary capacity of Latin America's exploited classes, but also belong to the increasingly small number of those who still believe (both here and in the United States) in the efficiency of the operations of US aid ... They overestimate imperialism's capacity for integration while they underestimate the growing power of the popular movement and all this comes with the speculative calm of the petit bourgeois, who calls himself left-wing, and while he takes his hot baths, believes that the workers will become corrupted if they have water to wash their hands.[58]

In reality, according to Nun, 'the Marginality Project's unforgivable sin is that it sets out to reveal the internal mechanisms through which neocolonialism operates'.[59]

In Nun's responses, therefore, the validity of the project depended as much on its scientific-conceptual grounds and the renewed system of hierarchies established within the field of social sciences as it did on its ideological grounds, which had received important recognition through the support of certain individuals and organisations that were perceived as 'legitimisers'. This is why the diatribes that Nun launched against his opponents went in both

[57] *Ibid.*
[58] 'La polémica sobre el Proyecto Marginalidad', *Marcha*, 28 Feb. 1969, pp. 18–22.
[59] Nun, 'Carta abierta'.

directions, for he accused them of being 'active accomplices of imperialism' at the same time as remembering that some of them, although of good faith, listened to the critics as a result of their 'weak sociological training'. According to Nun, the critics had not found a single argument to 'question even one of our hypotheses or theoretical propositions'. Throughout Nun's line of thinking, therefore, we see the staging of a double mechanism of legitimisation connected to his personal position both as a left-wing intellectual and as a transnational academic. One might say that Nun acted as a 'hinge' between two apparently incompatible systems of legitimisation that had developed simultaneously in the Argentine social science arena; that is to say, in Bourdieu's terms, two different forms of symbolic capital accumulation.[60]

The Ford Foundation and 'academic progressivism' in the 1960s

Finally, how did the Ford Foundation deal with the Marginality Project episode? First, it seems necessary to clarify certain details, even at the risk of repetition. It would appear that after DESAL and ILPES withdrew from the project the Foundation made it clear that henceforth the funds available would be restricted to what remained from the original grant. It also seems clear that Nun accepted these conditions in order to continue with the project, which would be reduced in terms of its range and coverage to Chile on the one hand and the Rosario-Buenos Aires area of the Argentine Littoral and the Chaco on the other. In a letter dated 14 December 1967, Nun told Jorge García Bouzas, of the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, about the difficulties he would face due to the reduction in the budget, but he also expressed his belief that it was possible to complete the research project under the existing conditions.[61] On the other hand, the Foundation seems to have sought non-formal means to continue financing the project, whether through 'informal' transfers proposed by an official of the Foundation in Argentina, or authorising the Instituto Di Tella to use institutional grants that it had received from the Foundation to subsidise it, or offering Nun the possibility of applying to the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) for a complementary grant, an offer that Nun rejected because it still involved funds from the Ford Foundation.[62]

[60] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le champ intellectuel, un monde à part', in Bourdieu, *Choses dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987), pp. 167–77.

[61] José Nun to Jorge García Bouzas, 14 Dec. 1967, FFA.

[62] Nita R. Manitzas to Eric Hobsbawm, 18 Oct. 1968, FFA. Even in 1970 Reynold Carlson concluded, after an interview with Nun, that 'unless some modest assistance can be made covering the first six months of 1971, much of the ground work that has been accomplished in data collection and preliminary analysis may never be published and so its impact on the concept of marginality in Latin America may never be realized': Reynold Carlson to Nita

Two versions of the final evaluation of the whole experience are available, both written by officials of the Ford Foundation: one by Nita Manitzas and the other by Kalman Silvert. These evaluations share some viewpoints, but also show evidence of different visions and reflect some of the tensions within the organisation. However, both reports demonstrate a vision of the 'thinkable' that differs greatly from that which provided the basis for the arguments of the project's critics in Argentina.

In her report dated 4 April 1973, Manitzas considered that the written work the project had produced was a very disappointing outcome considering the investment of US$250,000 the Ford Foundation had made.[63] Manitzas also recognised how much the Marginality Project had damaged the Foundation's credibility, both in terms of its relationship with the academic community and the possibilities of financing other research projects on important but politically delicate topics. She also emphasised the doubts that DESAL had aroused among some of the Foundation's members from the outset. Although the Foundation actively supported Chile's Christian Democratic Party, DESAL, 'whatever might be its other advantages' (in other words, its proximity to Frei's government and to Christian Democratic ideals), did not offer any guarantees either in terms of its political impartiality or its academic prestige.

According to Manitzas, the 'ideological balance' that the inclusion of Vekemans, Cardoso and Nun in the original team had created showed that the Foundation was aware of the possible political implications of studying marginality in the wake of the Camelot Project. However, at the same time, it reflected a lack of analysis (or inability to understand) on the part of the Foundation's staff when it came to appreciating the ideological complexities involved and, especially, the way in which different actors processed them. In effect, it would appear that for those who made decisions in the Foundation, Cardoso and Nun (both 'leftists') would compensate for Vekemans, and this would furthermore highlight the ideological neutrality of the Foundation, thus demonstrating its pluralistic orientation. The first problem was that the ideological nuances separating Nun from Cardoso, which the Foundation's officials, Silvert among them, did not notice, led to different (and incompatible) theoretical definitions of the research topic. In reality, Nun and Cardoso never agreed on how to define marginality. Moreover, the

R. Manitzas, 1 Dec. 1970, FFA. This was apparently the reason for offering Nun the 'discreet and informal' funding.

[63] According to Manitzas, the final product of the project consisted of a short report written by Nun in July 1971; a series of articles in a special issue of *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, published by the Instituto Di Tella, in July 1969; plus a few other articles that appeared as Instituto di Tella working papers: see Manitzas to Bell, 'Terminal Evaluation'.

Foundation's officials found it difficult to digest the means of justification that both Nun and Cardoso employed for their own arguments; each based their approach on quotations from Marx, which each of them believed to have 'interpreted correctly'.[64] Debates around the exegesis of Marx's work were very typical of Marxists in Latin America (and elsewhere) at that time. These controversies generated different forms of legitimisation to those of the 'modern social sciences' that the Foundation promoted.

The main point of the theoretical discussion between Nun and Cardoso centred on the definition of the 'marginal masses', a concept that Nun introduced to define marginal groups which he believed to be of no use to the capitalist system as a 'reserve army', but which instead were a structural consequence of monopolistic capitalism.[65] Cardoso, on the other hand, took up Marx's traditional concept of the 'reserve army' again and questioned the fact that monopolistic capitalism might generate that type of dysfunctional marginality.[66]

The problems (ideological, personal and financial) did not take long to erupt and involve the officials of the Foundation. In reference to this, Manitzas pointed out:

> While Nun was making a public and personal denunciation of one Foundation Advisor, another advisor was meanwhile trying to help him to get a year's appointment at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. And a third Foundation officer on two occasions offered him supplementary funding, despite the earlier decision that the Di Tella grant was a terminal one ... The result was an unusual amount of acrimony within the Foundation's own ranks, and an outward appearance of considerable foolishness.[67]

Silvert's final report, dated 26 July 1973, shares some of Manitzas' views, but his perception also contains significant differences. Silvert was sceptical about whether ideological differences had such an important role in explaining the project's failure. Silvert, whose stature in the academic arena was much more secure than that of Manitzas, used academic tools to evaluate the project.[68]

[64] In a tribute to Kalman Silvert, Richard Morse recalled: 'I've heard him [Silvert] address a Latin American academic audience where instead of diplomatically swallowing a turgid rehash of Marx, Gramsci and Althusser that was on the day's menu, he insisted that he too had a national and cultural base, that he too was tribal, and that perhaps Marx had learned a thing or two, even his best things from Locke': Richard Morse, 'Kalman H. Silvert (1921–1976): A Reminiscence', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 57: 3 (1977), p. 508.

[65] See Nun, *Marginalidad y exclusión social*.

[66] See Fernando Henrique Cardoso, 'Comentarios sobre los conceptos de superpoblación relativa y marginalidad', reproduced in Nun, *Marginalidad y exclusión social*.

[67] Manitzas to Bell, 'Terminal Evaluation'.

[68] Silvert was a consultant to the US Advisory Commission on International and Cultural Affairs, to the government of Puerto Rico, and to the Organisation of American States. He also served as professor in several prestigious universities and was adviser to the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations.

First, Silvert was less pessimistic about the possibilities of working with DESAL; he believed the connection Vekemans had with the CIA should not be overemphasised considering the evidence that it had been an isolated case. However, DESAL's limitations as a research agency in the social sciences and its direct connections with the Church were more serious. The inclusion of ILPES in the management of the project was a way of smoothing out these two issues, but it was not necessarily linked to ideological problems (and Silvert thought much the same about the incorporation of Nun and his team). For Silvert, therefore, no attempt to carry out 'ideological compensation' had existed in the intentions of the Foundation.

According to Silvert, not even the differences between Nun and Vekemans (the latter of whom Silvert described as a 'red priest' despite his explicit anti-Marxist stance), and even less so the differences between Nun and Cardoso (both of whom he defined as 'soft Marxists'), were of such great relevance given that both, in his view, agreed on their respective conceptions of marginality. Therefore, for Silvert, the problems arose from the ambition, personality, cultural differences and juvenile behaviour of the protagonists, rather than from the ideological or theoretical differences that were central for the other actors.

However, the problems did not arise only from the project's protagonists or the Foundation's ingenuousness. The members of the advisory committee, which, one should remember, Nun had reformed, also had their share of responsibility. Thus, for example, in a meeting of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences in Philadelphia, Silvert took the opportunity to ask David Apter if he thought that the denunciations published in *Marcha* were ethically acceptable. After Apter replied that he did not think so, Silvert asked him to publish an article in *Marcha*, or through another media outlet, clarifying the inaccuracies. Apter refused this request with 'vague excuses', and in this way 'knowingly accepted that the lies would persist'.[69]

The complaints against Touraine were of a different nature. Apparently, in a meeting in Paris, Touraine made it clear that he did not believe, although he had stated it officially, that Nun and his team members would even remotely be able to finish what they had promised in the agreed time (a report of around 800 pages). In response to Silvert's question as to whether Touraine had mentioned this in an advisory committee meeting held in London shortly before, Touraine had replied – at least in Silvert's version of events – that he had not because he did not take those meetings seriously: he attended them only because he enjoyed the first-class journeys, the travel allowances and the fees he received.[70] On the other hand, Hobsbawm's sins seemed less serious,

[69] Silvert to Carmichael, 'Marginal Populations'.
[70] *Ibid.*

since this case involved only his ingenuousness in continuing to seek funding for the project while Nun was writing articles denouncing the Foundation rather than the routine reports requested.

Conclusions: A Combination of 'Structural Misunderstandings'

As can be seen, the failure of the Marginality Project seems to have revolved around a set of political and cultural misunderstandings and the lack of a 'social discourse' shared by the various actors involved. In other words, the failure resulted from the existence of 'structural misunderstandings', in accordance with the definition of this concept presented in the introduction to this article. The Ford Foundation conceived of itself as a progressive institution according to the standards of the US academic world – that is, as a liberal, pluralist organisation, infused with *desarrollista* ideology, that supported projects of social intervention aimed at promoting social integration in a reformist context. Its officials included progressive intellectuals such as Manitzas and Silvert himself. In this sense, the Foundation's position was in line with the softer aspect of US foreign policy.

On the other hand, however, the Foundation's officials considered the ideological differences that existed among the researchers as a sort of 'interference' or 'noise' that hindered the development of a good working and professional atmosphere amongst them, which the Foundation promoted and perceived as a key condition for scientific research. While Silvert, using criteria appropriate to the US academic world, did not even consider these differences to be relevant and attributed the conflicts to purely personal issues and the limited technical ability of those involved, Manitzas considered that 'the Project managed to bring together an unusually exotic and difficult collection of individuals', but made it clear that she believed it to be far too simplistic to explain the Marginality Project's failure in terms of the idiosyncrasies of Latin American people. However, the fact that Manitzas mentioned this suggests that she did not totally discount it. Nevertheless, I do not agree that the 'ethnocentricism' which Adriana Petra detects in this exchange was a crucial element of the misunderstandings.[71] Rather, they reflect the existence of the different conceptual frameworks used to analyse the same facts. The Ford Foundation's documents show a lack of understanding of the peculiarities of the Argentine intellectual world and, by extension, that of Latin America more broadly. At the same time they display an effort to be sensitive to the politicised and polarised atmosphere of the region, and of Argentina in particular, where the criteria for 'collegiality' and

[71] Petra, 'El Proyecto Marginalidad'.

'professionalism' in the social sciences were not necessarily definitive where politically sensitive issues and circumstances were concerned.

According to Manitzas, the Foundation had lessons to learn from this whole episode. These were about understanding that pluralism had limits, that there existed a certain tension between social research and social activism, and that the Foundation should limit its involvement with regard to the management of projects (this referred particularly to the attempt to create a group that was balanced). In other words, according to Manitzas (and in this she coincided with Silvert), the Foundation should provide grant recipients with greater autonomy, thus avoiding behaviour that might be perceived as paternalistic. What the Foundation was implicitly recognising was the need to accept that other actors played by different rules.

The members of the advisory committee also seem to have played by different rules. Apter probably did not wish to become involved in a political conflict in Latin America, which was not his particular area of research. Cultural differences might perhaps explain the case of Touraine. In France, Touraine was at this time a *Maître-à-Penser*, a sort of mandarin of French academia. Even though he already had experience in the United States and Chile, this product of the French academic and intellectual tradition did not fit in very well or take his position as a semi-bureaucrat of a US foundation, which was probably managed according to very different criteria from those to which he was accustomed, very seriously.

For the critics, the problem was different. It was not a case of questioning the scientific bases of the project, but rather one of questioning its political purity. In reality, the problem was about the nature and origin of the institution financing it. Critics regarded the Ford Foundation as a direct agent of imperialism, which would benefit from the information obtained through the survey and use it in the same way as the Camelot Project had planned to do – namely, to serve the interests of the CIA. In this sense, nationalists and Marxists of different kinds shared common ground, above all, in their discourse and concepts, although their agreement did not extend much further. This compromised the project irredeemably from the moment it began. Furthermore, the critics in Argentina were also questioning the rules that legitimised research within the transnationalised field of the social sciences.

This situation put José Nun in a complex position. He acted as a type of 'hinge' between two incompatible discursive systems. On the one hand, he was part of the elite of 'transnationalised' Latin American social scientists. Prior to the Marginality Project, Nun had studied with Touraine in Paris, after which he went to Berkeley as a visiting professor; after that he headed for Toronto, where he taught for 12 years. We can therefore infer that, in this sense, and despite his youth, he knew how to handle the foundations' criteria, and he

made this known to his critics. However, he had to share the language of the critics to avoid being displaced from an intellectual field dominated by political rather than professional criteria. The diatribes he launched against his critics, which went from defining them as pseudo-revolutionaries to stigmatising them as mediocre sociologists, demonstrate the complexity of the situations in which he found himself. Furthermore, his attempts to justify his project simultaneously in terms of its scientific strength, its ideological purity and his appeal to authorities such as FORJA or General Perón show how he had to manoeuvre among various means of understanding intellectual effort, all of which, at least for us looking at the situation in hindsight from the twenty-first century, were mutually incompatible.

To conclude, the Marginality Project episode cannot be analysed simply (not even principally and certainly not productively) in terms of 'cultural imperialism'. One should not interpret the responses that it generated simply in terms of resistance to imperialism. It is more profitable to try to understand the whole 'Marginality affair' in terms of the 'misunderstandings' that originated in the existence of different systems of legitimisation and criteria of validation and, above all, the absence of a shared conceptual common ground amongst all the actors. This had an effect both on the 'locals' and on the Foundation itself, as it demonstrated the extent to which the transnationalisation of the social sciences was neither a linear nor a unidirectional phenomenon.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Este artículo analiza el fracaso del Proyecto Marginalidad, financiado por la Fundación Ford en los años 1960s, y los conflictos políticos y académicos que provocó. Toma en consideración los puntos de vista de los actores principales involucrados (el director del proyecto, la Fundación Ford y sus críticos). El objetivo original del Proyecto Marginalidad fue estudiar las condiciones de marginalidad de las poblaciones urbanas y rurales en varios países latinoamericanos, lo que generó escasos resultados. El artículo muestra que tales resultados fueron consecuencia de una serie de 'malentendidos estructurales', dado que los diferentes actores no compartieron lo que, en palabras de Marc Angenot, se puede llamar un mismo 'discurso social'. En otras palabras, sus concepciones de lo que era pensable y decible en el contexto latinoamericano de fines de los años 60 y comienzos de los 70 divergieron significativamente, dando origen a una serie de conflictos acerca de los objetivos y la conducción del proyecto.

Spanish keywords: Argentina, Fundación Ford, sociología, marginalidad, imperialismo cultural

Portuguese abstract. Este artigo analisa o fracasso do *Proyecto Marginalidad* (Projeto Marginalidade), financiado pela Fundação Ford na década de 1960, e os conflitos políticos e acadêmicos provocados por ele. O artigo leva em consideração os pontos de vista dos principais atores envolvidos (o diretor do projeto, a Fundação Ford, e seus críticos). O objetivo inicial do Projeto Marginalidade era estudar as condições de marginalidade de populações urbanas e rurais em diversos países latino-americanos, porém o projeto gerou poucos resultados. O artigo demonstra que este desempenho foi gerado por de uma série de 'mal-entendidos estruturais', devido ao fato de que os diferentes atores não compartilhavam o que nas palavras de Marc Angenot seria chamado 'discurso social'. Em outras palavras, as premissas sobre o que se podia pensar e dizer no contexto latino-americano no final da década de 1960 e início da década de 1970 variavam significantemente, levando a uma série de conflitos acerca dos objetivos e conduta do projeto.

Portuguese keywords: Argentina, Fundação Ford, sociologia, marginalidade, imperialismo cultural