

Raúl Prebisch and ECLAC in the institutionalization of Latin American social science

Raúl Prebisch y la CEPAL en la institucionalización
de las ciencias sociales latinoamericanas

Raúl Prebisch e a CEPAL na institucionalização
das ciências sociais latino-americanas

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Abstract

The article aims to analyze the transformations promoted by Raúl Prebisch and ECLAC in the institutionalization of Latin American social sciences. The questions that guide the research are: What were the main discussions that crossed the field of studies of Latin American social sciences during the 1940s and 1950s? What was the place of Latin America in the institutionalization of social sciences? In the first place, the historical process of institutionalization of ECLAC and of the different spaces of academic discussion in the formation of Raúl Prebisch, an Argentine economist, is reconstructed. Then, the theoretical and political novelties that Latin American structuralism brought about

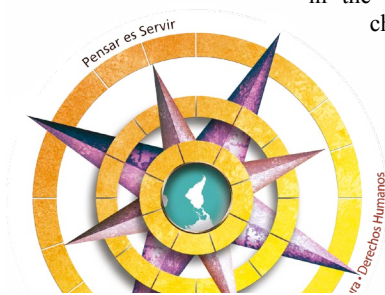
in the framework of ECLAC during the 1950s are characterized. Also, the criticisms to ECLAC

developmentalism by dependency theories during the 1960s are investigated. Finally,

some considerations are made about the role of Raúl Prebisch in ECLAC. The

methodological approach used is the historical sociology of Latin America.

It is a discipline that hybridizes the



theories of social change, typical of sociology, and documental research as is customary in historical studies. It has the potential to analyze socio-historical processes from the perspective of long, medium and short duration, enabling a procedural and long-term understanding.

Keywords: Latin American social sciences; ECLAC; Raúl Prebisch; Latin America; Historical Sociology of Latin America

Resumen

El artículo tiene por objetivo analizar las transformaciones impulsadas por Raúl Prebisch y la CEPAL en la institucionalización de las ciencias sociales latinoamericanas. Las preguntas que guían la investigación son: ¿Cuáles fueron las principales discusiones que atravesaron el campo de estudios de las ciencias sociales latinoamericanas durante las décadas de 1940 y 1950?, ¿Cuál fue el lugar de América Latina en la institucionalización de las ciencias sociales?

En primer lugar, se reconstruye el proceso histórico de institucionalización de la CEPAL y de los diferentes espacios de discusión académica en la formación de Raúl Prebisch, economista argentino. Luego, se caracterizan las novedades teóricas y políticas que trajo aparejadas el estructuralismo latinoamericano en el marco de la CEPAL durante la década de 1950. También, se indaga en las críticas al desarrollismo cepalino por parte de las teorías de la dependencia durante la década de 1960. Por último, se realizan algunas consideraciones acerca del rol de Raúl Prebisch en la CEPAL.

El enfoque metodológico utilizado es la sociología histórica de América Latina. Es una disciplina que rescata de forma híbrida las teorías del cambio social, propias de la sociología, y la investigación apoyada en archivos, de la historia. Además, tiene la potencialidad de analizar los procesos socio-históricos con el prisma de la larga, mediana y corta duración, posibilitando un entendimiento procesual y de largo aliento.

Palabras clave: América Latina; CEPAL, Ciencias sociales latinoamericanas; Raúl Prebisch; Sociología Histórica de América Latina

Resumo

A finalidade do artigo é analisar as transformações promovidas por Raúl Prebisch e pela CEPAL na institucionalização das ciências sociais latino-americanas. As questões que orientam a pesquisa são: Quais foram as principais discussões que atravessaram o campo dos estudos das ciências sociais latino-americanas durante os anos 40 e 50, qual foi o lugar da América Latina na institucionalização das ciências sociais, e qual foi o lugar da América Latina na institucionalização das ciências sociais?



Primeiro, o processo histórico de institucionalização da CEPAL e os diferentes espaços de discussão acadêmica na formação de Raúl Prebisch, economista argentino, é reconstruído. Em seguida, ela caracteriza as novidades teóricas e políticas trazidas pelo estruturalismo latino-americano no âmbito da CEPAL durante os anos 50. Em seguida, explora as críticas ao desenvolvimentismo da CEPAL pelas teorias de dependência durante os anos 60. Finalmente, são apresentadas algumas considerações sobre o papel de Raúl Prebisch na CEPAL.

A abordagem metodológica utilizada é a sociologia histórica da América Latina, uma disciplina que se baseia nas teorias da mudança social da sociologia e da pesquisa de arquivos da história de uma forma híbrida. Esta disciplina tem o potencial de analisar processos sócio-históricos através do prisma de longa, média e curta duração, permitindo um entendimento processual e de longo prazo.

Palavras chave: CEPAL, Sociologia Histórica da América Latina, América Latina; ciências sociais latino-americanas; Raúl Prebisch

“A time of crisis and societal transformation defines, then, the framework that delimits the constitutive body of the social sciences as an institutionalized professional activity in Latin America”
(Ansaldi, 1991)

“The distributive disparities are secular in Latin America and privilege has deep historical roots”
(Prebisch, 1971)

Introduction

The objective of the article focuses on analyzing the transformations advocated by Raúl Prebisch and ECLAC in the institutionalization of Latin American social sciences. In particular, the theoretical and political novelties brought about by Latin American structuralism are characterized. Also, it examines the criticisms of developmentalism by dependency theory during the 1960s. The methodological

approach employed corresponds to historical sociology of Latin America. It is a discipline that hybridizes the theories of social change, typical of sociology, and documental research as is customary in historical studies. In the words of Ansaldi *et al.* (2008:3), the main referent of this discipline in Latin America, “it is a perspective that reacts against a historiography without theory and without concepts, as well as a perspective that reacts against a



certain sociology without history”. The studies within this discipline are characterized by raising questions about social, political and economic transformations (Giordano, 2014).

As Jorge Graciarena rightly considered towards the end of the 1970s in a course taught in San José, Costa Rica, the moments of greatest creativity and expansion of the social sciences in Latin America occurred with greater boldness when their connection with social transformations was lucidly accepted. In this sense, Raúl Prebisch can be considered one of those Latin American intellectuals who managed to articulate the scientific world with the conjuncture of our continent, embodying his ideas in various publications, conferences and institutions. Particularly, in this work we will advance in those ideas that passed through the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Prebisch and Latin American development are two words that cannot be thought of separately. Prebisch can be considered one of the precursors of the expansion of the social sciences in Latin America, not only based on his studies on economic development, but also for having been one of the key gears for

the institutionalization of ECLAC, one of the main spaces for research and development of public policies at the regional level. Not only because of his theoretical postulates, but also because of the critical debates and positions that circulated around his ideas. Secondly, the concept of development –as Devés Valdés (2003) has pointed out– has probably been the most used by Latin American intellectuals after the Second World War.

Raúl Prebisch, a Public Accountant trained at the University of Buenos Aires, before joining ECLAC, made his professional career as director of statistics at the Sociedad Rural Argentina (translated as Argentine Rural Society), an entity that brings together the country’s large agricultural producers dedicated to livestock. Also, he served as Under Secretary of Finance and Agriculture during the de facto government of Félix Uriburu between 1930 and 1932. In 1933 he was a government advisor in the signing of the Roca-Runciman Treaty with Great Britain. In 1935 he contributed in the founding of the Banco Central de la República Argentina and became its first director.

After leaving the Central Bank of the Argentine Republic, where he



worked until 1945, his interest in the regional context began, making stops in Paraguay, Guatemala, Venezuela and Mexico where he carried out different economic advisory jobs before being appointed president of ECLAC. In the following sections, we will investigate the role of Raúl Prebisch during his tenure at the Economic Commission for Latin America in relation to the different stages of the institution's theoretical and intellectual production.

In a publication issued in the mid-1980s (Prebisch, 1983), Prebisch distinguished two central stages in the transformation of his economic thought. From the beginning of his academic career, he realized work on the characterization of the national economic cycle: he considered that the rise and fall of these processes were produced by the same forces that at times promoted economic activity in the expansive stage and that would operate in the opposite direction during the contractive stage (Pérez Caldentey, Sunkel and Torres Olivos, 2012). In the words of Gabay (2008) "Prebisch's participation in the field of state power in Argentina in the 1930s had a notable impact on the shift that occurred in his intellectual attitude in the domain of political theory, from orthodox nuance to an heterodox mindset" (p. 104).

Among the experiences that led to the transformation of his view of economic phenomena, two stand out. In the first place, the crisis unleashed in 1929 regarding the development of the agricultural-livestock export complex and the decisions taken by the Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Argentine Government: the application of orthodox recipes based on free competition and market break-even point (Gabay, 2008). Second, the advisory work that he conducted in various Latin American countries and the approximation he had to different social, economic and political realities.

Some time later he would affirm that the Argentine cycle was not something specific to the country, but that it reflected the Latin American monetary cycle in particular, and the global monetary cycle in general. In effect, Devés Valdés (2003), affirms that Prebisch formulated the great ideas of ECLAC in advance.

Development. The institutionalization of the social sciences in Latin America. ECLAC's role

Since the mid-19th century, the expansion of the social sciences in Latin America went hand in hand with literature and political



manifestos. Beigel (2010a) highlights the existence of three paths for the development of social knowledge: the university sphere, the journalistic sphere and the state sphere. The first brings together the schools and research institutes established from the mid-19th century to the mid-1950s. Regarding journalism, it centered around the development of social thought in an amateur way up to the onset of independent investigations. Finally, the state sphere includes the investigations that are related to the implementation of public policies, and also encompasses the technicians of the area of finance and economy established since 1920 (Garretón *et al.*, 2005).

The pioneers of Latin American social knowledge, in the words of Beigel (2010a), promoters of the “sciences of culture” or “sciences of the spirit”, were “writers without university training who lived from the journalistic profession. Others were part-time academics, teaching sociology, political law, economic history, political and institutional history, public administration, psychology or anthropology” (p. 55). In particular, the penetration of the ideas promoted by these individuals began to occur after the creation of careers in Law, Philosophy and professorships in History and Geography.

On the other hand, the cited author characterizes the heterogeneity of the Latin American higher education system existing towards the end of 1800s: “In most Latin American universities, research did not exist or was minimal and indispensable, for pedagogical reasons, for professional training” (p. 56). In addition, the professionalization of the teaching staff was very slow and disparate as a result of the absence of postgraduate studies and lack of scientific research policy in universities. Generally, postgraduate courses were carried out abroad, in Europe or the United States of America. Brazil marks an exception to this general rule. With the founding of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 1792, a group of intellectuals and scientists who carried out research activities at the university level quickly consolidated. Later, with the creation of the University of São Paulo in the 1930s, this model of research and formation of intellectuals would be consolidated (Scargiali, 2020).

Starting in the 1890s, positive ideas began to spread widely under the influence of Comte, Spencer, Taine and Le Bon, referents of European positivism and evolutionism. As Germani (1969) has highlighted, social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, were born



in Latin America as a by-product of philosophy and law. Among them, the figures of Carlos Bunge, Joaquín V. González and José Ingenieros stand out; the Venezuelans Lucas Ayarragaray and Pedro Arcaya and the Peruvian Mariano Cornejo. In addition, it is possible to name the works of the Paraguayans Cecilio Báez, *Introducción al estudio de la Sociología* and Ignacio Pane, *Los elementos de Sociología* (Soler and Scargiali, 2018).

The first researchers, strongly influenced by liberalism, eugenics and, above all, positivism, developed their first works within the framework of the consolidation of the State and the capitalist system in the region. Among the main themes on which they reflected were migration, miscegenation, indigenism and the political instability of the colonial heritage. All these themes pointed to the recreation of the social order after the organization of national states.

Among the objectives of the present article, it is worth emphasizing the importance that economic science began bear. In particular, the development of this field of study was stimulated by State institutions dedicated to statistics, as well as by financial institutions (Beigel, 2010a).

Raúl Prebisch began his professional activity in this area.

With the advent of the revolutionary processes in Mexico and then in Russia in 1917; the First World War and the arrival of fascism, the protagonists of Latin American thought began to be influenced by currents of thought linked to Marxism. Among the greatest references, Victor Haya de la Torre and José Carlos Mariátegui can be mentioned. In parallel, during these years, and specifically after the great crisis of 1929, economic science underpinned the development of the publishing world. Beigel (2010a) mentions the founding of the Mexican journals “Revista de Economía” in 1939 and “Trimestre económico” in 1934, publications that would give rise to the publishing house *Fondo de Cultura Económica*. At the same time, the institutionalization of the teaching of this science took place as a result of the initiative of the national banks and the economics faculties of the public universities in each country.

After the Second World War, and the consolidation of a bipolar world, with the crisis of liberalism and capitalism and the expansion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the global south began to witness the emergence



of social movements, the expansion of anti-colonial struggles on the African continent and Asia, and the creation of communist parties.

The reconfiguration of the pattern of accumulation led to the restructuring of the dependency situation of Latin America. It is in this precise context that the main research and dissemination centers of the social sciences emerge and become institutionalized. In this framework, the role of the United States was central in promoting the new paradigms of scientific research. The social sciences were the possible response to the development of the capacities and demands of the national States embarked on the modernization of their societies and new mechanisms of bureaucratization (Soler, 2018). As Blanco (2010, p. 614) describes, “in a context of crisis of tradition, caused by the processes of industrialization, modernization and increasing secularization, sociology was called to provide a rational orientation to action on the basis of a sociologically informed secular morality”.

Since the mid-1940s, careers related to the teaching of social sciences gained momentum, expanding their chairs in universities throughout Latin America. By these years, São Paulo (Brazil), Mexico City,

Santiago de Chile and Buenos Aires (Argentina) had already created their own institutes (Beigel, 2010a). Furthermore, in 1950 the Latin American Association of Sociology (Spanish acronym is ALAS) was founded. Sociology – in that moment– was considered an auxiliary discipline to other established careers where the intellectual and political professions were not dissociated: it came to challenge a new way of doing science (Soler and Scargiali, 2018).

The development of knowledge in economics was promoted in the region as of 1948 with the creation of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), an agency dependent on the United Nations that during subsequent decades became a key agent for the design and execution of public policies in the region: “ECLAC systematized the statistical information accumulated in public agencies in previous decades, stimulated the execution of national and regional studies, and the technical formation of officials of the ministries of finance and planning offices” (Beigel, 2010a, p. 5).

At the crossroads of the exhaustion of industrialization by import substitution, social insurgency, the recomposing of world capitalism



and the Cold War, is where the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) emerged as the first center for economic studies to provide explanatory approximations to the results of the functioning of the Latin American periphery (Ansaldi, 1991, p. 14).

In the words of Beigel (2010a), ECLAC was more than an institution, rather a structure of agents and networks that promoted social and economic research. Among the main referents of the first period were Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado, Aníbal Pinto, Jorge Ahumada, among others.

Faced with a strong process of social transformation that had been boosting the development of the social sciences, the different institutions and their intellectuals were crossed by the political, social and economic discussions of the time. With the support of the United States, from the “International Development Act” sanctioned during the government of John F. Kennedy, between 1944 and 1960 more than forty international organizations were created for the “development of underdevelopment”, a field that involved innumerable state, university and international dependencies in charge of giving form and content to the successive

development programs designed from the middle of the last century to the present (Nahón, Rodríguez and Schorr: 2006).

The new institutional and geopolitical strategy of the United States in the region was part of the theoretical paradigms (modernization, development, underdevelopment) with which the social sciences began to think about Latin America through the institutions through which passed part of the intelligentsia of those years. As Escobar (1998, p. 35) points out, even those who opposed the capitalist strategies of the moment were forced to express their criticism in terms of the need for development, by way of concepts such as “another development”, “participatory development”, “socialist development”. In this sense, “development” is the first concept that is cultivated in Latin America in close connection with the North American world (Devés Valdés, 2003, p. 21).

Beigel (2010a) in *Autonomía y Dependencia Académica* gives a prominent place to the creation of regional research and teaching centers in social sciences and economics that were sponsored by different external funding agencies. Most of them, founded between 1945 and 1970, had



the financial support of the United Nations, as was the case of ECLAC. Additionally, other organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), Government Cooperation Agencies of the United States Government and the Catholic Church played a central role in its institutionalization.

Most of these research centers were installed in Santiago de Chile, which was already the headquarters of ECLAC and the regional offices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). To these were joined the Inter-American Statistical Institute; Inter-American Training Center for Economic and Financial in 1952; School of Latin American Economic Studies (ESCOLATINA) in 1956; Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in 1957; Latin American Demographic Center (CELADE) in 1957; Center for Social Development of Latin America (DESAL) in 1960; Coordinating Institute for Research on Agrarian Reform (ICIRA) in 1962; Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) in 1962; Latin American Institute of Doctrine and Social Studies (ILADES) in 1965.

Finally, the institutionalization of the social sciences reaches one of its main milestones with the creation of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO) a regional organization dependent on UNESCO, which competes with FLACSO for attracting economic and academic resources (Beigel, 2009). Regional institutions, together with the private foundations that financed them, shared the vision of “modernization” of the structures and thought in the social sciences. This transformation led to what Lechner (1988) calls the “deprovincialization of the social sciences”, a process of central exchange, especially for peripheral centers. Undoubtedly, in the articulation and implementation of this circuit, the three regional centers mentioned above, each in its own time, were nodal: ECLAC, FLACSO and CLACSO (Soler and Scargiali, 2018).

The role of Raúl Prebisch in ECLAC. Latin American structuralism and the dependency problem

Since its foundation in 1948, ECLAC promptly set three objectives that became known as “the ECLAC agenda”: the central-peripheral relationship, the question of development and its consequent



process of industrialization. ECLAC theorists also paid attention to other notorious aspects, such as inflation and structural obstacles to development and, in particular, the weakness of the agricultural sector and the lack of coordination between the productive sectors of the Latin American economy. In this sense, it was a pioneer in raising the need to create a promotion unit for development that would stimulate regional growth.

The main economists of ECLAC – during the period we are analyzing here– were Raúl Prebisch, Argentine, and Celso Furtado, Brazilian. Later, in a second stage, Anibal Pinto, Osvaldo Sunkel and María de Conceição Tavares, among others, would join this space.

Initially, the intellectuals and economists of ECLAC carried out the task of rethinking and criticizing the law of comparative advantage, which would give an economic foundation to the state-leveraged industrialization policy. From a position critical of economic liberalism, they not only considered the underdevelopment of the region as a consequence of the backwardness produced by the colonization process; but also due to the interests of the central

countries over the peripheral countries that export raw materials. Indeed, their writings, theories, and recommendations supported the economic development of Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, ECLAC experts participated actively in the creation of other financing organizations in the region, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Among them, Raúl Prebisch participated in the committee of experts that shaped the Alliance for Progress (Beigel, 2010b).

The creation of ECLAC, towards the mid-1940s, coincided with the expansion of reflections on the impact of technological progress and the role of Latin American governments in development policies (Beigel, 2010b). ECLAC structuralism has its origin in the publication *El desarrollo económico de América Latina y sus principales problemas* by Raúl Prebisch. Here, the author characterized the global economic situation as the relationships existing between an industrialized center and a periphery, which assumed three levels: structural unemployment, related to the insufficiency of traditional exporting economies; the external imbalance, as a consequence of the asymmetry in the balance of payments due to the greater



propensity to import industrial goods in relation to exports of primary products; and the deterioration of the terms of trade (Love, 1999). Prebisch (1949) considered that this diagnosis implied that the standard of living in the peripheries was declining compared to the central countries and the only solution was, on the one hand, the modernization of agricultural activity through the incorporation of machinery and industrialization.

As Bresser-Pereira (2006) has considered, these economists defined development as the product of a national industrialization strategy. Its legitimation in the intellectual sphere was formulated from the criticism of the law of comparative advantage, and the demonstration that the application of orthodox policies was far from providing the productivity benefits generated by industrialization in central countries.

In this context, Prebisch would make his two most important criticisms of the international insertion scheme: the character of underdevelopment of the internal structure that generated obstacles to industrialization and the need for State intervention to overcome structural barriers. In line with this, he considered that the difference

in living standards in central and peripheral countries was explained by the productive characteristics of peripheral countries, focused on the export of raw materials and agricultural products, which are of low technological development: “A considerable inequality between the producers and exporters of manufactured goods, on the one hand, and the producers of primary goods, on the other.” (Deves Valdes, 2003)

Sunkel (2008) states that Prebisch, based on these ideas, exposed two issues: on the one hand, the central role of industrialization for development; and secondly, the need to modernize the agrarian sector through agrarian reform. For this, it was key to reallocate productive resources towards industrial production:

“The development policy that I proposed was oriented towards the establishment of a new pattern of development that would allow to overcome the limitations of the previous pattern; this new form of development would have industrialization as its main objective”. (Prebisch, 1983)

As Devés Valdés (2003) points out, the Latin American intelligentsia began to reflect on the idea that



the continent could not follow the path used by capitalist nor socialist countries to achieve development or modernization. In this sense, during the same years Prebisch had begun to value from ECLAC an approach to development that gave priority to the State as the fundamental actor in the economy, based on import substitution industrialization plans supported and stimulated by an industrial policy.

Arriving in the 1960s, and after carrying out the balance of industrialization policies, it was evident that the expectations regarding the scope of development had not been achieved. Import substitution policies were insufficient to explain the structural situation of the Latin American economies. Gabay (2008) calls this period a “theoretical crisis” in the advent of the emergence of dependentists in Latin American thought.

The dependentist debate had its origin in Chile in the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), and other institutions such as Instituto Latinoamericano de Planificación Económica y Social (ILPES), Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos (CESO) and the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica Nacional (CEREN)

Criticism was delivered from these institutions regarding the developmentalist theory promoted by ECLAC. Among the main objections, the following stood out: the limits to industrial development imposed by the capitalist system itself from the central to the peripheral countries; the necessity to advance radical changes through external trade, mainly through the subordination of peripheral countries to the companies and dominant groups of central countries; the need to include social disparities and conflicting interests between the dominant and oppressed classes in the explanation of underdevelopment in peripheral countries (Gabay, 2008).

Among the main referents of this current of thought stood out Enzo Faletto and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, authors of *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina: ensayo de interpretación sociológica*. The authors investigated the relationship between capitalism and pre-capitalist forms of production in different Latin American countries, which allowed them to describe different forms of economic dependency. The authors appointed themselves the objective of offering a new definition of “underdevelopment” combining the analysis of economics and politics (Faletto and Cardoso, 2001).



In view of the deepening reflections on the unequal structure of the world economy, ECLAC encouraged new perspectives. The incorporation of economists allied to dependency theory made it possible to incorporate class conflict and state power into the explanation of economic underdevelopment (Beigel, 2010b).

Due to the advancement of dependency theories and Prebisch's distancing from ECLAC, the organization saw its space weakened as the center of economic and social discussions in Latin America (Gabay, 2008). The central-peripheral approach had shown theoretical and explanatory limitations and was beginning to lose space in economic and social sciences.

During the fall of 1971, Prebisch presented one of his works that marked a new impetus for Latin American developmentalist thought. "Transformation and development: the great task of Latin America" was presented during the fourteenth session of the Economic and Social Council of ECLAC that took place in Santiago de Chile and incorporated some of the criticisms made by the dependency approach.

The report makes a historical display of the constitutive characteristics of our

continent: the unequal development of rural and urban areas; the characteristics of occupational structure and the deficiencies of industrial work; the potential of internal markets for the expansion of industry and the need to produce scientific-technological advances taking advantage of the potential and the university tradition in our continent.

At this point, Prebisch marks those issues and contradictions that hinder the development of the continent, for which structures and attitudes (economic and political) must be transformed to achieve true social development: "Development actually demands a series of converging measures that some and other countries have to take if they all recognize that it is a problem common to all of them" (Prebisch, 1970, p. 8). Prebisch emphasizes the internal obstacles of each country, in particular, those related to power factors:

"the power structure is undoubtedly a great obstacle, although not insurmountable, since the political evolution that could transform it is conceivable. Even in this case, one might wonder if it would be possible to drastically reduce the consumption of the high-income strata beyond certain limits without provoking great



resistance, without a covert or overt opposition, without the weakening of the incentives to invest and a much greater evasion of capital to the exterior...” (Prebisch, 1970, p.16)

In this sense, the economist develops a series of postulates about how to face these limitations, which are anchored in greater regional financial cooperation and the adoption of internal measures to counteract the impacts of extra-regional economic decisions. Among the internal measures, the stimulation of the internal market stands out, based on production and consumption and the promotion of social mobility that “is not only a matter of general education and technical training: it is a fundamental matter of structures” (Prebisch, 1970, p. 11). And on the other hand, he emphasizes the development and integration of basic industries within the framework of regional arrangements.

Conclusions

Latin American social sciences began to develop in the light of literature and political manifestos. Perhaps at this origin are found the profound debates that take place in its institutions, universities and research spaces. The university tradition, public, free and

gratuitous, since the Reform of 1918 in Argentina, which had an impact on the entire university system in the region, should also be considered as part of this profound intellectual movement.

In this context, social sciences expanded throughout Latin America, based on the financing of international organizations and, mainly, the United States. The confrontation between the capitalist and communist bloc in the context of the Cold War cannot be ignored, Latin America was a region in dispute, and in constant growth. In this framework, ECLAC constituted a pivot for its institutionalization. The organization was a hub for research, debate, and discussions relating to Latin American economic development.

Raúl Prebisch was able to read in the Latin American conjuncture of the 1960s and 1970s the challenges that the future held for the continent, and attempt a revitalization of developmentalist theory, making room for the criticism outlined by dependencyism. In this sense, the explanatory factors that he considers exceed the mere economic structure and mark differences with respect to the theoretical path *towards development* of other regions of the world.



Prebisch, in addition to being a reference in Latin American social sciences, was an interpreter of his time: “We must dialogue with the men who are in politics, economics and the trade union life, and the men who move in other spheres of thought and of action, especially with those of the new generations. This dialogue can and must lead to fundamental coincidences, to a pragmatic consensus that guides to urgent action” (Prebisch, 1970, p. 237).

Prebisch, from ECLAC, and together with other researchers, managed to position the social sciences in Latin America in the forefront of the great global debates, where peripheral countries tried to give body to their development in the context of the crisis of liberalism and the rise of neoliberalism in Europe and the United States. This article attempts to be a contribution to the debate on his role and pretends to be a starting point for new investigations to bring into debate the place of Latin American social sciences.

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