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## Priests, prophets or sorcerers?

On intellectual elites and politics in modernizing Latin America<sup>1</sup>

“The new states of America, originally Spanish, do need kings with the title of ‘president’.” If – as Simón Bolívar<sup>2</sup> puts it – presidents are kings, the intellectuals in politics might be priests at the court. But they can be protesting prophets, as well, or sorcerers: magicians with knowledge of special spells to influence reality (or to bewitch the public). Indeed, Max Weber’s typology of the actors on the religious field (Weber 1985: 259, 268; Bourdieu 1971) is helpful for the intellectual field as well.

In early times of independence many intellectuals, as Bolívar, were leading politicians at the same time. For their task of nation-building they could count on the somewhat stable basis of *mestizaje* (– a situation quite different from Africa). The task developed in a twofold way: Externally, national identity was constructed by boundary marking over against Europe. Internally, it relied upon a protagonist and quasi hegemonic control of the state over social life – in difference to North America, where social relationships were much more embedded in civil contract and association. (Strasser 2002) The internal quest for power remains unsolved throughout history, since politics in Latin America do not primarily root in popular participation but in a strong state under changing charismatic *caudillos*.

Thus, the intellectual field is traditionally being caught in the fight between different parties for the domination of a strong state and the struggle over the construction of cultural identity.<sup>3</sup> The latter is a two-front challenge: the relation to Europe/USA on one hand and a repressed indigenous past on the other. There is much space for intellectual elites to stand as priests behind the altar of orthodox powers. But they also can pronounce protest as heterodox prophets of the yet unknown. Or they can work on alternative knowledge – “allodox” at a first glance – and provide special services.

How did the intellectual field in Latin America develop under these conditions? What are the present challenges? Where do the intellectuals stand today? Before

these questions are being discussed along an historical survey, I will first outline some theoretical considerations.

### The intellectual field, or: what are intellectual elites?

Priests, prophets and sorcerers, what do they have to do with intellectual elites? Are intellectual elites social elites who are intellectual? Or are they elites among the intellectuals? What are elites and what are intellectuals?

One way to approach the intellectual field is to distinguish its *ideal-typical positions*, similar (not completely alike) to the religious field. Bourdieu (1971) proposes – following Max Weber – four ideal types of religious actors: the public (*“laics”*), the priests, the prophets, and the sorcerers. Priests dominate the field, control its institutions, hold the gross of its capital, and thus represent orthodoxy. They dominate the religious public by reproducing and slightly redirecting the general opinion. Prophets are the heterodox counterparts of the priests. They contradict the “system” within more or less the same rationality, but from “below”, representing marginalized positions. Both, priests and prophets, share the interest in hegemony over the field. Correspondingly, both partake in the logic of totalizing discourses, be this, for example, the teleological harmony of a perfect market system or the one of a perfect revolution.

The sorcerers on the religious field are *allodox* – they are not commensurable with the priest’s or the prophet’s discourses and strategies. They respond – for money – to the public’s interest in magic cure. A corresponding position on the intellectual field in general would be the one of, let’s say, Dadaists or a post-modern “going private”.<sup>4</sup> But this article has a special focus: the political relevance of intellectuals among a politically active public. So, the sorcerer’s position has to be defined more narrowly. The sorcerer, then, is a collective actor on the intellectual field that is not commensurable with the priest’s and the prophet’s positions. It does not respond to the logic of the conflict between the two other actors. It can well represent certain interests of the public, but without creating parties or fellowships of followers. Thus, it is not involved in the competition for lay followers. But the overall relationship of the intellectual field counts also for the sorcerers: the competition for intellectual legitimacy, recognition and relevance.

In the present article, these ideal-typical actors on the intellectual field serve in the present article as a general scheme of classification. However, it is focused only in the internal relations on the field. “Intellectual elites” have to be defined in the context of overall social relations.

“Elite” is a counter-concept to “ruling class”. However, the concept of “elite” comprises still a notion of social position, if elites are defined as “groupings with the positional privilege of power and with capability of decision.” (Müller 2002: 350) But in difference to the concept of “ruling class”, “elite” already presupposes the legitimacy of rule. The concept embraces the “meritocratic ideal of perfect election... Elites deserve it to rule.” (Müller 2002: 349) This can be interpreted with the Weberian concept of “domination” in difference to “power”. Domination is based on its recognition by the dominated, with other words: on “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu). The exertion of power does not need to recur to force. In the most effective case, the dominated already carry the logic of domination embodied in their “habitus”. They tacitly tend to even anticipate the elite’s moves. But the power of an elite is not the same all over society. Political elites, for example, do not dominate economic relations as economic elites do, and vice versa. Especially under conditions of social differentiation, elites are quite specific according to different fields and sub-fields of society. It is different elites that dominate, for example, governments or social movements. Both are elites, but in specific social positions and fields of action.

In consequence, we can maintain the notion of social position and take the function of symbolic capital into account, when we define “elite” as follows: Elites are collective actors that have the power to determine decisions and actions of other actors on certain fields without being directly involved or exerting direct influence. Elites dominate specific fields of social practice.

The most common concept of an *intellectual* is a prominent, notorious figure that produces in the fields of philosophy, humanities, literature, arts and so forth – like for example Emile Zola, Bertold Brecht, Simone de Beauvoir, Theodor Adorno, Mahatma Ghandi, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel García Márquez, Octavio Paz ... Intellectuals are considered to be relatively free from the constraints of political and social life. More narrowly, some hold that real intellectuals have to be critical towards the *status quo*. Moreover, Gramsci (1972) distinguishes between traditional intellectu-

als, near to the ruling "block", and organic intellectuals of the oppressed classes. This distinction reminds that intellectuals are not completely free from social constraints.

In this article we shall set out from a broad definition of "intellectual". If only critics of the status quo would be considered as real intellectuals, the perspective would be too biased. In this broad sense, an intellectual is a person that produces cultural goods that – in very different ways – reflect on social life and enjoy a certain public recognition.

But the intellectual production is not as directly involved in public affairs as, for example, juridical or journalistic work can be. Humanities, social sciences and arts, instead, gain their influence precisely by a marked independence from politics. The strength of scientists, writers and artists rests in their being *free* from political interests, being "pure", as Pierre Bourdieu puts it. If such an intellectual intervenes in politics, he or she does it as an "attorney of the common weal." (Bourdieu 1993: 29) Relative independence of the intellectual field and a structure of its own is precisely the condition of its social significance. It is because they are recognizably *intellectuals* (and not politicians), that intellectuals can grant or withdraw legitimacy (symbolic capital) of other social actors and become relevant to the public.

In these social relations, cultural goods – knowledge, artifacts, institutions and the like – can function as cultural capital (Bourdieu 1983), that triggers effects on society and politics. Knowledge and symbols can become an instrument in the struggle over the definition of common interest – a highly political issue. The more relevant cultural capital becomes, the more it turns a factor of domination.

Where does relevance originate from? It is very much according to intellectual self-understanding to say: 'Relevance derives from pertinence. If a theory is pertinent to resolve social problems, it will become relevant.' This is partly true. But it is also true that much impertinent talk gains relevance only because of its affinity to power positions in other fields (as politics or economy). The content of intellectual discourse, obviously, differs according to the social position of the intellectuals and to the fields of their compromise. Even subordinate intellectual practice can become most relevant, if it intervenes in mobilization of collective actors, such as social movements. In the end, the objective political value of the cultural capital owned by specific intellectuals depends on their possibilities to invest it; in other words: it depends

on its usefulness for political and other elites – be they ruling elites or leaders of oppositional movements. If intellectuals become intellectual elites, or not, does not only depend on the intellectuals themselves. It depends on other social factors, too.

*Intellectual elites* can be academics, educators, writers, artists, religious dignitaries, and similar. But the term should be understood according to two variables: production of relevant cultural goods and field-specific dominance. Intellectuals become intellectual elites, as they produce such cultural goods that are sufficiently relevant to the public and to other elites, in order for the intellectual to be granted a position of dominance in a certain field. Thus, the intellectual elite can take a dominant position in a specific field of social praxis: certain political scientists in foreign policy, certain writers in the media, certain tenure track professors in humanities etc. But they dominate these fields only as *intellectuals*. That is to say: by cultural products such as knowledge, symbols, artifacts etc. They dominate by virtue of the relative independence of the intellectual field from the fields that the intellectuals are engaged in. Intellectuals as *elites*, on the other hand, are co-dependend from other elites, such as governmental, bureaucratic, economic or social movement elites. Thus, the independence of the intellectual field is being challenged and has to be reinforced again – in order for the intellectual to remain relevant as intellectual. Within the dynamics of this paradox, intellectual elites are involved in public struggle for the definition of common interest, whatever position they may identify with (governmental or social movements). In this sense, "intellectual elites" turn out to be intellectuals with relevant positions in society.

In correspondence to this approach, it makes sense to describe intellectual elites according to ...

- their relative position in the overall social space,
- the characteristics of cultural capital (the special knowledge) of the different groups and the conditions of its investment and realization,
- the relative position in the intellectual field, and ...
- ... and taking into account the specific struggles for positions within this field.

Such criteria serve to locate intellectuals within the overall social space in relation to other positions. At the same time, the ideal types serve to indicate the dynamics of the intellectual field as such.

### Priests of independence: the liberal vanguard during the nineteenth century

Under the Spanish *colonial empire* the classic intellectual was the "*letrado*", the "literate": a person schooled in theology, law, philosophy, literature or grammar, according to thomistic ideas, and almost always a servant of Church and government. Opposition by Catholic intellectuals – as bishop Bartolomé de las Casas – was an exceptional case.

*Independence* became possible with large scale local merchants and export-crop producers, claiming free business opportunities, technical modernization and social autonomy, like civil marriage and non-Catholic schools. Their intellectual liberalism was oriented in the USA and Europe, except of Spain.

In opposition to Spanish monarchical rule the liberal elites (and later the conservatives, too) were constitutionalists, but not necessarily democrats. (Sondrol 1993) *Caudillismo*<sup>5</sup> was too a strong heritage. Rational liberal constitutionalism merged up to a certain point with charismatic *caudillismo* and rendered authoritarian constitutionalism. Power concentrated on the executive, and many successful attempts were made to lifelong "royal presidencies".<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the *caudillo*-feature was much stronger among Catholic and conservative *hacendados* than among urban liberals. This political juxtaposition was going to shape the intellectual field for a long time. Independence revolutionized the *intellectual field*. Liberals made up the vanguard, and their intellectuals performed as politicians. The strong identification of liberal intellectuals and liberal political power created a considerable force over against conservative *letrados*. The field polarized.

As politicians, or near to political power, the great majority of intellectuals – conservative and liberals – had no problem to affirm "royal presidencies". Some tended to more aristocratic forms of "elitocracy",<sup>7</sup> others to a constitutionalist variant.<sup>8</sup> But polarization went along clear lines: Conservatives maintained strong links with the Catholic church and firm orientation in Spanish culture. *Letrados*, of course, favored clerical control over public education.<sup>9</sup> But even under conservative rule, liberals still realized their influence to some extent in public schooling. (Sánchez 1998) On the other hand, liberal initiatives succeeded in creating institutions of lasting significance. In Colombia, for example, they established the first national uni-

versity and a school for mine engineering, in order to create patriotic technicians and intellectuals with utilitarian ideals following Bantham. In Venezuela, 1877, the first *Instituto de Ciencias Sociales* on the continent was founded. (González 1998: 27) During the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed a juxtaposition between *letrados* and technocratic elites – a constellation that still is somewhat significant.

But the relationship to Europe and the USA was almost the same among liberals and conservatives: Both tended to imitate models. Conservatives were oriented in the Spanish Catholic heritage; liberals opted for French or Anglo-Saxon philosophy and Protestantism.

Finally, the *indigenous intellectuals* ought to be mentioned. Meanwhile it is true that indigenous people did not partake in official politics for almost 500 years of colony and nation-state, there were indigenous leaders that interpreted their history in a political way and lead rebellions.<sup>10</sup> These men constitute a special position on the intellectual field in Latin America. It has long been latent, but it gave rise to a powerful intellectual reorientation on the brink of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, again, today.

The latency of indigenous intellectuals points towards a certain *latency of the intellectual field* as such. As the limits between intellectuals and politicians were still not quite marked, the field could not organize itself in a relatively independent way. As a consequence, intellectuals were too closely identified with political actors. Therefore, talking with adapted Weberian vocabulary, the liberals who had been "prophets" before independence turned "priests" soon after. For the intellectual field to crystallize as such, intellectuals had to become more professional.

### Rise of the prophets: first half of the 20th century

During this period the *Mexican revolution* was an important datum for Latin American intellectuals. It marked the fact that Latin America had consolidated its independence and created a political system of its own. Latin America could face Europe and the USA from this position. Mexico nationalized its oil production and introduced a new cultural policy: *Indigenismo* was a way of being proud of indigenous roots and of *mestizaje*. The Mexican government underlined this with a kind of cultural foreign policy, networking intellectuals and politicians on the continent.<sup>11</sup>

All this took place in the climate of industrialization in the bigger countries of the continent: Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, and – in lesser degree – Colombia and Peru. The new industrial elite grew a strong competition to the old oligarchy. Its influence triggered political liberalism. “Conspicuous consumption” (Veblen) became a cultural strategy to underscore social power. (Gerdes 1994) Cultural production – and with it intellectuals and artists – grew to be more and more a part of market economy and subject to its constraints and opportunities. One of the opportunities for intellectuals was a growing independence from official politics. At the same time politics turned more professional and democracy more formal, even though the presidencies (and constitutions) did not lose their authoritarian traits. Important for intellectual influence was that liberal elites secularized politics by cutting back the influence of the Catholic church. Industrialization gave rise to a new social class: industrial workers, who build strong unions and communist parties.

These organizations grew a third political force on the continent. Many intellectuals – in a subordinate position among the middle class – tended to identify with the working class, the subordinated of the whole society.<sup>12</sup> However, the most consequential change for intellectuals might have been modernization of social life: more free professions, newspapers, public debate and the foundation of liberal public universities. A cultural elite of public opinion makers could begin to develop. Accordingly, intellectuals did not perform so much anymore as politicians or as their counselors. They began to “pluralize” into many different professions and social positions. The intellectual field acquired relative autonomy.

Public *universities* were of special significance for intellectuals. Since the 19th century they had furthered liberal thought. Now they focused on rational social planning. Social sciences and social work were installed as careers beginning with the 1930ties (Chile, Mexico, Brazil) and booming in the 50ties (Caracas, Buenos Aires, Mexico, Santiago de Chile, Bogotá, Santiago de Cuba, Lima). (González 1998: 31) Social sciences were conceived as a means to steer industrialization and modernization, but also to give account of Latin American identity. The faculties took up questions like the situation of proletarians, peasants and indigenous people and searched for autochthonous sources of Latin American culture. Conservatives countered with the foundation of Catholic universities, thus fostering a more formal con-

servative intellectual elite, beyond the old image of the *letrado*.<sup>13</sup> The following polarization between universities remains effective on the intellectual field until today.

A scientific approach to society fit into official strategies for development. The United Nations Commission on Latin America (CEPAL), founded in 1948, defined the State as the motor of progress and launched programs of economic modernization and development. Structural-functionalist sociology, during the 1950ties, enriched this strategy with social know-how. But this line of technocratic approach to social affairs barely started up in the fifties. It grew more important later on.

In the first half of the 20th century, intellectuals began to “go social”. That gave rise not only to a *bohème* or to newspaper- and coffeehouse-debates. It identified, on the long run, many intellectuals with different *social movements*. On one hand, conservative intellectuals headed movements like the “*cristeros*” in Mexico that launched between 1926 and 1929 a rebellion against the revolution. But left wing movements, on the other hand, developed much more dynamics in the intellectual field. Leon Trotzky died in Mexico among a strong Marxist movement with leading intellectuals in rank and file. One of them, Diego Rivera, merged in his mural paintings modernization, socialism and the indigenous American roots into a vision of a new Mexico and Latin America. On the intellectual field, *indigenismo* merged, to a certain extent, with the affirmation of Latin American identity from “below”, as for example it happened with José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru. While, at that time, *indigenismo* was still a movement of *mestizos*, it nevertheless gave an important impulse for the later development of indigenous intellectuals.

The most important outcome of the first half of the 20th century was that lasting structures of the *intellectual field* in Latin America were formed. The intellectual field as such became more structured and more visible in society, and intellectuals developed an oppositional discourse of their own. The field polarized in left and right wing, secular and catholic. At the same time, intellectuals became more professional, more independent from official politics, more identified with social movements and more engaged in public debate. They gained profile as intellectuals. Now, intellectual “prophets” arose as a proper position of the intellectual field. The same counts for the position of the sorcerer: To allow for the existence of specialists, who sell their services, the field had to develop and generate intellectual professionals. Nevertheless, from the 1960ties to the ‘80ties the prophets dominated the intellectual field.

### Marxist prophets and technocratic priests: from the 1960ties to the '80ties

From 1959 onwards, the *Cuban revolution* set an important milestone for Latin American intellectuals. It helped to spawn the new Latin American narrative, the-ology of liberation, and *dependencia*-theory. Specially, the Cuba crisis produced an original sense of universal significance in many Latin American intellectuals.<sup>14</sup> In any case: on the continental level the Cuban revolution projected Marxism as a serious alternative to "CEPALism" on the road to progress.

The 1960ties set important features: the juxtaposition of Marxism and CEPALism, *dependencia*-theory, and continuing modernization of state and society, specially the universities. This combination spawned the rise of independent intellectual specialists.

For the situation between the 60ties and the 80ties, we will discuss three examples: Chile with a strong intellectual tradition, Colombia with a comparatively weak intellectual field and conservative hegemony, and the rise of indigenous intellectuals. These examples will be examined again with reference to the 1990ties.

Chile is one of the earliest countries in Latin America to modernize and develop strong political parties with intellectual background. Early industrialization also created a technological elite in the private sector. (Silva 1992; Puryear 1994)

Developmental politics in the 60ties – partly in response to the Cuban revolution – lead to the so called "revolution in freedom" of the Christian Democrats, beginning in 1964. Most of the intellectuals to design politics of modernization were drawn from international organizations such as CEPAL. Young Christian Democrat intellectuals looked for combining technocracy with a Christian social ethics. On the other hand, the socialist movement grew stronger among intellectuals, especially in public universities and among social scientists. Silva (1992) distinguishes technocratic and humanist intellectuals – the former mostly economists, the latter sociologists. During the period between 1964 and 1973 both shared a growing skepticism towards (early) economicist modernization-theory. On the brink of the 1970ties, *dependencia*-theory (Cardoso/Faletto 1969) swept the intellectual scene. Prime themes – even before the government of Salvador Allende – were "anti-imperialism, national liberation, struggle against the oligarchy, and the socio-political integration of the masses" (Silva 1992: 147). As the labor market for intellectuals ex-

panded, many of them began to work in free research institutions, public administration and planning, political parties and in the media. They gained still more independence and influence in society.

Towards the end of the 60ties the polarization among the intellectuals became more and more visible. It coincided with the polarization between public and Catholic universities. At the Catholic University of Chile the *gremialistas* movement was founded as a Christian response to the left. Later on, this movement agglutinated important social forces to overthrow the government of Allende.

Under the *Unidad Popular* (1970-73), however, humanist, left oriented sociologists gained an important influence on the political elites, on governmental politics and on social movements. The role of sociologists was redefined "in terms of theoretical and political militancy in favor of the revolution" (Silva 1992: 149). Consequently there has been a certain tendency for the intellectual elites "to gain in political audience what they lost in professional profile"<sup>15</sup> – a self-criticism pronounced by many engaged intellectuals after the military coup. However, the time of the *Unidad Popular* in government was too short to put Marxist intellectuals in the priest's position on the intellectual field.

The dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet between 1973 and 1989 re-structured the intellectual field by violence. Left wing intellectuals were killed, tortured, repressed and exiled. During the first year, integrist Christian intellectuals of the *gremialista* movement and the Catholic University proved low capacity in economic matters. So the neo-liberal "Chicago Boys" took over in 1975 and turned quickly into the new orthodoxy on the intellectual field. By governmental order they began to dictate economic and social policy until the 1990ties in a hegemonic way. They privatized economy thoroughly and reduced politics to an exclusive matter of the state. Public affairs were run either by economic measures or by military repression. Their discourse legitimized dictatorship for the sake of – the keyword: – *efficient* economic policy, and to the sacrifice of political democracy.

During the 1980ties the remaining humanist intellectuals could organize in private research institutes, much of them funded by international cooperation. The exiled social scientists fostered their professional education in European universities. They developed into an extraordinary and reasonably independent scientific elite. Both elements were of great significance for Chile's return to democracy in the

1990ties and for the development of a position on the intellectual field, specific for the independent specialist, the "sorcerer".

Chile, from the 1960ties to the late '80ties, is a very clear cut example for the ongoing differentiation of intellectual elites: traditional Catholics, humanist sociologist with Marxist heritage, and economicist technocrats. The most important trait of this period all over Latin America is the confrontation between leftist intellectual and oligarchic power elites. The intellectual field, however, was developing its own shape. The orthodox position was held by neo-liberals and traditionalist Catholics, and the heterodox by (exiled) Marxists and some Catholics. The sorcerer's position was about to rise.

The second example, *Colombia*, shows also a strong political polarization. (Sánchez 1993 and 1998) Towards the end of the so called *violencia*-period, between 1948 and 1965, a rapid modernization equipped the public universities with social scientists, who investigated *violencia* and focused themes of the time: Marxism and developmentalism. But swiftly, the pursuit of social change boiled down to a quest of power again. Left wing intellectuals –for example the priest Camilo Torres – cooperated with the guerrilla movement, meanwhile traditionalists did not enter into public debate, but encouraged the oligarchy's repression of protest with a state of siege in 1978. Only in 1984 president Belisario Betancourt initiated a National Dialogue. In this process the strongly marginalized humanist intellectuals took an important role and gave rise to new developments on the intellectual field as well.<sup>16</sup>

Heavy polarization of the intellectual field conditioned also the rise of *indigenous intellectual elites*. Indigenous peoples partly identified with guerrilla movements (for example ORPA in Guatemala). But in the end, their interests were not furthered to their satisfaction, because of the authoritarian cadre structure of the guerrillas and the violent military reaction.

The period between the 1940ties and '80ties, nevertheless, was important for indigenous movements. At its beginning, they were still quite much under tutelage of *mestizo* intellectuals and remained objects of integrative programs. But on the long run, this gave rise to an indigenous petty bourgeoisie and to representative organizations.<sup>17</sup> In consequence, some constitutions (like Guatemala 1985) take the ethnic condition into account and grant cultural self determination, local legislation and territories.<sup>18</sup> Most important: this era facilitates formal education for indige-

nous intellectuals. So, after the cease of war, the 1990ties came to be an important period of indigenous activism. Today, indigenous intellectuals constitute a considerable position on the intellectual field in many countries. In most cases they are in the position of the sorcerer.

The period from the 1960ties to the 80ties showed a strong polarization between orthodox and heterodox positions. The role of the priest generally was filled by technocratic neo-liberal or by conservative intellectuals; the one of the prophets by Marxists or humanists. Most interesting is the development of a third position represented by independent professional intellectuals and the indigenous movement.

#### Pragmatic sorcerers: the 1990ties and after

The 1990ties began with a political hangover. Neo-liberal technocrats in Chile, for example, had to cope with the disappearance of Pinochet from the presidential palace (1989). But the left suffered more: Important revolutionary movements (El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia and Peru) and the Nicaraguan revolution had been suffocated or had turned evidently criminal. Perhaps the most important setback was the fact that Nicaraguan revolutionary leadership had not proved resistant to corruption. On the other hand, democratic processes in the 1990ties opened new opportunities for intellectual action. While priests and prophets still were struggling with each other, the sorcerer's time had come.

In this sense, *Chile* was specially favored, since the dictatorship had not been able to disarticulate the intellectuals completely. A humanist intellectual elite had become very professional and relevant during the 1980ties. Social scientists prepared together with politicians the *referendum* against Pinochet in 1989. Many intellectuals came back from exile and engaged in the democratic process without merging again into a symbiotic relationship with the state or political parties. (Silva 1992: 156) Many of them maintained their jobs in free institutions and served as consultants. Former Marxist intellectuals began to revalue democracy. Neo-liberal technocrats suffered a loss of influence as even Christian democratic intellectuals began to oppose them.<sup>19</sup> A considerable number of humanists and technocrats finally merged into pragmatic politics.

Although the overall economic program stayed quite neo-liberal, public politics had a strong comeback. Over against economic efficiency justice, law, politics, and social security gained new significance for government again. On the other hand, political discourse of left wing intellectuals lost its focus on inner-societal contradictions and class struggle. Silva (1992: 160) reports that terms like '*el pueblo*', 'working class', 'the marginalized', 'class struggle' are being substituted by 'citizenship', 'population', 'sustainable growth', 'financial stability', 'modernity'.

This corresponds to a general shift away from totalizing ideologies to pragmatic strategies. (González 1998: 39 ff.) Carlos Sojo, director for Costa Rica of the *Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences* (FLACSO), underscores that social sciences in Latin America point towards more professional skill. This is the way, he adds, to take the official disenchantment with economics as an opportunity for sociology and social politics to come back into policy planning (Interview 28.2.2003) – or, as Silva (1992: 154) puts it, to be "more professional and less messianic".

A similar process took place in *Colombia*. After president Betancur had proclaimed a general amnesty for the guerrilla (1982) and a National Dialogue (1984), many intellectuals began to change their image of the Colombian society; and with the constitution of 1991 a broad cooperation of critical intellectuals in government and official politics began to develop. Today, even Gabriel García Márquez is designing a nation wide educational program together with the ministry of education.

Two peace-commissions were an important milestone for intellectuals to critically participate and take a lead in official politics. (Sánchez 1993) The commission's reports have been published in 1987 and 1992. The cooperation of the intellectuals focused on different forms of violence and possibilities for negotiation (1987), as well as on the relationship between the state and the guerrilla movement. The reports point to strengthening civil society, not the state. Specially, the second report was communicated to the public by regional workshops. It triggered grass-root political participation and proposals about agrarian reform, a social contract with demobilized guerrillas, conversion of coca plantations, and much more. Sánchez (1993: 44) underlines that one of the most important results was, to show that conflicts are part of ordinary life and have to be regulated by the society itself in a civilized way.<sup>20</sup> This corresponds precisely to the role of conflict in a modern society (Senghaas 1998: 32) – difficult to grasp for totalizing theories.

The *indigenous* movement and its *intellectuals* mobilized in the 1980ties and 90ties throughout a critical dispute with left and right wing positions, prophets and priests. Indigenous intellectuals had higher education during the 1970ties and 80ties. They transformed indigenismo into an authentically indigenous movement.

In Guatemala, during the early 1980ties, the movement was first to some extent linked to the guerrilla. But already at that time discussions about the ethnic nature of a revolutionary state were controversial. After democratization, the movement took more and more its own shape. Its middle class intellectual elite put much attention on cultural identity. This had immediate political effect. In 1995 some indigenous organizations created their own platform for the presidential elections. (Weisshar: 2000)

In Ecuador the indigenous movement made much headway with the rebellion in 1990. Since then it is an important actor in national politics. The current president of the country governs on the basis of the indigenous vote.

It is important to see that the indigenous movement pronounces claims that question deeply the political identity of Latin American republics. Many branches of the movement do not simply focus on a revitalization of indigenous culture, but on political presence in transformed nations. One of the most popular concepts has been Lenin's idea of the multi-national state. As Ibarra (1999: 86) notes, the vast majority of the Ecuadorian political elite does not share into this concept. The same is true for other countries. Nevertheless, indigenous intellectuals are making their way into politics and onto the university chairs.<sup>21</sup> They differentiate even more the intellectual field and they diversify social conflicts. The indigenous movement, in this sense, is an expression of an open and conflictive modernity; not so much of traditional society.

All three examples indicate an important shift in Latin American intellectual performance. Conflict is not seen anymore as an antecedent of some utopian harmony, but simply as a constant condition of a politicized society. As for social sciences, González (1998) traces this development back to *dependencia*-theory (according to Cardoso and Faletto). The former grand-theories – developmentalism and orthodox Marxism – both have worked with the distinction between traditional and modern society. They shared a positivistic epistemology and a teleological concept of change. As underdevelopment was shown to be an inherent condition



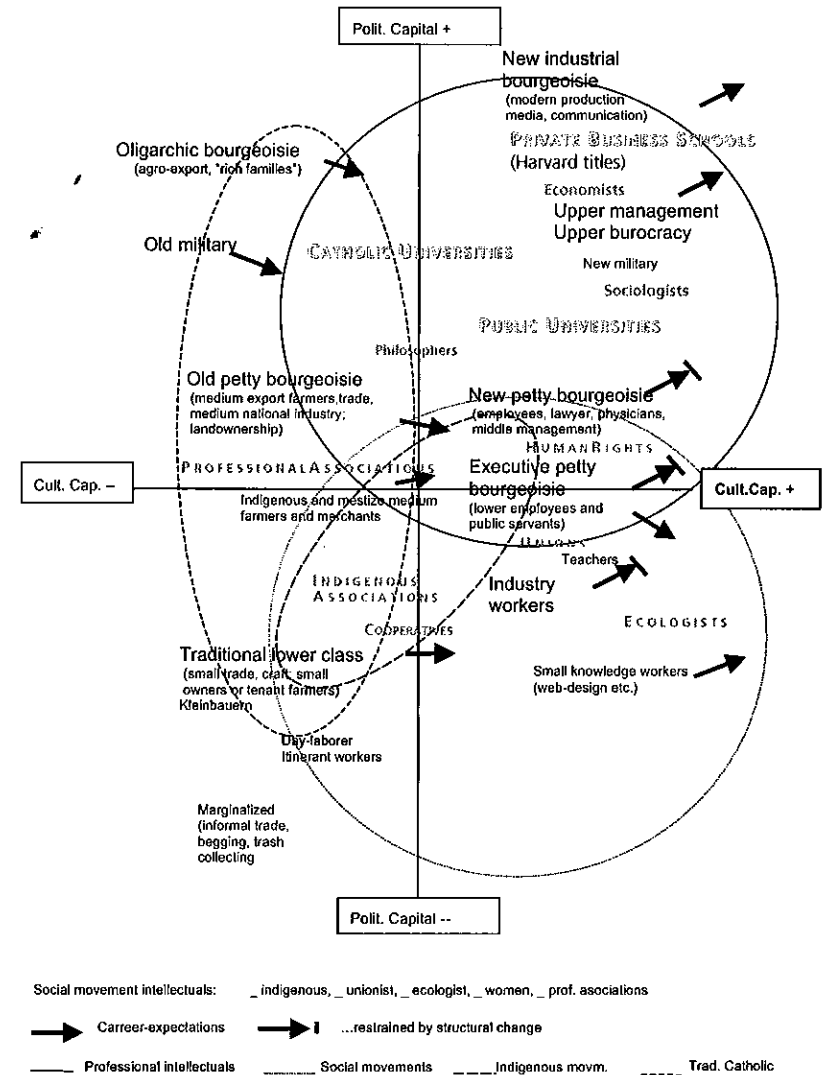
of capitalism, a conscience of historical contingency turned the positivistic and teleological concepts obsolete. Overall historical processes toward utopic horizons lost their appeal. Instead, during the last thirty years social sciences began to focus more and more on particular actors, for example: Freire and the pedagogic of the oppressed, Fals Borda and indigenous knowledge, Martín-Baró and the social psychology of war. The catalog of themes changed towards issues as identity, reform of the state, industrial politics, poverty, social politics, the rural condition etc. And the actors on the intellectual field diversified.

The growing *social differentiation* of Latin American societies during the last decades also shapes today's intellectual field in many ways.

First, it pushed in disadvantage of the "giants". Top cultural figures lost much of their significance. Novelists like Gabriel García Márquez or Mario Vargas Llosa may still be significant for politics. But – as the Chilean writer Tatiana Lobo puts it – their voice as the moral consciousness of society is being less listened to in the public. Additionally the writer's guild, as a whole, suffers pressure from the editorial houses for mass-public productions with low political and cultural profile. (Interview 26.2.2003) Moreover, former political "giants" (as *el pueblo unido*) dissolved into a large variety of "dwarfs" in civil society. New forms of political representation and intellectual influence on politics developed. (García 1995: 28) Most important: the number of actors, positions, interests, relations, and coalitions increases notably.

The following diagram shows intellectual actors according to their position in social space. It relates political capital with cultural capital to construct the space itself. The scale-value of cultural capital derives from its relevance (a product of usefulness for problem solving and public recognition). The value of political capital derives from influence on political decisions and processes. Along these variables the diagram constructs the social space. As a basic orientation it depicts some positions of the general "class structure" with corresponding career expectations. On this basic scheme, the graph projects the distribution of important intellectual actors with respect to political power: university types, movements (like Human Rights) in distinction from their intellectuals. Further, the diagram distinguishes and relates the spheres of professional, traditional catholic and movement intellectuals. Finally, there is an attempt to locate the ideal types of the intellectual field within the frame of

society as a whole: priest, prophet and sorcerer. The graph will not be fully interpreted here. It is not the result of a quantitative correlational analysis, but of an overall estimation. However, it might help to place most of our considerations within a broader social context.



Intellectuals diversify into NGOs, social movement organizations, corporations, consultancy firms, media, arts, research institutes and, of course, universities and governments. Obviously there will develop new power relationships, new opportunities to mobilize resources by cooperation and new frontlines on the intellectual field.<sup>22</sup>

*Social movements* are of growing political significance. The sheer number of different action groupings shows the actual differentiation of collective action into diverse interests as well as the social weight of the phenomenon as a whole: women's movement, indigenous, Afro-American, anti-globalization movements, unions, employers associations, micro-enterprise networks, professional associations, religious groups with political agendas, human rights activists, the ecology movement ... and may be more.<sup>23</sup> All these organizations mobilize politically and offer a field of action for intellectuals. With reference to political capital, the movements are located in the lower sphere, while some of its intellectuals might have special influence due to their professional position, for example, as a professor at a public university. In terms of cultural capital, most movements and their intellectuals appear with quite a high position. They address issues of social significance and even achieve to mobilize public behind them. Thus, the proper intellectuals of the movement sphere appear to be the "prophets". But also sorcerers can be counted under movement influence. The main contradiction on the field exists between movement intellectuals and those near to the upper positions, as economists, private business school professors, media commentators etc. – "priests" according to the model. A second important contradiction prevails over against traditional intellectuals, mostly in close relation to Catholic social teaching. In a certain sense, this contradiction is the heritage of the old juxtaposition between the Catholic *letrado* and the secularized liberal thinker. But it loses significance for society. Instead, the contradiction between social movements and neo-liberal technocrats becomes more important. "Sorcerers" appear to be in a medium position that offers opportunities to mediate and, thus, gain social relevance. A third area of multiple contradictions opens between different movements, for example: ecologists and unionists, indigenous and feminist movement. The prophets of each movement normally are too much caught within the movement's interest, to be able to find solutions. This is another field for mediation by independent intellectual specialists. On the other hand, professional-

ization of intellectuals bears the seed of conflict with social movements, too. A movement intellectual sees many interests and strategies of "his" or "her" movement with different eyes, once he or she arrived at a university chair.

Among the *universities* the traditional competence between Catholic and public institutions stays quite similar. While it is very difficult to score the difference in political capital between these two types of universities, it seems quite obvious that the philosophers lost significance over against social scientists during the last decades. New actors on the academic field are private universities of very different scale and quality, but in a great number. The most important private institutes in Latin America are continental networks of, roughly speaking, neo-liberal orientation, as for example INCAE (Costa Rica and other countries), a fellow institution of Harvard Business School. These institutions focus on a straight forward education of intellectual business elites according to a technocratic style. Given the close relationship to business capital and the orientation of many Latin American governments during the last decade or two, these schools hold much political capital and represent a "priestly" position on the intellectual field. The typical intellectual here is the politically active economist. But most of the private universities do not qualify for the subject of this article.

Many more aspects could be discussed, as for example the role of the media. In any case, the most important trait of the intellectual field in Latin America, today, is functional differentiation within obvious power relations. Both frame the opportunities and constraints of today's intellectuals engaging in politics.

How do these intellectuals face the present conditions of *power and social differentiation*? As for power, Inacio "Lula" da Silva, the new president of Brazil and leader of the Workers Party (PT), reportedly was told the following by a member of the Brazilian business elite: "Power is like a violin. You take it up with the left and play it with the right." Things are more complex. The governments of "Lula" in Brazil, of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and of Alejandro Toledo are not simply "left". What they have in common is regionalism, or more to the point: a nationalism open to regional interests. According to Arnaldo Mora, Lula and Toledo modified their relationship with the bourgeoisie of their countries in order to develop national and regional programs against the economic domination of the USA and for more social justice.<sup>24</sup> The situation in Venezuela features more of *caudillismo* and little so-

cial consent, but for the rest it is comparable. Mexico, on the other hand, does not develop straight forward neo-liberal policies under Fox, and searched for more compromise with the Zapatista guerrilla than the PRI government did. In other words: political power is not as one-handed as it was during the 1970ties and the 80ties. It cannot be dealt with by totalizing theories.

In a similar way, the one-handed neo-liberal model of mere economic growth, as a means to eradicate poverty and inequality, proved wrong. It coincided too much with age old politics of Latin American power elites, who have been unable to develop even decent democracies, because of their unwillingness to contribute to public income.<sup>25</sup> The economicist approach to development has come to an end. Today even the World Bank considers political cooperation with social organizations in polycentric development coalitions as an interesting alternative.

In this situation, a group of humanist intellectuals<sup>26</sup> took the initiative to create a policy proposal, the so called "Buenos Aires Consensus"<sup>27</sup>. This paper assumes the condition of a global market economy. But within this framework it proposes to build up social and economic alliances and to facilitate political participation of citizen-movements, in order to guarantee economic growth with equity and, thus, to strengthen representative democratic institutions. The struggle against poverty and inequality as well as the reformation of government are key tasks of the program.

For the orthodox left such a program might mean – as a journalist puts it – "to swallow toads for the 21st century" (Spielmann 1999). Instead, Jorge Castañeda – a leading member of the group, distinguished intellectual, and ex-minister of foreign affairs in Mexico – believes that the main challenge lies in pragmatic politics: the combination of "left programmatic theses" with the struggle for power to influence politics within the actual framework.<sup>28</sup>

The point is, to find the balance between a necessary power-play, on one hand, and politics that are oriented in social participation, on the other. Such an approach is not entirely new in Latin America. But it still challenges old vices of Latin American politics. First, the approach does not seek power for the sake of power; so it denies the traditional absolutistic style of government. Second, it defines democracy as the common participation in public affairs; so it disapproves the authoritarian character of the presidential system and its constitutions. Third, it allows for chang-

ing coalitions and dissenting; so it overcomes personalistic *caudillismo*. Fourth, the approach focuses on feasible contents and objectives; so it rejects utopias of any kind, left or right. In the end, the proposal modernizes the political processes in Latin America, with an important ingredient of social justice and political participation.

Modernization means to open up the political processes to the arena of conflicting social interests. Time has gone by for "democratic kings" and *caudillos* to rule traditional societies by suffocating potential social conflict. Conflicts are part of the "fundamental politization" of society in modern age, as Dieter Senghaas (1998: 32) underlines. Traditional philosophies conceive of society as a closed and harmonious order. Thus, conflict is seen as chaos and has to be stifled in order to reconstitute harmony. Both, conservative and left utopians strive for this kind of harmony: The former search for it in the past, the latter in the future. But both views are pre-modern. Modern "fundamental politization" means that conflict drives society *itself* and has to be regulated by political means.

This involves many actors. Intellectual expertise can engage on many levels. Its relevance depends on the paradox of intellectual elites. On one hand, they have to be pertinent and useful for those engaged directly in politics; on the other hand, their judgment has to be independent. In the end, both depend on a strongly developed intellectual field that facilitates relatively autonomous intellectual positions.

In any case, the regulation of constitutive conflict in fundamentally politicized societies is not a business for intellectual priests behind a throne, nor the one for intellectual prophets with a flaming sword. It is a job for intelligent and reflexive mediators, who feed their knowledge and critique into political processes and stay as "independent as possible"<sup>29</sup> – just as the sorcerer does. The challenges are demanding, so that even a little magic might be welcome.

### Annotations

- 1 The task was to give an overview on the Latin American situation under similar premises. It is a hazardous enterprise to outline two hundred years of intellectual engagement in political affairs on a whole continent. So I apologize at this point for being very brief and rather schematic. Many interesting details cannot be considered.

- 2 Quoted according to Sondrol (1993: 59)
- 3 A general assessment of Latin American social thought in Werz 1992.
- 4 See Urrego (1996) who shows different currents in intellectual responses to the appearance of the EPR-guerrilla in Mexico during the mid-nineties. While there was a broad and very diverse response, the postmodern intellectuals didn't say a word.
- 5 For example for the 19th century José Gaspar Rodríguez (Paraguay) and Juan Manuel de Rosas (Argentina); in the 20th century Juan Perón (Argentina), Getúlio Vargas (Brasil) and in a certain sense as well Fidel Castro.
- 6 Monarchies in Brazil (Don Pedro I and II) and Mexico (Iturbide and Maximiliano); Bolivia: Bolívar as "consul" vitalicio; en Paraguay Dr. Francia; Haiti: monarchy and lifelong presidencies.
- 7 So did the early liberators Simón Bolívar (gran Colombia, Bolivia) and José de San Martín (Argentina, Chile, Perú), but also liberal intellectuals like José Enrique Rodó (1871-1917, Uruguay).
- 8 As for example the Argentinian sociologist and lawyer Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810-1884): "Give any possible power to the executive, but do it through a constitution." (Quoted after Sondrol 1993: 60)
- 9 ... a program that could be maintained quite rigorously under strong conservative regimes until the first decades of the 20th century, for example in Colombia. (Sánchez 1998)
- 10 Only to mention Guatemala: Tecún Uman against Alvarado at the very brink of the colonial era; 1708 a revolt in Chiapas, 1770 Cobán y Rabinal, 1813 San Martín Cuchumatanes, 1820 in Totonicapán lead by the indigenous intellectual Anastasio Tzul, 1898 in San Juan Ixcoy, and 1944 in Patzicia.
- 11 Among other things, this served to counteract the US initiative of a Pan-American union under US-leadership with the own enterprise of a "Latin American Union". (Yankelevitch 1996)
- 12 ... according to the homology between two different, but equally subordinated positions in two different fields, as Bourdieu (1992: 282 f.) shows.
- 13 For example the Universidad Javeriana in Colombia that countered the Escuela Normal Superior, a liberal institution according to the model of the french Ecole Normale Supérieure. (Sánchez 1998) As for Latin American universities in general see Ruiz 1995.

- 14 So the former Costa Rican minister of culture, the philosopher Arnaldo Mora, (Interview 24.2.2003)
- 15 Brunner (1988: 81), quoted according to Silva (1992: 149).
- 16 See below, on the 1990ties and later.
- 17 See Ibarra (1999) for Ecuador and Weissbar (2000) for Guatemala. In more general terms Colombes (1993). An overview with more literature in Melgar (2003).
- 18 From an indigenous perspective see Chavajay (2000).
- 19 According to Silva, technocratic intellectuals divided into a "oficialistas" and a "disidentes" fraction already during dictatorship.
- 20 On most recent developments see Archila (2002)
- 21 "See for the actual situation as well Barrera (2002).
- 22 A nice satirical counterfeit of the new intellectual field is given by Hopenhayn (2001).
- 23 On social movements in Latin America see Nueva Sociedad (2002).
- 24 Interview 24.2.2003. "Lula" obtained even support of the Sao Paulo business elite, because of his policy against the free trade agreement with the USA that would weaken considerably Brazilian capital.
- 25 See in this line of critique Joseph Stieglitz during his recent visit to Colombia (La Nación, Costa Rica, 7.3.03). Argentina is only the most visible example of shipwrecked local elite and IMF policies. See with more detail Korzeniewicz /Smith 2000.
- 26 Jorge Castañeda, Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Leonel Brizola, Manuel Camacho, Dante Caputo, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Vicente Fox, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Sergio Ramírez and Vicentinho.
- 27 ... designed as a counterproposal to the "Washington Consensus" of the IMF and adopted by the Socialist International in June 1999; see Internacional Socialista (1999).
- 28 Castañeda (2001). This former left wing intellectual presented a widely discussed analysis about the Latin American left (Castañeda 1993). He came to be a symbolic figure for the new intellectual current in search of pragmatic and humanist alternatives.
- 29 Caballero (2000: 79) for the Colombian context.

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