

## **The *Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología* and its foundational role. A history of institutional organization of sociology in Latin America from the 1950s to the 1960s.\***

**Dr. Diego Pereyra.\*\***

Published in *Sociology: History, Theory and practices*, Russian Society of Sociologists, Moscow- Glasgow, 8, 2007: 155-173.

The *Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología* was the first sociological body in the world that was conceived on a regional basis. Established in 1950, it played a key role in the promotion of sociological activities in Latin America and the Caribbean Area. From its creation to 1964, it organised seven regional congresses and encouraged the foundation of national professional bodies throughout the region. However, its institutional experience has been disregarded and its history is unexplored and scarcely known. The contribution of ALAS to the development of the sociological field in the region need to be studied. Was it the result of a triumphal Latin- Americanism? Which were their activities and the level of participation of local sociologists? Was its membership a representative sample of Latin American sociologists at that time? Which were their links with other international networks in the field? Which were the topics and themes discussed at the different meetings? Hence, this paper reconstructs an institutional history of ALAS from 1950 to 1964, reviewing his activities and its role in the institutionalisation of the field in the region and trying to show, therefore, a regional history of sociology through the experience of one of its most representative bodies.

Keywords: Sociology in Latin America, ALAS, Germani, Poviña.

### **Introduction**

The *Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología* (ALAS) was the first sociological body in the world conceived on a regional basis. It played a key role in the promotion of sociological activities in Latin America, being a useful network to exchange information and to study local social reality. It organised seven regional congresses and encouraged the foundation of national professional bodies from 1950 to 1964. It also elaborated many other institutional plans, but most of them failed, at a time when the scenario of sociological activities in Latin America was characterised by isolation and lack of funds. Later, during the 1970's and 1980's, it gathered a group of sociologists who defended the sociological

---

\* This paper was submitted with a different title to the *XVI World Congress of Sociology*, International Sociological Association (ISA), Durban, 2006. A previous version was included in my doctoral dissertation (Pereyra, 2005). I would like to thank Jennifer Platt for her suggestions I also acknowledge the financial assistance of *Fundación YPF* that financed one-week of fieldwork at the International Institute of Social History, in Amsterdam, where I collected most of the material cited here.

\*\* Research Assistant at the CONICET, and Director of the Working Group in History of Sociology at the Professional Council of Sociology, Buenos Aires [email: diegoepereyra@yahoo.com.ar].

---

perspective against the spreading authoritarian conditions. Today is just to organize its 26<sup>th</sup> Congress and events announce a time of expansion and success.

But the institutionalisation of sociology in Latin America was an uneasy process. The emergence of ALAS happened in a time when the field was difficultly organised but some institutional development took place. It emerged after a previous unsuccessful program. During the 1940's, the plan to create a Pan- American Institute of Sociology (able to coordinate sociological activities throughout the region) failed for different intellectual and political reasons (Gonzalez Bollo, Pereyra, 2003). Later, a new regional association competed with ALAS. It was in 1960, when a group of local scholars established an alternative international network: the *Grupo Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo de la Sociología* (GLADS) [Latin- American Group for the Development of Sociology]. It sought to promote the field and to get new resources from the US foundations (Pereyra, 2004). But, at last, ALAS survived and remained as the only regional network grouping sociologists in Latin America.

This historical experience appears to be meaningless for Latin American sociologists, however. The history of ALAS is unexplored and scarcely known. Even more, the body itself seems not be interested in its own past.<sup>1</sup> But some recent exceptions became known (Blanco, 2005, Escribano, 2005). There is an increasing interest in many Latin American countries to reflect upon the history of local sociology, but such studies refer to only institutional or national traditions. Thus, the field lacks of comparative research between countries or even taking the region as a whole. This paper looks forward driving further this new trend, rewriting an institutional narration better than histories of big names and ideas. I will focus in the history of ALAS from 1950 to 1964, examining its creation and the institutional background in which it developed. I will also revise its projects and institutional activities, studying its membership and contribution to the field.

### **The foundation**

ALAS was established in 1950 in Zurich, during the First World Congress of Sociology, when a group of Latin American sociologists decided to create a new institution. It was a particular context of regional and international development of institutions devoted to

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the institutional site has shown for many years a blank space in the historical section [[www2.udec.cl/~alas](http://www2.udec.cl/~alas)]. Additionally, a list of presidents cited in the web- page of the 25<sup>th</sup> ALAS Congress is incomplete and inaccurate [[www6.ufrgs.br/intrel/alaspoa/Historico.htm](http://www6.ufrgs.br/intrel/alaspoa/Historico.htm)].

---

sociology and certain intellectual environment in Latin America. This coincided with the foundation of two different bodies: the International Institute of Sociology (IIS) and the International Sociological Association (ISA). Once those two organisations were established, they found ground for dispute, claiming to be the only official international sociological body. The disagreement between them since the 1950's resulted in the organisation of separate congresses and the representation of different audiences. Also, ALAS existed as a network because local scholars in Argentina found difficulties in successfully establishing a single and strong sociological national associated. Finally, It emerged at the same time that the decay of Pan- Americanism within sociological field, the reaction against US imperialism and a deep debate about the past and the future of the region from a Latin- American (ist) perspective.

Several actors had an important participation in ALAS but one figure prevailed. That regional body could undoubtedly be considered the Alfredo Poviña's *magnum opus*. He founded the institution and was its president for thirteen years (1951-1964). That scholar taught sociology at local universities in Argentina during five decades and achieved important international recognition. But he lost all his former intellectual prestige after 1960 when he was displaced by Gino Germani in the academic leadership of sociology in Argentina. Germani was an Italian refugee who is considered the founder of scientific sociology in Argentina. Thus, ALAS was another battle field of the institutional and personal opposition between Germani and Poviña, who argued with each other and competed locally and internationally for funds, networking and prestige. They played out their rivalry within ALAS, which developed later in the creation of two national associations in Argentina.

Most historical interpretations assert that ALAS first members had a traditional and non- scientific sociological outlook and lacked criticism on social reality. It was said (e.g. Verón, 1974; Delich, 1977) that it was opposed the modernisation of sociology in the region. Germani (1960) stated it was

“... chiefly constituted by professional lawyers, politicians, people in administrative positions who happen to hold also a chair of sociology or are otherwise interested in it; many of them are completely out from the main trends and problems of contemporary sociology” (sic).

Costa Pinto (1957) described it as a body composed by two groups of scholars. One, a group that represented the old sociological approach based in a philosophical outlook. The other was a new cohort of sociologists “seriously dedicated to the scientific study of the problems of contemporary Latin American national societies, specially the process of their

change". He argued that the old pattern was predominant in ALAS while the new one spread rapidly in local universities. However, this description was part of the strategy to isolate its role and strengthen Germani's activities in Buenos Aires. In contrast, Williamson (1955: 152) suggested that ALAS contributed to a better knowledge on social history and sociological theory, but not in active sociological research. However, its contribution to the development of the sociological field in the region should also be considered.

Probably two main reasons led to the creation of ALAS. Firstly, Poviña diagnosed that the emergence of sociology in the region was a valuable chance for studying the local reality from a new and original outlook. He (1952b: 471; 1955: 4) recognised that the Latin American nations not only shared a common geography and history but also similar social and ethnic conditions. These shared interests led to the formation of a comparable social concerns and a particular sociological viewpoint. To quote Poviña (1952b: 474):

"When... we assert that there is such a thing as Latin American sociology, we must bear in mind that it neither stands alone nor has it any independent value, that in fact it is not sufficient unto itself, but it is simply the application of a technique based on general principles and appropriate to the nature of the object under study... (Therefore) Latin American sociology is the outcome of a professional vocation rooted in theory and history"

This Latin- Americanism did not reject US influence in social sciences, but it held a powerful belief that the region could offer an original and rich cultural interpretation of social phenomena. Poviña did not reject an institutional integration with the US, but recognised that since previous Pan- American experience had been frustrated, the regional strategy was the best available option.

Secondly, both the shortage of national sociological institutions and the isolation of local sociologists required a supra- level for their better participation within international networks. The difficulty for establishing a national professional body in Argentina gave Poviña a reason for exploring a new institutional framework. The situation of the Latin American statisticians, who actively participated in a global association through the IASI institutional activities, was also an example to be imitated.

ALAS had two defined aims. First, it aimed at the promotion of scientific knowledge of the Latin American societies. Its related goals were the coordination of relationships and scientific work amongst local sociologists and affiliated national associations, the interchange of information and discussion on common intellectual problems, the organisation of meetings and the publication of works on theoretical or applied sociology. Second, the regional association sought to establish an alternative network for Latin American sociologists who

---

found it difficult to participate at international activities because of distance or funding reasons and, at the same time, it was planned as a link to reinforce the participation of local actors in those international events (ALAS, 1950; Poviña, 1952b; 1961).

ALAS soon moved in order to establish broader international connections and to reach institutional recognition. From the outset, it decided to affiliate to international organisations in the field. It applied to the ISA in 1951, and, at the same time, their members participated at IIS activities (Poviña, 1951b; 1955). The ISA was really interested in recruiting it and asked Fernando de Azevedo, who was one of the ISA vice-presidents, to urge it to affiliate. He was also a member of ALAS and willingly recommended acceptance. Leopold von Wiese, who knew Poviña's works and who would become ISA vice-president some months later, was also in favour of that membership. But he mentioned a report from Carl C. Taylor that said that ALAS was predominantly an Argentine organisation without sufficiently broad acceptance by other countries. Taylor had been researching in Argentina and he probably recognised Poviña's large influence in the body (ISA, 1951: 4; ISA, 1952: 14). The ISA delayed its reply. The official reason was the feeling that the regional body could block and interfere in the relation between the ISA and Latin American sociologists (Rokkan, 1953a). But, the dual participation of ALAS members at both the ISA and the IIS was most probably an additional unhelpful factor.

ALAS followed the pattern of Pan- American bodies within the United Nations, though it was not included in the Pan- American Union (PAU). In contrast, the ISA followed the general UN model of national representation, leaving no place for regional cases. However, ALAS was not the only case. A project of a Scandinavian Association of Sociology was considered in 1950 (*International Social Science Bulletin*, ISSB, II, 3, 1950: 450). Finally, the ISA accepted ALAS as a regional member in 1953, in the expectation that the new affiliate could cooperate closely with the ISA and arrange the affiliation of all the national bodies of the region as regular ISA members (ISA, 1950: 3; Rokkan, 1953b).

However, in 1957, the ISA suggested that ALAS change its affiliation to "associate member". This category was introduced in the statutes for joining bodies "concerned with problems related to sociology but not directly active in the field" (Platt, 1996: 1). But ALAS rejected the proposal, remaining as a regional association. According to Costa Pinto (1957), refusal was a matter of prestige for ALAS members. ALAS leaders were convinced of both their regional role and their sociological work. The fact that some other regional bodies joined

---

the ISA after 1958 and the much later institutional developments, such as the European Sociological Association, indicate that affiliation from a regional basis was viable and desirable for many sociologists worldwide.

The creation and expansion of the ISA surely contributed to the diffusion of worldwide sociology during the 1950's and early 1960's. But much of that involvement in Latin America could be attributed to ALAS. For instance, the 1951 sociological meeting in Buenos Aires allowed the recreation of the local Institute of Sociology. Further, the Bolivian Sociological Society considered its work as part of ALAS legacy. Indeed, the first Congress of Sociology in Bolivia was sponsored and organised by the regional association. That sponsorship was probably influential to get some money from the local government (*Sociedad Boliviana...*, 1952). Even more, the Latin American Congress of Sociology held in Brazil in 1953 allowed later the organisation of the First Congress of Sociology organised by the Brazilian Sociological Society. Held in Paraná in 1954, it was promoted by active members of ALAS (e.g. Odorico Pires Pinto and Antonio Rubbo Muller) (*ISSB*, VI, 3, 1952: 567). The organisation of the regional meetings accelerated too the development of sociology in Uruguay, Venezuela and Colombia. ALAS also provided an important support for the creation of national sociological associations in Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua (Poviña, 1959: 250-252; 317-323).

## **Membership**

ALAS had a very large and active affiliation during the time studied. It gathered prestigious local sociologists and the most important sociological bodies all around the region. The information on its membership is unfortunately very incomplete, though it can be reconstructed. By 1953, nine sociological bodies, representing a wide range of countries, had joined ALAS. Six of them joined the ISA almost simultaneously as national associations or institutional members. Also, two national associations affiliated to both ALAS and the ISA from 1958 to 1963. Only one national sociological association from Latin American joined the ISA without becoming a member of ALAS, during the period studied (*Asociación Argentina* led by Germani). In addition, five Latin American institutions joined only the ISA, though their members kept a different level of participation at ALAS. Also, the Institute of Sociology of Buenos Aires affiliated to ALAS as an institutional member in 1951 before joining the ISA (Poviña, 1955). Later, from 1955 to 1959, some new bodies affiliated to

---

ALAS, but did not join the ISA. It was the case of the *Sociedad Argentina de Sociología*, (presided by Poviña) and two national bodies from Ecuador and Honduras. Clearly, the pattern changed during the middle 1950's, in a situation when the multiple international memberships of local sociologists were transformed by an open competition between the ISA and the IIS (Pereyra, 2005).

Individual membership was also very important. Ten individuals from seven Latin American countries signed the ALAS constitution.<sup>2</sup> This group included sociologists who headed their local sociological bodies, and, at the same time, held important political positions in their respective countries. For instance, Bossano and Paredes were national ministers in Ecuador while Ríos was Health Secretary in Brazil. In addition, Tapia Moore held a parliamentary seat in Chile. However, the most successful case was Caldera, who was elected twice as President of Venezuela (1969-1974; 1994-1999). The group ranged in age, from Bernal Jimenez, who was in his late fifties in 1950, to Caldera and Tecera del Franco, who were almost 30 years younger. Nonetheless, new members enhanced the original group very soon.

The information on individual membership needed to be reconstructed, since there is only one available printed membership list (*Boletín del Instituto de Sociología* (BIS), UNC, 2, 1957: 85-90). The information on participants at the regional meetings and the list of board members, although incomplete, can help, in addition, to reconstruct the affiliation data. According to the institutional rules, the individual membership would be formed by the ten founders, the participants of the congress held in Buenos Aires and those who would apply later on. Thus, by 1951, the affiliation can be estimated as 69 people only from participants at the congress (people who were present and paper authors) and board. As one can see in Table 1, they were mostly from Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. The distribution in 1957 shows a membership of 128, but in that case, the Brazilian sociologists represented 35% of the total, followed by Argentinians, Chileans and, surprisingly, Bolivians.

In addition, estimation of the membership during 1961-1963 shows an even higher figure: 182, considering the board and the participants in two different institutional events

---

<sup>2</sup> Poviña and Rodolfo Tecera del Franco (Argentina); José Arthur Ríos (Brazil); Marcos Goycolea Cortes and Astolfo Tapia Moore (Chile); Rafael Bernal Jiménez (Colombia); Luis Bossano and Angel Modesto Paredes (Ecuador); Roberto Mac Lean y Esteños (Peru) and Rafael Caldera (Venezuela). Biographical data is incomplete and information should be better reconstructed (ALAS, 1950<sup>a</sup>, 1951; Poviña, 1976).

during that time.<sup>3</sup> Then, Argentina had gained the relative majority of members with 44%, followed by Venezuela with 24%. This however probably overestimates the representation of Argentina and Venezuela, which is where the meetings were held, and underestimates other countries, such as Brazil and Bolivia, which both had larger affiliation in 1957. Only eighteen names were in all these lists (9 from Argentina, including Germani and Poviña). Interestingly, 51 people included in the 1951 list also appeared in the 1957 membership, meaning that around 74% of the original members were still associated in 1957. In contrast, it was estimated that only 21% of the members registered in 1957 (27 people) were linked to ALAS five years later. That probably means a membership renewal since the late 1950's.

**Table 1. Distribution of ALAS members by country in selected years [In percentages]**

	1951 (Estimated)	1957	1961-1963 (Estimated)
Argentina	42	24	44
Brazil	20	35	4
Chile	12	12	4
Bolivia	2	10	1
Central America	3	7	5
Mexico	1	2	3
Rest South America	19	10	36
US	0	0	3
Other or Unknown	1	*	*
N	69	128	182

\* Some membership, but a figure less than 1 %.

(Sources: ALAS, 1951; 1961; *BIS*, UBA, 6-8, 1952-1953; *BIS*, UNC, 2, 1957: 85-90; *BIS*, UNC, 17, 1964: 81-114).

Another interesting point is the power distribution within ALAS, in which sociologists from Argentina took part. The board consisted of a President, a General Secretary, and two members from each country that had an affiliated national body. From the latter members, four vice- presidents were elected. Some countries were underrepresented, though. The presidency and the general secretary were held by people from Argentina, though the country had no representation in terms of national association until 1959. The fact that the HQ was located there was sufficient reason. The conception of ALAS as Poviña's personal project was

---

<sup>3</sup> Estimated on the basis of information of the Caracas Congress (1961) and a meeting (but not an official assembly) in Córdoba (1963).

a crucial additional factor. Therefore, Poviña was elected president in 1951 and was re-elected for several terms until 1964. Tecera del Franco was designated General Secretary during the first assembly in 1951, being replaced by Pires Pinto in 1959. Tapia Moore, Bossano and Caldera too uninterruptedly held a board position from 1951 to 1964. Indeed, Tapia kept on a position on the ALAS board till 1966, when the collected records finish (ALAS, 1950; *BIS*, UNC, 1957: 35-84; ALAS, 1961, 1964).<sup>4</sup>

## Congresses

Seven regional sociological congresses were organised by ALAS from 1951 to 1964. Given Poviña's leadership, it was reasonable that the first meeting was in Argentina. But it is very noticeably that ALAS never met there again for five decades. The numbers of participants at the congresses remained from 60 to 120 until 1961. That increased to more than 300 at the Bogotá Congress in 1964. The number of papers ranged from 40 to 70 during the time studied, as shown in Table 2. The topics varied widely from the teaching of sociology and social research to rural sociology and the examination of ethnic relations. Other sociological themes such as electoral sociology, development and social change unsurprisingly were incorporated over the successive meetings.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2. Participation at different ALAS Congresses (1951-1964).**

Venue	Buenos Aires	Rio/ Sao Paulo	Quito	Santiago	Montevideo	Caracas	Bogotá
Date	1951	1953	1955	1957	1959	1961	1964
Papers	61	44	27(*)	42	68	44	22(*)
Participants	42(**)	114(***)	60	54	109	70(****)	307

\* Proceedings only included a partial list of papers. Real figures are probably higher.

\*\* Information on participation differs. ALAS (ISA, 1952: 14) reported it was attended by 111 people, but Proceedings (ALAS, 1951) cited only 42.

\*\*\* The list of participants was longer, but included politicians and administrative staff, which were eliminated whenever it was recognised.

<sup>4</sup> The ALAS HQ was at the University of Buenos Aires from 1951 to 1956, when they moved to the Institute Orgaz in Córdoba. Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Uruguay hold only one seat during the 1950's. Peru had no representation at all.

<sup>5</sup> The congresses were biannually since 1951. The 1963 congress was delayed to the following year, because it overlapped with the IIS Congress held in Córdoba. Information from those meetings was taken from the available proceedings (ALAS, 1951, 1955, 1957, 1961; 1964), but data from 1955 and 1964 is incomplete. General information was additionally collected through reports and archive material.

---

\*\*\*\* Plus 90 Venezuelan students from local universities.

(Sources: Proceedings and reports already cited)

The participation by country fluctuated very much at each meeting. As one could anticipate, local sociologists have the higher figures. As shown in Table 3, the Congresses of Santiago and Montevideo had a less imbalanced participation, though. Apart from the Buenos Aires meeting, the Argentinian participants attended the Congresses held in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay in significant numbers. In contrast, Argentine participation was very low in Quito, Caracas and Bogotá. The distance factor seemed to be crucial. However, the submission of papers from Argentina abruptly decreased after the Montevideo Congress, even apparently reaching zero in Bogotá, though the information on this congress is quite incomplete.

Participation from Argentina was significant. Top Argentinian sociologists attended those congresses. For instance, six of the board members of the *Academia Argentina de Sociología* participated at ALAS Congress in Buenos Aires. Also, 36 participants out of 42 Argentinian sociologists present in Montevideo were members of the *Sociedad Argentina de Sociología*. It is important to remark that the most prolific paper writers within ALAS were Poviña and Germani. Both of them submitted papers to five of the seven congresses until 1964.

They found in the 1957 Congress a venue to prove their leadership among local sociologists, a competition that would increase in the following years. But departmental participation was very similar. While five people from the UBA Sociology Department participated in that meeting, four people from the Institute Orgaz did. During the following congress, the participation was 11 from Buenos Aires and 10 from Córdoba.

The event held in Santiago manifested both traditional and modern sociological trends. It was simultaneously the official launching of UNESCO activities in the region and the occasion to organise a tribute to Comte. However, those were not clearly distinguished by topics or political attitudes. Germani used the stage in Santiago to present his department as the most advanced sociological body in Argentina. But Poviña's group also took advantage of the event reading some papers on the importance of sociological research and avoiding theoretical discussions (Poviña, 1957).

**Table 3. Participation at different ALAS Congresses by country (1951-1964) [In percentages]**

Venue	Buenos Aires		Rio/ Sao Paulo		Quito		Santiago		Montevideo		Caracas		Bogotá	
Date	1951		1953		1955		1957		1959		1961		1964	
	Part	Auth	Part	Auth	Part	Auth	Part	Auth	Part	Auth	Part	Auth	Part	Auth
Argentina	65	49	12	36	3	15	15	25	33	33	1	5	4	0
Bolivia/ Peru/ Paraguay	2	6	8	8	5	12	10	12	3	5	1	0	*	4
Brazil	7	21	65	43	2	4	13	13	16	10	4	0	3	15
Chile	12	9	2	5	5	0	37	38	6	10	9	10	2	3
Colombia	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	7	59	26
Central America	5	4	5	0	12	8	6	0	2	7	11	13	5	4
Ecuador	0	0	2	0	68	50	4	6	1	1	1	2	*	0
México	0	0	1	3	2	0	2	0	0	3	3	5	1	4
Uruguay	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	6	36	28	4	7	*	0
Venezuela	7	7	4	0	3	11	0	0	2	1	59	37	8	11
US	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	11	30
Other/ Unknown	0	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	7	3
N	42	53	114	42	60	26	54	32	109	68	70	43	307	27

Part= Participants; Auth= Author of paper. Grey cells show the country where the meeting was held.

\* Some attendance or paper, but a figure less than 1 %.

(Sources: Proceedings and reports already cited).

But, one of the few papers on a traditional topic was read by Rodriguez Bustamante, who worked at Germani's institute (ALAS, 1957: 39-48). Paradoxically, its topic, the theory of Ortega y Gasset, was said to be a typical theme used by Poviña's group and a mark of sociological underdevelopment. But Rodriguez Bustamante (1957) has surprisingly reported the overwhelming quality of the papers read by people from Buenos Aires.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, when

<sup>6</sup> I thank Magali Turkenich who kindly gave me a copy of this document.

---

an event demanded a political response, both groups moved together rejecting the racism of one of the participants.<sup>7</sup>

ALAS Congresses were carefully observed by different international networks. UNESCO and the Food and Agriculture Organization sent representatives to the 1955 congress in Quito. UNESCO sponsored the Congress in Santiago and funded, jointly with the US Social Science Research (SSRC) Council and the Ford Foundation, the one in Bogotá. René Clemens from the ISA attended the event in Quito. Moreover, T. H. Marshall, president of the ISA from 1959 to 1962, attended the meeting in Montevideo in 1959. Also, the ISA organised a regional meeting on the sociology of education during the sessions in Bogotá. A singular situation happened in Caracas, two years later, when Pierre de Bie, the ISA Executive Secretary, and Corrado Gini, the IIS President, both attended. ALAS maintained close relationships with international bodies, although it seemed to have little participation in their cooperative plans and decisions.

During the ALAS meetings held in the 1950's, both the attendance and the submission of papers were, with a few exceptions, by local sociologists. From 1961, though, there was increasing participation of scholars from the US. Thirty- four sociologists from the US attended the congress in Bogotá; their institutional membership ranged from representatives of funding foundations, such as Lyle Saunders, and university scholars (e.g. Seymour Lipset) to members of US information or military bodies, such as Norman Painter of the US Information Agency.

### **Organisation and funding**

ALAS activities were largely restricted by the lack of funds. It was an unstructured organisation that really existed just at the regional meetings. Assemblies and personal contacts only happened during those events. It depended therefore on the funding support of the city or university where the congresses were held. The members paid an annual fee of approximately two dollars (ALAS, 1950). Congresses were usually free, following a regional tradition in which scholars do not pay fees as a way of not limiting the access to scientific knowledge. So, in the best of cases, ALAS incoming money was about \$ 300.00 each year,

---

<sup>7</sup> Teddy Hartman, a Bolivian sociologist, explained in his paper that the Chilean democracy was more successful because the higher rates of white people in the local population (ALAS, 1957: 281-287). The scandal stormed the congress. Local press protested energetically. The author's opinion was rejected also by the Congress commission.

---

which was a small amount to pay for travels throughout a vast geographical area or to fund research.

Poviña recognised that this was a crucial point. He looked for financial aid from different international networks. Even before submitting the membership application, he (1951a) asked for help from the ISA, soliciting a fixed annual contribution for funding regional activities. When, the reply was not affirmative, he (1952a) asked at least for money to cover travel expenses and air tickets during the world congresses, but this was also rejected. The ISA suggested that aid could come from PAU (Rokkan, 1953b). Indeed, Rokkan (1953c) and Bottomore (1954) contacted PAU to get some money, but the latter (Crevenna, 1953, 1954) replied negatively. Thus, ALAS did not receive any funds from international bodies.

This financial shortage held many ALAS projects back. Its board had considered the organisation of additional activities. For instance, it proposed the edition of a directory of Latin American Sociologists, inspired probably from the ISA International directory. Also, it discussed and approved a project of a Latin American Sociographic Institute in La Paz. It planned in addition the creation of a Latin American Department of Rural Sociology. Further, it projected the edition of a dictionary of Sociology in the Spanish language (ALAS, 1953; 1957). However, all these ideas remained as ideas. Lack of funds and broader institutional support stopped them. Only the idea of a directory of local sociologists was partially fulfilled, when the IIS printed a biographic dictionary in Mexico in 1960 (IIS, 1960: 62-63). ALAS had no ability and better strategies to sell their products in the sociological market in a region that was dramatically changing during the 1950's.

Financial matters also complicated the affiliation of ALAS to the ISA. Poviña (1957; Costa Pinto, 1957) recognised that the regional body would have difficulty in paying the ISA if the national societies were not paying fees to ALAS. This could have been the origin of some rumours that Poviña sometimes paid fees from his own pocket. By 1957, that debt jeopardised the affiliation of the Latin- American Association and pushed Poviña to express regret with the ISA, which finally agreed (1957) to cancel ALAS arrears and confirming its affiliation. At the beginning, ALAS considered that ISA might solve the lack of funds. But, at the end of the day, it was a headache for Poviña, since it absorbed some important necessary money, offering only the reward of membership in return. After 1955, he started feeling excluded from the ISA government.

---

However, ALAS offered a novel “honouring system” for their members. Poviña could not distribute money but he gave symbolic resources. Top Latin American sociologists found in ALAS potential cross membership, increasing the honours among themselves. For instance, Poviña affiliated to different sociological societies in Chile, Peru and Colombia. Also, he was elected as honorary member of the Mexican Sociological Association (1959: 186). But he transformed ALAS into an honouring society and as its president extended honours among his peers. For instance, the different presidents of regional congresses received considerable reward and prestige in their countries.<sup>8</sup>

Although Germani participated actively at ALAS, he still did not have power in it by 1960. In contrast to his confrontational manner applied in Argentina and the creation of alternative institutions, he moved in a different way at the regional level. He (1960) agreed with the ISA a Good neighbour’s policy between the two international bodies, helping in the renewal of topics and concerns within ALAS. Thus, a journal printed by Germani joyfully congratulated the participation of young sociologists at ALAS Congress in 1964 and the noticeable level of scientific sociology in Latin America (*Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, I, 1, 1965: 115-116). The election of new officers in that meeting was perceived by Germani’s group as a sign of renewal. That was well greeted by some leftist historians too. But, they considered it as a revolution against Germani, not Poviña, since it was the end of both functionalism and US dependence (e.g. Bobes León, 1990: 30).

However, that election does not seem to have been either a definite shift from traditional accounts to empirical sociology or a displacement to the left. Manuel Dieguez Jr was elected as president after Poviña’s long- term presidency. He was the director of the UNESCO Research Centre in Rio. The board was completed by Fals Borda, Tapia Moore, Miguens, Antonio Donini and Alejandro Marroquin (El Salvador). The new board showed the complexities of sociology in the region. For instance, it included two catholic scholars (Donini and Miguens) and one socialist (Tapia Moore). Argentina still maintained an important institutional power. During the period studied, there was a noticeable lack of rotation in the directorship of the body and power was concentrated especially in Argentinians’ hands. The new composition also showed that the Poviña’s local body had more power than Germani’s national association. Fals Borda was the only board member who was intellectually identified with Germani. However, the latter had been developing an

---

<sup>8</sup> Thus, the President of ALAS congresses were Poviña (1951), Pires Pinto (1953), Bossano (1955), Tapia Moore (1957), Ganón (1959), Caldera (1961), Fals Borda (1964).

alternative strategy to create a substitute network that would represent his interests and needs better, in a context in which US funding bodies were playing a key role. It was the GLADS, which deserves another paper.

In summary, the development of sociology in Latin America from the 1950s to the 1960s has been affected by the tensions between international bodies and the competition among local sociologists. The difficult of integrating the field within the Pan- American framework led to a different networking strategy. Thus, ALAS contributed to the promotion of sociology in Latin America. It was based on the idea of the Latin America could offer a particular vision of reality. However, the lack of funds made further activities very difficult. ALAS activities were nevertheless not integrated with other regional activities. Further studies could (should) go on studying this history. They will very probably contribute to better illuminate the evolution of sociology in the region, confronting the usual poor description of lack of creativity and research before the 1960s and the irruption of *modern sociologists*.

## References

- Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología (1950) "Estatutos de la ALAS", Box 15.3, International Sociological Association Archive (ISAA), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
- (1951) "Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología", *BIS*, UBA, 6, 1952: 9-21 [In English, *ISSB*, IV, 3, 1952: 489-498].
- (1953) *Boletim do Segundo Congresso Latino- Americano de Sociología*, 7, B. 15.1, ISAA.
- (1957) *Memoria del IV Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología*, El Congreso, Santiago, Chile.
- (1961) *Memoria del VI Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología*, Imprenta Nacional, Caracas.
- (1964) *Memoria del VII Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología*, Asociación Colombiana de Sociología, Iqueima, Bogotá, 1965.
- Blanco, Alejandro (2005) "La Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología: Una historia de sus primeros congresos", *Sociologías*, Porto Alegre, VII, 14: 22-49.
- Bobes León, Velia Cecilia (1990) *Sociología en América Latina. Notas para una periodización*, Editora en Ciencias Sociales, La Habana.
- Bottomore, Thomas (1954) "Letter to Theo Crevenna", November 26<sup>th</sup>, B. 30.3, ISAA.
- Costa Pinto, Luis (1957), "Brief report of the 4th Latin- American Congress of sociology", July, B. 30.1, ISAA
- Crevenna, Theo (1953) "Reply to Rokkan", June 8<sup>th</sup>, B. 30.3, ISAA.
- (1954) "Reply to Bottomore", December 23<sup>rd</sup>, Idem, ISAA.
- Delich, Francisco (1977) *Crítica y autocrítica de la razón extraviada, 25 años de sociología*, El Cid editor, Caracas.
- Germani, Gino (1959) "The development and present state of sociology in Latin America", *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology*, ISA, Milan, 1961: 117-138.
- (1960) "Letter to Pierre de Bie", March 23<sup>rd</sup>, B. 37.1, ISAA.

- Gonzalez Bollo, Hernán and Diego Pereyra (2003) "Social Sciences and the Pan- American Region. Networks in Statistics and Sociology during the 1940s", *International Colloquium: The Location of Knowledge...*, Universities of Duke, Virginia and Torcuato Di Tella. Buenos Aires.
- Institut International de Sociologie (1960) *Memoire du XIX Congrès International de Sociologie*, México, 1961.
- International Sociological Association (1950a) "Draft article for the *ISSB*", Winter Issue 1950-1951, Idem, ISAA.
- (1951a) *Annual Report of activities*, 1951/5, Idem, ISAA.
- (1951b) "Survey and membership and council representation, II", 1951/6, May, Idem, ISAA.
- (1952), *Annual Report of activities*, 1951-1952, 1952/6, B. 42, ISAA.
- (1957) "Letter to Poviña", September 26<sup>th</sup>, B. 15.3, ISAA.
- Pereyra, Diego (2004) "American organizations and the development of sociology and social research in Argentina. The case of the SSRC and the Rockefeller Foundation (1927-1966)", *Research Reports online*, Rockefeller Archive Center, New York, 2006.
- (2005) *International Networks and the institutionalization of Sociology in Argentina (1940-1963)*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Sussex, Unpublished.
- Platt, Jennifer (1996) *Statutes of the ISA*, Unpublished.
- Poviña, Alfredo (1951a) "Letter to Geiger", March 15<sup>th</sup>, B. 37.2, ISAA.
- (1951b) "Letter to Louis Wirth", December 21<sup>st</sup>, Idem, ISAA.
- (1952a) "Letter to Rinde", April 25<sup>th</sup>, B. 37.2, ISAA.
- (1952b) "Latin American Sociology in the XX Century", *ISSB*, 4, 3: 471-480.
- (1955) *La sociología contemporánea*, Arayú, Buenos Aires.
- (1957) "Letter to the ISA", July 22<sup>nd</sup>, B. 15.3, ISAA.
- (1959) *Nueva historia de la sociología latinoamericana*, Assandri, Córdoba.
- (1961) "La Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología", *ES/SS*, 1: 183-188.
- (1976) *Diccionario de sociología a través de los sociólogos*, Astrea, Buenos Aires.
- Rokkan, Stein (1953a) "Letter to Poviña", February 10<sup>th</sup>, B. 37.2, ISAA.
- (1953b) "Letter to Poviña", May 5<sup>th</sup>, B. 15.3, ISAA,
- (1953c) "Letter to Theo Crevenna", May 30<sup>th</sup>, B. 30.3, ISAA.
- Rodríguez Bustamante, Norberto (1957) "Informe sobre el IV Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología", Universidad Nacional de la Plata.
- Scribano, Adrián (2005) "Orígenes de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología. Algunas notas a través de la visión de Alfredo Poviña", *Sociologías*, Porto Alegre, VII, 14: 50-61.
- Sociedad Boliviana de Sociología (1952) *Reglamento y Temario del I Congreso Boliviano de Sociología*, La Paz.
- Verón, Eliseo (1974) *Imperialismo, lucha de clases y conocimiento. 25 años de sociología en Argentina*, Tiempo Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires.
- Williamson, Robert (1955) "La sociología en América Latina", *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, México, 18, 1, 1956: 145-153.