

THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION AND USE IN BOLIVIA, PARAGUAY AND PERÚ

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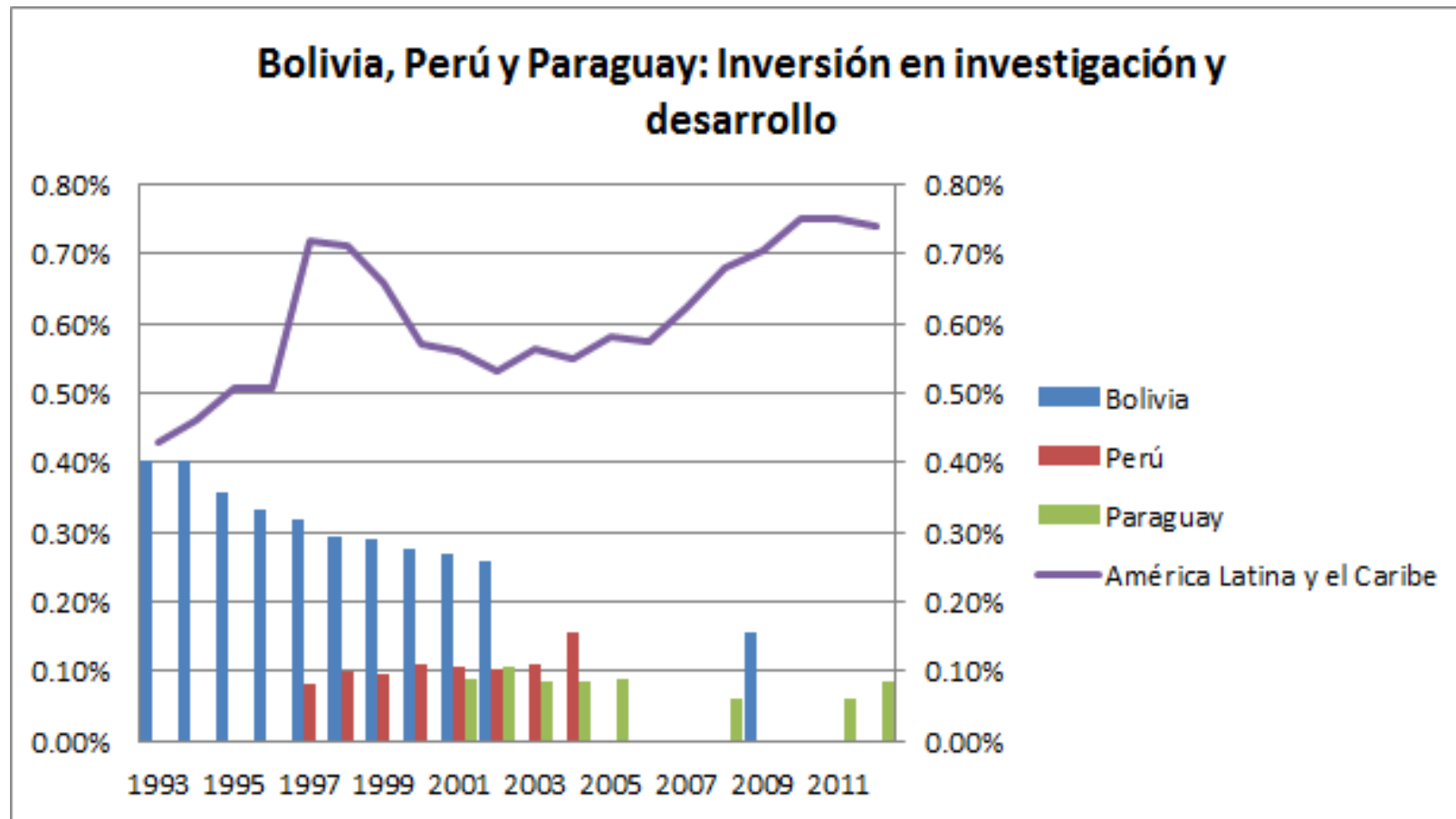
The research project

- **Comparative study as part of GDN “Doing Research” initiative**
- 3 country **case studies** constructed through:
 - a **common thematic protocol** and a **common sample structure**
 - **Secondary data** (documents, laws, available quantitative data, etc.)
 - **Primary data**: in-depth interviews with policy actors; institutional leaders; researchers in different institutions
 - Joint elaboration of a **comparative synthesis**
- **Conceptual approach: cultural political economy of research** (Tyfield) – how research is structured, through policies, institutions and discourses, giving rise to particular cultures and regimes of knowledge production
- The protocol therefore focused on:
 - The recent history of research production
 - Structuring forces in the research environments, especially the role of the state as seen through policies, laws and funding
 - The institutional contexts from which research is produced: the role of universities and research centres/think tanks
 - The characteristics of research supply: types of research produced, individual experiences of doing research.
 - Existing demand for research from: the state, the third sector, international organizations, academia
 - The quality, circulation and use of social research

Bolivia, Paraguay & Perú in the regional context

- Factoring in national investment in research and the recent growth in research production Mouton and Waast qualify these three countries as:
- Intermediate (Perú), small science (Bolivia), very small science (Paraguay) countries
- This reflects both the level of public investment that these countries have committed towards Sc&T and their status in terms of global research production

Bolivia, Paraguay & Perú in the regional context: ¿a growing gap in R&D funding?



Source: The Network for Science and Technology Indicators –Ibero-American and Inter-American– (RICYT)

Bolivia, Paraguay & Perú: Research environments in historical perspective

- Marked **historical absence of the state in science policy and public funding for research**, traceable to **weak or null presence of developmentalism**
- Research predominantly carried out from **independent research centers**, funded mostly by international cooperation on a piecemeal basis, as **universities maintained a mostly teaching oriented model** – partly because of lack of funding but also because of weak appreciation of research as fundamental for teaching and of the role of universities in knowledge production
- The ‘lost’ 1980s decade saw little developments in science policy
- In the **1990s neoliberalism and the installation of a technocratic governance agenda** brought a transformation of social research production with a greater role for think tanks/research centers in providing evidence for decision making - different impact of this agenda on the three countries
- **Opening of HE market** leads to increase in private universities of dubious quality and little research production, while public universities and traditional non-profit private ones largely remain untouched

Current structuring elements

In the last decade:

- All three countries have moved to **strengthen their National Science and Technology Councils and put in place R&D plans**, in Perú and Paraguay, with considerable increases in public funding.
- But **research is understood in narrow terms** as contributing to changes in the production matrix and towards innovation and industrialization rather than creating a broad knowledge base.
- **Programatic public funding for social research is excluded.**
- Peru has the largest number of research relevant policies in place: a new law of higher education that places greater emphasis on research from universities; a results oriented budgeting system that has led to an increase of state demand for research; a national scholarship programme; provisions for the use of mining canon funds for research and the regional level. But **laws and policies do not converse with each other and they are not articulated towards generating a stronger research environment.**

The institutional basis from which social research is produced

- **Universities are still largely focused on teaching** rather than research and social research is produced mostly from independent centres that raise funding on a piecemeal basis
- Comparatively, **Perú has a more diverse institutional basis**: some (few) universities have taken steps to strengthen research production; some research centres are promoting stronger career and quality related rules; there are a number of social research societies and research is more professionalised. All of these are bottom-up efforts.
- But without a correlate in terms of public policies and funding **research in Perú is still seen as a solitary pursuit** as there is a lack of communities and critical mass. In **Bolivia and Paraguay** doing research is **still considered an outright “heroic” endeavor**.

External demand leads research production

- **Demand from the state or from the international cooperation is the main driver of research production**
- Such demands, especially those from the state, are often quite specific and do not respond to well formed agendas
- **Research produced on demand often does not conform to accepted rules of knowledge production** – i.e. peer review systems, strong communities, etc. – and together with lack of programatic funding contributes to the **deep fragmentation of research agendas** which have an impact on quality as researchers find many obstacles for specialization
- **Academic communities are notably absent** from the definition of research priorities and agendas

Consequences for the forms and quality of social research

- In **Bolivia** the **instrumental technocratic agenda** is **progressively replaced by a form of populist instrumentalism** in social research that is increasingly averse to the idea of evidence based policy making.
- In **Paraguay and especially in Peru** **technocratic instrumentalism has deepened** as fragmented state demand, mostly via consultancies, has soared
- In **Peru** this is having **strong and recognised effects on the form and quality of research**: fragmented agendas, lack of conceptual development
- In **Paraguay** this trend has been recently complemented by **greater public funding and incentives for social research** which indicates a further but not necessarily sustainable change

Developing research policy frameworks?

- All three countries are at the **very early phase of developing their research systems** without always having a clear aim in this respect
- There is a **need to generate a debate on what kind of research environment is desirable and what policies are needed to put it in to place**
- This should include discussions about the **importance of developing a broad knowledge base** not only geared towards solving specific economic or policy problems, but also towards thinking and promoting societal and global change
- A common picture in all three countries: the **social sciences as a blind spot in Sc&T policies which reflects the narrow understanding of why and what kind of research base is needed**





BOLIVIA, PARAGUAY & PERU'S RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTS TODAY

BOLIVIA: Opportunities for Social Research

- Greater diversity of actors in doing research:
 - Centers linked to universities
 - Private centers
 - State centers
- Interest of some political actors in using social research
 - In 2013 the Centre for Social Research (CIS) that depends of the Vice-presidency was created to promote the changes driven by the government

BOLIVIA: Obstacles for Social Research

- Distrust between producers and users of research which difficult the use of social research for the design and implementation of public policy
- Lack of institutionalization of social research given that the national science and technology policy assigns no role nor budget for social sciences
- The challenge is to articulate recent efforts (such as the new center created at the Vice-presidency) to the national policy on science and technology

PERÚ

- Recent normative and policy elements that structure the research environment
 - Strengthened role of CONCYTEC: Increasing funding for science and technology research (from 3 to over 26 million US\$ in 15 years); greater incentives and opportunities for researchers
 - Widespread installation of evidence-based policy discourse and practices (at central government level) leads to greater demand for social research (via consultancies, and specific projects) – “with the arrival of democracy (in 2000) the state opened up to researchers”
 - University reform (2014) seeking to reorganize the university system and give it greater research orientation
 - National scholarship programme
- Signs of change? – policy disarticulation; exclusion of soc. science from Sc&T policies and funding; very fragmented state demand doesn't respond to well formed agendas; demand without capacity building

PERÚ

- Greater institutional diversity (centres, universities, research societies, consortia) and bottom up initiatives to strengthen research production (internal incentives)
 - Some non-profit private universities seeking to differentiate themselves from their competitors develop their own funding schemes and incentives for research. Different emphasis on time vs. resources highlight unavailability of public funding/difficulty to make research compatible with academics teaching and admin role
- Research centres: combined effects of reduced international funds (as Perú becomes middle-income), new funders appearing (eg. OECD) and state demand increase.
 - Becoming “think tanks” generates identity tensions for centres with strong academic identities
- Research production dynamics:
 - quality is still weak: fragmentation agendas; lack of critical mass (peer pressure) and of quality criteria among counterparts; research still very much a matter of individual strategies; for many state led demand via consultancies has weakened research quality
 - circulation has improved but is still weak;
 - use is stronger on the part of the state but with narrow understanding of social research as providing information rather than defining problems

PARAGUAY

- Key role of the independent centers and of the private sector in the research offer. Absence of universities.
- Demand for research generated by different actors: the international cooperation and the State excel.
- Research agendas of the centers influenced by the research demand.
- Research production more of applied type and oriented toward the public policies.

PARAGUAY

- Absence of an academic community at a national level which guarantees a better quality of researching.
- Recent public policies of support to research and in particular in social sciences areas: greater commitment by the State.
- Appearance of the Program PROCIENCIA: more financial resources available and greater freedom of the centers to establish their own research agendas.
- The impact of the state policy of support to the research in the country can only be confirmed in the coming years.