



Consejo Latinoamericano
de Ciencias Sociales
Conselho Latino-americano
de Ciências Sociais



Asdi
Agencia Sueca
de Desarrollo Internacional



OBSERVATORY ON LATIN AMERICA
OBSERVATORIO LATINO AMERICANO

OCTOBER
2014

PBC

POLICY BRIEF - CLACSO



Democracy and Human Rights. Key aspects of the reconfiguration of the Uruguayan left (1980-2014)*

◆ ANA LAURA DE GIORGI

Master and degree in Political Science at the Republic of Uruguay University. She is currently completing a PhD in Social Sciences at the Institute for Economic and Social Development (IDES) and University General Sarmiento (UNGS), Argentina. Professor and researcher at the Political Sciences Institute.

E-mail: analauradegiorgi@gmail.com

◆ Presentation

The research focused on the eighties and addressed the reconstruction of the Uruguayan left at the political transition.

The goal of this research was to analyze the reconfiguration of the Uruguayan left during this time and reconstructed the new ideas and practices that made the difference with the sixties. Democracy and human rights were the keys to

*This document was made in the framework of the call for grants “Thirty years of democracy in Latin America: change processes, achievements and challenges”.

◆ KEYWORDS

- Uruguay

- Democracy

- Human Rights

- Uruguayan Left

- Government

this reconfiguration and this phenomenon has their consequence these days. The current agenda of Uruguay, called by many ‘new rights agenda’ was revised in this key, on its origins in the eighties. This decade was especially important because new causes emerged and a new political generation do socialized fighting against the dictatorship. The research, focused on the process of emergence of this generation, reconstruct the circulation spaces and the new political practices.

One of the questions to answer was about the importance of this new generation and his role with democratic practices and narratives about human rights. The second question was about this generation and the new rights agenda. The eighties generation was a different generation from the sixties generation, and was not worried about the political past. For this reason, they could be interested to broaden the former left’s agenda. The old agenda of human rights, centred in the victims of State terrorism, has been complemented with a new agenda that include others rights and in this process the eighties generation would be extremely important.



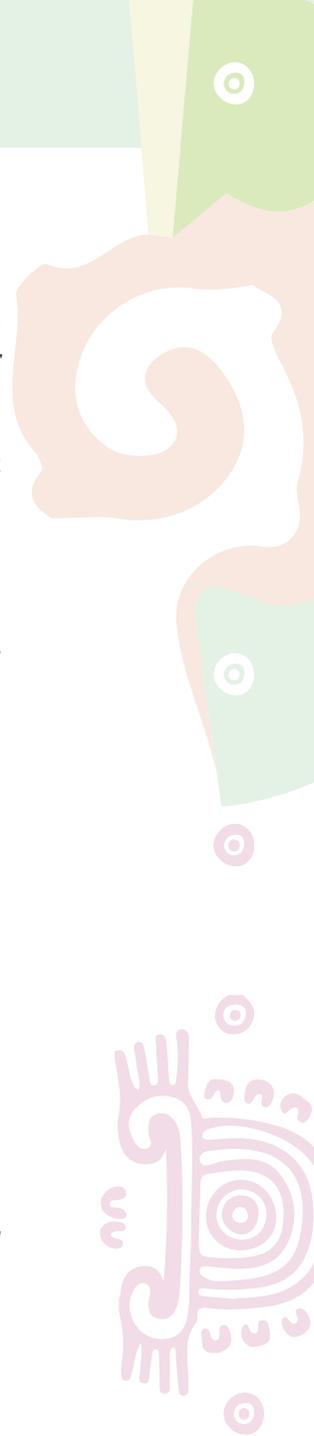
✦ Political analysis

This research produced important results that allow us to follow the path of the Uruguayan left since the end of dictatorship to the present. The eighties were central because in that time some keys that defines the left are set to the present.

Principally, this research provided insight into the importance of the first half of the eighties as a space where new discourses, new ways of doing politics, new agendas and new members arise.

The eighties were the time where the left expresses its democratic values, democratic political practices deployed and incorporates the language of rights. Democracy and human rights allowed a new generation to socialize and broaden the agenda of the left.

So, in the framework of these slogans, it may be requested by respect for the basic rights and guarantees for the functioning of Justice. And also arise, in the margins, other



claims in terms of rights — the right to participation of women, the right to decide what to do with our own bodies, the right to sexual freedom — which will be also considered as guarantors aspects of full democracy.

The incorporation of democracy involved discourses and new political practices, which in the context of a multiplicity of social and political actors had its best expression in the early years of the eighties. However, the return of political party competition and the successful recovery of the left, caused the paradoxical effect of closing some areas, restrict discussions and foreclose opportunities to the emergence of new issues.

In this process, a generation felt excluded and their participation was restricted to the demands of the agenda of the political parties. Those spaces that welcomed a large number of militants lost prominence in this process, and the agenda of human rights suffered the consequences.

The agenda of human rights emerged in the early years of the democratic transition and became a cause to fight against the dictatorship that brought together in an integrated space various leftist sectors beyond its membership. Public reporting violations and claim amnesty for political prisoners diluted differences among the left tendencies. However, the return of the Frente Amplio

(FA) to the front line and the competition among sectors since 1984, diluted the shared space, drove out a generation socialized in it or reabsorbed militants into the party structures and made visible differences from the human rights. After the defeat of 1989 on the amnesty law, the defence of this cause was further restricted to certain sectors and organizations directly affected. The years of the FA, despite all the advances over previous governments, showed the difficulty to share the cause of human rights between the left and beyond this.

The return of party dynamics in the mid-eighties also affected the possibilities of expanding the agenda of the left. For this reason, a new generation and other militants who wanted to discuss the agenda had to process their discussions outside parties. As noted above, the demand for new rights came from the margins, not from the left party. It came from organizations composed with militants in the eighties and, generally, with a double militancy seeking spaces to discuss new topics. The restoration of the eighties expelled those who were socialized in the ideal of democracy. They could not discuss new topics such as those related to youth, human rights or what we now call 'new rights'.

Despite this, no one dump the left wing and in Uruguay it means that nobody, or almost nobody, left the FA. They



ceased politically participate in sectors and abandoned the organic, but contributed from somewhere else. The new rights' agenda came from the periphery of the FA, from organizations whose members somehow linked to the political left or at least vote.

The agenda of the Uruguayan left is made within and outside the party structure. The strength of the FA and the base-unit maintenance, allow it to remain as almost the only left party option and thus finally been nurtured by the discussions that come from its boundary. Clearly, the FA government responsibility in the final installation of this agenda is huge, but the responsibility carry out by a left that transcends its party structure is even higher.

The Progressive agenda of Uruguay nowadays is the result of the misreading of the eighties and the late agreement of the XXI century. The challenge ahead is regard the modalities of the dialogue between the social left and the left party to continue moving forward expanding an agenda focused on democracy and human rights.



* Proposals

To furthering the cause of democracy and human rights, it is necessary to propose three challenges:

- ◆ Promote the connection of traditional human rights agenda with the agenda of new rights.
- ◆ Update the human rights agenda.
- ◆ Promote coordination between political parties and civil society organizations.

To achieve these challenges it is proposed:

- ◆ Reinforce the human rights agenda with memory policies, new researches and self-criticism about this issue on the left.
- ◆ Promote spaces to discuss and reflect about human rights from a gender perspective.
- ◆ Introduce memory policies that allow visualize the traditional human rights agenda and the new rights agenda with their actors involved and with new generations.



-
- ◆ Create spaces for meeting and reflection among those who suffered human rights violations during the State terrorism as political prisoners and those who are currently as common criminals or trafficked persons.
 - ◆ Attend to abusive situations and disappearances of persons from a human rights perspective.
 - ◆ Generate awareness strategies regarding human rights violations nowadays.
 - ◆ Keep track of social and partisan agendas to compare their levels of articulation and figure out the coordination problems.
 - ◆ Facilitate the coordination of these organizations by creating spaces that allow for sharing issues and developing joint strategies, in dialogue between the different agendas.

Executive Secretary | **Pablo Gentili**

Academic Director | **Fernanda Saforcada**

Editor | **Carlos Fidel**

Coordinator of the Research Promotion Area | **Natalia Gianatelli**

Chief Editor | **Lucas Sablich**

Art Director | **Marcelo Giardino**

PBC

www.clacso.org