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Attempts at Westernization in Latin America: Between Ways of Being and Information on Civic Morality

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the positions towards and investments in Westernization in Latin America and more specifically discusses the positions and logics of action regarding the import and adaptation of cultural and institutional models from the West. This paper suggests that the effects of attempts to Westernize depend on the multidimensionality of social structures, which implies certain historical and cultural conditions. Here, it is political capitalism that is inscribed in specific social structures, and investments in Westernization affects the most explicit and codified social dimensions. The empirical focus of this paper is on the relations between bonds of reciprocity and institutional rules, as well as the attempts to adapt them to those of Western capitalism. After an initial section about these relationships in Western capitalism some of their elements are highlighted. The main positions originating in Latin America regarding this issue are explained, which is followed by an exploration of the positions of investments in Westernization. These notions are linked to the definition of social capital based on current civic morality. Some basic indicators for this issue are also presented.

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Introduction

The effects of the importation and adaptation of Western cultural and institutional models in non-Western conditions (which, for the sake of brevity, is referred to as “Westernization”) form the central theme of this work, which covers different levels and issues. One condition that stands out in imposing limits on the approach to pertinent themes arises from the divisions into specific disciplines of the social sciences, which results in different approaches centred on a narrow area of focus limited to a certain dimension. This fragmentary view is problematic because the supposed possibilities of Westernization and its denial imply the need to approach different dimensions of the social structure.

The multidimensionality of social structures provides the backdrop for theoretical and epistemological confrontations regarding the defence of hypotheses regarding Westernization or its denial. Some currents in the social sciences (in the strict sense) have become notable for the presupposition of the universalization of Western models, but the theoretical positions and empirical studies questioning the universalization of Westernization have been increasing in number and strength. It is in this sense that formulations such as those of, for example, stand out. Although these authors refer to disciplines, in the institutional sense, they are based on foundations and references that go far beyond any discipline in the strict sense [1-2].

These perspectives are directly related to the analytical problems regarding the effects of Westernization in non-Western conditions. The dimensions of social structures are interdependent. Those

dimensions based on hierarchical and legitimizing resources—which are based on reciprocal bonds and, therefore, of a more implicit and tacit nature are essential. This occurs even in social structures where this hierarchy and resource legitimization is of a more explicit and codified nature, such as the market and institutional rules of the state in modern capitalism [3]. The existence of capitalist market relations and the legal relations of the state do not eliminate their dependence on other spheres or institutions, which may be founded on principles and rules based on reciprocity or that have developed over time.

These questions refer to a more general problem, that of the relations between capitalism and social rules. As Weber (1984, pp. 1047–1117) highlights, capitalism presupposes the objectivity and predictability of formal rules. This connects to other general questions, such as that of the different conditions and types of capitalism, particularly in peripheral conditions. It also affects the analytical problems related to the relations between capitalism and social structures, which may maintain different conditions and modalities [2, 4].

The multidimensionality of social structures and the importation and adaptation of cultural and institutional models are interdependent because these imported models are more directly associated with the dimensions of a more explicit and codified nature, especially for dimensions linked to erudite culture, politics, and institutional rules. This may be the main reason for the occurrence of what define as the “simulacrum” in Latin America. However, it may also be the origin of other consequences, such as the polysemy concerning imported products and their appropriation, especially in politics [1]. In the same way that imported models have a more direct impact on the dimensions most directly associated with explicit and codified resources and rules, they are usually limited

to general principles. This results in their insertion at a generic level that overrides the logics of action more directly associated with the practical specificities of concrete conditions. It is thus that, as already noted in a study limited to Brazil [5], strictly speaking, cultural and institutional models are not adapted and imported, but rather certain principles and techniques are adopted *ad hoc* according to local agendas.

In more general terms, theoretical and analytical questions come into play linked to the emergence of capitalism and its specificities relative to pre-existing social structures. This is the case, particularly, of propositions to the effect that the emergence of capitalism in England was based on certain cultural conditions that led to the rationalization not only of the spheres of circulation but of the processes of production [6]. Such questions remain open, including in the sense of that the emergence of capitalism “creates the capitalist”. As the material presented below shows, the very investments to induce the rationality of Western capitalism have the character of an undertaking to forge this “capitalist spirit”. This is particularly clear in the assumed need to disseminate and convince people of the importance of attributes such as trust and predispositions to comply with general formal rules. This encourages the establishment of connections that are more compatible and favourable to broader and more predictable relationships than more restricted links, which are better suited to the logic of Western market capitalism and formal institutional rules.

To avoid the problems arising from adopting a generic perspective on the problems involved in Westernization, this study opted to take a specific approach focusing on reciprocal links and formal institutional rules in public management that is, the recruitment and careers of civil servants. Empirically, this work focuses on the problems related to the adoption of formal rules in the selection of civil servants in light of the logic of action and principles of recruitment and hierarchization based on reciprocal links. The general hypothesis is based on previous work focused on Brazil, but here applied to the diversity of conditions across Latin America as a whole. According to this general hypothesis, the adaptation of cultural and institutional models or products from Western centres to conditions such as those in Latin America does not result in something that can be defined as Westernization. Depending on the specific conditions, however, these processes can lead to *ad hoc* readaptations that incorporate certain products according to the interests and logic of the action at hand [5].

The next section addresses the conception of politics and its relationship to social structures in Latin America. The links between reciprocal bonds and institutional rules in current political capitalism are highlighted. The subsequent section highlights some fundamental details of the Western capitalist perspective regarding reciprocal bonds and institutional rules, because of their confrontation with the conditions in Latin America. Finally, investments in the dissemination of positions regarding reciprocal bonds are addressed, including positions grounded in Latin America and those based on Western civic morality. The effects of such investments are then assessed.

Reciprocal Bonds and Political Capitalism

The hypotheses pursued by this work regarding theoretical confrontations in the social sciences about the possibilities and results of Westernization are based on opposing positions. The main sources are based on the work by, among others [1,2]. Given that Westernization encompasses different dimensions

(e.g. economics, politics, and technology, among others), this work focuses on a specific problem: the process of establishing and implementing rules for depersonalizing access to public office. In general, this type of rule is directly associated with the expansion of modern capitalism and the legal regulation of the state. One of the main implications of this is the tendency to impose rules supporting impersonality in the execution of policies and the recruitment of employees. This impersonality does not, however, include leadership positions, whether in the business world or public management [7]. This raises questions about the relationship between what is attributed to the political sphere and the implementation of policies. Theoretical problems related to the respective social structures that condition the different types of capitalism also come into play beyond the requirements regarding general formal rules with a claim to universality, such as those associated with the economic market and legal regulation.

The complexity allowing the possibility of Westernization depends on conditions that affect different levels. The most general of these levels consists of the relationships with the multidimensionality of social structures and, consequently, the relationships between those dimensions of a more objectified and codified nature and those of a more implicit and tacit nature (Bourdieu, 1980, pp. 209–231). The relationships between reciprocal bonds (which tend to be implicit and tacit) and institutional rules (which tend to be objectified and codified) put these dimensions into conflict [4,3]. However, the multiplicity of the types of reciprocal bonds and their respective foundations means that their relationships with institutional rules can be very variable and subject to different uses. This diversity is the basis for the polysemy of controversies about the foundations for legitimacy of these relationships. In the social science literature itself, categories of reciprocal bonds are classified in terms of their greater or lesser legitimacy. This is the case, for example, in the opposition between situations considered to be clientelism or patrimonialism, which are generally considered to be illegitimate, and other types of reciprocal bonds that are considered to be positive due, for example, to their supposed effectiveness in public management [8-9].

These differences between the types and criteria for assessing reciprocal bonds are much greater within the field of politics. However, these differences encompass different levels and dimensions, perspectives, and foundations. Certain types of reciprocal bonds are valued regarding the aspects most directly linked to the notion of social capital based on civic morality, including from the perspective of creating or strengthening the conditions for deepening of capitalism in the image of Western models. These are reciprocal bonds that would strengthen predispositions such as trust, with a view to better functioning of market regulations and public administration [10].

In the case of Latin America, as highlighted by, a conception of politics as participation and not as representation comes into play [11]. Leaving aside the issue of the Western conception of political representation and considering politics as participation, some elements are worth highlighting. The first consists of the fact that this participation, which may have a populist connotation, also implies the means and conditions for that participation. If, in Western models, political representation is based on the expression of individual opinion through organizations of its aggregation, which generally occurs through parties, politics as participation is connected to the provision of means supported by mobilization and positioning in the mediation structures [12,13]. If this participation relies on resources such as mobilization capacity,

it directly depends on access to resources associated with origins and social position. These conditions of participation have a statutory character, which favours the reproduction of reciprocal bonds that, in other conditions, could be classified as archaic, such as nepotism and the importance of friendship bonds. One of the main consequences of this conception of politics as participation is panpoliticism, when practically everything can be associated with politics. The practical result thus tends to be the opposite of what is assumed by civilist conceptions of interventions grounded in social capital based on the current civic morality.

Because politics conceived as participation is linked to mediation structures and the resources that arise from them, something similar occurs with the possibilities to exercise public management. This results in one of the most perverse effects of interventions aimed at adapting Western models to conditions such as those in Latin America. By definition, these are interventions that, in addition to being two-faced, are partial and selective in the name of civic morality, although they are supported by financial, political, and institutional resources that interact with the hierarchical mediation structures linked to political participation. Thus, not only the means enacted, but the results themselves tend to increase the social segmentation of current political capitalism.

More specifically, the permanence of reciprocal links in access to public office constitutes one of the main characteristics of non-Western conditions, especially in Latin America, and this is not excluded in central capitalism. However, the origins and conditions of existence of these reciprocal bonds in the functioning of the state differ from those obtaining in non-Western conditions. There are peripheral situations that have some similarities with non-Western situations, such as recruitment only partially based on formal criteria. Among examples from Europe – taking data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – countries such as Greece stand out, in addition to candidates for entry as members; OECD, [7]. However, for countries on the periphery of central capitalism, it is generally a matter of entering capitalism under specific conditions, which are not restricted to the economy alone, in addition to their economic conditions. Even in central capitalist countries, there are other conditions for the permanence of reciprocal ties in public administration, but this does not imply any weakness in capitalism. This highlights the problem of defining what constitutes politics and its boundary with public administration. This is what define as modern clannism, or the growing importance of social capital the closer one approaches the decision-making centres of the State or of personalized relationships in the upper spheres of business and politics [11-14]. However, in central capitalism, this problem of defining public management policy is more directly associated with the relationship between political representation and policies. This implies the problem of the limits of politicization of public management and its relationship with the implementation of policies [10].

This is not, however, the main problem regarding the permanence of reciprocal bonds in the recruitment and exercise of public positions in non-Western conditions, such as Latin America. The first point to be highlighted here is that this is not an explicit position of replacing reciprocal bonds with formal institutional rules, although this does also occur. What comes into play more specifically is what define, for Latin America, as a simulacrum [1]. One of the best indications of this is that all countries with larger economies and populations in Latin America have a history of reforms to formulate and implement formal criteria in the

recruitment and selection of public servants. In all cases, there have been setbacks: The results are only partial or null, with a long series of actions and instruments of resistance and denial of the effects of the reforms [12].

Looking at the relationship between reciprocal bonds and institutional rules in the occupation of public office more specifically, one of the best indicators of the effects of the multidimensionality of social structures is indirect. This is evidence that, even in the case of defending the implementation of formal rules, they are conceived as something “external” to social relations and structures. This is even true for those with high educational qualifications and those involved in discussions regarding impartiality, such as those in the legal, journalistic, or political worlds. Problems related to impartiality are not a significant part of public discussions. Indeed, the opposite occurs with related issues, such as corruption, political conflicts or the like. Impartiality in particular involves population segments that have historically been defenders, such as jurists. However, these segments in favour of reforms in public management and the inclusion of impartiality provide an exemplary case that stands in contrast to the perspective based on the civic morality of Western capitalism. In short, this is a confrontation between a conception based on political capitalism and its conception of society and impersonality.

The specific term of impersonality has been little discussed from the Western capitalist perspective, because the most important thing in this perspective is civic morality, trust, and related categories. In political capitalism, impersonality is always presented as the imposition of something external. The main issue consists of the foundations and justifications for submission to external rules that are imposed in the name of impersonality. In empirical terms, jurists and lawyers provide an example of this. In Brazil, for example, they were defenders of the impersonality established in the 1988 Constitution (article 37). In a long list of publications by one of the main legal organizations (Jusbrasil), the defence and explanation of the principles of impartiality and related principles, such as morality, publicity, and efficiency, prescribed in the current Constitution, impartiality is defined as: “The principle of impartiality seeks to translate the notion that public administration must treat citizens without discrimination. Political/ideological divergences or convergences, personal sympathies or disagreements cannot interfere in the performance and treatment by public servants”. In short, it is a recommendation for “equal treatment”.

The conception and political structures also form another general condition in the relations between reciprocal bonds and institutional rules. Politics in Latin America is conceived as participation and not as representation, and this has many implications, starting with mediation structures, which are differentiated according to the specific conditions of each country [10]. One of the effects of this conception of politics as participation is panpoliticism or the omnipresence of a link to politics for any type of problem. More than the conception, however, the complexity of political structures comes into play. The most similar conditions in the relevant literature are presented by for the case of Mexico, where the generalized dependence on one's respective position in the mediation structure and on politics includes access to opportunities for participation in the economic sphere (pp. 132–133) [2].

Although the implementation of formal rules can be tolerated or even defended, this generally occurs based on their supposed

contribution to increasing the effectiveness of public administration. It turns out that these are social structures in which practically all paths – especially in the phases of bifurcation and changes of direction – are based on dependence and the use of reciprocal bonds, whether in terms of family relations, professional ties, politics, instrumental friendship, or any other modality [2].

The intensification of reciprocity is the main effect of the introduction of partial ad hoc rules for the occupation of public office. Although it may seem paradoxical, this occurs because the incorporation of formal rules increases the degree of complexity and refinement of the politicization of public management and access to positions. At the same time, there is a relative replacement of the modalities of reciprocal bonds that are considered more retrograde, such as clientelism, by those considered positive and modern. With the partial implementation of measures officially intended to impose formal rules for access to public office in Latin American countries, one of the main trends has been the strengthening of a new amalgam of different types of reciprocal links with formal rules, which has led to the intensification of panpoliticism. Thus, what at first glance could be taken as a mere adaptation to new standards of modernity can configure something central to the understanding or, at least, as an indication of the relations between segmental capitalism and panpoliticism. The central importance of what is considered politics derives not only from its conception as participation, but as a decisive resource for determining the conditions and opportunities for any access to resources and, therefore, to certain trajectories and social positions.

The formal aspects of the incorporation of institutional rules together with reciprocal bonds based on redefinitions are relatively simple. Despite the variations in the conditions and methods of implementation, they primarily involve the definitions of rules relating to recruitment for public office with criteria considered to be meritocratic or with some degree of competition. However, both the segmented nature of the dynamics of this type of capitalism and the hyper-politicization can be increasing and cumulative.

Because the conditions in each country are diverse, Brazil was taken as a case study here, because it is the country most advanced in the adoption of institutional rules for access to public office in Latin America. Access to public office is limited to those who enter through a competitive examination, in addition to those who occupy public office through political nominations and those who are recruited for positions of trust. The latter are recruited from among those who already hold public office. Aside from these last two categories, the others, in principle, enter through public selection processes (after the 1988 Constitution), which can be more general or for specific categories. In short, all advisory, leadership, and management functions are recruited through political or trust criteria. At first glance, the category of politically appointed people is the one most directly related to reciprocal ties for becoming public office holders, because political appointees depend directly on occupants of positions obtained through elections. However, occupants of positions of trust are more important, for different reasons, in their significance for panpoliticism. Although in legal terms there are limits to its expansion, the data show overlaps and expansion far beyond these limits. Officially, positions of trust are justified by providing a means of communication based on trust between the respective functional category and government policies and those responsible for them. This would reduce corporatism or the specific interests of employee categories to the detriment of government policies. However, its importance as a means of politicization is much broader.

In addition to the enormous number of positions attributed to administration or management, the main effect of this is the intensification of hyper-politicization. This results in an amalgamation of categorical or sectoral corporatism with the panpoliticism contained in relations with government policies and mediation structures. This leads to the formation of different amalgamations between categorical, union, and political representation (i.e. parties and factions and different possibilities of careers as “representatives”). Because a conception of politics as participation is at stake, activities and positions linked to management are considered to be at the top of the hierarchy, whether in professional terms, as a social position, or as a human achievement. This has strong effects on financial incomes however, administrative positions acquire the meaning of political positions and are the main indicator of professional excellence beyond these differences in income [15].

Public office holders occupying positions of trust also interact with those whose entry occurs through political nominations. These are segments of elites that are less dependent on training or technical resources and are thus more closely associated with factions and electoral disputes. Formally, they are the category most directly associated with party politics, although, as these are political structures in which parties have little importance, the most direct links are with elected politicians. Public office holders occupying positions of trust are among those most directly linked to the defence of the supposed need to consider the special qualities or skills of leaders [6]. Thus, the basis and results of this partial incorporation of criteria for entry into the occupation of public office consist of aggregation, at different levels and based on logics of action and resources of different orders.

The first point to highlight about this aggregative logic consists of the differences between levels. Just as when considering Latin American countries as a group, when focusing on a country that has already incorporated new types of reciprocal ties in recruitment for public office, there is also a more general level, with more explicit rules and justifications. These more general and explicit rules tend to be present and incorporated, notably at the federal level, where categorical corporatism has more weight in the realization of interests. On the other hand, at lower levels, such as states and municipalities or in the implementation of specific policies, these more abstract, general rules – close to the standards imported from Western centres – tend to be directly associated with types of reciprocal ties considered less legitimate, such as clientelism and patronage [16].

Reciprocity and Western Capitalism

Because the issues at stake are related to reciprocity bonds and Westernization, it is worth highlighting some aspects of these Western models that directly affect these issues. In general terms, it is assumed that there is a tendency in modern capitalism for more objective and codified social dimensions to have greater weight, such as market rules and the legal organization of the state. These general principles cover different aspects that affect the relationships between reciprocity bonds, formal institutional rules, and what is considered to be part of the political order. Therefore, in addition to the general principles of capitalism, the respective social structures and concepts that support those principles come into play, which may have different foundations and notions for rules [2].

The division between the power of influence and the power of injunction is one of the general aspects of the different versions of the Western conception of politics and its relations with both

reciprocal bonds and with institutional rules. This conception of politics, regardless of its different versions, is based on political representation, which implies the selection of representatives, the criteria for which are centred on the power of influence, with the most diverse principles of legitimization. Policies, meanwhile, are based and organized on the power of injunction, which implies negative sanctions as the basis and means of action [17]. This suggests that politics as injunction and policies, in principle, excludes the power of influence, the rationality of which is based on modern bureaucracy and its formal rules. The concrete realization of this depends on historical conditions (Weber, 1984).

Politics as representation and, therefore, based on the power of influence, in principle does not include particularistic reciprocal bonds, despite being based on the power of influence, because the delimitation of representation is categorical and generally organized in political parties [18]. In addition to these general aspects of the conception of politics, it is also necessary to highlight some conditions of its historical realization. As highlighted by Bourdieu, the historical realization of this model in the West has two distinct dimensions: politics in the sense of participation in the process of political representation, which consists of the secret expression of individual opinion, and as a confrontation of force [10]. Although studies have found historical trends towards the gradual consolidation of structures of political representation in most central capitalist countries, controversies regarding the concrete meanings of political representation for the definition of policies have intensified [11]. One of the main trends is the distinction between the processes of political representation as a means of legitimizing the regime and as the formulation and implementation of policies and the representation and intermediation of interests.

It is worth highlighting the tendency to strengthen reciprocal relations in the structures of the State in the relationship between political representation and decision-making processes in central capitalism. The central characteristic of this tendency is the strengthening of these relations of inter-knowledge and reciprocity as one rises in the hierarchy of political power structures. This has direct effects on the controversies and positions taken in countries with peripheral or political capitalism, such as in Latin America. This type of non-meritocratic classification and hierarchization criterion provides the basis for justifying and defending the free choice of political appointments. All Latin American countries that have attempted to implement meritocratic recruitment criteria have ended up adopting some type of hierarchical criterion based on political or trust-based recommendations [12]. Another justification for the hierarchy of public office holders and their recruitment based on reciprocal bonds stands out in peripheral capitalism – namely, the perspective that assumes the need for special qualities or skills to perform management functions. Despite being a foundation based on non-meritocratic criteria, this perspective presents itself as something modern. Because these are skills that do not depend exclusively or directly on school learning – in addition to those qualities associated with the world of politics – they are also linked to social origins and trajectories.

Reciprocal Bonds and Westernization

Although the perspective of interventions based on the notion of social capital grounded in current civic morality is the only one with explicit claims to Westernization, there are several other positions involved with this type of problem in Latin America, with very significant differences. Before directly addressing the perspective based on the notion of social capital and related issues, it is worth pointing out some of these other perspectives and their

positions regarding Westernization and, particularly, regarding reciprocal bonds. Some of these positions originate in central capitalist countries, while others have roots associated with Latin America itself.

A matrix of the positions most representative of an evolutionary perspective regarding the supposed overcoming of reciprocal bonds in recruitment for public positions in Latin America is institutionally linked to universities that act as think tanks; this matrix is thus based on central capitalism. It deals particularly with studies such as the one taking a comparative approach to a group of Latin American countries focused on the evolution of recruitment criteria for public positions, particularly in terms of competitiveness, as opposed to political appointment [12]. The starting point for the comparison is the evolution that occurred in the United States, from the old Spoil System towards regulation. The general assumption is that something similar would occur in Latin America on a different time frame. In addition to the strong differences between Latin American countries, however, the historical data demonstrate systematic cyclical setbacks in all attempts at reform and the imposition of regulations with criteria that do not depend on political control. To present a positive example for Latin American countries, the official descriptions of these attempts to regulate meritocratic criteria are considered. For example, in the case of Brazil, which is presented as an extremely exemplary case for the effectiveness of the supposed evolution towards the adoption of meritocratic criteria, the data used were from unofficial sources and indicate that only 9.52% of public office holders in Brazil in 2004 were recruited through political appointments [12]. However, unofficial information indicates a proportion of one-third of the total number of employees recruited through political appointments for the year 2016.

The type of empirical material used is one of the best indicators that this type of interpretation, which is based on the evolution of Latin American countries towards central capitalism, is possible. It is almost exclusively about legislative decisions regulating access to public office. However, the practical uses and results of the implementation of these decisions present their main weakness, as these legislative decisions have little or no practical effectiveness. Considering Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, only the countries with larger economies and populations have made any attempt to regulate access to public office through formal rules (e.g. Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Chile). However, all of the countries that have had some regulation of access to public office through formal rules also have a series of “mechanisms to prevent its implementation through various mechanisms” [12]. In other words, in addition to the concrete conditions for implementing this type of measure – which contradicts the interests of different orders in social and political conditions where practically everything is based on reciprocal bonds – implementation suffers the effects of official or diffuse opposition and limitations.

One of the best summaries of the ambivalences and evaluation criteria of reciprocal bonds in access to public office in Latin America from a perspective with native roots is presented by [7]. Their central focus is on problems related to the effectiveness of public management – specifically the confrontation between the perspective of “state capacity” and the “administrative tradition” resulting from local history and the interventions of international organizations. The emphasis is centred on the diversity of conditions and the complexity of recruitment bases for public servants. To this end, they developed the following typology: (a) “patronage appointees”, involving clientelist relationships to guarantee political support; (b) “technocrats”, who have emerged

more recently and include “highly qualified personnel” linked to international organizations in local governments (think tanks), who “occupy leadership positions in local governments”; and (c) “partisan loyalists”, who are linked to international organizations, universities, and prominent positions in government, and are characterized by their continued membership in factions and political parties; and (d) “careerists”, are “bureaucrats who obtain access to public office based on meritocratic criteria”. These categories coexist in bureaucratic organizations in a kind of “hybrid” system [7].

One of the most general aspects of this classification of access to public office is its perspective centred on relations with reciprocal ties and their respective social and political bases. While categories such as “patronage” or clientelism tend to be considered negative or illegitimate according to new criteria coming from international centres and organizations, this does not mean that the other categories are based on criteria that exclude reciprocal ties. This is the case for the other modalities of access to public office, with the possible exception of the fourth category, defined as “careerists”, which represents a quantitatively insignificant portion. The difference regarding reciprocal ties in the other categories does not lie in their existence and uses but in their combination with other types of resources, such as supposed “technical competence” and “politics”, among others.

The problem of the one-dimensional approach and the consequent conversion of categories of reciprocal ties into concepts is evident. This is the problem of taking what is considered a concept in the substantive sense and its scope and circumscription, and the main consequence is the exclusion of the multidimensionality of social relations and the failure to consider the fact that, beyond categories, principles and resources of hierarchy and legitimization are at stake. These resources and principles are not limited to a specific dimension or sphere, such as politics, and their presence is even interdependent, through reconversion and repositioning. It is clear that these are concrete and specific conditions for the realization and operation of reciprocal ties based on different resources, whether those are linked to politics; educational qualifications and circulation in school and media environments, generally abroad; to parties; or to different forms of corporatism, among many other possibilities. Because these are different perspectives, some positions go so far as to praise positive forms of reciprocal ties that are generally considered to be among the most negative, such as patronage itself. This position tends to defend the idea that reciprocal ties contribute to the effectiveness of public management. As an exemplary case of this perspective, another position with Latin American roots stands out, whose central idea is that patronage or political appointments for public office improves the effectiveness of the bureaucracy [19]. This is tested with a consideration of the management of municipalities in Brazil. Its main arguments include the notion that political appointments increase responsibility and effectiveness by providing social and political concessions between bureaucrats and politicians. This would guarantee access to resources and the application of sanctions and rewards, thus increasing mutual trust.

Another way of valuing reciprocal bonds, also with origins different from Western capitalism, consists of the paternalistic style, whose roots are attributed to Latin America. The formulators and disseminators of this position also have origins linked to Latin America. Its main basis is the assumption that the paternalistic style would support a “system of labour relations based on cooperation”, which would be “centred on the community”; its origins are attributed to the historical social structures of Latin

America, particularly to categories such as the hacienda, the Brazilian jeitinho and the compadrazgo in Chile and Mexico [20].

Reciprocal Bonds and Social Capital Based on Civic Morality
Having reviewed the modalities for defending reciprocal bonds in public management and the criteria for access to public office, another pole stands out. In this case, the foundational matrix is grounded on the concept of social capital based on the current civic morality. In addition to civic morality, this perspective is based on interpretations of what the history of communitarianism in the United States would have been and its relations with basic notions such as civil society and its values [21]. Not only issues related to public management or market rules and institutional regulation are at stake, but also the problems attributed to the existence of predispositions and favourable social ties for this. Although there are many organizations that seek to create favourable conditions for the existence and functioning of something like civil society or institutions closer to the civic morality in force in central capitalism, some stand out. These are include large organizations with international operations, notably the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank in the financing sector and the think tank Latinobarômetro, among others.

One of the main characteristics of this type of intervention is its missionary nature. This is associated with a perspective that focuses on the problems of peripheral conditions as related to the need for persuasion and convincing. Because these perspectives aim to find solutions to practical problems, this discourse is generally characterized by a focus on propositions and positions of persuasion from a behaviourist perspective. As a general foundation, these are the doctrines that support the notion of social capital based on civic morality or related categories, such as trust. Consequently, this association with the applied social sciences practically never takes social structures and positions into account. Significantly, the rare social science works that address related topics, such as trust, but that include indicators related to structures or social positions end up concluding such indicators are decisive for understanding trust or other problems associated with “values”.

Consider as an exemplary case one of the rare studies on trust that include indicators of social position [22]. Although its main source is Latinobarômetro, which specializes in collecting data on social capital in the definition based on civic morality, it attempts to identify “determinants of trust in political institutions”: “the preference for democracy as opposed to authoritarianism, views on the economy and satisfaction with the government, optimism regarding the future of the country and the family nucleus and interest in politics”. The main conclusion of the study is that institutional and historical contexts matter for the behaviour and political culture of citizens. Likewise, the political and economic context is relevant to determining trust, since it interferes in citizens’ views on the economy, on the functioning of the institutions themselves and can even undermine or generate relationships of trust [22].

In other words, the indicators that go beyond the “values” that would be the basis of trust are decisive. In this case, the perspective is based on the notion of social capital based on civic morality, and the missionary nature of the argument is based on the fact that issues that encompass civil society are at stake. The predispositions regarding the population with fewer social and cultural conditions are also at stake. This type of investment is also two-pronged, because one of the main problems is the lack of cultural conditions for the proper functioning of civil society, while it also has as

its object supporting the conditions for the functioning of the rules of the economic market and the legal system for business investments.

Concerning the pole most directly associated with civic morality and capital, in general, a notion is highlighted as a kind of key category, such as trust. For example, a collective publication by the Inter-American Development Bank stands out with the following highlights “Trust is a tremendous opportunity for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean”; “Distrust in the private sector is an obstacle to development”; “Distrust in the public sector is an obstacle to inclusive growth”; and “Restoring trust depends on information and training” [7]. This has even resulted in the creation of a discussion programme entitled “Trust: The Key to Social Cohesion and Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean”, the main objectives of which are to discuss the imperative of social cohesion to generate economic growth, the importance of trust for effective public policies, and the power of information and transparency. To restore trust and make information accessible, the Inter-American Development Bank is creating key pathways to strengthen educational and regulatory institutions, reduce barriers to entry in the private sector, and, more broadly, encourage governments to deliver on their promises [23].

However, there is a more general foundation beyond these key notions. This general foundation is associated with the assumption that “good” social capital implies the predominance of broad ties, which help to mediate between groups or categories, as opposed to “bad” social capital, based on ties restricted to the group itself [24]. This has serious implications for discussions related to “community” and broader ties, including the market and institutional regulations. From this perspective, more, this is a problem of requalification of reciprocal ties, rather than their exclusion from relations with the market and institutional rules. It turns out that restricted reciprocal ties, such as those limited to the group itself or interpersonal, are not compatible with the market and with current civic morality, which requires trust in broader social relations and governmental institutions. Other criteria for qualifying what would therefore be considered good conditions for development come into play – namely, the notion of civil society.

The assumption of the universalization of cultural and institutional models of Western centres is present, because these perspectives use the notion of social capital based on civic morality. Under these conditions, problems related to the very conceptions of society and politics would not be applicable, because this is an ethnocentric perspective. As already highlighted, authors such as Touraine have emphasized the conception of politics based on the notion of participation in Latin America, as opposed to representation [9]. The problem would thus be much more than a lack of generation and dissemination of information on Western civic morality, because, beyond the mere notion of participation, what is at stake is the insertion of mediation and power formed historically in the multidimensional structures.

Because these are investments aimed at disseminating and convincing people about the concept of social capital based on civic morality and, more generally, the perspective of Western capitalism, the positions of this agenda do not necessarily encompass all of organizations. This is an instrumental perspective, in the name of the values of a certain approach. Because these are investments for dissemination and convincing, they necessarily have a missionary character. However, this does not exclude the possibility of different positions existing within the same organization, in sectors not directly linked to this missionary

character. We can also include a study on behalf of the World Bank on the persistence of nepotism in the recruitment of public servants despite successive reforms in Colombia [25]. In this case, there is no connection with the optimistic and prescriptive perspective of civil society and the very possibility of overcoming current standards is called into question.

In this diversity of perspectives and adaptations of models from different aspects of central capitalism, there are also those more directly focused on the management of public servants. These tend to be more directly aimed at converting cultural differences in the face of capitalism into administrative problems. This not only involves organizations like think tanks but also those that operate based on financial resources, such as the World Bank or, more specifically, of some of its supporting organizations focused on creating conditions for the expansion of capitalism and Westernization (e.g. the OECD). The World Bank, for example, has sought to create conditions for the implementation of rules for access to and management of public servants that are less linked to politicization and corruption and are closer to administrative rationality as put into practice by a Bureaucracy Laboratory. This also included an empirical survey of a sample of civil servants from developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. The main recommendations from this survey included the need to (a) “Prioritize professional merit over political and personal considerations in civil service management decisions”; (b) “Ensure that civil service management issues are performance-oriented”; and (c) “Pay enough to retain more motivated civil servants and avoid large-scale turnover of high-performing employees”.

As is clear, this is a position contrary to current modalities. In addition to corruption, the “politicization” of access to and exercise of public office can be highlighted. The general justification is centred on the search for administrative effectiveness. This perspective thus assumes that the search for administrative effectiveness presupposes the exclusion of politicization, at least regarding the rules for access to and exercise of public office. Politicization and the use of personified relationships should be replaced by formal administrative rules. The central issue is that both politicization and corruption are embedded in social and political structures on a national basis. This implies that the problem of implementing such reforms is directly focused on defending rules for adapting public administration to the market and capitalist efficiency. In short, both corruption and politicization are viewed as problems of an administrative nature when they arise from historical and cultural conditions that go beyond this dimension. However, unlike the perspective centred on the notion of social capital based on civic morality, not everything can be reduced to behavioural problems.

These interventions by international organizations, particularly when focused on diagnostics and the dissemination of doctrines and recommendations, have a strong emphasis on data collection. In these surveys, Latin America always appears to be at the lower end of the spectrum for the indicators under consideration. These indicators, although always linked to civic morality and social capital, vary, not least because they are determined by different organizations. In the case of organizations that bring together countries with central capitalism and focus on the homogenized implementation of market and institutional rules, there tends to be a greater emphasis on diagnoses of the availability and compliance with formal rules (e.g., studies by the OECD). The central themes of such studies, at least regarding Latin America, are associated with the fragility of the rates of adherence to the current civic morality. Consider a 2022 OECD report: for the information

about Latin America, the entire focus is on negative indicators regarding civic morality. In other words, taking all the countries as a whole, the general findings are that “Trust in government in Latin America remains comparatively low”; “Public participation can be more inclusive and effective”; “Despite some progress, women are underrepresented in politics”; “Governments can do more to combat the climate crisis”; “Public integrity standards must be applied in practice”.

In summary, surveys by international aid organizations regarding the existence and compliance with public management and recruitment rules for public positions tend to place Latin American countries at the lower end globally, albeit with many differences. However, these classifications suffer from the effects of being official and self-representative surveys. They are therefore vaguely indicative. In a survey for the year 2020 for all Latin American countries regarding recruitment criteria for public positions, 66% of the countries used criteria considered competitive in the exams. Merit-based recruitment at the entry-level was recognized based on the existence of published rules (100% of the countries examined), structured interviews (83%), and standardized exams (83%). Furthermore, in 66% of the countries, most vacancies are open to external recruitment. These data do not include non-permanent employees, the proportions of which vary from country to country. In some cases, such as Chile, the proportion is more than half (57%) and in others, such as Peru (40%) and Argentina (34%), there are also considerable proportions [26]. It is necessary to consider, however, that these general data refer to recruitment for initial entry into the career. These data also indicate that just over half of the countries in Latin America apply some type of selection competitive criterion, although the meaning of “competitiveness” in this context remains extremely vague and ambivalent.

Conclusion

Although this work focused on problems linked to Westernization, its object centred on more specific issues. Without disregarding the theoretical and epistemological positions that underlie the hypotheses of the possible universalization of Western cultural and institutional models or their denial, this work focused on the conditions and effects of the processes of importing and adapting these models in non-Western conditions – namely, in Latin America. In addition to the empirical references focusing on the relationships between reciprocal bonds and institutional rules, formulations from the social sciences were appropriated that indicate new theoretical and analytical levels.

The first aspect to be highlighted was related to the multidimensionality of social structures, which comes into play when dealing with problems related to the import and adaptation of cultural and institutional models and the importance of the effects of historical and cultural conditions. Another axis of theoretical questions and analytical problems is related to the relationships of capitalism with the formal rules of the market and state regulation, as well as with the bonds based on reciprocity. This implies analytical problems related to the different types of capitalism and their relationships with social structures and conceptions of society and politics.

As highlighted at the beginning of the paper, rather than any dichotomous question regarding the possibilities of Westernization, the objectives of this paper centred on the possible effects resulting from the import and adaptation of Western cultural and institutional models in Latin America. In the empirical material analysed, this appears in the positions and investments of disseminators of principles and categories specific to the civic morality of central

capitalism or in an environment of political capitalism. This is particularly relevant for the examination of the conditions and limits of the results of investments in Westernization. However, different questions regarding the meanings and effects of these investments arise. The first and most elementary consists of the need to consider the nature of the interests and logics of action in question. The second arises from the need to consider these investments in terms of the dissemination of the civic morality of Western capitalism and the establishment of institutional rules as operating in two-faced logics of action. This implies the use of categories associated with the definition of social capital based on the current civic morality as a resource for instrumentalizing dissemination and persuasion and, simultaneously, for acting in the business and institutional universe.

While the possible effects of these interventions and investments cannot be ruled out, one would be generalizing too much to assume that these effects encompass the whole of what constitutes Westernization. The possible adoption of formal rules based on Western models in specific business sectors or public administration does not imply the adoption of the general principles of Western civic morality. The intensification of business investments and the actions of international organizations towards the adoption of rules more in line with the market and legal institutions, alongside the systematic observations of the continued weak incorporation of the principles of Western civic morality, constitute a good indicator here.

The most important aspect of these analytical problems is the elucidation of the logic of action and the multiplicity of interests involved in these dynamics. Westernization presupposes the conversion of conceptions and ways of being in their different dimensions. This means much more than the incorporation of information and persuasion regarding certain notions of civic morality. As highlighted in a specific work on the definitions of social capital based on civic morality, one of the main problems of this perspective is the lack of consideration of the conditions in which the agent is formed [27].

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