

# Transforming the nation or transformed by the market?

## Latin American public university, obstacles and challenges

Center for Global Higher Education

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# A Latin American Tradition

## From colonialism to early independence

- First colonial universities were established in 1500's
  - Universidad Santo Tomas de Aquino, Dominican Republic ( 1538,  1558)
  - Real y Pontificia Universidad de San Marcos, Peru ( 1551,  1571)
  - Real y Pontificia Universidad de México, Mexico (  1551, est. 1553)
- Universities during 300+ years of colonial rule
  - 16th Century: Dominican Republic, Peru and Mexico,
  - 17th Century: Argentina (Córdoba), Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala
  - 18th Century: Chile and Venezuela
- 19th century
  - Limited participation during independence struggles
  - Sites of confrontation between liberals and conservatives

# A Latin American Tradition

## University reform movements

- From Córdoba, 1918 to Dominican Republic, 1965
  - Autonomy
  - University involvement in politics, for societal change, justice and democracy
  - Alliances with workers' unions and peasant organizations
  - Latin Americanism, antiimperialism, anti-US
  - Free teaching, pluralism and academic freedom
  - University extension (commitment to society)
  - Co-governance (students, faculty, alumni)
  - Selection of faculty through competitive examinations

# A Latin American Tradition

## The State Building University

- In the context of developmentalist national projects in Latin America, from 1920's to 1970's, national universities were fundamental in:
  - creation of cultural and material conditions for the construction, expansion and consolidation of nation States
  - design, organization and integration of new State institutions
  - intellectual and social legitimation of the State
  - vehicles for urbanization and industrialization in the transition from agrarian societies
  - central role in State's development projects
  - dominant in teaching and research activities within their countries
  - Upward social mobility

# From nations to markets

## LA universities material and identity crises

- Economization, privatization and marketization of society
- The crisis of LA developmentalism (1970's and 1980's)
- Modernization policies for higher education
  - Institutional and financial diversification
  - Strategic planning
  - Managerialism
  - The central role of evaluation and assessment
  - Market orientation and market policies
- Financial hardship and identity crises
- A new hegemony: the US elite research university
- Resistance and critiques
  - Student struggles
  - Regional Conferences of Higher Education: “public social good, universal human right and State obligation

# Higher Education in Latin America

## Historical obstacles and challenges

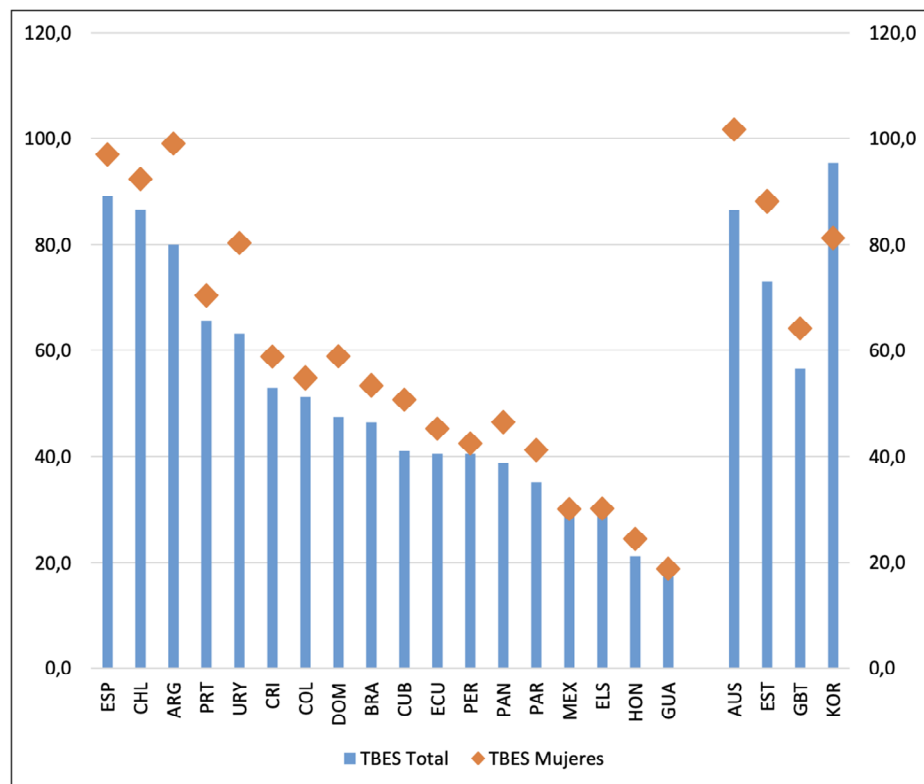
- Latin American higher education enrollments vary by countries from 35 to 90 percent of the age group (46% average).
- Most highly privatized region (48%)
- Access is highly stratified by income, profound inequalities
- Student struggles for access and tuition free HE have been a constant
- More recently, national systems and institutions (Argentina, Chile, Honduras and Mexico among others) have been sites of strong women mobilization for gender equality and against gender violence

# Higher Education in Latin America

## COVID-19 Crisis

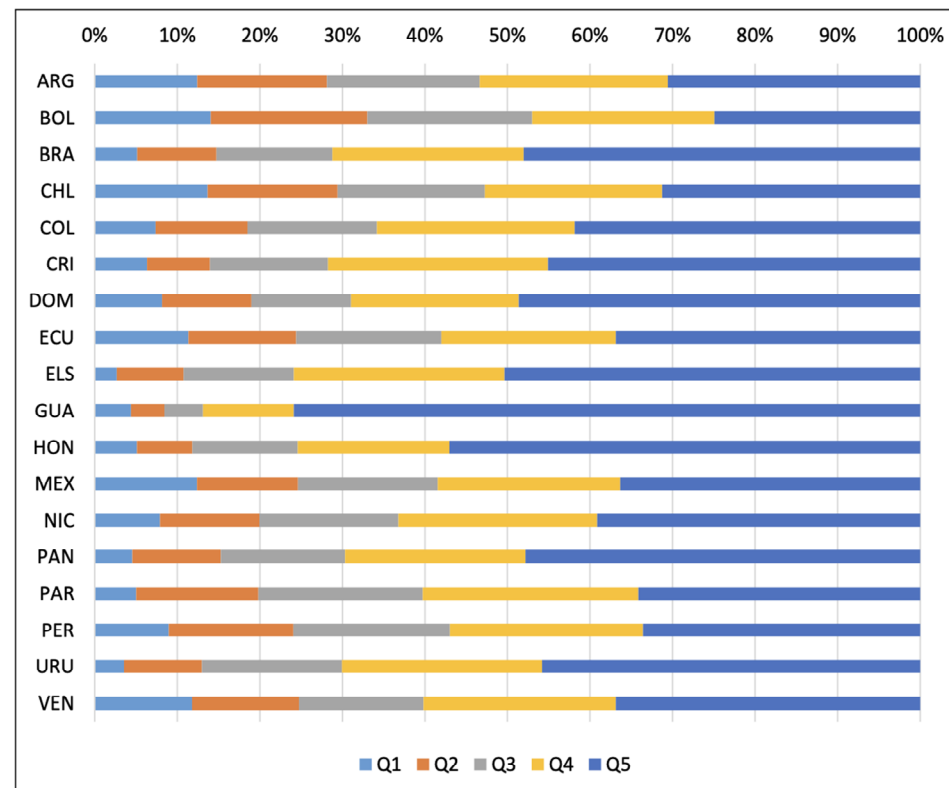
- Pre-existing tensions and ongoing social conflicts, endemic to higher education now compounded by challenges posed by COVID-19
- Most salient are increased socioeconomic and gender inequalities:
  - HE in LA has switched to online distance education
  - Only 50% of homes have access to internet
  - Student attrition
  - Female students and faculty are over charged by home chores, child care and home schooling
- Higher education financing
  - Institutions: income reduction and cost increases
  - National systems: fiscal restrictions and augmented support for students
- Female student movements cut short by confinement
- Increased centralization and authoritarianism

### Gross national enrollments by country 2014 total and female



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre 2016.

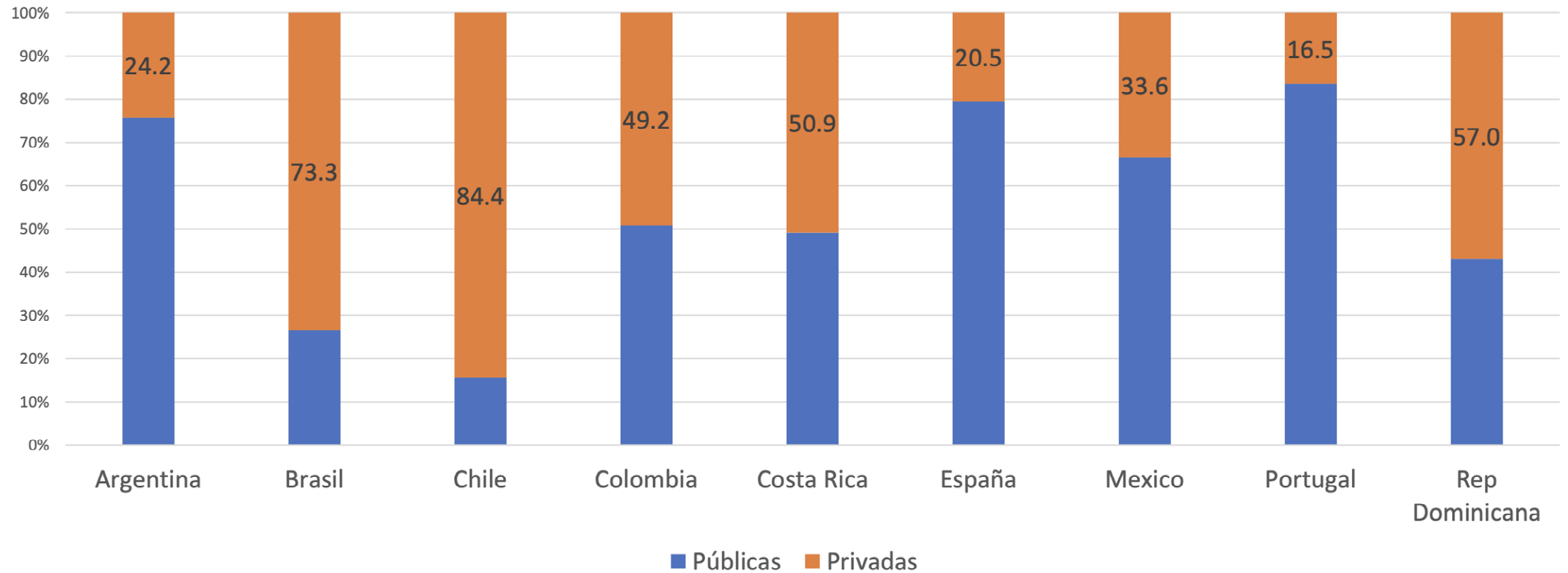
### Enrollment percentage by income quintile 2014



Source: Base de Datos Socioeconómicos para América Latina y el Caribe (SEDLAC), 2016.



Public and private enrollement percentages, 2017  
Average for LA 48%



# Latin American Universities

## Future paths

- Repoliticization of the university
- Comitemnt to society
- Increased autonomy
- Democratization
- Gender equality
- Universal access
- Public funding and free higher education