

Application Early Career Scholars' Research Fund

### **The Developmentalist Origins of the Colombian “Neo-Liberal” Technocracy**

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The study of the causes of underdevelopment and the pursuit of economic development dominated the agenda of economists and policymakers in mid-twentieth century Latin America. Colombia did not escape the élan of developmentalism in the region. Like its regional counterparts, the Colombian state implemented import-substitution industrialization policies. Colombia was also the first country to receive a World Bank Development mission. Alongside Chile, Colombia was one of the “showcases” of the Alliance for Progress, an inter-American development cooperation initiative. With headquarters in Santiago, Chile, the staff of the Economic Commission of Latin America (CEPAL), the institutional anchor of a regional development consensus, was also vying for influence among Colombian economists. Many influential political figures and economists forged close links with *cepalinos* and tried to implement *cepalino*-inspired development plans and policies but the influence of *cepalinos* in the creation of a technocratic elite in the country is still ignored or dismissed. Like in the rest of the region, developmentalism created the space for economists within the state. Yet, despite their formation as a cohort in development institutions, Colombian economists did not recognize themselves as developmentalists, and even less so, as *cepalinos*. Instead of development, they privileged macroeconomic stability, a turn that regional economists would only come to embrace and herald at the turn of the century. Contrary to *cepalinos* emphasis on ideas for and from Latin America, Colombian economists privileged foreign training.

Commonly referred to as “pragmatic” by its members and “neoliberal” by its critics, the Colombian technocracy has an exceptional story in relation to the rest of the region. This collaborative project aims at looking at the developmentalist origins of the Colombian technocracy and establish the heretofore uncharted influence of *cepalinos* in Colombia. From the 1940s to the 1990s, this project will trace the alternative path of Colombian economists’ ascent to power, examining the competing regional and international networks that they belonged in an effort to explain another of Colombia’s exceptionalism. Using archival sources as well as oral interviews in Colombia and abroad, the paper will examine the comparatively late process of professionalization of economics in Colombia, the changing relations between economists and both the state and the private sector, and the influence of *cepalinos* and their ideas in the country. The project will assess the impact of *cepalinos* and their ideas in the formation of the Colombian technocracy in the following four areas: planning boards and formulation of development plans, agrarian reform, exchange reform, and regional market integration.

In order to complete this project, I need to do archival research in Colombia and Chile and meet with my collaborators in Bogota. We will consult the personal archive of Carlos Lleras Restrepo, minister of the Economy and Colombian president who was fundamental in promising developmentalism in Colombia, and the collections of the national planning institute, the Minister of the Economy, and the Foreign Affairs ministry at the national archive in Bogota as well as the archives of the Institute of Agrarian Reform. In Chile, I will consult the archive and library of CEPAL as well as the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. I will need support for air transportation to Bogotá (\$700). I have secured support for transportation to Chile through a small research grant from my home institution but I need support for accommodation in Santiago for three weeks (\$800).