

Economic and Political Freedom among the Latin American Members of the Mont Pelerin Society,  
1947-2001

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Scholarship on Latin American neoliberalism -or modern liberalism- has offered important contributions to understanding its origin, diffusion, implementation, and consequences. Still, there are two major gaps that I intend to address. First, I include the overlooked role of horizontal networks among Latin American elites to foster this philosophy, beyond commonly emphasized national (Díaz Arias, 2021; Gárate, 2014; Morresi, 2008; Romero Sotelo, 2016) and North-South connections (Caldwell & Montes, 2015; Onofre, 2014; Valdés, 1995). In my account, modern liberalism in the region was not mere result of global north agency, but rather a collaborative project that included an active interregional community. Second, I address the relationship between political (democracy) and economic freedom (capitalism) among Latin American liberals throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, I discuss a critical narrative that sees an inherent opposition between neoliberalism and democracy (Brown, 2003; MacLean, 2023; Madariaga, 2020), and a liberal view that sustains a complementarity between capitalism and liberal democracy (Berger, 1992; Fukuyama, 1989; Sartori, 1991). Instead, I argue that democracy in the region was an unstable concept -even nowadays-, and that market-oriented elites aimed to re-define it using democratic, populist or undemocratic means depending on personal, national, regional, and global contexts.

My doctoral dissertation goal is to provide a transnational intellectual assessment of the philosophy's origin and evolution, testing the assumption that democracy and neoliberalism inherently contradict each other. I will do so by examining the ideas on democracy and networks of five Latin American members of the Mont Pelerin Society between 1947 and 2001. These individuals, hailing from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, and Venezuela, championed liberal reforms inspired by their local traditions along with the Austrian, Chicago, Public Choice and Ordoliberal schools. They catalyzed local intellectual communities through their involvement in political parties, think tanks, universities, and magazines. An influential group of thinkers on the liberal spectrum in the region, these intellectuals represent an unstudied yet relevant transnational community with high impact in their countries and important connections worldwide.

This project's academic relevance rests on three elements. First, it widens the analytical scope of Latin American modern liberalism by incorporating a transnational dimension beyond isolated national and North-South narratives, revealing its polycentric nature. Second, the project traces the evolution of this philosophy through different contexts from 1947 to 2001, transcending traditional synchronic narratives mostly focus on the authoritarian age of the Washington consensus. Finally, it critically engages with the tension between freedom and democracy, offering a conceptual analysis that emphasizes democracy as a contested concept that this group aimed to re-define.

My research draws on archival material from MPS members and related institutions from Latin America, Europe, and North America. I have collected sources from the Pedro Ibáñez papers, first Chilean MPS member, at the Adolfo Ibáñez University; and the Manuel Ayau papers, Guatemalan president of the MPS, at the Francisco Marroquín University. I will consult the Mont Pelerin Society,

Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman records at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University between October 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024, thanks to a fellowship granted by the Hoover Institution and my doctoral program.

Still, I lack of Brazilian primary sources -correspondence, speeches, columns- and some secondary literature -not available in Berlin- that would allow me to provide broader interpretation for Latin America. Without these material, I would continue the gap between Hispanic and Luso America in the understanding of this philosophy in the region. Specifically, I need to consult the Eugenio Gudín and Paulo Ayres papers at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro. Both actors were members of the Mont Pelerin Society in Brazil, active promoters of market-oriented ideas in their country, and key figures within the Latin American liberal community. While Gudín participated in the Brazilian government as Minister of Economy (1954-1955), Ayres Founded IPES a major neoliberal think tank during the 1960s. Although there are an interesting literature on their ideas in Portuguese, my project will contribute a transnational intellectual perspective of their role.

Next 2025, I intend to complete my archival work in South America with a trip to Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. Luckily, a DAAD grant has provided me the funding for my aerial transportation from Berlin to Santiago de Chile. Additionally, I will apply to Erasmus Mobility and a SCRIPTS research grant -from my doctoral program- to visit Argentina and Chile. Still, I need support to cover my accommodation in Rio de Janeiro for one month (US\$1.000), and to travel from Santiago de Chile to Brazil (US\$500).

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