

Interinstitutional Cooperation in Authoritarian Times: The Ford Foundation and the Development of Autonomous Research Centers in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (1969–1990)

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During my three-week stay at the Rockefeller Archive Center in September 2015 I made substantial progress on my research on three independent academic centers in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. The main purpose of my research was to document and analyze the financial support these centers received from the Ford Foundation in the 1970s and 1980s. The three centers are the CEDES in Argentina, the CEBRAP in Brazil, and the CIEPLAN in Chile. Thanks to RAC Archivist Lucas Buresch, I was able to access an important set of documents that will allow me to clarify, in forthcoming publications, one of the most interesting episodes in the recent history of Latin American political and social sciences in the context of dictatorial regimes.¹ In that period of severe academic and institutional restrictions (universities intervened, schools shut down, academics fleeing into exile), the Ford Foundation's aid and protection helped to promote collaboration between these Latin American research centers, and was essential to their functioning.

The assistance of this philanthropic institution had already been decisive for the development of the political and social sciences in Latin America. Along with the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation has played a key role in supporting public and private academic institutions throughout the region. Ford started its Latin American Program in the late 1950s in the context of the Cold War and in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. The Latin American Program served as a diplomatic instrument that supplanted the policies of economic, technical, and scientific assistance that the United States offered for the region under the Alliance for Progress (Gabay, Morales, & Navarro, 2013).

The Ford Foundation's support for the development of political and social sciences continued in the context of authoritarian rule in the Southern Cone. The Foundation believed it essential to preserve the autonomy and freedom of the several private academic centers it was funding. My work at the RAC enabled me to hypothesize that private foundations from the world academic center, such as the Ford Foundation, should not only be seen as agents of the political

domination of the periphery and of its academic dependence (Berman, 1983). I suggest, instead, that the channels of communication and protection between CEBRAP, CEDES, and CIEPLAN, which were established by the Ford Foundation's agents and intermediaries, made it possible for Latin American scholars to carry out research projects and joint publications that contributed to strengthening the independence of the Latin American social scientist in a complex and difficult situation.

More specifically, I have been able to establish a link between these academic centers and their first directors—Fernando H. Cardoso of CEBRAP, Alejandro Foxley of CIEPLAN, and Guillermo O' Donnell of CEDES—with some of the Ford Foundation's most important officers in Latin America, including David E. Bell, Peter D. Bell, William Carmichael, Abraham Lowenthal, Nita Manitzas, Jeffrey Puryear, Richard W. Dye or Kalman Silvert. The correspondence, files, and reports I consulted demonstrated some of the interactions maintained by Cardoso, Foxley, and O'Donnell with these “academic diplomats.” They established fruitful collaborations that allowed them to lay the foundations for a circuit of interinstitutional cooperation.

Two theoretical anchors help us to understand the actions and practices of Ford Foundation officers in Latin America: the interrelated concepts of “academic diplomacy” and “academic diplomats,” on the one hand, and the concept of “circuit,” on the other. I define “academic diplomacy” as the set of activities developed by the Ford Foundation to articulate its relationships with regional academic institutions and to evaluate the use of the funds it donated for the promotion of scientific and research activity (the grant documents allude to these evaluations). By “academic diplomats,” I mean the agents that the Ford Foundation sent to promote and evaluate international academic cooperation relations. Studying the available documents and tracing the itineraries of these diplomats reveals their skills, expertise, and mediating practices.²

These two concepts are analytical complementaries to the concept of “circuit” (Beigel, 2010; Cornu & Gérard, 2015) is an essential analytical tool in my research observing the movement of knowledge and the mobility of people. I understand “circuit” as the network in which cooperative, intellectual, and personal relations are established between two or more institutions—in my case, these three independent academic centers and the Ford Foundation. The concept of circuit is also useful for understanding how spaces of reciprocal collaboration, research, and protection are generated at the same time that channels of communication and information between institutions and their social scientists are formed, each having simultaneous derivations and interrelationships with other national and international institutions. The concept of circuit, finally, also allows one to observe how the interests and content of this inter-American network changed over time. While this network at first limited itself to carrying out intellectual exchanges, in time, it would enable these academic centers to participate in the democratic transitions of their respective countries.

The Ford Foundation was an institution that invested in concepts of talent, training, exchange, and networking, particularly in the case of Latin America. The Foundation considered establishing contacts between its officers and the academics it funded to be an important goal for this part of the world (Bell, 1971). This perspective was closely related to the wide experience and knowledge of the region possessed by Kalman Silvert, who served as Advisor to the Ford Foundation Latin American Program from 1967 until his death in 1976 (Morse, 1977).³ This same perspective would continue during these years for the agents of this philanthropic institution, who supported and recommended in their reports the funding to the academic centers directed by Fernando H. Cardoso, Alejandro Foxley and Guillermo O’Donnell.

The documentation I consulted allowed me to verify the important role played by David E. Bell and William Carmichael in the itinerary of Fernando H. Cardoso. They managed the Ford Foundation grant that supported the creation of the

Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP) in Sao Paulo in September 1969.⁴ CEBRAP was created as a “private, nonprofit, interdisciplinary and specialized technical assistance in the field of social sciences research.”⁵ This academic center gathered a group of important Brazilian social scientists, including Octavio Ianni, Juarez Brandao Lopes, Paulo Singer, Francisco Weffort, Elza and Jose Arthur Giannotti Berquo. Fernando H. Cardoso was the first director of this institution.

CEBRAP opened the way forward for two other academic centers funded by the Ford Foundation: CEDES and CIEPLAN. The Ford Foundation considered it useful to follow the “CEBRAP model” to enable Latin American social scientists to stay in their countries, avoiding the need for exile. The aim was for these scholars to continue their intellectual and research tasks in their countries despite the restrictions imposed by the military dictatorships.

Latin American Program officials initially had certain doubts about the support of private academic centers in a context of authoritarianism. This opinion is visible in a letter sent by John Nagel to David E. Bell on August 27, 1970:

We have said that we don't view support for CEBRAP in the first instance as an institution-building undertaking, though it may well be that Brazil will indeed find itself with a first-rate private social science research agency as a result of our endeavors. We are certainly not attempting to build another Di Tella Institute. We do view the grant as supportive entirely of research and advanced training of competent individuals and believe we should not permit ourselves to slide into a set of criteria for evaluation which were not, in truth, our original motivation. In Silvert's words, “we should not fall in love with an institution” which, should the Brazilian University situation become normalized, probably should not continue to exist. But if CEBRAP's autonomous life should seem desirable at some future time for reasons we do not as yet know, we do think we should remain prepared to think freshly about its fate.⁶

Despite these initial doubts, however, CEPRAP ended up becoming, as Fernando H. Cardoso recalled, “a model for some of these centers. A model of intellectual resistance against authoritarian regimes” (Cardoso, 2009, p. 35). Yet the institution also served other independent academic centers in the region as a model of an interdisciplinary team dedicated to empirical research, to planning, and to the provision of scientific and technical advice. CEBRAP also assumed an influence in the public debate linked to “the complex tasks of development through modern forms of mass culture.”⁷

In light of the success and stability achieved by CEBRAP, Kalman Silvert put the Ford Foundation in contact with Guillermo O’Donnell in order to fund and launch a similar institution in Argentina, the Center for the Study of State and Society (CEDES) in Buenos Aires in July 1975 (O’Donnell, 2007). The efforts of David E. Bell, Abraham Lowenthal, and Nitas Maniztas, as Responsible Program Officer, in recommending a grant to the CEDES, were also very important. It is pertinent to note here the Ford Foundation officers’ vision of the need to preserve the careers of these social scientists given the political instability in Argentina and in the Southern Cone. The grant request set down guidelines for “the new undertakings” that included:

- (1) attempting to preserve within the subregion at least part of the existing pool of talent (much of it trained by the Foundation), (2) helping a few of the best social scientists in the Southern Cone to analyze critically the problems and trajectories of their nations’ societies and place them in a regional perspective, and (3) providing training opportunities for particularly promising younger social scientists in preparation for “a better day.”⁸

The aim of the Ford Foundation in funding CEDES was precisely to support and give opportunities to a group of young Argentine social scientists in order to

enable them to continue their research and academic development. This academic center began as “a civil non-profit organization” dedicated to research, theoretical reflection, and technical assistance. Its origins “are in the Center for Research in Public Administration (CIAP),” constituted in 1968 as the independent center Torcuato Di Tella Institute, which also received grants from the Ford Foundation.⁹ CIAP developed an active program of empirical and theoretical research until December 1974, when it withdrew from the Di Tella Institute. Its researchers, being barred from employment at the University of Buenos Aires, were looking for other ways to continue their careers in Argentina. The original CEDES group included Adolfo Canitrot, Marcelo Cavarozzi, Roberto Frenkel, Oscar Landi, and Oscar Oszlak, with O’Donnell as its first director.

The history of the Economic Research Corporation for Latin America (CIEPLAN) is similar. This institution had its origins in the Center of Studies and National Planning (CEPLAN), an institution created in 1970 in the Faculty of Economics at the Catholic University and which the Ford Foundation also supported. A group of young economists and intellectuals decided to establish themselves in the context of the intervention of the military government and the dominant position that the Chicago Boys and the “gremialista” movement had acquired in this university (Brunner & Barrios, 1987, p. 135; Silva, 1991, pp. 402–403). Jeffrey Puryear described this situation in the grant request: “CEPLAN staff members made plans to develop an alternative institutional base in order to protect their long-term stability and to maintain their program of critical and independent research.”¹⁰

The Ford Foundation’s donations and Peter D. Bell and Jeffrey Puryear’s efforts enabled these young economists and social scientists to create a new independent academic center where they could maintain their autonomy and independence during the years of the military dictatorship (Meller & Walker, 2007, p. 2). CIEPLAN began to function in Santiago de Chile in 1976 as “a private non-profit institution” dedicated mainly to economic and social research (Lladser, 1986, p.

131). Headed by Alejandro Foxley, the CIEPLAN's initial group consisted of José Arellano, René Cortázar Sanz, Ricardo French Davis, and Patricio Meller.

These Latin American academic centers shared the financial and economic support of the Ford Foundation that was vital for their survival in a context of authoritarian pressure. They also shared other features and similarities in their origins, in their functioning, in their strategy of opposition to the military dictatorships, and in their vision of a project for an alternative society. The centers ensured a new institutional framework able to provide career opportunities and an environment of academic autonomy in a complicated context characterized by the political purges of universities and increasingly narrow academic and professional fields (Brunner & Barrios, 1987).

Peter D. Bell wrote a report entitled “The Aftermath of the Military Coup in Chile” that reflected the Ford Foundation's concerns following the coup d'état of September 11, 1973. The Foundation assumed its commitment of aid and protection to Latin American social scientists after this event.¹¹ Foreign funding and donations from the Ford Foundation acted as an umbrella to protect these centers from the threats and the repressions of the dictatorships. In that sense, the personal engagement and the intellectual ascent of Albert O. Hirschman, advisor to the Ford Foundation in 1976–1979 and again in 1982, were very important. Hirschman was interested, however, in linking, and strengthening CEBRAP, CEDES, and CIEPLAN through the formation of international committees. This solution served as a sort of shield and resistance against the threats of the dictatorships. It was no coincidence that Hirschman was a member of the committees of these academic centers—committees in which the names of Cardoso, Foxley and O'Donnell were also intertwined.

The aim of the international committees was to organize internal opposition to the military regimes, to protect the social scientists, and to avoid the need for them to go into exile. In his role as advisor to the Ford Foundation and to its

president, McGeorge Bundy, Hirschman recommended that the Latin American program maintain an optimistic outlook and support democratic tendencies, despite the difficult context (Adelman, 2011; 2013). He had made the case for connecting democracy and socioeconomic development in his 1971 essay *A Bias for Hope: Essays on Development and Latin America*. The message of this great social scientist had a great impact on the academic elite of the Southern Cone and served as a source of inspiration for the public activities of Cardoso, Foxley, and O'Donnell—as well as for many other Latin American intellectuals—in favor of a return to democracy in their respective countries.¹²

But also this association of academic centers funded by the Ford Foundation followed a clear strategy of internationalization and of irradiation towards the exterior starting a regional and international “cooperative model of projects.” This strategy gave them so much protection against the military dictatorships as granted them “academic visibility and professional recognition” (Brunner & Barrios, 1987, p. 132). The way of acting of CEBRAP, CEDES and CIEPLAN was, in many occasions, through the collaborative networking and communicating vessels between them. These academic centers benefited from a continuous exchange of knowledge, scientific information and professional experiences and policies lived in each country. Something like a “partnership” was established from those intellectual and personal ties between the members of these academic centers and thanks to the international intermediaries of the Ford Foundation.

One of the most representative and important collaborative projects of those years was “Policy of Economic Normalization in contemporary regimes of the Southern Cone of Latin America: Study of the cases of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay,” directed by Guillermo O'Donnell. This project brought together researchers from CEBRAP, CEDES and CIEPLAN. Later the Center for Economic Researchs (CINVE), and the Center of Information and Studies of Uruguay (CIESU), were associated to the project. In addition these academic centers of Montevideo also received grants from the Ford Foundation in their origins.¹³ This

project, developed between 1977 and 1982, provided, despite the difficulties, academic mobility, meetings and the development of joint ventures, always important to establish epistemic communities or to articulate interactions of academic or scientific cooperation.

More specifically, this project analyzed the political and economic aspects of the normalization plans applied in those countries by the military dictatorships. National and comparative studies were realized between the countries. There was a collaboration between interdisciplinary teams of economists, sociologists and political scientists. But in addition with this research these academic centers wanted, where possible, to influence in the public regional debate through the publication of various working papers. Among the documents prepared in relation to this project include titles like the following ones: “Stabilization policies and social behaviors. The Chilean experience 1973–1978,” elaborated by Tomás Moulian and Pilar Vergara, August 1979; “The transformations of the Chilean State under the military regime,” by Pilar Vergara, March 1980; “Inflation with recession. The experiences of Brazil and Chile” and “Stabilization policies and their effects on employment and income distribution. A Latin American perspective,” both by Alejandro Foxley and both from the year 1979; or “Normalization policies. Elements for a synthesis,” document prepared by Guillermo O'Donnell and dated in May 1980.¹⁴

The academic networks of this circuit were a part of an intellectual and collective effort of notable intensity, focused in the discussion, in the debate, but especially destined to strengthen and to consolidate this small academic autonomy conquered from the dictatorships. While over time, and as there were changing the social and political conditions of these countries, this academic autonomy, that in a first moment was an economic specialized critique, was orientated increasingly towards a political critique. Really, institutional and personal links between some of the social scientists selected in my research, as Fernando H. Cardoso, Alejandro Foxley or Guillermo O'Donnell and some academic diplomats

from the Ford Foundation, initially responded to academic and intellectual pursuits. But these academic exchanges ended later to support a political commitment that crossed the academic area and eventually penetrated in the field of the public life.

Thanks to all the documents I was able to consult and compile during my stay at the Rockefeller Archive Center, the study of the Ford Foundation and its academic diplomats in Latin America in establishing communication channels between CEBRAP, CEDES and CIEPLAN and their Inter-American links, far from being an exhausted topic, is a line of research that still needs further explorations beyond this preliminary work. It is necessary, undoubtedly, a more original biographical, intertwined and historical perspective on these facts, on this academic elite and the links that it established. I just hope to contribute in next works with the analysis and the understanding of these cross-linkings, which cross ideas, institutions, paths and times. The aim will be to make a more complete understanding of the role played by these independent academic centers in the process of democratic transition in Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

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¹ My current research is part of a wave of recent work by young academics from Latin America who are studying the history of the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation support for the development of the Latin American social and political sciences. I would highlight in particular the work of Álvaro Morcillo Laiz (2013), Diego Pereyra (2006), and Fernando Quesada (2013), each of whom also benefited from the Rockefeller Archive Center Grant Awards.

² I must indicate the important influence of the book of Jeffrey Puryear (1994) in my perspective on the role of the Ford Foundation agents as “academic diplomats” and as mediators between the world of the politics and the world of the academia.

³ Silvert had obtained the Penfield Fellowship in 1947 to develop research on Chilean industry. He was then a visiting professor at the University of Buenos Aires in the 1950s. Beside being an agent of the Ford Foundation in Latin America, he was a great promoter of the education and research of the Latin American studies in the United States and served as the first president of the Latin American Studies Association (Adams, 2006; Quesada, 2010).

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- ⁴ “Support for Social Science Research at the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP),” grant 06900644, reel numbers 2822; 2823; 3119; 5490; Ford Foundation Records (hereafter FFR), Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter RAC).
- ⁵ “CEBRAP. Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento,” Institutional Documents, n.d, p. 3.
- ⁶ John S. Nagel to David E. Bell, August 27, 1970, in “Support for Social Science Research at the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP),” grant 06900644, reel 2822, FFR, RAC.
- ⁷ “CEBRAP,” p. 3.
- ⁸ Request No. ID-2357, August 11, 1975, p. 4, in “Partial Support for CEDES’ Research and Publications Activities,” grant 07500550, reel 2851, FFR, RAC.
- ⁹ “Reseña de Actividades,” CEDES, Buenos Aires, 1977, p. 1.
- ¹⁰ Request No. ID-2976, July 24, 1978, p. 4, in “Support for Research in Economic and Social Policy Issues,” grant 07600290, reel 4269, FFR, RAC.
- ¹¹ Peter D. Bell, “The Aftermath of the Military Coup in Chile,” 1973, report 010668, box 430, FFR, RAC. On the repercussions of the military dictatorships in the work of the Latin American social scientists and on the programs of exiles’ relocation, see Bayle (2008).
- ¹² An example of Hirschman’s intellectual influence in these Latin American authors is the book compiled by Foxley and O’Donnell (1989).
- ¹³ “Reseña de Actividades,” CEDES, Buenos Aires, 1980, p. 25.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26 and 38.