

To the Mitteleuropa Stiftung,

My name is Leandro Montes Ruiz, and I am a first-year student of the MA in international Relations/Political Science at the IHEID. Like many other students, I have been honored to be awarded a Mitteleuropa Stiftung Scholarship at the Institute, which has made it possible for me to have concluded the first of out this wonderful two-year journey.

Over the last year, I had the chance of taking classes with Professor Jean François Bayart, a point of reference in (my) academic world ever since I was an undergraduate student, and as of now I have had the privilege of having two classes with him: *Sociologie Historique et comparée du Politique*, and *Réligion et Politique en Afrique*. On top of the intellectual breadth of his reflections, working with him has allowed me to start conducting research on Political Sociology, the field I am most inclined to work with, and one where there is simply not enough expertise in academic institutions back home. Simultaneously, and for the same reasons, I have also enjoyed working with Anna Leander for both, *Qualitative Methods and Practices of World Politics*, which have significantly sharpened my critical and reflexive skills as a researcher, while also providing for tools on grounding and going about research projects.

I have also enjoyed taking part in discussions that I was not fully involved with now in the context of academia. Over the course of my Gender and International Relations class, with Professor Elisabeth Prugl, I worked on a research paper on the FARC and the gendered implications of the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration processes in Colombia in the political scenery of the country. I am, as of now, working with the Gender Centre in turning that paper into a research brief that will be posted on the Gender Centre's website. Additionally, I also had the pleasure, over the context of the Political Science Colloquium Series, to have witnessed a presentation by Emanuel Adler on an upcoming book project. Adler, a compatriot of mine, is a world-renowned International Relations theorist and a great source of personal inspiration in the academic world.

As of now, I am working towards crafting a thesis project for my Master's dissertation, which I am planning to do over the context of Mobilization of expert knowledge in politically disputed areas, as a way to neutralize political debate. Although the details are yet to be laid out, Prof. Anabelle Littoz-Monnet is a leading scholar in the field of Expertise in International governance, and I am sure she will be able to help provide me with a robust guidance when it comes to deploying some of the theoretical frameworks she has worked with for so long in order to interpret the Latin American context. I am confident that my two years at the institute will train me as a scholar in ways that help me contribute towards generating knowledge about Latin America for both, Latin American and foreign audiences, thanks to the different regional and theoretical insights I have gained over the course of my studies, first in the United States, and now at the IHEID.

As a student from a working-class background in Montevideo, I have always relied on my academic merit and on scholarships in order to pursue an international education that I can use to the benefit of my country and my region. I thank the Mitteleuropa Stiftung for its commitment and generosity towards my education, and in exchange, I promise not only to

excel in my studies, but to make every possible effort so that their investment is not simply about myself, but about what I can do as a person for those like me, and those around me.

Cordially,

Leandro Gabriel Montes Ruiz