THE QUEST FOR MATERIAL PROGRESS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

COLOMBIA 1840S-1900S

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THE QUEST FOR MATERIAL PROGRESS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

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Abstract

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Historians have often framed the historiography of nineteenth-century Colombia around relatively homogeneous, identifiable groups and their ideological struggles, labeling them accordingly after the foundation of the Liberal and Conservative parties in 1849. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, factionalism rather than consistency characterized these groups’ members and politics, particularly the Liberal party. Thus, although the way Colombians conceived of progress was to some extent linked with ideological principles, the traditional conservative-liberal dichotomy does not work to circumscribe a group of scattered Colombians looking for models of material progress in a global perspective. To a degree, simple references to the classic Liberal–Conservative dichotomy serves to obscure more than it reveals about how Colombians and Latin Americans overall thought in the nineteenth century. This dissertation examines a large body of knowledge about other Latin American countries that many Colombian intellectuals, politicians, and entrepreneurs circulated during the second half
of the nineteenth century. Due to the brokerage role this group of people sought to play in Colombia, I refer to them as Colombia’s “progress brokers.” Some of them, openly admirers of the United States’ and Europe’s developments, resolutely argued that neither the United States nor Europe provided an appropriate model to follow. I argue that Colombian progress brokers sought models of material and intellectual progress from among other Latin American countries between the 1840s and the 1900s, an issue largely ignored in the historiography on Colombia and on Latin America in general.
To Ana, with love
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The current Republic of Colombia had different names during the nineteenth century—the Republic of Colombia, also known as Gran Colombia, which contained modern Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela (1819-1831); New Granada (1831-1858); the Granadine Confederation (1858-1863); the Republic of the United States of Colombia (1863-1886); and the Republic of Colombia (since 1886). For the sake of clarity, Colombia and Colombians rather than any other name will be used wherever possible. Likewise, Latin America and Latin Americans rather than any other label will be used to describe both the territory and the people that stemmed from the former Spanish colonies.
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION: LOOKING FOR APPROPRIATE MODELS OF MATERIAL PROGRESS IN LATIN AMERICA, 1840S-1900S

1.1 Introduction

The nineteenth century epitomizes an era of Latin Americans striving for political as well as economic independence, the latter seen as material progress, or economic growth. Many Latin Americans understood “material progress” as manifest in what they saw emerging in the industrializing societies of the North Atlantic, in modern cities, factories, railroads, ports, trade, wealth, goods, and profit-making enterprises.¹ Scholars have “defined” progress in nineteenth-century Latin America along the same lines. Mauricio Tenorio refers to it as “the emergence of modern, industrial, and capitalist progress,” Frank Safford as a “project of economic Europeanization,” and Edward Beatty as the aspirations for “the knowledge, skills, labor, tools and capital” that would allow countries like Mexico create national wealth.² The word “progress” would become a


² Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, Mexico at the World’s Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation, New Historicism ; 35 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1; Frank Safford, “Race, Integration, and Progress: Elite Attitudes and the Indian in Colombia, 1750-1870,” The Hispanic American Historical
commonplace concept in nineteenth-century Latin America, but it would simultaneously become an eloquent expression of the way peoples measured their place in the world.³

Following independence from Spain in 1819, many Colombians and Latin Americans believed that material progress would bloom spontaneously by simply imitating North Atlantic models. Among the institutions, policies, and practices that Latin Americans sought to copy, the United States’ constitution was their primarily model. But many contemporaries would soon realize that they were mistaken. Some intellectuals and politicians would take up the banner of a more realistic understanding of progress, as well as of more pragmatic ways to achieve it in Colombia. They firmly believed and sought to prove that models of material and intellectual progress ought to be appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances. In the minds of these observers, Latin American conditions differed from Europe and the U.S. not only in historical processes but also in religion and values. “Democracy, the absolute freedom of the press, of assembly and even of action is the foundation of those inimitable institutions of the United States,” said El Pasatiempo in 1853.⁴ “If this principle of liberty is based on the Anglican liberties and the Saxon language and race,” they asked, “how could they be the foundation of the social and political institutions of the Hispanic American Republics, whose social base,


⁴ “Cual es la situación actual de las repúblicas del Centro y del Sud-América,” El Pasatiempo, August 31, 1853, 111. Throughout the dissertation, the translations of Spanish and French materials are mine unless otherwise indicated.
embodied in customs, in traditions and [...] in the very veins of the people, is Catholic authority and the Greco-Latin race?”⁵ As these newspaper editors alleged, many Latin American intellectuals and politicians came to believe that the principle of European and Anglo-American institutions resided “in the customs and traditions of the people, not in the abstract and speculative virtue of the institutions themselves.”⁶

Although governments like persons often seek to draw models from more experienced counterparts, many Colombian intellectuals eventually came to believe that the only suitable models were those more readily adaptable to local conditions. In fact, they sought to help their contemporaries comprehend that it was one thing to desire the material progress and comfort that many people and nations in the North Atlantic were increasingly enjoying, but it was another thing entirely to believe naively that reaching higher standards of living was as simple as imitating alien government systems, constitutions, and institutions. Due to the brokerage role this group of intellectuals and politicians sought to play in Colombia, I refer to them as Colombia’s “progress brokers.” Some of them, openly admirers of the United States’ and Europe’s developments, resolutely argued that neither the United States nor Europe provided an appropriate model to follow. The editors of the Colombian periodical El Día stated it as early as 1849, affirming that “we are opposed to blind imitations of the uses of the European nations [because] experience has taught us that it is costly to copy slavishly some

⁵ “Cual es la situación actual de las repúblicas del Centro y del Sud-América,” 111.

⁶ “Cual es la situación actual de las repúblicas del Centro y del Sud-América,” 111.
practices of countries much more advanced in civilization.” Moreover, the Colombian newspaper *El Pasatiempo* stated in 1853 that fostering U.S. institutions was to “imitate the inimitable,” and that turning “its eyes to that Europe […] has surely been the most disastrous influence in [Hispanic] America because the European monarchical governments could never serve as a model and the systems of European ideologues should never serve as guidance.” Decades later, the same conviction prevailed. In 1901, the editorial board of the Colombian newspaper *La Opinión* stated that “we could not wish to enjoy stable peace and progress in the first years [after independence] having been so tempestuous the school in which we learned freedom. Neither the slavery nor the horror of a ferocious war could have given us the model. […] Neither could the model for us be the American Union, which was born to independent life already in the almost politically perfect form.” Hence, how might Colombia pursue material progress if the existing North Atlantic models were not appropriate?

Colombian progress brokers believed that progress was neither automatic nor achievable through a rigidly linear path towards the examples set by the North Atlantic, as many nineteenth-century positivists implied. In fact, many Latin American

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8 “Cual es la situación actual de las repúblicas del Centro y del Sud-América,” 111.


positivists believed that, to reach higher levels of civilization, Latin Americans ought to be de-Latinized, implying a necessity to acquire the blood and the minds of people from Europe and the United States, which in their view embodied the pure expression of civilization.\(^{11}\) Instead, Colombia’s progress brokers believed that paths to progress could be more elastic and regionally varied. They shared with some Latin American positivists the expectation of a gradual evolution towards material and intellectual improvement, and they barely challenged racist assumptions so common in nineteenth-century positivism. But progress brokers considered a wider spectrum of means and models to follow. Colombia’s progress brokers were predominantly pragmatic people, and looked for models of material progress appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances in neighboring Latin America rather than in Europe and the United States exclusively. Examples of this have been drawn by historians analyzing the evolution of Latin American liberalism.\(^{12}\) For instance, rather than simply imitating, influential liberals like the Chilean Victoriano Lastarria and the Colombian Ezequiel Rojas looked to adapt European models to Latin American contexts.\(^{13}\) Likewise, seeking to avoid blind imitations and looking for appropriate models, the Colombian intellectual and founder of the Conservative party Mariano Ospina—who is often associated with Latin American

\(^{11}\) Zea, *Pensamiento positivista latinoamericano*, xi–xii.


\(^{13}\) Posada-Carbó and Jaksić, “Shipwrecks and Survivals,” 490.
positivism—suggested in 1849 that “constitutions and laws are to the peoples’ opinions, customs, and circumstances like different pieces of a machine. If they do not correspond exactly, the machine never runs, or it runs wrongly.”¹⁴ Like Ospina, many progress brokers believed that only Colombia’s neighboring countries could offer appropriate models because they were all similar in heritage, customs, religion, language, and practices. Contemporaries emphasized that Latin American countries faced similar obstacles to prosperity. While positivist thought often linked material progress with racial inferiority, Colombia’s progress brokers focused on challenging topographies and social evils like empleomanía (office-seeking) and warlordism. Empleomanía, for example, was widely perceived in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America as the evolution of the vices inherited from the Spanish colonizers, reinforcing an idea of shared challenges among Latin American nations. This notion of a relative uniformity would support progress brokers’ claims regarding the appropriateness of Latin American models in contrast with the more distant and alien settings, practices, and cultures of the North Atlantic—however enviable their wealth and power. Countries like Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, then, gradually became for these progress brokers the countries from which more appropriate models could be adapted. The editorial board of the Colombian newspaper *La Opinión* also stated in 1901 that the appropriate model for Colombia “[should be] those [Latin American] nations that, after having endured unprecedented misfortunes, obtained later relative perfection and stability, under whose protection they

have advanced in a few decades to reach the level of the most advanced civilization.”

Regarding the southern countries, they stated that “seldom has a nation been seen under more inflammatory leadership than that of the twenty years of the opprobrious domination of Rosas in Argentina, [but] the horrible lesson paid off, and the result of that experience is the prodigious overtaking that in few years has taken it [Argentina] ahead of the most distressing crises.”

Historian Jeremy Adelman has argued that Argentina went through a sequence of conjunctures, from revolution to anarchy and then to order in the nineteenth century. The first (1770s-1820s) was a revolutionary phase covering the independence period and early efforts to establish a new liberal constitutional republic, which failed because legislators were, in his view, too reliant on models of European liberalism that were inappropriate for the Argentine context. The second phase was anarchy through the Rosas years (1820s-1850s), exemplifying how caudillos like Juan Manuel de Rosas fostered a set of contingent deals with different social groups and patron-client relations that allowed them to rule regimes, but not to consolidate states. The last phase was “the age of order” (1850s-1860s), which followed the defeat of Rosas in 1852 and the subsequent establishment of political order and stability under a constitutional rule reflecting the

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15 “Oh! Patria,” 2.
16 “Oh! Patria,” 2.
18 Adelman, 194.
conditions and needs of society, an appropriate system for Argentina’s circumstances. To Adelman, this phase was possible because policymakers became more pragmatic than the first generation of liberals. In fact, the so-called “Generation of 1837,” which included Argentine intellectuals like Esteban Echeverría, Juan Bautista Alberdi, and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, came to believe that a more pragmatic approach was necessary, and sought to learn from the past and to adapt to Argentina’s circumstances policies appropriate for local conditions.19 A similar approach is developed by Charles Hale, who in his books of 1968 and 1989 argues that a comparable evolutionary sequence explains the development of Mexico and the “transformation of liberalism” towards the end of the nineteenth century.20

Reflecting the mental orientation of Latin American positivists who were concerned above all with political stability and order as imperative to achieving material progress, a more practical legal foundation of statehood came to take shape towards the end of the century in countries like Mexico and Argentina—Chileans had been pragmatic since the early 1830s, serving as a model for the representatives of the Generation of 1837 who had sought refuge in Chile during the Rosas years.21 In fact, contemporary politicians and intellectuals like Colombia’s President Rafael Núñez—who, like Opsina, is often associated with Latin American positivism—mused on these countries’


20 Charles Adams Hale, Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853 (Yale University Press, 1968); Hale, The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico.

21 Adelman, Republic of Capital, 204.
evolutionary sequence. He indicated in 1883 that Argentina “had to go through the long purgatory of Rosas to return to the life of a civilized people,” and that Mexico reached the “beautiful hopes of progress” only after enduring “opprobrious tyrannies like those of Santana and Miramón,” as well as after having gone through the “bitter test of the Empire, which ended with the murderous execution of Maximilian in Querétaro.” Only Chile, Núñez stated, “through a different path has solved the problem of a respectable political organization, occupying the vanguard […] alongside the Argentine Confederation.” Like Núñez, contemporary Colombians perceived the evolution of Chile, Mexico, and Argentina through the analyses of the vast body of global printed materials that, since the 1840s, Colombian progress brokers had been gathering, selecting, republishing and circulating through personal writings and local newspapers. Núñez himself had remarked this need as early as 1853, claiming that “if history is not a sterile book, the events of Buenos Aires, Central America and Mexico should be a useful lesson for us.” Thirty years later, he continued stressing critical study of Colombia’s neighboring countries. Núñez affirmed in 1883 that rather than studying France and the United States, “we have had to make a constant study of what was happening in the very


23 Núñez, 357.

few republics of the same origin [as ours] that escaped chronic anarchy.” Colombia’s
dependence brokers, who were increasingly pragmatic, derived many of their ideas not by
comparing Colombia with the North Atlantic nations, but with other Latin American
counterparts. Thus, although positivist-like debates on religion, scientific education, and
race were central to devising projects of nation and state formation in nineteenth-century
Colombia, this dissertation focuses on why and how some progress brokers focused on
framing narratives about appropriate models for Colombia rather than on detailed
discussions of specific policies, practices, and programs. It focuses on the circulation of
ideas about Latin America’s material and intellectual progress.

Colombian progress brokers’ ideas of a logical sequence towards material and
intellectual progress drew mostly from the history of their American counterparts during
the second half of the century. Having developed regular patterns of economic growth


26 Efraín Sánchez Cabra, “Las ideas de progreso en Colombia en el siglo XIX,” Boletín de
Vega Bendezú, Discursos sobre “raza” y nación en Colombia, 1880-1930 (Cali: Universidad del Valle,
2013); Lina del Castillo, “Educating the Nation,” in Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader, ed.
Jordana Dym and Karl Offen (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2011); Néstor Cardoso Erlam, “Los
textos de lectura en Colombia: aproximación histórica e ideológica 1872-1917,” Revista Educación y
Pedagogía (Medellín) 13, no. 29–30 (2001): 2001; Patricia Cardona, La nación de papel: textos escolares,
lectura, y política. Estados Unidos de Colombia, 1870-1876 (Medellín: Fondo Editorial Universidad Eafit,
2007); Frank Safford, The Ideal of the Practical: Colombia’s Struggle to Form a Technical Elite (Austin:
University of Texas Press, 1976); Andrés Álvarez and Juan Santiago Correa, eds., Ideas y políticas
económicas en Colombia durante el primer siglo republicano (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2016);
María Teresa Calderón and Carlos Villamizar, “El sistema adoptado en la Nueva Granada: ‘Liberal’ como
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primeros liberalismos en el mundo iberoamericano (Marcial Pons Ediciones de Historia, 2012), 181–222;
Nancy Appelbaum, “Envisioning the Nation. The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Colombian Chorographic
Commission,” in State and Nation Making in Latin America and Spain: Republics of the Possible, ed.
Miguel Angel Centeno and Agustin Ferraro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lina del
Castillo, Crafting a Republic for the World: Scientific, Geographic, and Historiographic Inventions of
Colombia (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).
since mid-century, Chile was the first benchmark republic, becoming the model par excellence. Mexico and Argentina, which were anti-models for Colombia up to the 1870s, grew significantly thereafter and became enviable models as they achieved political order and stability towards the end of the century. References to Latin American countries as models and anti-models circulated widely in Colombian newspapers from the 1840s to the 1900s. This dissertation focuses on Colombian progress brokers seeking models of material and intellectual progress among other Latin American nations rather than in copying or contesting models from Europe and the United States, as the historiography on nineteenth-century Colombia and Latin America has traditionally emphasized.

Colombian progress brokers, however, were not a unified, identifiable group. Nor were they always in general agreement. Many of them used a variety of pseudonyms to circulate their ideas in typically short-lived periodicals, restricting traceability. Some of them changed intellectual orientations and political affiliations throughout their lives. All, however, developed ideas of national improvement based on the examination of neighboring experiences. Looking toward neighboring Latin American countries for lessons was the Colombian progress brokers’ unifying, lasting methodology. The brokerage role they played took place in the form of funneling information about other Latin American experiences and practices to a Colombian readership—sometimes in the form of political lobbying, sometimes simply as conveying information, but always with an eye to the lessons that Colombia’s neighbors might offer. They frequently had access to primary data like statistics, laws, and official reports, as well as access to narratives of all sort that they would select and partially re-publish or summarize in personal writings.
Before any Colombian had the opportunity to read local periodicals, the editors had already gone through dozens of international publications and selected what they believed was useful to their audience—and to further their own agendas. Increasingly after the 1840s, a large variety of excerpts from other Latin American periodicals were republished in Colombian newspapers, most of which implied appropriate models or anti-models within the region.

Colombian progress brokers, in other words, represented a group of well-educated Colombians (mostly mestizos) who, having a relatively comfortable socio-economic upbringing (although some were self-made), developed different levels of engagement with national politics. They were part of a larger Colombian intellectual and political elite, although they did not represent a portion of that elite with uniform interests and views. While their views varied, progress brokers shared a sense of social Darwinism, which filtered the way they understood Colombia’s place in the region and in the Atlantic world. The competition was not merely a matter of which country was taking the lead in the race for progress. It was also the result of a legitimate fear of being the weakest and becoming the prey of the great global powers, which had, in fact, happened in Mexico during the 1830s, 1840s, and 1860s at the hands of the United States and France. In this view, if not devoured after proving weakness and vulnerability, countries like Mexico would risk their independence and would become enslaved or tributary to economic powers like the United States.27

The general principle behind the idea of seeking appropriate models within the region was that Latin American societies had more features in common with each other than with those in the North Atlantic, and that success and failure stories in Latin America were more easily transferable, and hence appropriate, to Colombia. As early as 1849, the newspaper El Día stated that rather than blindly imitating the North Atlantic, there was evidence that “when in the Hispanic American Republics some improvement has had success, there is a good chance that the same thing will apply to the other [Hispanic American republics].”

Decades later, in an 1880 article analyzing his homeland’s literary, artistic, and scientific stasis, the renowned Colombian intellectual Sergio Arboleda invited his countrymen to look at Chile. He argued that in Chile, “institutions similar to ours govern”—like the Civil Code—and its “political and economic well-being attract as much attention as its progress in science and fine arts.”

Likewise, in 1900 the Colombian statesman Antonio José Uribe stated that “there is no need to look for examples to imitate in already remote times.” In fact, he stated that, “in these same columns, we have put other examples that are taken from peoples [like Mexico, Chile, and Argentina] which are currently in conditions similar to ours. What

28 “Casa de Moneda,” 388.


30 Antonio José Uribe, “La administración,” La Opinión, December 12, 1900, 382.
matters is not losing sight of one or the other, and studying the conditions of our own country very well.”

Drawing from personal experiences and the analysis of global printed materials, Colombian progress brokers looked to other Latin American countries in order to identify the reasons why Chileans, Argentinians, and Mexicans had managed to move from chaos to order and progress. Gradually, they came to believe that a linear sequence was necessary to achieve progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America during the second half of the nineteenth century. The history of Latin America had convinced them that the first step towards progress was to secure domestic peace, which in their perspective was merely the lack of local struggles and political violence and the establishment of an effective rule of law. During the 1840s this was evident in Chile’s history, but also in a negative way in Mexico and Argentina, where the lack of internal order long hindered projects of national betterment. Narratives about appropriate models for Colombia were for a long time found in the current affairs of Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, illustrating to the Colombian readership that if progress was their sought-after aim, Chile exemplified the path to follow. By contrast, any proximity to the Mexican and Argentinian currents might take Colombia to similarly chaotic ends. This narrative would change in the late 1870s and more clearly in the 1880s, when both Mexico and Argentina managed to establish internal order and began to develop unprecedented material progress, at least for a while.

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31 Uribe, 382.
Colombian progress brokers, then, came to identify that these cases were strong enough to prove that peace was the prerequisite to fostering progress. The logic of this, then, was that if Colombia reached steady peace, the path would be cleared to establishing strong republican institutions, which would in turn encourage the population growth and industriousness that progress brokers believed crucial to the development of economic enterprises which would lead to material prosperity. In this view, material progress would provide the means necessary to promote the sciences and fine arts underlying intellectual progress. These were the essential components that Colombia’s progress brokers saw as an appropriate model within Latin America, and more specific paths were drawn with practical lessons regarding colonization, infrastructure, agriculture, education, technology, and industry.

Colombia’s progress brokers were fixated on finding appropriate models from other Latin American countries, and on the issues of political stability and order as essential prerequisites for material progress, because a constant pattern of political instability, social unrest, and civil wars characterized the history of nineteenth-century Colombia, making internal disorder the primary challenge to fostering any plans for material progress. In fact, in 1891 the Bogotá newspaper *El Correo Nacional* reported that after the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1831, Colombia went through six constitutional periods, and that only one of them had experienced complete peace (1845-1849), and partially from 1855 to 1857, when then-Vice-President Manuel María
Mallarino took the presidential office after overthrowing president José María Melo.\textsuperscript{32} It argued that “in the course of our independent political life, the maintenance of public order has thus been the exception, and civil war the general rule.”\textsuperscript{33}

Progress brokers identified the requirements for reaching material progress (domestic peace, republican institutions, population growth, and industriousness), and signaled some particular policies, road systems, crops, machines, and a variety of methods and means to encourage economic growth. For instance, in 1903 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia asked its Chilean counterpart “to send some copies of the current regulations in Chile regarding public finances, colonization and education,” because the Colombian government “wants to get to know them before putting into practice an administrative program that alleviates the difficult economic, fiscal and monetary situation in which Colombia has remained after the last internal commotions”—the Thousand Days’ War (1899-1902).\textsuperscript{34} Likewise, in 1907 Colombia’s Minister of Public Works asked Colombian diplomats in Chile to remit “laws, regulations and decrees in force in Chile on railways, trams, water and mountains,” in response to which Samuel Ramírez Arbeláez, then Charge d’affaires ad interim, sent three separate volumes of “Laws, decrees and other provisions in force on railways under study and


\textsuperscript{33} Periódico El Porvenir de Cartagena, 2.

\textsuperscript{34} Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del gobierno de Chile 1882-1926, Caja 212, carpeta 209, 40-40v.
construction,” “Chilean legislation on waters,” and a Glossary of colonization in which the law of forests was included, “the only existing provision in that branch.”

Stemming from the wide circulation of references to Latin American countries’ experiences, regulations, and statistics, the idea of a binding and linear evolutionary sequence had taken shape and consolidated continually in Colombia from the early 1840s. While considering the achievement of material and intellectual progress Colombian politics’ raison d’être, many Colombian progress brokers deemed critical the examination of neighboring countries’ experiences rather than, or in addition to, the North Atlantic models which were perceived to some degree as an inappropriate model for Colombians and Latin Americans overall. Colombian progress brokers developed an extensive intellectual and economic orientation toward neighboring Latin America, rather than an exclusive and mimetic focus on the North Atlantic countries, as most historians have commonly argued.

Because Latin Americans perceived themselves as relatively similar to each other, and because their countries were experiencing analogous processes of nation and state formation, Colombian progress brokers believed that inspirations for development and models appropriate for their country’s context were more readily available within the region rather than in North Atlantic societies distant not only physically, but also culturally and historically. By tailoring consistent stories and stereotypes that would contribute to debates in Colombia, they deliberately appealed to the power of the printed

35 AGN, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Legación de Colombia en Chile, 1907-1911, Caja 188, Carpeta 3, 15.
word, as well as to literary circles, *tertulias* (informal social gatherings), partisan societies, artisan guilds, and to gossip and collective out-loud-reading practices, then customary for reaching the illiterate and low-income population. 36

This dissertation examines a large body of knowledge about other Latin American countries that many Colombian intellectuals circulated during the second half of the nineteenth century. It argues that Colombian progress brokers sought models of material and intellectual progress from among other Latin American countries between the 1840s and the 1900s, an issue largely ignored in the historiography on Colombia and on Latin America in general.

1.2 A Note on The Historiography

The history of Colombia has typically been published as either a variety of regional histories or in national-like narratives that link political and economic sagas of the major cities and their surroundings. Colombia’s history is predominantly a history of its regions. The history of Colombia has also been linked with the world, but a world that has largely been constrained to North Atlantic economies. Eurocentric and teleological queries about national failure have often framed modern historiography on nineteenth-century Colombia. Works addressing processes of nation and state formation in the

nineteenth century have largely argued that political and intellectual leaders in Colombia essentially embraced European models after independence, disregarding broader outlooks and some Colombians examining neighboring countries’ historical processes as exemplary.

The influential French historian Frédéric Martínez, whose 2001 masterwork became a classic study of nineteenth-century Colombia, acknowledges that the United States and some of the most prosperous countries in Latin America such as Argentina, Chile and Brazil emerged as countries of reference in Colombia towards the end of the century (“se perfilaban como países de referencia”). However, to further his comprehensive analysis of the “nacionalismo cosmopolita” in Colombia, he focuses on the analysis of European referents because “it is against Europe that the new Hispanic American nations are constituted; it is around Europe that the essence of the political debate is concentrated and institutional models are imported from Europe.” From this perspective, only individuals mirroring or challenging European referents contributed to projects of nation making in Colombia, excluding intra-Latin American perspectives. In fact, he argues that everything related to the so-called Latin race belongs to assimilations and interpretations of European models, leaving little room for non-European referents. This approach has fixated on the European origins of Latin Americans’ history and worldviews. Like in Martínez’s authoritative work, the widely studied European

37 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 22.

38 Martínez, 22.
civilization process remained central in the historiography on Colombia and Latin America, measuring the countries’ historical success or failure against European norms exclusively.\textsuperscript{39}

In terms of material progress, business and economic historians have developed similar perspectives. The literature on this field has long focused on Colombians’ struggles to integrate into the North Atlantic economies. This view has accentuated the idea that Colombians, having failed in the nineteenth century to develop efficient transportation systems and modern enterprises, had no choice but to become dependent on trade with North Atlantic technologies, goods, and ideas.\textsuperscript{40} Key to this approach is the role that not only people but also capital from Europe and the United States played in Colombia and in Latin America in general since the early nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{41} By perpetuating the idea of Latin America as a periphery doomed never to catch up to the

\textsuperscript{39} Frédéric Martínez, “Apogeo y decadencia del ideal de la inmigración europea en Colombia, siglo XIX,” trans. Ximena Fidalgo, Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico 34, no. 44 (1997); Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita; David Bushnell, The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself (University of California Press, 1993); Safford, The Ideal of the Practical; Safford and Palacios, Colombia.

\textsuperscript{40} José Antonio Ocampo, ed., Historia económica de Colombia (Bogotá: Fedesarrollo, 1987); José Antonio Ocampo, Colombia y la economía mundial, 1830-1910, 1a ed., Economía y demografía (Mexico City, Mexico) (México, DF: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1984); José Antonio Ocampo, Café, industria y macroeconomía: ensayos de historia económica colombiana, 2015; Adolfo Meisel Roca and María Teresa Ramírez, eds., Economía colombiana del siglo XIX (Bogotá: Fondo de Cultura Económica ; Banco de la República, 2010); Luis Eduardo Nieto Artea, Economía y cultura en la historia de Colombia (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1962); Alvaro Tirado Mejía, Introducción a la historia económica de Colombia, 13th ed. (Bogotá: El Ancora Editores, 1983); Álvarez and Correa, Ideas y políticas económicas en Colombia durante el primer siglo republicano; William Paul McGreevey, An Economic History of Colombia 1845-1930. (Cambridge University Press, 1971).

\textsuperscript{41} Rodrigo de J García Estrada, Los extranjeros en Colombia: su aporte a la construcción de la nación (1810-1920) (Bogotá: Planeta, 2006); Alvaro Gärtner, Los misteres de las minas: crónica de la colonia europea más grande de Colombia en el siglo XIX, surgida alrededor de las minas de Marmato, Supía y Riosucio (Manizales: Editorial Universidad de Caldas, 2005).
industrialized world, the “dependency approach” developed self-explanatory reasons for Colombia’s situation as purchasers of foreign manufactured goods and suppliers of raw materials, at the expense of their own industrial development. Moreover, historian Hermes Tovar holds that material and political progress had not occurred in Colombia since the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores; although some of Colombia’s economic sectors grew, “the essence of its history has been backwardness and marginality.” Implicitly, any reference a historian has made along these lines has been to backwardness and marginality in comparison to the United States and Western Europe. Although recent studies have begun to challenge the dependency framework and general narratives of failure, economic historians continue to shine the spotlight on relations between

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43 Hermes. Tovar Pinzón, *Colombia, imágenes de su diversidad: (1492 a hoy)*, 1a ed. (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Grupo Editorial Educar, 2007), 9.
Colombia and the North Atlantic, which is particularly evident in works examining the
nineteenth century. 44

Narratives on failure are not exclusive to Colombia. Modern business and
economic historians have typically focused their attention on teleological queries framed
upon the notion that Latin America represents a quintessential laggard territory. This
view devalues Latin America’s own historical processes, implying that while North
Atlantic societies have moved steadily forward, Latin American countries have
developed unsuccessful attempts to catch up, and instead have “fallen behind.” 45 These
traditional teleological approaches have highlighted “the gap” between the so-called
developed and developing countries but illuminates little about Latin America’s own
history. By comparing Latin America only with the early industrializing countries in the
North Atlantic, scholars have found self-explanatory reasons for Latin American
backwardness in natural, cultural, and institutional flaws. 46 Anthropologist Arturo
Escobar has criticized this approach from a post-World War II perspective. 47 I argue that

44 Salomón Kalmanovitz, Nueva historia económica de Colombia (Taurus, 2011).

45 Stephen H. Haber, How Latin America Fell Behind: Essays on the Economic Histories of Brazil
and Mexico, 1800-1914 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

46 Cardoso and Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America; Stanley J. Stein, The
Colonial Heritage of Latin America; Essays on Economic Dependence in Perspective; Sheahan, Patterns of
Development in Latin America; Stephen H. Haber, Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization
of Mexico, 1890-1940 (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1989); Haber, How Latin America Fell
Behind. Frank, Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment; Peter B. Evans, Dependent Development:
The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
Press, 1979). Weaver, Latin America in the World Economy; Klarén, Promise of Development; Sheahan,
Patterns of Development in Latin America; Packenham, The Dependency Movement.

47 Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World
the North Atlantic alone does not provide the appropriate comparative framework for understanding nineteenth-century Latin American experiences. Examining Colombia solely in comparison with the North Atlantic creates misleading results about the progress made on the country’s own terms and, in comparison, with other Latin American countries. In fact, many Colombian intellectuals and politicians realized this over a century ago, and sought to adapt models of intellectual and material progress developed not only in the North Atlantic, but also within Latin America and in other parts of the world. They were Colombia’s progress brokers.

If the historiography suggests that no international interactions have played a noteworthy role in the making of Colombia’s political, economic, and cultural spheres other than those with the North Atlantic, it is partially because the Atlantic basin was the assumed environment where formal, visible exchange took place for centuries. Yet, crucial aspects of Colombia’s history fall outside of the obvious, namely legal transactions, successful economic transactions, public—and publicized—exchange, and formalized interactions. Some silences and unseen interactions were paramount. While international trade records and other quantifiable data suggest that Colombia’s economy was clearly oriented toward the North Atlantic up to 1930, diplomatic documents as well as periodicals and a variety of official and personal memoirs reveal much wider exchanges and orientations. Moreover, throughout the Colonial period, trade and exchange between Spanish colonies in the Americas was largely forbidden (as was trade and exchange between Spanish colonies and other European colonies). Exchanges of
goods and ideas occurred, but mostly through illicit channels.\textsuperscript{48} Interactions between Colombia and other Latin American countries have largely been neglected, yet Colombians looked to neighboring republics to learn from them and with them, developing a variety of profitable intellectual and material relations during the nineteenth century.

It is hardly deniable that in Colombia and elsewhere in the Western world during the nineteenth century, the North Atlantic’s developments were central to statesmen and concerned citizens. For centuries, Colombians dealt with the North Atlantic in political, economic, and intellectual matters. Thus, the conventional realization that several nineteenth-century Colombians furthered and displayed European models and values is neither new nor fully satisfactory when trying to understand the history of nineteenth-century Colombia. Intra-Latin American values and interactions also shaped hemispheric developments. Some historians, such as the Colombian Germán Colmenares and the Spaniard Josep Barnadas, pointed this out in the late 1980s, but little attention has been paid to Colombia’s history within wider hemispheric contexts.\textsuperscript{49}

Focusing on political, military, and diplomatic interactions, some scholars have examined Latin American mutual relations as well as their interactions with the Great


Powers in the North Atlantic. Historians have embraced a variety of historical questions and approaches, but they seldom fall outside the body of either specialized national histories or general histories of Latin America built upon common threads—or historical trends—like sexuality, slavery, race, labor, and gender. They have examined these and other historical issues playing out in a variety of Latin American settings and time periods, but little more than similarities and differences glue these histories together. While examining Latin American countries’ historical processes, this body of historiography does little to examine intra-Latin American interactions and mutual learning, which is at the core of this dissertation.

Historians considering mutual interactions within Latin America have typically highlighted the efforts some influential people made to build political and intellectual alliances. Pan Americanism as well as other social movements stemming from socialist ideals and revolutions—like the Mexican Revolution (1910-1914) and the university reform in Argentina (1917)—are central to these works. But these narratives usually

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examine interactions between Latin Americans on either government levels (mostly based on official documents) or at the grassroots level. Neither approach gives proper attention to an intermediate level of interactions through which intellectuals seeking a greater, collective good surpassed any official agenda and needs for mobilizations. In fact, rather than seeking a common good, politics in nineteenth-century Colombia in the view of many contemporaries experienced high levels of selfishness, corruption, nepotism, favoritism, and incompetence. Thus, to understand better Colombians’ intra-Latin American interactions and their perceptions of neighboring countries’ developments, the examination of intellectuals’ understanding and attitudes towards material and intellectual betterment within Latin America becomes paramount.

Within the historiography on Colombia, the analysis of this level of intra-Latin American networks has been developed almost exclusively by biographical studies. In this case, however, relations are often valued in light of the main character’s experience, prioritizing perspectives on particular life-trajectories rather than on more general issues like intra-Latin Americans cooperating to achieve material prosperity. In fact, collaboration rather than competition emerged within intra-Latin American interactions,

52 Federico Cornelio Aguilar, *Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas* (Imprenta de Ignacio Borda, 1884); Aníbal Galindo, *Recuerdos Históricos, 1840-1895* (Bogotá: Imprenta de la Luz, 1900); Emiro Kastos, *Artículos escogidos* (Londres: Juan M Fonnegra, 1885); Aníbal Galindo, *Estudios económicos i fiscales* (Bogotá: Imprenta a cargo de H. Andrade, 1880); Martínez, *El nacionalismo cosmopolita*, 127–29.

mainly through personal correspondence exchanges between intellectuals like Colombians Miguel Antonio Caro and Ezequiel Uricoechea and Argentinian Juan María Gutiérrez, or through broader associations like Sociedad Latinoamericana “Biblioteca Bolívar.” Collaborative interactions, as well as the impetus for seeking models of material progress within Latin America, have been largely overlooked in the historiography of Latin America.

Historians have often framed the historiography of nineteenth-century Colombia around relatively homogeneous, identifiable groups and their ideological struggles, labeling them accordingly after the foundation of the Liberal and Conservative parties in 1849. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, factionalism rather than consistency characterized these groups’ members and politics, particularly the Liberal party. The historian Helen Delpar and others have pointed out that Colombian liberals “did not pursue identical personal or political goals. Nor did they all hold the


55 Rubén Sierra Mejía and Carolina Alzate, El radicalismo colombiano del siglo XIX. (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2006); Álvarez and Correa, Ideas y políticas económicas en Colombia durante el primer siglo republicano; Bushnell, The Making of Modern Colombia; Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita; Safford and Palacios, Colombia; Eduardo Posada Carbó, “La tradición liberal colombiana del siglo XIX: de Francisco de Paula Santander a Carlos A. Torres,” in Liberalismo y poder: Latinoamérica en el siglo XIX, ed. Ivan Jaksic, Sección de obras de historia (Santiago, Chile: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011); Beatriz Castro Carvajal, ed., Colombia. La construcción nacional, América Latina en la historia contemporánea, 2. 1830/1880 (Madrid: Taurus; Fundación Mapfre, 2012).
same beliefs, though Liberalism did exhibit what might be called an ideological core."

Thus, although the way Colombians conceived of progress was to some extent linked with ideological principles, the traditional conservative-liberal dichotomy does not work to circumscribe a group of scattered Colombians looking for models of material progress in a global perspective. To a degree, simple references to the classic Liberal–Conservative dichotomy serves to obscure more than it reveals about how Colombians and Latin Americans overall thought in the nineteenth century.

Inspired by Marcello Carmagnani and Daniel Rodgers’ works of 2016 and 1998 respectively, this dissertation considers intra-Latin American relations as well as global webs of interdependencies to examine a group of Colombians looking for models of material progress in other Latin American countries from the 1840s to the 1900s. Rather than Eurocentric, this approach relies on a perspective of wider human interactions. This dissertation, then, challenges traditional assumptions that identify the North Atlantic as the quintessential provider of models, and political affairs as the dominant means of intra-Latin American interactions. Aiming to contribute to a better understanding of the history of Colombia in a more global perspective, this dissertation focuses on Colombian progress brokers perceiving and fostering their country in relation to other Latin


American countries during the second half of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century.

Focusing on collaborative relations, this dissertation stresses the impetus for seeking models of material progress rather than its outcomes. The historiography has already paid a great deal of attention to projects of state formation and economic development, which have been primarily used to frame the history of Colombia as a history of failure. For this reason, this dissertation avoids teleological queries and does not make general statements about Colombia as a historical actor or as a uniform entity. It focuses on some Colombians building out of Latin American experiences an alternative vision for guiding Colombians towards a more prosperous future.

1.3 Colombian Progress Brokers and The Circulation of Ideas

The historical actors examined in this dissertation represent a group of literate Colombians who valued other Latin American countries’ own experiences and sought to learn from them, bringing ideas, policies, production techniques, tools, expert knowledge, and even migrants as well as plant and animal breeds. This was particularly important after crucial transformations like industrialization, the popularization of education, and the construction of major infrastructural works such as sophisticated coastal ports and railroads began to take place in neighboring countries in the late 1840s. These men and

58 Manuel Ancizar, “Instituto Caldas” (V. Lozada, 1848); Restrepo, Jorge Isaacs; Aguilar, Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas; Federico Cornelio Aguilar, Último año de residencia en México (Bogotá: Imprenta de Ignacio Borda, 1885); Salvador Camacho Roldán, Notas de viaje: Colombia y Estados Unidos de América, 4th ed. (Paris: Garnier Hermanos, 1898); Galindo, Estudios
women perceived Colombians’ future from optimistic rather than pessimistic points of view.

In Colombia, traditional narratives have typically pondered historical actors based on their political affiliations, limiting the history of Colombia to political parties’ clashes, ideologies, and realizations. But this approach illustrates little about the complexity of human interactions in non-partisan settings. By focusing on a group of Colombian intellectuals committing to the mutual goal of material prosperity as a greater, common good in Colombia, this dissertation seeks a better understanding of these people’s intra-Latin American interactions, notwithstanding their dogmatic motives. Although no unifying vision of material progress was held among them, this group of Colombians coincided to believe that political order, republican institutions, population growth, and industriousness were necessary for Colombia to achieve any plans for material and intellectual progress.

This dissertation examines a heterogeneous group of Colombians looking for models of material progress in Latin America. No traditional unifying label or unifying ideological mindset would work for the examination of this group. However, a unifying interest in understanding Latin American countries, and in learning from them, partially

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económicos i fiscales; Galindo, Recuerdos Históricos, 1840-1895; Justo Arosemena, Estudios constitucionales sobre los gobiernos de la América latina, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librería Española i Americana de E. Denne, 1878); Santiago Pérez Triana, Desde lejos: asuntos colombianos (Londres: Wertheimer, Lea, 1907); José María Quijano Wallis, Memorias autobiográficas, histórico-políticas y de carácter social (Roma: Tipografía Italo-Oriental, 1919); Medardo Rivas, Obras, vol. 2. Viajes por Colombia, Francia, Inglaterra y Alemania (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1885); Eustacio Santamaría, Conversaciones familiares sobre industria, agricultura, comercio, etc., etc., etc., 3 vols. (Havre: A. Lemale Ainé, 1871); Rafael Uribe Uribe, Por la América del Sur, 2 vols. (Bogotá: Imprenta Eléctra, 1908); Rafael Reyes, Las dos Américas. Excursión por varios países de las dos Américas, su estado actual, su futuro. (New York: Frederick AStokes Company, 1914).
framed the historical inquiries addressed in this dissertation. This group of intellectuals and politicians seem to have shared the principle stated in *El Pasatiempo* in 1852, which indicates that “every people possesses some noble gifts which are particular to it, and no one has so few virtues that others have nothing to learn from them.” (“Todo pueblo posee algunas nobles dotes que le son peculiares, y ninguno carece a tal punto virtudes que los demás no tengan algo que aprender de él.”)\(^5^9\) These intellectuals exhibited much wider mental orientations than the North-Atlantic-centered mindsets highlighted in the historiography traditionally.

Bypassing traditional, political-oriented narratives, this dissertation uncovers the mental orientation of some Colombians in regards to the race for progress and Colombia’s place in the world. It also analyzes the circulation of global ideas and subsequent models of material progress some Colombians crafted after analyzing Latin American experiences. It focuses on perceptions of Latin America that would contribute to framing alternative models for prosperity other than those traditionally imported from the North Atlantic. Hence, although this dissertation continually refers to “models” for progress, it does not delve into detailed discussions and analyses of specific models like policies, practices, and programs. Instead, this dissertation focuses on how and why some Colombians, whom I call progress brokers, sought models in other Latin American countries rather than looking solely to the North Atlantic.

The wide circulation of printed materials allowed Colombian intellectuals to remain up-to-date about ideas circulating in the region and across the Atlantic during the second half of the century. Some of them looked to neighboring countries consistently since the 1840s. Although transportation hindrances prevailed in Colombia (which restricted the internal flux of goods and ideas), global news and publications circulated with relative regularity. Many Colombian periodicals broadcasted international news and bibliographical novelties frequently, including *El Día, La Civilización, El Conservador, Pasatiempo, El Comercio, El Agricultor, La Opinión, El Correo Nacional, Panama Star and Herald, Anales de La Instrucción Pública, Repertorio Colombiano*, and *Anales de Jurisprudencia*. When pondering Colombia’s prosperity, these publications often highlighted Latin American countries’ shortcomings and developments as comparative referents. Information about Latin American countries also circulated in the form of travelogues that travelers from within the Americas and from overseas would publish in periodicals or manuscripts, reporting their experiences and observations in Latin America. One such travelogue comes from the Colombian priest Federico Cornelio Aguilar, who dedicated several decades to the comparative analysis of Colombia with the rest of the Latin American countries. These and other publications would become available in public libraries and bookshops in Colombia, allowing concerned citizens to access global writings and reports, mainly in major cities and administrative centers like Bogotá. While public and government bureaus’ libraries would grow exponentially after

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60 Federico Cornelio Aguilar, “Ligero Estudio Sobre Las Minas de Méjico y Colombia,” *Anales de La Instrucción Pública* 7, no. 42 (1884); Aguilar, *Último año de residencia en México*; Aguilar, *Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas*. 
signing official postal and exchange agreements, bookstores like Librería Torres Caycedo and Librería Americana would also serve as agents of foreign publishing houses and international journals and newscasts, bridging links between global and local journalism. Moreover, many Latin Americans would create and join scientific and intellectual associations in their own countries and abroad, like the French Sociedad Politécnica de Colombia, Sociedad Latinoamericana “Biblioteca Bolívar,” and Sociedad de la Unión Latinoamericana, producing a reputable corpus of useful knowledge that was disseminated by international publications. The second half of the century was an epoch of discerning Latin America within a global perspective, producing and circulating an original body of knowledge about Latin American countries, their history, their peoples, and their progress. Many Colombian intellectuals would play an active role in this enterprise.

Besides contributing to continental debates about the so-called Latin race and stillborn projects of uniting Latin American countries, this unprecedented body of knowledge would provide Colombian intellectuals with critical matter for examining neighboring countries’ experiences and to weigh Colombia’s developments against their counterparts’ progress. Aiming to replicate successful experiences in Colombia, they examined neighboring countries’ history and strategies to remove barriers to progress. In fact, many Colombians believed that nineteenth-century Latin American nations shared a


62 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 153.
set of common cultural, political, and economic practices, and that by mid-century little
had changed after independence. “These [Spanish-American] countries, baptized with the
name of Republics, are nothing other than the old colonies, with the clothes of a
deceiving and badly-founded democracy. Beneath that clothing remained the same
concerns, the same customs, the same institutions, and the same mistakes. This is
incontrovertible,” affirmed an anonymous writer in a Colombian newspaper in 1853.63
Similar references were repeatedly published in Colombian newspapers during the
second half of the century. Like some contemporary Latin American intellectuals such as
Francisco Bilbao, José Victorino Lastarria, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, José Martí, and
José Enrique Rodó, many Colombian intellectuals believed that, to foster progress in
Colombia, legislators required a sense of Latin America’s past, and full awareness of its
present.64

Understanding Latin America depended heavily on global exchanges of goods
and ideas promoted by enthusiastic intellectuals. In Colombia, these intellectuals
exercised what historian Gilberto Loaiza has called poder letrado (“lettered power”),
creating and propagating projects of state-and-nation-making.65 Within this power
intellectuals promoted the creation of networks through which useful knowledge and


64 Francisco Bilbao, Obras completas de Francisco Bilbao (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Buenos Aires, 1865); José Victorino Lastarria, La América (Gante: Impr. de E. Vanderhaeghen, 1867); Domingo F. Sarmiento, Ambas Américas, revista de educación, bibliografía i agricultura (Nueva York: Imprenta de Hallet y Breen, 1867); José Martí, Nuestra América (Mexico: El Partido Liberal, 1891); José Enrique Rodó, Ariel. (Montevideo, 1900).

65 Loaiza Cano, Poder letrado, 17.
referents to successful and failed experiences worldwide could be debated in Latin America. This was part of an older and larger market of intellectual works and ideas, which was widely known in Europe and in the Americas as la república de las letras (The Republic of Letters). Many of these intellectuals were Colombians looking for Latin American models of politics, institutions, education, roads, and economic enterprises. They were in a quest for models of economic growth, as well as for answers to challenges that analogous nations had already faced or were still facing. Due to the brokerage role they sought to play, and resembling the “intermediaries” of North Atlantic political progressivism examined in Daniel Rodgers’s work, as well as the “knowledge brokers” or “linking agents” that literature in corporations study, I refer to these Colombians as progress brokers. In contrast with the French Frédéric Martínez’s “cultural intermediaries between the Old and the New World,” the brokerage role this dissertation examines goes beyond traditional Eurocentric outlooks, and focuses on broader exchanges and on the quest for appropriate models within Latin America.


68 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 201.
While “intermediaries” simply help ideas move from one place to another, “mediators” or “brokers” take ideas, transform or interpret them, and help move them to another place.

Colombian progress brokers believed that neighboring countries embodied models of both success and failure, and assumed that Colombian intellectual and political leaders ought to look at them as forecasting mirrors. They trusted that Colombia would reach analogous ends if following in Latin American countries’ footsteps rather than following North Atlantic models. In fact, progress brokers believed that only neighboring countries could offer appropriate models for Colombia because they all shared similar cultural heritage, language and topographical settings. Hindrances to prosperity were deemed similar too, fueling images of correspondence and expectations of mutual learning among Latin Americans. Colombians’ understanding of neighboring currents stemmed from the circulation of global printed material, from diplomatic missions, and from the promotion of Latin American countries abroad through the creation of Latin American associations, participation in international fairs, and publication of intellectual works about the region’s progresses. Specialized periodicals on Latin American countries or on the region in general were also key to broadcasting news and ideas. By analyzing intellectual networks among Latin Americans, this dissertation focuses on some Colombians’ perceptions and aspirations to learn from and to adapt models of progress developed within Latin America. This was part of a larger quest for material progress in global perspective.

This dissertation examines Colombian progress brokers interacting with Latin American fellows and their ideas. A list of names corresponding to the category of progress brokers in Colombia from the 1840s to 1900s would be extensive. Hence, this
dissertation refers to an abstract group of people who individually committed to the analysis of global intellectual and material developments, aiming to adopt models of progress in their homeland. While the historiography on Colombia has traditionally argued many of them looked at the North Atlantic, this dissertation focuses on those looking for Latin American models. Specific names and contributions will appear with the unfolding chapters.

This dissertation focuses neither on political parties nor on unified, consistent groups’ mindsets or goals. It focuses on people looking to models of progress worldwide, predominantly on progress brokers promoting Latin American models. Unless stated by preceding ideological modifiers, “progress brokers” defines a group of scattered politicians, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs who looked at neighboring countries aiming to contribute to debates about progress in nineteenth-century Colombia. Disregarding political affiliations, it focuses on progress brokers embracing an overarching idea that the combination of peace, industriousness, republican institutions, and population growth would promote material progress in Colombia as much as it did in other Latin American countries.

Progress was conceived in Colombia as elsewhere as the forward movement towards a foreseeable betterment. During the second half of the century, progress was often measured in Colombia from a historical perspective, imagining the colonial times as a relatively stagnant place of departure (the 16th to 18th centuries) and the material betterment the North Atlantic displayed after the first industrial revolution (1760-1840) as an ideal end. Progress was also measured in a comparative perspective. As no society has ever moved either steadily forwards or steadily backwards, Colombians also weighed
their progress against other Latin American countries, which had gained political independence from Spain in analogous circumstances and at a similar time.\textsuperscript{69} Colombian intellectuals perceived their country’s place in the world depending on the way neighboring countries developed. The race for progress was against their colonial past as much as it was against the newly independent countries within the Western hemisphere. Whether material, moral or intellectual, progress was perceived in Colombia as elsewhere as a need for improvement.

In Colombia, at least two ideas of progress were prevalent during the second half of the nineteenth century. While some Colombians believed that progress represented the improvement of everything which had already been established (including remaining colonial institutions), others deemed radical change and revolutions necessary. The former was commonly linked with a conservative way of thinking, and the latter with liberalism, mainly among those embracing the Jacobin principle of “destroy everything and create everything.”\textsuperscript{70} But this dissertation is about neither political parties nor individuals’ agendas. It focuses on the way Colombian progress brokers perceived Latin American neighbors’ developments as potential templates to achieve progress in their own country.


\textsuperscript{70} Posada Carbó, “La tradición liberal colombiana del siglo XIX: de Francisco de Paula Santander a Carlos A. Torres,” 167.
Colombian progress brokers widely accepted that material progress was possible and important.\(^{71}\) This idea became particularly encouraging after the North Atlantic economies signaled an upward trend of growth following the so-called first industrial revolution (ca. 1760-1840).\(^{72}\) Although different in pace and scale, some neighboring countries in Latin America also began to grow from the 1840s.\(^{73}\) Convinced that material prosperity was genuinely feasible, progress brokers looked for models to achieve material prosperity.\(^{74}\) They considered two different paradigms. First, progress brokers looked for Latin American countries exemplifying the prerequisites for prosperity, which in their view comprised a linear sequence beginning with steady peace (domestic order and political stability), followed by strong republican institutions (constitutional power, individual rights, education, and the rule of law), population growth (primarily through immigration), and industriousness (economic activities contributing to, rather than bleeding the national budget). Second, they looked for ideas, institutions, practices, policies, crops, and industrial and commercial methods that Colombians believed suitable to their homeland after being successfully developed in Colombia’s neighboring


\(^{72}\) Beatty, *Technology and the Search for Progress in Modern Mexico*, 10–12.

\(^{73}\) Weaver, *Latin America in the World Economy*.

countries. In Colombia, as elsewhere within the hemisphere, politicians and intellectuals often engaged in debates about the most appropriate path to progress.\textsuperscript{75}

The creation, circulation, and adaptation of useful knowledge was deemed essential to achieve political stability and economic growth in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America, primarily after neighboring countries began to strive for progressive goals like mechanizing production towards the end of the century.\textsuperscript{76} Colombian progress brokers developed a sharp interest in countries such as Argentina, Mexico, and Chile, and devoted a great deal of time and energy to examining appropriate models to their homeland’s particular circumstances.\textsuperscript{77} By creating, gathering, and circulating useful information about the world, progress brokers contributed to expanding Colombians’ mental orientation towards economic growth. Through personal observations and global networks of interactions, these men shaped suitable alternatives to bring Colombia closer to a foreseeable material betterment.

This dissertation is divided into two sections and seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the first section examines the way Colombians devised progress and weighed their country against Colombia’s neighboring countries. It also examines the

\textsuperscript{75} Edward Beatty, “Riqueza, polémica y política: pensamiento y políticas económicas en México (1765-1911),” in El mito de una riqueza proverbial. Ideas, utopías y proyectos económicos en torno a México en los siglos XVIII y XIX, Serie Historia Moderna y Contemporánea 67 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2015); Paul Gootenberg, Imagining Development: Economic Ideas in Peru’s “Fictitious Prosperity” of Guano, 1840-1880 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

\textsuperscript{76} Sánchez Cabra, “Las ideas de progreso en Colombia en el siglo XIX.”

\textsuperscript{77} Campuzano-Hoyos, “Hemispheric Models of Material Progress in New Granada and Colombia (1810-1930).”
role the wide circulation of printed materials played in the crafting of self-perceptions and models for progress in Colombia. Chapter 2 examines how, by surveying the Colombia’s territory and its peoples, the Colombian government opened a window through which many Colombians would become interested in examining neighboring countries’ histories and currents in order to weigh better their place in the world and to measure how far they had come—or how far they had to go—in the race for progress. Besides realizing that they needed much more than natural riches to develop material progress, progress brokers observed that appropriate models could be adapted to Colombia from countries which had faced or were still facing similar hindrances to prosperity within Latin America. Colombia’s progress brokers had a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of appropriate models of progress, drawing them, if not exclusively, then largely and vigorously from neighboring countries like Mexico, Chile, and Argentina. Chapter 3 analyzes the circulation of Latin American ideas and useful knowledge by Colombia’s progress brokers. It focuses on diplomats stationed in Latin American countries, mainly in Argentina and Chile. It also scrutinizes the role some Colombian and Latin American intellectuals played overseas during the 1880s and 1890s, creating and divulging Latin American statistics and narratives of these countries’ developments, and forging international networks that moved useful information among Latin American nations, often through intermediaries in places like Paris and New York. This chapter also stresses the expansion of informal and official canje practices (mutual exchanges of publications) between Colombian intellectuals and government offices and their Latin American counterparts, which is key to comprehending how ideas moved in Latin America, in Colombia particularly, despite the often-noted infrastructure
hindrances. This chapter argues that by discussing and disseminating printed materials, Colombian progress brokers helped configure appropriate models from Latin American countries during the second half of the nineteenth century. It provides the background for better understanding specific debates in Colombia about political stability, social betterment, and economic growth that historians have often observed within Eurocentric rather than Latin American framings.

The second section will delve into specific models and antimodels Colombian progress brokers drew from neighboring countries, mainly Chile, Argentina, and Mexico. Chapter 4 focuses on how Colombia’s progress brokers perceived developments in other Latin American nations primarily during the 1840s, and delves into the creation of narratives of models and antimodels that were appropriate and inappropriate to adapt in Colombia. Progress brokers aimed to transcend the political analysis by redirecting the debate from local, national, and European levels, to a more inclusive intra-American plane. This chapter argues that by focusing on neighboring countries’ history and developments, Colombian progress brokers identified and explained that a combination of domestic peace, appropriate and strong republican institutions, population growth, and industriousness were imperative to achieve material and intellectual progress in Colombia. They believed that these foundations would encourage growth in Colombia as much as they did in other Latin American countries during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this story, Chile initially embodied the quintessential appropriate model of progress, while Mexico and Argentina represented the antimodels due to their prevailing political chaos. Following with the 1880s and 1890s, Chapter 5 examines how Colombia’s progress brokers perceived developments in Latin America and argues that
rather than drawing models from the North Atlantic countries, they sought to make sense and draw appropriate models of immigration, industry, and economic and government systems from Chile, Mexico, and Argentina to Colombia’s particular circumstances. Mexico and Argentina—which were previously considered as antimodels—had moved relatively fast from disorder to order, and from general poverty to luxuriant growth, which allowed progress brokers to reinforce their narrative: after crediting peace and appropriate institutions with the fundamental role of paving plans for progress, they now focused on illustrating how, by augmenting population via immigration and fostering productive economic activities rather than bureaucratic careers, Colombia could develop intellectual progress and economic growth. Chapter 6 is a case study examining the origin and technological change the Colombian fique (henequen) industry through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that this industry was established and could reach significant levels of growth in part because during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some Colombian intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and scientists examined global developments, disseminated useful knowledge, and sought to adapt suitable crops, practices, and technologies to Colombia’s particular needs, settings, and social traits, mainly from Mexico. Chapter 7 outlines the dissertation’s concluding remarks.
CHAPTER 2:  
THE RACE FOR PROGRESS AND COLOMBIA’S PLACE IN THE WORLD 

2.1 Introduction 

The race for progress was a particular nineteenth-century mindset which carried overtones of social Darwinism and assumptions of an international order defined by competition between civilizations, nations, and races.¹ It carried a notion of nations’ evolutionary potential, but also the threat of competition implying the survival of the fittest and the demise of the rest. Strength, then, implied a closely cohesive relation between political, moral, and intellectual progress, which were “inseparable from material progress.”² Held in London in 1851, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations signaled the way material progress came to be perceived in the Atlantic World. Progress was represented by revolutionary undertakings like railways, steam power, telegraphy, and by “the great principle of division of labor, which may be called the moving power of civilization [and which] is being extended to all branches of

¹ Beatty, Technology and the Search for Progress in Modern Mexico, 50; Vega Bendezú, Discursos sobre “raza” y nación en Colombia, 1880-1930, 108–15.
science, industry, and art,” as the Prince Consort, the Exhibition’s originator, stated in a public speech explaining the importance of this fair, the first of its kind.³ In Colombia, although the Exhibition’s revelations were enviable, the idea of progress was nuanced. Progress brokers came to define it by, first, getting to know their own territory.

Through the middle of the nineteenth century, Colombians began gradually to discern their territory as well as the vast Latin American region, when local and foreign scientists conducted scientific expeditions and created and disseminated descriptive manuscripts, colorful illustrations, and detailed maps. This body of knowledge was deemed vital not only to exercise power more efficiently but also to diagnose the actual state of Colombia and its place relative to other countries in the Atlantic world, including the challenges and the realistic possibilities for the country to engage fully in the race for “civilization and progress,” which contemporaries labeled interchangeably as nations’ “happiness,” “greatness,” “civilization,” “perfection,” “prosperity,” “progress,” “material progress,” “economic redemption” or simply “redemption.”

Inspired by expeditions and mapping endeavors conducted in other parts of Latin America, the Colombian government established the Chorographic Commission of 1850-59, the foremost scientific expedition in nineteenth-century Colombia. Surveying Colombia would provide the necessary knowledge to weigh Colombia globally, allowing officials to have a sharper sense of Colombia’s place in the world. This information would also help Colombians develop self-criticism and challenge traditional assumptions.

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³ Burry, 330.
inherited from chronicles of the conquest, Spanish-administration accounts, and the Royal Botanical Expedition of New Granada, which was carried out from 1783 to 1816. The world had changed after independence and many Colombians came to believe that although their territory was rich with mineral resources, biodiversity, and climates, they were far from reaching the progress they had supposedly been “destined” to achieve. While perceiving their country as relatively stagnant, ideas of Colombians being destined to prosper and thrive internationally endured through time like a utopia, becoming one of Colombians’ repeated axioms—like in contemporary Mexico.4

As a result of the production and circulation of global knowledge—primarily from other parts of Latin America—Colombian progress brokers came to the realization that plentiful natural resources, and a strategic geographical position due the interoceanic connection they held in the Isthmus of Panama, were not sufficient to achieve progress. This represented a critical transition from Colombians’ intellectuals and politicians increasing confidence to a more realistic approach to material progress. During the 1840s Colombians continued to believe that their homeland had plenty of potential, but soon began to perceive that rather than progressing, Colombia was falling further behind neighboring countries like Chile, which began to show signs of prosperity earlier than other Latin American republics. This feeling of stagnation and “atraso” (backwardness) developed in Colombia more fully during the 1880s, when traditionally chaotic countries

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like Mexico and Argentina had found internal stability, and had begun to achieve unprecedented levels of mechanization of production, international trade, infrastructural works like roads, railroads, and ports, and ultimately economic growth. These Latin American countries became enviable models for some intellectuals, politicians, and entrepreneurs in Colombia towards the end of the century.

*Atroso* was primarily perceived in Colombia as a long-lasting side effect of the process of independence, which many believed had stimulated bureaucratic rather than industrious careers in Colombia and Latin America equally. It was also linked with a critical change in the way people in the Atlantic thought about economic growth from the early to the late nineteenth century, representing a change from a more physiocratic view of wealth (e.g. agriculture and mining) to a more capitalist and industrial view of wealth, stressing the importance of work in terms of labor and technology, rather than just a focus on natural resources.\(^5\) The concept of *empleomanía* (a mania of public employment, also called *aspirantismo* in Mexico) was coined to define an office-seeking habitus, which was widely perceived as a social evil in Spanish speaking countries.\(^6\) However, contemporary critics stated that by seeking bureaucratic and military careers almost exclusively, Colombians had developed pathological levels of empleomanía that came to


be associated with political conflict and instability. Empleomanía, in their view, had become one of the most-noted obstacles to progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America. They saw empleomanía as a Latin American phenomenon, and they tended to believe that countries of the North Atlantic did not suffer this ill—or at least not as chronically. Colombian progress brokers believed that the country had to create incentives to promote wealth-producing activities, rather than office-seeking efforts, if they wanted to attain progress. They believed that countries with similar conditions and similar challenges rather than alien nations and cultures from the North Atlantic would provide appropriate models. If empleomanía was one of the cultural traits binding together all Latin American countries as many believed, progress brokers looked for models adaptable to Colombia to cure it. They emphasized that progress in Colombia required, along with a lasting peace, more practical systems of education, commercial enterprises, industry, and roads that other Latin American countries like Chile, Argentina, and Mexico were developing towards the end of the century.

This chapter examines the way that, by surveying Colombia’s territory and its peoples, the Colombian government opened a window through which many Colombians would become interested in examining neighboring countries’ history and currents in order to weigh better their place in the world and to measure how far they had come—or how far they had to go—in the race for progress. Besides realizing that they needed much more than natural riches to develop material progress, progress brokers observed that appropriate models could be adapted to Colombia from countries which had faced or were still facing similar hindrances to prosperity within Latin America. Historians have long emphasized how Latin American elites in the nineteenth century looked to the North
Atlantic as the model for progress and modernity par excellence. In contrast, my evidence suggests that Colombia’s progress brokers had a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of appropriate models of progress, drawing them, if not exclusively, then largely and vigorously from neighboring countries like Mexico, Chile, and Argentina.

2.2 Early Perceptions of Colombia’s Intrinsic Riches and Potential Developments

“Let us agree,” said in 1807 the renowned scientist and martyr of Colombia’s independence Francisco José de Caldas while describing his homeland, “nothing is better situated in either the new or in the old world than New Granada.” He was referring to the New Kingdom of Granada, which comprised modern-day Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and the northernmost fraction of Ecuador. Privileged by nature, New Granada not only faced both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, but it also had plenty of natural resources due to an abundance of water and the diversity of natural regions and climates—such as


8 Francisco José de Caldas, “Estado de la Geografía del Virreinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá, con relación a la economía y al comercio, por Don Francisco José de Caldas, individuo meritorio de la Expedición Botánica del Reino, y encargado del Observatorio Astronómico de esta capital,” in *Semanario de la Nueva Granada. Miscelanea de ciencias literatura, artes é industria publicada por una sociedad de patriotas granadinos, bajo la dirección de F. J. de Caldas*, Nueva edición corregida y aumentada con varios opúsculos inéditos de F.J. de Caldas. (Paris: Lasserre, 1849), 8.
the tropical mountain climates in the Andes (*pisos térmicos*), determined by elevation above sea level rather than by meteorological seasons.

The coexistence of an advantageous geographical position and the abundance of natural riches such as minerals, plants, and rivers made intellectuals like Caldas believe that this territory was exceptional and nothing less than “destined” to play a key role in “the commerce of the universe.”9 In terms of location, Caldas stressed that New Granada was “far from the hurricanes and icicles of the polar extremities of the continents,” allowing its inhabitants to “carry its commercial speculations from where the sun rises to sunset.”10 As for natural resources, he believed that New Granada was the wealthiest territory in the New World. “Let us not be dazzled by the riches of Mexico, or by the silver of Potosi,” he proclaimed. “We have nothing to envy of these highly regarded regions. Our Andes are as rich as those, and the place we occupy is the foremost.”11

But Caldas alluded not only to the New World when assessing his homeland and its resources. He also brought up contrasts with African, European, and Asian towns and goods. “Better placed than Tyre and Alexandria,” he boasted, New Granada “may accumulate in its bosom the perfumes of Asia, the ivory of Africa, the industry of Europe, skins of the North, *la ballena del Mediodía* [the whale of the south], and all that the

9 Caldas, 7.

10 Caldas, 8.

11 Caldas, 7.
surface of our globe produces.”  
Moreover, he declared, “It seems to me that this fortunate colony collects with one hand the products of the hemisphere in which the Ursa dominates, and with the other the ones of the opposite.” Like Alexander von Humboldt’s perceptions of New Spain (modern Mexico), in which natural resources were long coupled with promises of economic development in Mexico, Caldas’ understanding of New Granada and its place in the world was a matter of global perspective.

The idea that Colombia was an intrinsically wealthy territory became widely accepted, arousing reflections on Colombia’s place in the world. Even Charles Biddle, Special Agent of the United States to Colombia, wrote in 1836 to Robert B. McAfee, United States Chargé d’Affairs at Bogota, indicating that “upon looking at the map of New Grenada (sic) we are struck with the peculiar felicity of her geographical position, bounded as she is by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and intersected by their vast tributary streams, but it is melancholy to find that large portions of her fertile valleys remain uncultivated, which by the exercise of moderate industry would sustain an immense population of free and independent citizens.”

Similarly, in 1847 the renowned Colombian intellectual and statesman Florentino González published “A Glimpse into the

12 Caldas, 7.
13 Caldas, 7.
14 Beatty, “Riqueza, polémica y política: pensamiento y políticas económicas en México (1765-1911),” 245; Richard Weiner and José Enrique Covarrubias, “Political Economy, Alexander Von Humboldt, and Mexico’s 1810 and 1910 Revolutions.”
World,” a newspaper article weighing Colombia against Latin American and North Atlantic nations.16 “What role are we destined to play in the world?” González asked. “Here is a question that naturally occupies every New Granadian thinker, knowing the importance of our geographical position, and the natural wealth of our soil.”17 Aware of the global currents, he perceived Colombia as a country able to excel most of the Latin American nations. Located “in the heart of America,” he stated, New Granada is “a land rich in all mineral and agricultural products,” is “cut by navigable rivers,” and which owns “the Isthmus of Panama, which will be the point of contact of the mercantile interests of the two worlds.”18 In virtue of its natural riches and geographical position, González believed that Colombia was destined to take the lead in the race for progress in Latin America. Panama was key to understanding this viewpoint.

Resembling Caldas’ esteem of the Isthmus of Panama, Florentino González believed that Colombia was “necessarily the contact point” of all international exchanges. “Lady of the Isthmus of Panama, through which the flows of South America to the north and to Europe transit, and vice versa, and where many natural and manufactured products will transit later, [New Granada] is already drawing the attention of merchant nations,” he

16 Florentino González, “Una ojeada sobre el mundo,” El Día, August 8, 1847, 1.

17 “¿Qué papel estamos destinados a representar en el mundo? He aquí una cuestión que naturalmente ocupa a todo granadino pensador, que conozca la importancia de nuestra posición geográfica, y la riqueza natural de nuestro suelo”. González, 1.

18 “Colocados en el corazón de la América; poseedores de una tierra rica en todos los productos minerales y agrícolas y cortada por ríos navegables; dueños del Istmo de Panamá, que habrá de ser el punto de contacto de los intereses mercantiles de los dos mundos.” González, 1.
stated.\textsuperscript{19} In fact, relevant interactions were already taking place through the isthmus, raising expectations. González reported that “on our coasts two English steam lines have been established which, touching our Atlantic and Pacific ports, have their point of correspondence in the Isthmus of Panama. French and American lines are to be established in the same manner, and it will not be long before the continent’s \textit{preciosa garganta} [precious gorge] begins to acquire the importance that it must have very soon.”\textsuperscript{20} Like Caldas and González, many Colombians believed that by exploiting Colombia’s plentiful natural resources along with the Isthmus of Panama—intercontinental trade’s doorway—Colombia would assure prosperity and achieve the place in the world it was destined by providence. First and foremost, however, getting to know the country was paramount before reaching any higher levels of prosperity.

These ideas of New Granada being destined to prosper and thrive internationally endured. Throughout the nineteenth century, excerpts of Caldas’ “\textit{Estado de la Geografía del Virreinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá}” were republished systematically, oftentimes in periodicals and compilations.\textsuperscript{21} It was even used in public speeches as well as in school texts, underpinning the conventional idea about the intrinsic value of Colombia’s soil and

\textsuperscript{19} González, 2.

\textsuperscript{20} González, 2.

geographical position. Echoing Caldas’ wider perspective on New Granada’s native opulence was a reminder that Colombians were destined to prosper, and that economic growth would follow exploitation of natural resources, many of them esteemed internationally as engines of trade and, therefore, of material prosperity. Moreover, restating Caldas’ words during the nineteenth century represented an invitation to value Colombia’s own strengths, to strive for progress, and to seek the leading place, as many believed, for which Colombia was destined in the race for progress among Latin American nations.

Yet Caldas and González were not alone. Many different geographers, botanists, and scientists surveyed Colombia and developed mapping projects during the mid-nineteenth century. They generally concluded that this territory held a variety of natural resources as well as a hydrographic system suitable for developing profitable agricultural, mining, and industrial enterprises. Although Colombia’s topography challenged contemporaries’ technological expertise, its geographic position, biodiversity and soil fertility were generally perceived as advantages in terms of potential for material progress.

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23 Castillo, Crafting a Republic for the World.
2.3 Surveying Colombia

Colombia remained an enigmatic land long after its independence. During the first half of the nineteenth century, rulers governed it relatively blindly, with no comprehensive knowledge of the countryside or its resources, of its peoples or their needs. Moreover, the central government had limited or no contact with local authorities, let alone with provincial dwellers. Maps, surveys, statistics, balances, diagnoses, and proposals to solve problems were generally nonexistent, at least to the statesmen’s eyes.\textsuperscript{24}

By 1850, the circulating knowledge about Colombia was limited. It was either a reproduction of manuscripts by some Colombian explorers or facsimile editions of travelogues by foreign travelers, including sixteenth-century Spanish conquistadors. Some of these works were first published in foreign languages, like the 1842 edition of \textit{Coquilles et échinodermes fossiles de Colombie (Nouvelle-Grenade), recueillis de 1821 à 1833} by the influential French scientists Jean-Baptiste Boussingault and Alcide D’Orbigny, who explored New Granada during the 1820s.\textsuperscript{25} The works by the Royal Botanical Expedition of New Granada, however, prevailed as the source par excellence for a long time. From 1783 to 1816, the Royal Botanical Expedition was directed by the Spanish priest and botanist José Celestino Mutis, and conducted by several Colombian scientists such as Francisco Antonio Zea, Jorge Tadeo Lozano, and Francisco José de...

\textsuperscript{24} Loaiza Cano, \textit{Manuel Ancízar y su época (1811-1882)}, 187.

\textsuperscript{25} Alcide Dessalines d’Orbigny and J. B. Boussingault, \textit{Coquilles et échinodermes fossiles de Colombie (Nouvelle-Grenade), recueillis de 1821 à 1833} (Paris: P. Bertrand, 1842).
During the decades after this expedition, however, the production and circulation of scientific works remained largely neglected in Colombia. The education of forthcoming generations would largely rely on these works, mainly on the Expedition’s writings.

During the late 1840s, Colombian military man and explorer Joaquín Acosta promoted scientific publications, aiming to broaden the circulation of knowledge about his homeland. Knowledge about Colombia was deeply rooted in old-fashioned, scarce manuscripts, and on a map that Acosta himself had created in 1847 (Figure 2.1). This was the first map created of this territory after the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1831. Later, in 1848, while living in Paris, Joaquín Acosta published a book revising the conquest and colonization of New Granada, which, he argued, were in chroniclers’ accounts “incomplete and full of fables and declamations hiding […] the essential

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26 Loaiza Cano, Manuel Ancízar y su época (1811-1882), 187; Florentino Vezga, La Expedición Botánica (Santiago de Cali: Carvajal & Compañía, 1971); Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo, Bibliografía colombiana de viajes. (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1957), 15.


Moreover, before leaving France, Acosta managed to get the French editor Lasserre to establish the *Librería Castellana*, a collection of books including original works by Francisco José de Caldas, Jean-Baptiste Boussingault, and François Désiré Roulin. Acosta himself contributed to this collection by compiling, editing, and translating into Spanish Boussingault’s and Roulin’s scientific annotations about New Granada, which were dispersedly published in both the *Annales de Chimie et de Physique* and in the *Mémoires couronnés et mémoires des savants étrangers* published by the French and Belgian Academies of Sciences. Having accomplished this, Joaquín Acosta returned to the Americas in June 1849. He left Paris after enduring not only a cholera epidemic that had struck France a month earlier, but also the mid-century political furor that influenced many liberal thinkers all over the world, mainly after the French Revolution of 1848. A liberal himself, Acosta reprinted and circulated works about


30 Francisco José de Caldas, *Estado de la Geografía del Virreinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá, con relación a la economía y al comercio, por Don Francisco José de Caldas, individuo meritorio de la Expedición Botánica del Reino, y encargado del Observatorio Astronómico de esta capital, Nueva edición corregida y aumentada con varios opúsculos inéditos de F.J. de Caldas* (Paris: Lasserre, 1849); Jean-Baptiste Boussingault and François Désiré Roulin, *Viajes Científicos a Los Andes Ecuatoriales; ó Coleccion de Memorias Sobre Física, Química é Historia Natural de La Nueva Granada, Ecuador y Venezuela*, trans. Joaquín Acosta (Paris: Lasserre, 1849); Acosta, *Compendio Histórico Del Descubrimiento y Colonización de La Nueva Granada En El Siglo Décimo Sexto*.

31 Boussingault and Roulin, *Viajes Científicos a Los Andes Ecuatoriales; ó Coleccion de Memorias Sobre Física, Química é Historia Natural de La Nueva Granada, Ecuador y Venezuela*, i.

New Granada as an overture to new scientific enterprises. The brokerage role Joaquín Acosta played would encourage the production and circulation of knowledge that many intellectuals and politicians believed key to exercising power more efficiently and to determine Colombia’s place in the world.

Figure 2.1. Map of the Republic of New Granada by Joaquín Acosta, 1847.

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34 Acosta, “Mapa de La Republica de La Nueva Granada: Dedicado Al Baron de Humboldt a Quien Se Deben Los Primeros Conocimientos Geográficos y Geológicos Positivos de Este Vasto Territorio
2.3.1 The mid-nineteenth-century Comisión Corográfica

The Chorographic Commission of 1850-59 was the foremost scientific expedition in nineteenth-century Colombia. Although the Librería Castellana’s volumes had brought fresh insights to Colombian intellectuals and politicians, the country remained largely underexplored by 1850. Thus, Colombian statesmen Joaquín Acosta, Florentino González, Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, and the then-President José Hilario López sought to survey their homeland by promoting the Comisión Corográfica (Chorographic Commission). In 1849, the Colombian Secretary of International Relations Victoriano de Diego Paredes signed a contract with the Italian scientist and military man Agustín Codazzi, who had already conducted similar studies in Venezuela. Besides describing and delimiting the territory, Codazzi agreed to make cartographic maps of New Granada and its provinces, beginning on January 1, 1850. This expedition was expected to register the still largely unknown physical and political configuration of Colombia as well as to gather information and statistics about its people, natural resources, and economic activities. One of the major goals of the Commission was the analysis of possible communications roads, mainly connecting urban and productive centers with navigable rivers like the Magdalena River, Colombia’s main artery. Contemporary observers

Por El Coronel de Artillería, Joaquín Acosta; Diseñado Por J.B.L. Charle, Geográfo; La Letra Por J.M. Hacq, Gravador Del Depósito de La Guerra, A. Orgiazzi.”

35 Loaiza Cano, Manuel Ancizar y su época (1811-1882), 189.

believed that to achieve progress interconnection between Colombia’s relatively autarkical regions and communities was necessary.

In the race for progress, surveying the country was paramount. Some Latin American intellectuals like Juan Bautista Alberdi had already affirmed that mapping was crucial to foster progress and establish strong republics in Latin America. In 1844, Alberdi stated that “we must redraw her [Latin America] geopolitical map. America is an old structure, built according to outmoded thinking. It was previously a Spanish factory…. Today each of its departments is an independent nation, occupied by every social element and working… for itself… under this new regime…. It needs to change its building plans, but collides with boundaries set up by the monarchic metropolis and respected by republican America.”

Moreover, Agustín Codazzi had already mapped the Venezuelan territory, contributing to enhance the idea of mapping as necessary in Colombia. The mid-nineteenth century Chorographic Commission in New Granada stemmed from the circulation of ideas about the power of mapping and from geographic expeditions and mapping endeavors that the Commission promoters like Joaquín Acosta had carefully examined. As historian Lina del Castillo has argued, “New Granada seems to be afflicted by a serious case of map envy.”


38 Acosta, Compendio Histórico Del Descubrimiento y Colonización de La Nueva Granada En El Siglo Décimo Sexto, 429–43.

By establishing the mid-century Chorographic Commission as a state-sponsored scientific mission in 1850, the Colombian government provided with science the exercise of power in Colombia. In fact, by hiring Codazzi and establishing the Chorographic Commission, statesmen “sought to demonstrate nationally and internationally that New Granada was more than a concept,” and sought “to legitimate Nueva Granada’s coherent spatial and historical existence in order to consolidate their hold on territorial and political power.” Nations like Mexico had already conducted similar interventions. Statesmen aimed to map out not only the territory, but also the nation. By crafting graphic and textual depictions, the Commission would provide valuable information about the Colombian territory and peoples’ own potentialities and weaknesses. For any plan for national progress, ample knowledge was key. In Colombia, said former President Tomás C. de Mosquera, “the temperature, the productions of each soil, the communications between diverse towns and places, depend on the distribution of the mountains; and without their knowledge, it is not easy to form an idea of the physical, industrial, and political system of a country as the mechanism of a machine cannot be

40 Loaiza Cano, Manuel Ancizar y su época (1811-1882), 188–89.


43 Appelbaum, “Envisioning the Nation. The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Colombian Chorographic Commission.”
understood without examining the whole of its formation.” But surveying the country
was not only useful for understanding the “machine’s mechanism.” It would also be
useful to weight its productivity internationally. The Commission’s findings would allow
Colombian officials to measure their country’s progress vis-à-vis neighboring countries
and, overall, to weight their prosperity against larger international developments.
Contributing to a better understanding of Colombia’s place in the world, a variety of
publications resulted from the Chorographic Commission.

The production of new scientific literature confirmed the idea that Colombia was
intrinsically wealthy and, therefore, destined to progress—implying that with naturally
rich resources, Colombia needed only to adopt the institutional models of the North
Atlantic to achieve progress. It was rich with mineral resources, biodiversity, and
climates suitable for developing commercial agriculture (e.g., sugar, cocoa and coffee
plantations), for extractive industry (e.g., mining and forestry), for production of raw
materials for export (e.g., cinchona bark and dyes), and for production of foodstuffs for
domestic consumption.45

44 Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, Compendio de geografia general política, física y especial de los
Estados unidos de Colombia, dedicado al Congreso general de la union (Londres: Imprenta inglesa y
extranjera de H. C. Panzer, 1866), 164.

45 Francisco José de Caldas, Semanario de la Nueva Granada. Miscelanea de ciencias, literatura,
artes e industria. Publicada por una sociedad de patriotas granadinos, bajo la dirección de Francisco José
de Caldas, Nueva edición corregida y aumentada con varios opúsculos in éditos de F. J. de Caldas.
Anotada, y adornada con su retrato y con el cuadro original de la Geographia de las plantas del barón de
In 1854, the botanist José Jerónimo Triana, who had joined the Chorographic Commission in 1851, published a work on new species of plant in New Granada.\textsuperscript{46} Triana attested that “in no part of the world does plant nature develop more variedly and spontaneously than in New Granada,” which he considered the tropical region’s heart (“el seno de la región tropical.”)\textsuperscript{47} Moreover, he concluded that due to the “community of natural influences,” New Granada’s variety and opulent vegetation was comparable only with that found in Australia and in the coastal regions in Africa.\textsuperscript{48} Triana argued that New Granada boasted virtually the whole of the New World’s intertropical flora, which in turn constituted “a considerable part of the Universal one.”\textsuperscript{49} Thus, in Triana’s words, New Granada was “a land called to be [...] the center of the sciences and the prosperity of South America.”\textsuperscript{50} In fact, scientific explorations have skyrocketed in this territory ever since. For his botanical works, Triana himself was awarded with a gold medal and three thousand francs in the Universal Exposition which was held in Paris in 1867.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{46} Colombia. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Informe del secretario de Estado del Despacho de Relaciones Exteriores de la Nueva Granada al congreso constitucional de 1851 (Bogotá: Imprenta del Neo-granadino, 1851), 21; José Jerónimo Triana, Nuevos jeneros i especies de plantas para la flora Neo-Granadina, (Bogotá: Imprenta del Neo-Granadino, 1854).

\textsuperscript{47} Triana, Nuevos jeneros i especies de plantas para la flora Neo-Granadina, 3.

\textsuperscript{48} Triana, 3.

\textsuperscript{49} Triana, 4, 5.

\textsuperscript{50} Triana, 4, 5.

\textsuperscript{51} Galindo, Recuerdos Históricos, 1840-1895, 122–23.
Colombia became a major center of international research during the nineteenth century. If renowned botanists like José Celestino Mutis, Alexander von Humboldt, Aimé Bonpland, Jean-Baptiste Boussingault, François Désiré Roulin, and Charles M. de la Condamine explored New Granada during the first decades of the century, it was during the second half of the century that about fifty different scientists and adventurers—mainly from France and Germany—would come to survey the country. In addition to these explorations, some other British and U.S. envoys examined prospects to build interoceanic ship-canals in Colombia. A large body of literature resulted from these travelers’ explorations, most of it published in Europe in their original non-Spanish languages. Although these works were usually intended to expand the European scientific academies’ reach, and to strengthen some imperial powers’ intelligence, some literate Colombians accessed them. Moreover, most of these works would be included in some


Notes on the Central Provinces of Colombia,

Naturwissenschaftliche Reisen im tropischen Amerika centrale
Louis Verbrugghe and George et cie., 1891); Carlo Vedovelli,
Sievers ... (V,p., 1879); Wilhelm Sievers and A Göring,
Grenade, 1869,"

Grenade et les anciennes colonies espagnoles de l
Voyages d l'Amérique Du Sud contenant I. Voyage dans l'intérieur des Guyanes (1876-1877)
II. De Cayenne aux Andes (1878-1879) III. A travers la Nouvelle-Grenade et le Venezuela (1880-1881)
IV. Excursion chez les Guaraounos (1881) (Paris: Hachette, 1883); Issac N. Ford, Tropical America (New
York, 1893); Alexis Gabriac, Promenade à Travers l'Amérique Du Sud: Nouvelle-Grenade, Équateur,
Pérou, Brésil. (Paris ;, 1868); William Lewis Herndon and Lardner Gibbon, Exploration of the Valley of the
Amazon Made under Direction of the Navy Department, 2 vols. (Washington: R. Armstrong Public Printer,
1853); Alfred Hettner, Reisen in Den Columbianischen Anden. (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888);
Higgins Henry H., Notes by a Field-Naturalist in the Western Tropics: From a Journal Kept on Board the
Royal Mersey Steam Yacht “Argo” (Liverpool: EHowell, 1877); Isaac F. Holton, New Granada Twenty
Months in the Andes (New York: Harper & brothers, Harper & Brothers, 1857); Hermann Karsten, Notes
on the Medicinal Cinchona Barks of New Granada by H. Karsten; and on the Cinchona Trees of Huano co
(in Peru), (London, 1861); Hermann Karsten, Flore Columbiæe terrarumque adiacentium specimina
selecta in peregrinatione duodecim annorum observata delineavit et (Berolín: Apud F. Denummler, 1858);
Auguste Le Moyne, Voyages et sejours dans l'Amérique du Sud, la Nouvelle-Grenade, Santiago de Cuba,
la Jamaïque et listhme de Panama (Paris: AQuentin, Imprimeur-Éditeur, 1880); Francisco Michelena y
Rojas, Exploración oficial por la primera vez desde el norte de la America del Sur siempre por rios,
entrando por las bocas del Orinoco, de los valles de este mismo y del Meta, Casiquiare, Rio-Negro ó
Guaynia y Amazónas, hasta Nauta en el alto Marañon ó Amazónas, arriba de las bocas del Ucayali bajada
del Amazonas hasta el Atlántico ... Viaje a Rio de Janeiro desde Belen en el Gran Pará, por el Atlántico,
tocando en las capitales de las principales provincias del imperio en los años, de 1855 hasta 1859,
(Bruselas, Bruselas [etc.: ALocroix, Verboeckhoven, A Lacroix, Verboeckhoven y ca, 1867); Albert
Millican, Travels and Adventures of an Orchid Hunter. (London, 1891); Henry Morris Myers and Philip
Van Ness Myers, Life and Nature under the Tropics. Or Sketches of Travels among the Andes, and on the
Orinoco, Rio Negro, and Amazonas (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871); Enrique Onffroy de
Thoron, Amérique équatoriale: son histoire pittoresque et politique, sa géographie et ses richesses
naturelles, son état présent et son avenir (Paris: Veuve Jules Renouard, 1861); Hermann Karsten, Notes
on the Medicinal Cinchona Barks of New Granada by H. Karsten; and on the Cinchona Trees of Huano co
(in Peru), (London, 1861); Hermann Karsten, Flore Columbiæe terrarumque adiacentium specimina
selecta in peregrinatione duodecim annorum observata delineavit et (Berolín: Apud F. Denummler, 1858);
Auguste Le Moyne, Voyages et sejours dans l'Amérique du Sud, la Nouvelle-Grenade, Santiago de Cuba,
la Jamaïque et listhme de Panama (Paris: AQuentin, Imprimeur-Éditeur, 1880); Francisco Michelena y
Rojas, Exploración oficial por la primera vez desde el norte de la America del Sur siempre por rios,
entrando por las bocas del Orinoco, de los valles de este mismo y del Meta, Casiquiare, Rio-Negro ó
Guaynia y Amazónas, hasta Nauta en el alto Marañon ó Amazónas, arriba de las bocas del Ucayali bajada
del Amazonas hasta el Atlántico ... Viaje a Rio de Janeiro desde Belen en el Gran Pará, por el Atlántico,
tocando en las capitales de las principales provincias del imperio en los años, de 1855 hasta 1859,
(Bruselas, Bruselas [etc.: ALocroix, Verboeckhoven, A Lacroix, Verboeckhoven y ca, 1867); Albert
Millican, Travels and Adventures of an Orchid Hunter. (London, 1891); Henry Morris Myers and Philip
Van Ness Myers, Life and Nature under the Tropics. Or Sketches of Travels among the Andes, and on the
Orinoco, Rio Negro, and Amazonas (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871); Enrique Onffroy de
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Granada Its Internal Resources. (London: A.H. Baily and Co., 1863); Armand Reclus, Panama et Davien:
Voyages d'exploration (Paris: Hachette, 1881); Élisée Reclus, Voyage à la Sierra Nevada de Sainte-
Marthe: paysage de la nature tropicale (L. Hachette (Paris), 1881); W Reiss and Karl Heinrich Dietzel,
Reisebriefe aus Südamerika, 1868-1876. Aus dem Nachlasse herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Karl
Heinrich Dietzel, etc. (München & Leipzig, 1921); Wirt Robinson, A Flying Trip to the Tropics A Record
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West Indies, in the Year 1892, (Cambridge, Mass: Riverside Press, 1895); Ferdinand Rolland, La Nouvelle
Grenade et les anciennes colonies espagnoles de l'Amérique du Sud. Aperçu sur leur situation actuelle et
leur avenir industriels, 1872-1875 (Avignon: A. Roux, 1875); Charles Saffray, “Voyage à la Nouvelle-
Grenade, 1869,” Tour du monde: nouveau journal des voyages, 1873 1872; Friedrich Schenck, “Süd-
Amerika: Reisen in Antiöquia,” Dr. A. Pettermann's Mittheilungen Aus Justus Perthes' Geographischer
Anstalt 26 and 29 (and 1883 1880); Ludwig K. Schmarda, Reise um die erde in den jahren 1853-1857., vol.
3, 3 vols. (Brunschwieig: Brunschweig, 1861); Wilhelm Sievers, Santa Marta, Columbia; pamphlets.
(v.p., 1879); Wilhelm Sievers and A Göring, Reise in der Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, von Dr. W.
Sievers ... (Leipzig: Gressner, 1887); Arthur Thouar, Explorations dans l'Amérique du Sud (Paris: Hachette
et cie., 1891); Carlo Vedovelli, Da Puerto Colombia a Bogotà. (Roma: Società geografica italiana, 1892);
Louis Verbrugge and George Verbrughe, Forêts vierges: voyage dans l'Amérique du sud et l'Amérique
centrale (Paris: C. Lévy, 1880); Godfrey T Vigne, Travels in Mexico, South America, etc. etc., 2 vols.
(London, 1863); Frank Vincent, Around and about South America (New York, 1890); Moritz Wagner,
Naturwissenschaftliche Reisen im tropischen Amerika (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1870); Robert Blake White,
“Notes on the Central Provinces of Colombia,” Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and
influential Colombians’ private collections as well as some public offices’ shelves. Most of them would also be deposited in Bogotá’s National Library of Colombia, the country’s largest public book repository since its opening in 1777. Along with botanical publications and travelogues, geographical and ethnographical works enriched nineteenth-century Colombia’s larger project of nation and state building. Encyclopedic textual representations were then complemented with visual depictions like maps, drawings, and illustrations. Along with brand-new knowledge of Colombia, similar expeditions and creation of knowledge grew in Latin America in mid-century, allowing the circulation of useful materials within the Americas.

Most of Colombia’s enigmatic territories metamorphosed into realistic representations during the 1850s. Besides official reports by Agustín Codazzi, illustrative works by both the Chorographic Commission’s members and foreign expeditionary men circulated in Colombia. While some of them focused on Colombia’s geography, others reported viable and convenient commercial routes. But not only books contributed to

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*Monthly Record of Geography* 5, no. 5 (1883): 249–267; Charles Wiener et al., *América pintoresca; descripcion de viajes al nuevo continente* por los mas modernos explotadores Carlos Wiener, doctor Crevaux, D. Charnay, etc., etc. (Barcelona: Montaner y Simon, 1884); Hugo Zöller, “Pampas und Anden,” *Dr. A. Petermann’s Mitteilungen Aus Justus Perthes’ Geographischer Anstalt* 30 (1884); Boussingault and Roulin, *Viajes Científicos a Los Andes Ecuatoriales; ó Coleccion de Memorias Sobre Física, Química e Historia Natural de La Nueva Granada, Ecuador y Venezuela.*


56 Appelbaum, “Envisioning the Nation. The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Colombian Chorographic Commission.”

57 Agustin Codazzi, “Apuntamientos sobre inmigracion i colonizacion. Al señor Secretario de Estado en el D. de Relaciones Esteriores,” *Gaceta Oficial*, December 21, 1850; Antonio Basilio Cuervo, *Resumen de la geografia histórica, política, estadística i descriptiva de la Nueva Granada, para el uso de las escuelas primarias superiores* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Torres Amaya, 1852); Tomás Cipriano Mosquera,
the spread of new discoveries. Domestic newspapers like Bogotá’s *El Neogranadino* were also key. Founded in 1848 by Manuel Ancízar, *El Neogranadino* served as the Commission’s diffusion means up to its latest edition in July 1857.\(^58\) The Colombian intellectual and statesman Santiago Pérez published in this periodical his observations about Antioquia and the southern provinces from 1852 to 1853.\(^59\) Pérez was the successor of Manuel Ancízar, who abandoned the Commission after traveling throughout New Granada’s northern provinces from 1850 to 1851.\(^60\)

As a result of his expeditions, Ancízar published *Peregrinación de Alpha*, a lengthy volume with illustrative as well as analytical remarks. It became one of the Chorographic Commission’s most influential works.

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\(^59\) Giraldo Jaramillo, *Bibliografía colombiana de viajes.*, 64.

\(^60\) Santiago Pérez, “Apuntamientos de Viaje Por Antioquia y Las Provincias Del Sur,” *El Neogranadino*, 1853.
Besides enjoyable descriptions of landscapes, towns, and peoples, *Peregrinación de Alpha* highlights mid-nineteenth century New Granada’s potential and constraints to progress, mainly in its northern provinces. The Chorographic Commission ended in 1859, when Agustín Codazzi, its director, died of malaria while conducting scientific works in Valledupar.

By surveying Colombia’s territory and its peoples during the 1850s, the Colombian government opened widely a window through which many Colombians would became interested in examining not only their own natural, social, and political situation, but also neighboring countries’ history and currents to weigh their place in the world and to measure how far they had come in the race for progress.

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Figure 2.2. Map of South America, 1860 (Anonymous)
2.3.2 Nature and Progress

Manuel Ancízar extolled Colombia’s natural riches like many preceding explorers had done. “It would be tiresome to enumerate the natural riches,” he said when describing the Chiquinquirá canton, located in the country’s northeastern section.\textsuperscript{63} “As I heard our wise, modest and ill-fated compatriot Céspedes speaking of the forests of Carare,” Ancízar added, “they are an exaggeration of nature in wealth and endless varieties.”\textsuperscript{64} Yet Manuel Ancízar not only offered commonplace references to Colombia’s general intrinsic riches. He also delved into relevant details he found in places like Vélez and Paipa. He perceived nature as an ally to these places’ prosperity. Regarding Vélez, he stated that “this territory’s mineral wealth is incomparable within the family of metals and fossils of industrial application.”\textsuperscript{65} Likewise, he deemed Paipa as an area full of mining and industrial potential. “The richness of this mine,” argued Manuel Ancízar when describing the Glaubero salt mine, “as of the adjacent coal, sulfur and native iron, still awaits the appreciation and use of the calculating and scientific industry that will bring us the coming ages with the greatest population and growing needs.”\textsuperscript{66} Overall, he believed that the territories he surveyed were destined to prosper due to the “opulence that God has reserved for these singular regions, which are a vast container of infinite

\textsuperscript{63} Ancízar, \textit{Peregrinación de Alpha. Por las provincias del norte de la Nueva Granada en 1850 i 51}, 76.

\textsuperscript{64} Ancízar, 76.

\textsuperscript{65} Ancízar, 104.

\textsuperscript{66} Ancízar, 281–82.
riches accumulating in silence, waiting for their future lords.” Ancízar’s depictions, along with similar appreciations by domestic and international scientists and explorers, deep-rooted the already widely accepted idea that Colombia was a privileged land holding plentiful natural riches like minerals and biodiversity, which were universally deemed as elements of progress. Like Ancízar, many Colombians perceived them as providential gifts, waiting patiently to be exploited.

In Colombia and elsewhere within the hemisphere’s tropical zone, nature was largely perceived as a limitless potential to progress. During the second half of the nineteenth century, intellectuals and politicians would often remark on Colombia’s nature as means of wealth and prosperity. In 1866, in his extended edition of the 1852 Geography of Colombia, Tomás C. de Mosquera emphasized previous explorers’ declarations. “What is the most advantageous position in the world capable of being compared to that of Colombia? We believe none,” Mosquera affirmed. He believed that Colombia has plentiful natural advantages he assumed fundamental to its prosperity. Colombia “is both a mining and an agricultural country,” he argued, “and it is as varied in their climates and productions as it is in valleys, pits, plateaus, and mountains.”

67 Ancízar, 70.
69 Mosquera, Compendio de geografía general política, física y especial de los Estados unidos de Colombia, dedicado al Congreso general de la union, 301.
70 Mosquera, 301.
underlined Colombia’s strategic geographical position. “With ports to the Atlantic and Pacific Seas,” he affirmed, Colombia “owns the Isthmus of Panama and Darién [and shall] unite by channels these seas at a not distant age, and facilitate the world’s trade by railroads in the meantime.”

In 1866 these descriptions were already common knowledge. However, Mosquera contributed to the better understanding of Colombia’s place in the world by bringing together a clear and comprehensible list of the whole country’s major riches. In terms of minerals, he declared that “gold is abundant in the sections of the South and West [and] rich mines of salt, copper, iron and fossil coal, emeralds, and other precious stones, silver, platinum and lead make Colombia’s main mineral wealth.” In terms of produce, “sugar, coffee, cocoa, indigo, cotton, rubber, dyes, cinchonas, balm of Tolú and Peru, sarsaparilla, timber, vanilla, and cochineal are products in which Colombia abounds, and many others from the vegetal kingdom.” Moreover, he added that “pearls, mother-of-pearl shells and tortoise shells are abundant products in Colombia’s seas.” Similarly, he indicated that “hides and wools will be exported with advantage of the cattle that is in its beautiful valleys and high savannahs.” Having analyzed Colombia’s topmost natural

71 Mosquera, 301.
72 Mosquera, 302.
73 Mosquera, 302.
74 Mosquera, 303.
75 Mosquera, 303.
riches, Mosquera also weighed Colombia against neighboring countries, implying some sense of superiority. “Colombia possesses the vigorous vegetation of Brazil, rich gold mines like those of California and silver like Peru. Its emerald mines are unique and the platinum ones are the best-known [in the world]. On its shores hawksbill and pearls are caught as in the East, and it has analogous climates for all races, without suffering the icy North or the scorching heat of Senegal.”

He concluded by affirming that “this set of highly varied and rich products in all the natural kingdoms is such that it looks like a poetic painting for those who have not visited those vast regions.”

However, although Colombians continued to believe that their homeland had plenty of potential, they came to the realization that Colombia’s plentiful natural resources and strategic geographical position were not sufficient to achieve progress. From the early 1840s they began to perceive that rather than progressing, Colombia was falling further behind neighboring countries like Chile, which had begun to show signs of prosperity earlier than other Latin American republics.

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76 Mosquera, 303.

77 Mosquera, 303.
2.4 Lagging Behind

Complaints about the lack of Colombia’s progress began to overshadow positive perceptions of Colombia’s riches and its so-called providential, wealthy destiny. By mid-century, some Colombian journalists and politicians lamented the lack of development of their homeland, a place that many of them perceived as full of wasted potential. Independence-era politician Pastor Ospina had celebrated that “the period of our revolution [independence] is over,” and had encouraged future generations to say by midcentury that “this has been the epoch of progress, sciences, industry, and national prosperity.”

However, as early as 1842 the influential Colombian statesman Mariano Ospina Rodríguez suggested that “the promising hopes that encouraged the heroes of independence of a rapid and powerful development of industry and wealth of this country have remained until today mocked; and when other countries less favored by nature thrive with an astonishing promptness, New Granada so rich and fertile remains almost stationary.”

Mariano Ospina’s impression of national stagnation was a reaction to both Colombia’s lack of industrial development and to the faster pace that other Latin American countries had already set towards material and social betterment. Independence struggles and further civil wars and uprisings would contribute to the increasing gap between Colombia and neighboring countries’ developments.

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78 Ignacio Borda, El libro de la patria; historia del 20 de julio, complementada con pensamientos de esclarecidos colombianos sobre esta fecha memorable ilustrada con rasgos biográficos de los treinta y siete vocales que constituyeron el gobierno del nuevo reino. (Bogotá, 1894), 164.

79 Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, Antología del pensamiento de Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, ed. Doris Wise de Gouzy (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1990), 565–67.
Newspapers brought up explicit debates about Colombia’s lack of prosperity in contrast with the neighboring countries’ developments. “Let us compare Colombia with […] other countries that were subject to the same colonial regime and that became independent and began their career at the same time as we did,” said Bogotá’s *El Día* in 1847. After independence, “Chileans and Venezuelans resulted as poor, as backward and as fatigued as the Granadines [Colombians], and yet, despite our well-known advantages in situation, production, and population, we figure in a much lower position than them in world trade transactions.” Moreover, the newspaper article moved on to diminish the widely-shared idea that Colombia’s natural resources were a guarantor of national progress. “The tropical fruits in Venezuela do not grow faster and more abundantly than in New Granada, nor are the gold, silver, and copper mines which supply Chile with annual values of more than three million pesos richer than those of the same kind abounding in our territory’s full expanse.” Likewise, in 1853 Bogotá’s newspaper *El Pasatiempo* stated that “although placed in the best geographical position known, New Granada does not make amazing material progress.” This newspaper had already analyzed neighboring countries like Peru, Chile, and Ecuador, and argued that all of them


81 “Nuestro comercio de esportación,” 3.

82 “Nuestro comercio de esportación,” 3.

had taken advantage of their own “natural advantages” by making Valparaíso, Callao, and Guayaquil “the best ports on a coastline of two thousand leagues.”

During the 1850s, the Chorographic Commission’s creation of knowledge about both Colombia’s territories and its peoples had offered insights into the nation’s wealth, potentialities, and challenges. However, this knowledge was complemented by a brokerage role that many Colombian intellectuals played through republishing and circulating in Colombian newspapers useful knowledge about Latin America, which would support views of *atrás*o (backwardness) relative not only to the North Atlantic economies, but also relative to neighboring countries. During the mid-century, notions of backwardness in Colombia were linked with the legacy of Spanish administration—which some believed had inhibited local industrial development—and with recurring civil wars. The Colombian economist, lawyer, and intellectual Salvador Camacho Roldán regretted the fact that both industry and agriculture in Colombia were still “lamentably” backward in 1874. “Our manufacturing arts,” Camacho argued, “are in the same state now as three centuries ago, when the Spaniards found among the Indians our parents.”

Camacho’s view revealed a widely-shared idea that in Colombia there was “in incubation the seed of a great people, of a powerful, rich, intelligent, free, civilized and happy

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84 Federico, 2–3.


86 Salvador Camacho Roldán, *Escríritos varios de Salvador Camacho Roldán*, vol. 1 (Bogotá, Librería colombiana, 1892), 57.
nation,” but also a lament about Colombia being still “poor, very poor; backward, really backward; ignorant, quite ignorant.”

This feeling of stagnation and atraso (backwardness) developed in Colombia more fully towards the end of the century, when along with Chile, countries like Mexico and Argentina had begun to reach unprecedented levels of economic growth, becoming enviable models in Colombia. Contemporaries lamented that while some Latin American countries had begun to display significant material progress by 1880, Colombia had remained relatively idle.

During 1880s Colombians witnessed countries like Mexico, Argentina, and Chile taking off and developing agricultural, commercial, and industrial enterprises that were providing them the necessary means to achieve the longed-for material prosperity. This pattern of growth provided Colombians a sense of paralysis before enviable regional models. In 1880, the Colombian intellectual Sergio Arboleda stated that “Colombia is an admirable country [...] having in its people,] rich soil, and fortunate climate, everything Colombia needed for its moral and political well-being, for its economic and mercantile prosperity, for its aggrandizement by the arts and industry, and for its intellectual and scientific glory.” However, he argued, Colombia’s “current situation is lamentable.”

Rafael Núñez, several times President of Colombia, also acknowledged that Colombia

87 Salvador Camacho Roldán, Escritos varios de Salvador Camacho Roldán, vol. 3 (Bogotá, Librería colombiana, 1895), 81.

88 Arboleda, “Las letras, las bellas artes y las ciencias en Colombia,” 55.

89 Arboleda, 55.
was lagging behind. “We have not been able to progress at the pace of world progress,” said Núñez in his inauguration speech, in April 1880. Many [Latin American] countries that started the march [towards progress] at the same time as we did, have left us behind.” In terms of nature and industry, he stated that “our agriculture is far behind, and our industry is quite rudimentary.” He also considered trade by indicating that “if we look at the picture of our exports, we find that precious metals and coins are one third part; another third consists of agricultural or manufactured products, both of which are obtained with very old processes; and the other third consists of natural products, which hardly represent any effort of intelligence, such as cinchona bark, balsam, divi-divi, rubber, ivory nut, palo mora wood, etc.” When comparing Colombia with sister nations, he argued that “if we study the prosperity of Chile, for example, we find that Chile’s topographical conditions have had much influence, which, no doubt, were less advantageous than ours.” In 1882, Cartagena’s newspaper El Porvenir also claimed that Colombia’s natural riches, although plentiful, were no means of progress by themselves. “Colombia possesses abundant natural riches: gold, iron, copper, salt, coal, petroleum, excellent tobacco, superior coffee, quinine, cocoa, cotton, wool, dye sticks, furs, etc. [...]

90 Rafael María Merchán, Estudios críticos (Bogotá, Imprenta de la Luz, 1886), 410.

91 Merchán, 410.

92 Merchán, 410.

93 Merchán, 410–11.

94 Merchán, 410.
We dye all kinds of plant and animal products as a result of the diversity of climates, and yet we can hardly change those products for the satisfaction of our own urgent needs.”

In 1884, the Colombian priest and inveterate traveler Federico Cornelio Aguilar published a book asserting that Colombia embodied “vergonzoso atraso” and “estancamiento increíble” (shameful backwardness and extraordinary stagnation). Colombia, he argued, was falling well behind the rest of the Hispano-American nations.

“In light of our varied and powerful elements of progress, and in view of our incredible backwardness and stagnation, […] we have remained behind the other sister countries,” Aguilar stated. “Indignant,” he added, Colombians would soon “undertake the march that Providence has pointed us to get the place we were allotted.” In contrast, stated El Conservador in January 1884, “The material progress of the Argentine Republic is truly astounding.” When comparing Colombia with Argentina, Aguilar also lamented Colombia’s stagnation. “We have eight hundred thousand inhabitants more than the Argentine Republic, we are half of their distance from Europe and the United States, we have greater mineral and vegetable wealth, more navigable rivers and a people, by confession of [the Argentinian intellectual] Mr. [Miguel] Cané, more intelligent,” stated

95 La Crisis Económica (Bogotá: Imprenta de “La Luz,” 1886), 12.

96 Aguilar, Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas, 3.

97 Aguilar, 3–4.

98 Aguilar, 3–4.

Aguilar.\textsuperscript{100} However, Aguilar continued, “last year Argentina exported and received three times more than what we exported and collected.”\textsuperscript{101} General discontent with the idea of Colombia falling behind other Latin American countries was widely expressed in Colombia.

Along with general criticisms and comparisons, more specific complaints were reported. In 1894, \textit{La República} explicitly lamented how far behind Colombia was in terms of urban transportation. “Lima and Caracas, Santiago, Montevideo and Asunción, and, obviously, Mexico, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, and even Guatemala and Quito have left us behind,” stated the periodical. “The capital [Bogotá] is at the level of indigenous Bolivia, of Managua and San Salvador. What a shame for our progress! What a disgraceful stigma!” it concluded.\textsuperscript{102} A week earlier the same newspaper had published an article stating that “blind will be [those] who do not see that our country is in a state of deplorable backwardness.”\textsuperscript{103} This perception of Colombia falling behind neighboring countries worsened when Colombia’s bloodiest civil war unfolded at the turn of the century.

During the Thousand Days’ War at the end of the century (1899-1902), many Colombians perceived that their country was not only behind other Latin American countries

\textsuperscript{100} Aguilar, \textit{Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas}, 195–96.

\textsuperscript{101} Aguilar, 195–96.

\textsuperscript{102} “Propuesta,” \textit{La República}, April 10, 1894.

\textsuperscript{103} “Nuestros progresos,” \textit{La República}, April 6, 1894, 1.
countries, it was regressing. This time of war provided Colombians a period of critical
reflection. In 1900, *La Opinión* published an editorial making the balance of the
preceding century. “We have already seen on our black horizon the dawn of the new
century that comes to surprise us, and it finds us devouring each other like ferocious
beasts without having left, in ninety years of independence, any trace of true progress,” it
stated. ¹⁰⁴ Moreover, “the navigations of the rivers and our mining
operations are, with
few exceptions, in the same degree of backwardness as they were fifty years ago,” it
continued, “and if we were to examine briefly the current state and the march of many
works of progress, we would undoubtedly find them as they were in the time of our
forgotten colonial regime.”¹⁰⁵

Hopes, however, rested largely on the neighboring countries’ own experiences,
whose struggles and eventual progress signaled pathways to Colombia’s improvement.
“But it is still time to apply the remedy to this chronic evil,” said the same editorial. “We
have already publicized in these columns the luminous reports presented by some South
American rulers, who have gone through situations more abnormal than the one
Colombia is enduring, but they have known how to face them with sound judgment and
energy.”¹⁰⁶ Besides social struggles, in 1900 the Colombian intellectual and statesman
Antonio José Uribe attributed Colombia’s backwardness to “wasted energy in the

¹⁰⁴ “Fin de siglo,” *La República*, November 16, 1900, 2.

¹⁰⁵ “Fin de siglo,” 2.

¹⁰⁶ “Fin de siglo,” 2.
cultivation of letters and to politics itself, which among us has been essentially imaginary.”107 By extolling neighboring countries’ developments, Uribe argued that “saner than we have been are peoples like Mexico, Argentina and Chile, who have dedicated the nation’s forces to foster material development, to create wealth, and to acquire social welfare.”108 The same year, in 1901, Bogotá’s newspaper La Opinión summarized the general complaint about Colombia’s natural riches and potentials for progress going to waste. “Soon it will be a century since we are independent; and are we richer, more useful, happier? Is the Colombia we deliver to the twentieth century more prosperous, more industrial, more peaceful than that given by the Spaniards to the nineteenth century? There is no need to embarrass us with the answer, and the complaint is sterile.”109 Likewise, by comparing Colombia with Costa Rica, the Colombian intellectual Salomón Ponce Aguilera reported in 1901 that “a country like Costa Rica, which hardly has a foot of strength equal to that which composes half a battalion in Colombia, is worthy of praise and sincere admiration, because that means that social tranquility is not a utopia.”110 Moreover, he deemed Costa Rica’s progresses as models to follow. “A country such as this, where the public instruction diffuses day by day, where works of material progress are exhibited to the contemplation of the whole world with

107 Antonio José Uribe, “La administración,” La Opinión, September 13, 1900, 1.

108 Uribe, 1.

109 “La reforma universitaria,” La Opinión, September 6, 1901, 2.

eloquent development, and whose people seek the common welfare by easy means and without political upheavals, is no doubt a country that can never retreat in the broad path of its progress, its providential destinies.”

Ponce Aguilera concluded by stating, “Annoying is the contrast that this land [Costa Rica] offers in its territorial smallness with that of Colombia, the beloved Colombia that today is only a vast scene of desolation and death!”

From a more optimistic perspective, in December 1900 the Colombian intellectual Francisco Posada encouraged his fellow citizens to stop fighting and to start imagining their country as a ship departing for an idyllic destination. “The captain’s name is Industry,” he exclaimed, “the pilot’s, Commerce; Machines, Tools, Roads, Immigrants, etc., etc., are the obedient crew that understands the maneuver; the compass is Political Economy; the destination is Progress.” By pleading to move “from theory to practice,” as he entitled his newspaper article, Posada reminded readers that achieving material progress was possible, but that human action rather than utopian printed materials was required. Posada was well aware that nineteenth-century Colombia’s projects of material progress remained largely imagined. Aiming to contribute to a better

111 Ponce Aguilera, 2.
112 Ponce Aguilera, 2.
113 “El capitán de la nave se llama Industria; el piloto Comercio; Máquinas, Herramientas, Caminos, Inmigrantes, etc. etc., los tripulantes que obedezcan y entiendan la maniobra; la brújula, Política económica; el rumbo, Progreso.” Francisco Posada, “De lo teórico a lo práctico,” La Opinión, December 21, 1900, 3.
114 Posada, 3.
understanding of how to make Colombia prosper, Posada continued publishing articles regarding Colombian material progress and political economy from late 1900 to early 1902.¹¹⁵ Posada, as well as many other intellectuals, knew that besides debating theoretical solutions to an array of fiscal problems in Colombia, raising Colombians’ awareness of possible actions was critical. Posada believed it was convenient for Colombians to follow models like Mexico, and more precisely Porfirio Díaz’s system of government, of which he stated that “the sanity, patriotism, and greatness that has made General Díaz a model ruler resides in having executed everything at the same time: providing labor to the proletarian, attracting foreign immigration, opening interior roads, solving credit, promoting public education, giving powerful impulse to the nascent national industries.”¹¹⁶ Like Posada, many other Colombian progress brokers believed that neighboring Latin America had historical processes that would allow Colombians to examine their own approaches to economic, social, political, and cultural problems.

Stemming from the production and circulation of global knowledge—primarily from Latin America—Colombian progress brokers came to the realization that having plentiful natural resources and a strategic geographical position due the interoceanic


¹¹⁶ Posada, “De lo teórico a lo práctico,” 415.
connection they held in the Isthmus of Panama was not sufficient for achieving progress. In contrast with neighboring countries like Chile, Argentina, and Mexico, Colombians believed that their homeland had plenty of potential, but was not progressing. This feeling of stagnation and *atraso* (backwardness) developed in Colombia from the 1840s, and more fully during the 1880s after neighboring countries had begun to reach unprecedented levels of mechanization of production, international trade, infrastructural developments like roads, railroads, and ports, and ultimately economic growth. The perception of *atraso*, however, became also increasingly linked with *empleomanía* practices (mania of public employment), a concept coined to define an office-seeking habitus, which was widely perceived as a social evil in Spanish-speaking countries. This phenomenon had been reported as a common drawback in Latin American countries since the early nineteenth century, became criticized in mid-century, and was increasingly condemned towards the end of the nineteenth century.

### 2.5 A Common Drawback. The “*Empleomanía*” Cancer

During the second half of the nineteenth century, many Colombians learned that the idea of Colombia being destined to prosper due to its intrinsic riches was nothing but a long-lasting romanticized fallacy. Measuring Colombia’s intrinsic wealth and its potential to progress depended on domestic surveys as much as it did on evaluating wider and more objective contexts. Colombia certainly held an incomparable set of natural resources, but they remained largely unexploited. To achieve material progress, then, some Colombians deemed it crucial to bring up other Latin American countries’ own experiences. This comparison generally resulted in the understanding that Colombia,
despite its intrinsic riches, was lagging well behind. Nature alone did not suffice to boost material progress in nineteenth-century Colombia. Nor did it elsewhere in the hemisphere.

Empleomanía was perceived as the fountainhead of most of the often-lamented constraints to progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America, and newspaper articles circulated criticisms widely from 1840 to 1909. Coined in Spanish-speaking

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countries, contemporaries defined the concept of empleomanía as a twofold social pathologyor, as economists and political scientists of the latter twentieth century have said while examining developing countries, “rent-seeking behavior.” On the one hand, they used it to define a social phenomenon emerging in places where educated citizens would rather consume than produce public wealth, and seek public offices instead of commercial, industrial and agricultural enterprises. On the other hand, it exemplified a political and historical phenomenon occurring in places where public officials would rather enhance bureaucracy than industrialism, opening oft-useless positions at their discretion to pay political favors, to benefit friends and relatives, and to intrigue with their appointed lackeys. The latter phenomenon was perceived as the originator of agitation by perpetuating favoritism where office-holding vocation, the sense of duty, impersonal loyalty, and adequate training were required to sustain modern democratic

Preparación contra la empleomanía,” El Comercio, December 24, 1908, 3; “Defectos sociales. La empleomanía,” Diario del Salvador, October 21, 1909, 2.


119 Luis Manuel del Rivero, Méjico en 1842 (Madrid: Imprenta y Fundición de D. Eusebio Aguado, 1844), 305; R. A., “Los partidos en la América Española,” El Pasatiempo, April 20, 1853; Diario, “Chile y su situación entre las repúblicas Hispano-Americanas,” Panama Star and Herald, June 24, 1858; Jorge Gutiérrez de Lara, Memoria del Secretario del Despacho de Hacienda i Fomento de los Estados Unidos de Colombia, dirigida al Congreso Nacional (Bogotá: Imprenta de La Nación, 1868), 4; Aguilar, Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas, 7–8; Miguel E. Seminario, “Abusos Tolerados Que Deben Desaparecer,” in La Cuestión Monetaria En La América Española (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fé, 1893); Adolfo León Gómez, Ofrenda a la patria en el centenario de su independencia: discursos, artículos y conferencias (Bogotá: Sur América, 1910), 109.111.
societies. Empleomanía was generally associated with professionals (mostly lawyers) and military men striving to bleed public finances à la “social parasites,” and more precisely as “public treasury parasites,” as they were oftentimes denounced in newspaper articles. In fact, adjectives like “presupuestívoro,” (“budgetivore,” meaning government leech/parasite) were commonly used to denote people developing empleomanía and similar rent-seeking practices in Latin America. The Colombian historian Victor M. Uribe-Urán argues that in Colombia “intra-elite disputes were not so much over economic doctrines and interests, but rather an ideological reflection of tensions over the power, prestige, and status-honor derived from control over high ranking bureaucratic jobs (ultimately alleged to have provoked empleomanía and instability.)” Uribe-Urán also noticed that complaints about empleomanía appeared as early as in the early 1830s, and that early references to this phenomenon mirrored José María Luis Mora’s discussions of it in Mexico. “Rather than an adequate source of status-


121 “La reforma de la educación,” 1; “Defectos sociales. La empleomanía,” 2.


honor,” Uribe-Urán concluded, critics believed that “public job-seeking was becoming a pathological tendency.”

Colombia went through a short period of general peace from 1845 to 1849, experiencing firsthand the practical benefits internal order would bring towards economic growth. In March 1849, the Secretary of the Treasury Ramón M. Arjona attributed to this period of peace the successful development of Colombia’s domestic businesses and showed confidence in a prosperous future if the pattern continued. “[With] prevailing peace in the expanse of the Republic for the first time without disturbance in a constitutional period,” Arjona stated, “healthy habits of order and public tranquility certainly consolidated in the people, primordial elements of common welfare that can only survive in the shadow of a real freedom, far from despotism and demagogy. The inclination to work producing wealth is the necessary consequence.”

Hopeful, he concluded by saying that “continuing peace, which is the precious emanation of a fraternal patriotism, nothing will be powerful enough to stop the ongoing progress of the Republic, whose fertile soil gives us a flattering future in abundance.” However, the domestic order would remain a chimera for a long time in Colombia as well as in other

124 Uribe-Urán, 133.

125 Ramón M. Arjona, Informe del Secretario de Hacienda al Congreso Constitucional de 1849 (Bogotá: Imprenta de Ancizar y Pardo, 1849), 18.

126 Arjona, 18.
Latin America countries, and the fixation to empleomanía practices was often blamed as the cause of strife.\textsuperscript{127}

Contemporary observers blamed empleomanía for obstructing material, moral, and intellectual progress in nineteenth-century Colombia. The governor of Buenaventura criticized empleomanía in his 1846 memoir, calling it “a true social disease.”\textsuperscript{128} Likewise, in 1853 an anonymous author published in the Colombian newspaper \textit{El Pasatiempo} an article questioning pernicious social habits affecting Latin American nations like empleomanía which, he argued, was “sustained by customs.”\textsuperscript{129} As he came to explain, “a young man finishes his school career, that is, he obtains a Doctor’s degree, but this title, not always representative of science but of a declining aristocracy, does not provide a living.”\textsuperscript{130} In the author’s view, the problem would begin after “he finds himself, having consumed the most beautiful years of life in a school studying jurisprudence or medicine, with no industry providing him with labor and sustenance; in this case he develops a liking to public jobs, which among us are exercised even if there are neither skills nor work ethic, emerging in him instincts for politics, superficiality, and the spirit of revolts.”\textsuperscript{131} Along with social upbringing, nature was also perceived as a determinant

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\textsuperscript{128} “Memoria presentada por el gobernador de Buenaventura a la cámara de provincia en sus sesiones del último año,” \textit{Gaceta de la Nueva Granada}, January 11, 1846, 2.

\textsuperscript{129} Diario, “Chile y su situación entre las repúblicas Hispano-Americanas,” 3.

\textsuperscript{130} Diario, 3.

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factor in societies with more or less empleomania. While admiring the United States’
development, in 1855 the Colombian newspaper *El Catolicismo* indicated that “the
commercial interests so developed in the American Union, by their habits inherited and
by their geographical position, drive the North Americans away from empleomanía, the
true leprosy the other nations.”

Colombian progress brokers funneled useful information from other Latin
American countries to Colombians, and questions regarding hindrances to progress like
empleomanía were among their interests. In 1858 the *Panama Star and Herald*
republished a Chilean article alluding to empleomanía as a social burden and a source of
wicked revolutions. “There are two kinds of revolutions,” stated the author, “one seeks a
change of *principles*, the other a change of *persons*.”

Belonging to the latter, continued
the columnist, were “most of the revolutions that took place in the old Spanish colonies,
whose curse has been their sons’ empleomanía” (*La empleomanía de sus hijos ha sido su
maldición*).

This problem, widely debated in Latin America, was believed to have
originated the numerous civil struggles that overwhelmed Latin American nations shortly
after their independence from Spain. In contemporaries’ view, “when the war of
independence was over, it was difficult to find armies for so many of the surviving

133 Diario, “Chile y su situación entre las repúblicas Hispano-Americanas,” 3. Italicized in the
original.
134 Diario, 3.
135 Uribe-Uran, *Honorable Lives*. 
generals and colonels, and of course each of them was [...] forming battalions among their supporters, promising them a part of the spoils, and forgetting the happiness of their country, they strove to climb to the seat of power over the corpses of his compatriots and between streams of blood,” attested the writer.\textsuperscript{136} This attitude was perceived as an outcome of an ill-defined system that allowed influential families to purchase cheap military titles in times of economic crises.\textsuperscript{137}

Likewise, along with some Latin American intellectuals, Colombian progress brokers believed that plans of economic growth were doomed to go awry wherever peace, republican institutions, and legions of industrious people were lacking. While the Argentinian \textit{El Libre Pensador} affirmed in 1882 that “empleomanía weakens the productive power of society,” the \textit{Panama Star and Herald} followed in 1887 by arguing that “where everybody must be an employee, there are no industries, no farmers, no literary persons, no scientists.”\textsuperscript{138} Empleomanía, concluded the latter, “excludes property and lack of property accustoms people to slavery and slavery brings tyranny. In nations of this type, militarism becomes a particular way of empleomanía.”\textsuperscript{139}

Hindrances to prosperity were generally linked with a vicious circle that empleomanía and civil wars created. The Colombian president Rafael Núñez came to

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\textsuperscript{136} Diario, “Chile y su situación entre las repúblicas Hispano-Americanas,” 3.

\textsuperscript{137} Diario, 3.

\textsuperscript{138} La Defensa, “Egoísmo social,” 4; “Federalización,” 1.

\textsuperscript{139} La Defensa, “Egoísmo social,” 4; “Federalización,” 1.
\end{flushright}
believe and reported that empleomanía and its subsequent wars were driving Colombia penniless. “The war of 1876 cost at least nine million pesos in direct damages only,” said Núñez in 1885.140 “The last war [1884] has probably cost twice as much; and the entire expense of the preceding struggles has not yet been paid. You cannot think of new taxes of sufficient amount, because taxable matter is no longer available, really. Multiplied to the infinite the contributions [only] to nourish the vast empleomanía created by governmental diffusion, any plan aiming to widen the revenues of the national treasury will inevitably fail,” he argued.141 Then not only militarism triggered national finances by beginning wars and by withdrawing manpower from productive fields. Public employees in general were “other national elements that exclude themselves from the movement of progress. That is why the country’s son is insensibly excluding himself from commerce, from industry, and even from scientific careers,” as the Argentinian newspaper El Libre Pensador stressed in 1882.142

Peace and order were perceived as exceptions rather than the norm during the second half of the nineteenth century in Colombia, and empleomanía was widely blamed as a primary cause. In 1884, Federico Cornelio Aguilar argued that in Colombia, “holding better elements [of progress] than most of the Hispanic American republics, […] empleomanía, a legitimate daughter of laziness and politics, has devoured us and still


141 Núñez, 645.

142 “Federalización,” 1.
devours us; the internal wars have ripped apart the bowels of the country.”¹⁴³ In fact, in 1891 the Bogotá newspaper *El Correo Nacional* reported that after the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1831, Colombia went through six constitutional periods, and that only one of them had experienced complete peace (1845-1849), and partially from 1855 to 1857, when then-Vice-President Manuel María Mallarino took the presidential office after overthrowing president José María Melo.¹⁴⁴ It argued that “in the course of our independent political life, the maintenance of public order has thus been the exception, and civil war the general rule.”¹⁴⁵ The list of civil wars and general turmoil is quite telling (see Table 2.1). Referring exclusively to the previous two decades, the article listed periods of many different agitations and upheavals, disorders, disturbances, general agitation, revolutions, and civil wars. In Colombia, then, where the youth’s major goal was to reach public offices, in this context of highly divided party doctrines, the “contagious disease” of empleomanía was hardly curable.¹⁴⁶ In a society “where every individual lives only in the interests of the party, in the men of his circle, in the plume of the titled chief to follow him blindly, in the friendship of the pontiffs, and in the next fight of electoral fraud,” said León Gómez, “empleomanía is enforced.”¹⁴⁷


¹⁴⁵ Periódico El Porvenir de Cartagena, 2.

¹⁴⁶ León Gómez, *Ofrenda a la patria en el centenario de su independencia*, 109–11.

¹⁴⁷ Frank Safford, “El problema de los transportes en Colombia en el siglo XIX,” in *Economía colombiana del siglo XIX*, ed. Adolfo Meisel Roca and María Teresa Ramírez (Bogotá: Fondo de Cultura Económica; Banco de la República, 2010), 109–11.
### TABLE 2.1.
UPRISINGS AND CIVIL WARS IN COLOMBIA, 1868-1885

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868-1870</td>
<td>Revolts</td>
<td>Cundinamarca and Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-1880</td>
<td>Disorders</td>
<td>Panama, Antioquia, Cauca, Tolima, and Magdalena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-1880</td>
<td>General agitation</td>
<td>Throughout the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876-1877</td>
<td>General civil war</td>
<td>Throughout the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-1883</td>
<td>Disorders</td>
<td>Cundinamarca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-1883</td>
<td>General agitation</td>
<td>Throughout the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-72</td>
<td>Revolts</td>
<td>Boyacá and Cundinamarca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-74</td>
<td>Disorders</td>
<td>Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-74</td>
<td>Great agitation</td>
<td>Boyacá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-76</td>
<td>Agitations and upheavals</td>
<td>Throughout the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Disturbances</td>
<td>Santander and Cundinamarca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>General civil war</td>
<td>Throughout the Republic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While empleomanía was largely associated with official servants’ economic security, honor seeking, and social climbing, it was also perceived as the engine of frequent social and economic crises in Latin America during the second half of nineteenth century. Critics of this stated that by neglecting wealth-producing ventures, many Colombians and Latin Americans alike sought bureaucratic positions and a military career. “There are nations that work to improve their state by fixing their meaning in

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politics, mistakenly believing that the greatest possible welfare for all social classes depends on politics,” said the *Panama Star and Herald* in 1887.149 “Such mistake has led to the use of empleomanía as a means of subsistence and it is known that empleomanía is the most terrible cancer that can corrode the entrails of a society: empleomanía is the hindrance of all progress,” (*es la rémora de todo progreso*) it stressed.150 Hence, in many contemporaries’ eyes general poverty and underdevelopment prevailed in countries where many men of productive age became either government layabouts or military men, whose power struggles often fueled civil wars all over the continent throughout the century.

Colombian progress brokers came to believe and disseminate the idea that, to achieve material prosperity, human will and commitment to this end were imperative. “It is necessary to confess it,” stated Panama’s newspaper *Star and Herald* in 1887. “The wealth of a country does not consist in the abundance of its minerals, nor in the fertility of its land, but in the abnegation of its fellow citizens, in the fulfillment of its duties, which are work and mutual protection.”151 As historians have observed similarly in countries like Mexico, this newspaper’s view captures a common change in the way people thought about economic growth from the early to the late nineteenth century, representing a change from a more physiocratic view of wealth (e.g. agriculture and

149 La Defensa, “Egoísmo social,” 4.

150 La Defensa, 4.

151 La Defensa, 4.
mining) to a more capitalist and industrial view of wealth, stressing the importance of work in terms of labor and technology, rather than just a focus on natural resources.\textsuperscript{152} However, when devising progress on a national level, processes of industrialization required the competence of public officials, who were largely perceived as selfish people casting a toxic shadow over countries like Colombia during the nineteenth century. The same newspaper stressed that “indifference to the general good is a symptom of death for social uplifting,” a symptom that was seemingly chronic in Colombia.\textsuperscript{153} Many contemporaries believed that behind every limitation to Colombia’s prosperity was a growing number of empowered citizens embodying the quintessence of the social evil widely known as empleomanía.\textsuperscript{154}

Empleomanía, then, came to be associated with political conflict and instability, a hindrance to projects of national betterment. For these reasons, and having identified empleomanía as a distinctive evil in Spanish-speaking countries, many intellectuals and politicians from all over Latin America, and from all political spectrums, strongly criticized this phenomenon. They perceived it as a primarily Latin American phenomenon that constrained progress. To cure it, progress brokers looked for models adaptable to Colombia in neighboring countries rather than in the North Atlantic. They emphasized that progress in Colombia required, along with a lasting peace, more

\textsuperscript{152} Weiner, “Economic Thought and Culture in Revolutionary Mexico.”

\textsuperscript{153} La Defensa, “Egoismo social,” 4.

\textsuperscript{154} La Defensa, 4.
practical systems of education, commercial enterprises, industry, and roads that other Latin American countries like Chile, Argentina, and Mexico were developing towards the end of the century.

2.6 Conclusions

The creation and circulation of original knowledge about Colombia since the early nineteenth century had led politicians and intellectuals to believe that their territory, although plentiful in natural resources and opportunities to prosper due to its strategic location (facing the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans plus holding the Isthmus of Panama), was lacking elements for progress that neither nature nor Providence could provide. Likewise, the brokerage role many intellectuals and politicians played in circulating Latin American printed materials contributed to a better understanding of both Colombia’s place in the world and the appropriateness of neighboring models rather than the North Atlantic ones to foster material progress. In fact, the large body of knowledge that circulated in Colombia suggested that from the 1840s, Colombia’s challenges and hindrances to prosperity were common and widely shared within Latin America. Colombian progress brokers, then, came to believe that although Colombia was increasingly falling behind countries like Chile, Mexico, and Argentina towards the end of the century, those countries offered methods, means, and models to achieve prosperity that Colombians could adapt to their own local circumstances.

Funneling information about other countries’ experiences and practices to a Colombian readership—sometimes in the form of political lobbying, sometimes simply
as conveying information, but always with an eye to the lessons that Colombia’s neighbors might offer—Colombia’s progress brokers aimed to raise awareness in Colombia of neighboring countries’ states of affairs and appropriate ways to foster progress. Statesmen deemed vital this body of knowledge because it was useful for exercising power more efficiently within Colombia’s territory and for identifying challenges and the realistic possibilities with which Colombia had to engage fully in the race for progress.
CHAPTER 3:
THE CIRCULATION OF IDEAS

3.1 Introduction

Historians of Colombia have traditionally emphasized that, for most of the nineteenth century, Colombians remained physically and intellectually isolated from the rest of the world, especially from other Latin American countries. However, my evidence demonstrates that many Colombians developed an intense interchange of ideas with their fellow Latin Americans, which would contribute to a better understanding of the politics, literature, trade, and economies of Colombia’s neighboring countries. In fact, as the Spanish-Bolivian historian Josep María Barnadas stated in 1988, “something that has been usually forgotten must be remembered: that Hispanic American elites cultivated among themselves intellectual, political and economic relations which were far more intense than with Europe or the United States.”¹ Colombian progress brokers played a

key role on the creation of such relations and on the circulation of useful information from all over the world to Colombia.

From the 1840s, Colombia’s progress brokers had developed an increasing interest in global affairs, and more precisely in the history and circumstances of Latin America. As a result of this exchange of information, and the careful study of regional experiences, progress brokers gradually came to believe that neighboring nations rather than North Atlantic countries would provide appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. This idea, however, was not simply an abstract observation.

Colombian progress brokers exercised intellectual curiosity coupled with more concrete and pragmatic interests. They read international books and newspapers, interacted personally and through correspondence with Latin America’s important figures, joined and created scientific and patriotic associations, and represented the Colombian government in diplomatic missions all over the world and increasingly in Latin America towards the end of the century. This complex network of interactions allowed Colombian progress brokers to access critical information and to weigh Colombia against their neighbors and the rest of the world. But they did not keep this information to themselves. They founded newspapers and periodicals, engaged actively with *canjes* (mutual exchanges) of printed materials, and sought to circulate useful ideas about Latin America that would help Colombians draw suitable models of material progress, and lessons for action, from neighboring countries. For instance, based on a careful scrutiny of Latin American experiences during the second half of the nineteenth century, Antonio José Uribe proposed to improve the Colombian political system by separating, like other neighboring countries, administrative duties and political debates,
which in Colombia seemed to have occupied officials, beginning with the President. “We cannot continue as we have come here; it is necessary to make the demarcation between administration and politics,” stated Uribe. “The men of the government must dedicate themselves to preserving order as the supreme good, and to developing, under the protection of peace, the living forces of the nation,” Uribe continued defining the administrative duties he considered critical. “Men of politics,” on the other hand, “whatever party they belong to, will stir in their own field, arguing with the freedom that is compatible with morality and order all systems, all theories, all public affairs, all philosophical questions, everything that interests the country in general, or a party in particular.” Uribe believed that examples could be drawn from Colombia’s neighboring countries. “We have called attention to what is happening in Argentina and Peru,” said Uribe in 1900, “and in later articles we will talk about what happens, in this regard, with several other Hispanic American republics, to show, with practical examples, the fertile work of the demarcation between the Administration and Politics.” His former observations were published as newspaper articles in 1900 under his nom de plume “U,” and in 1917 they were compiled, complemented, and published in a lengthy book.

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2 Uribe, “La administración,” September 13, 1900, 81.

3 Uribe, 81.

4 Uribe, 81.

5 Antonio José Uribe, “La administración,” La Opinión, September 19, 1900, 238.

6 Antonio José Uribe, La reforma administrativa en Colombia (Bogotá: Librería colombiana, 1917).
Like Uribe, Colombian progress brokers aimed to offer useful lessons from different perspectives and historical periods. They committed to gathering, selecting, and circulating as much useful information as possible, helping their fellow Colombians perceive wider historical processes and to grasp, for instance, how countries with more complex and violent pasts like Mexico and Argentina had begun to develop political stability and economic growth in contrast to Colombia towards the end of the century.

In a context where evolutionary Darwinism was commonly accepted in Atlantic intellectual circles, and where efforts to develop social and economic strength was the norm, countries unable to foster plans of material and intellectual progress were at risk of being devoured by more powerful nations. Colombian progress brokers channeled this preoccupation through printed materials, playing the crucial role of selecting and funneling useful global information aiming to promote similar levels of prosperity that neighboring countries had been developing—and which they were envying.

This chapter analyzes the circulation of Latin American ideas and useful knowledge by Colombia’s progress brokers. It focuses on diplomats stationed in Latin American countries, mainly in Argentina and Chile. It also scrutinizes the role some Colombian and Latin American intellectuals played overseas during the 1880s and 1890s, creating and divulging Latin American statistics and narratives of these countries’ developments, and forging international networks that moved useful information among Latin American nations, often through intermediaries in places like Paris and New York. This chapter also stresses the expansion of informal and official *canje* practices (mutual exchanges of publications) between Colombian intellectuals and government offices and their Latin American counterparts, which is key to comprehending how ideas moved in
Latin America, in Colombia particularly, despite the often-noted infrastructure hindrances.

By discussing and disseminating printed materials, Colombian progress brokers helped configure appropriate models from Latin American countries during the second half of the nineteenth century. They contributed to the shaping of referents of progress from neighboring countries by engaging with journalism, diplomacy, and intellectual activities in Latin American countries, the United States, and Europe. This chapter provides the background for better understanding specific debates in Colombia about political stability, social betterment, and economic growth that historians have often observed within Eurocentric rather than Latin American framings.

3.2 Blind North Atlantic Imitations vs. Appropriate Latin American Models

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the construction of new republics in the former Spanish colonies depended heavily on observations of advanced societies, mostly from Europe and the United States. However, in politics as well as in literature, mimicry and creativity were at stake when devising newly independent Latin American nations. While some political and intellectual leaders opted to import identical, foreign institutions, other influential men advised to look at alien institutions critically, making

7 Maiguashca, “Historians in Spanish South America: Cross-References between Centre and Periphery.”
interpretative adaptations.\textsuperscript{8} Either way, the historiography has traditionally argued that Colombians in particular, and Latin American in general, looked for models exclusively in the North Atlantic.\textsuperscript{9}

Historian of Colombia Frédéric Martínez has argued that Colombians from different political spectrums condemned blind imitations and contributed to the creation of a “negative imaginary of imitation,” which would take the form of “a true discourse against external influences” from 1849 to 1854.\textsuperscript{10} However, by focusing nearly exclusively on North Atlantic references, he disregards the far-reaching search for models in neighboring Latin America, an “external” reference that played a major role in the search for appropriate models for Colombia’s material and intellectual progress. Like Martínez, historians have systematically disregarded Colombian intellectuals and politicians who, based on a sharp understanding of both the Old and the New World, rejected plain imitations from what they saw as unsuitable models, but also deemed necessary to look to and seek to learn from neighboring experiences. “Mankind always


\textsuperscript{10} Martínez, \textit{El nacionalismo cosmopolita}, 46, 52.
imitates, but with this difference: mediocrity copies; higher understanding transforms,” asserted the Spanish intellectual Leopoldo Augusto de Cuervo in 1853. Resembling the latter, the Colombian progress brokers that comprise the focus of this dissertation focused on appropriate Latin American models rather than on unsuitable North Atlantic paradigms. As early as the 1840s, Colombian newspapers disseminated ideas advocating for the analysis and adaptation of Latin American models, rather than European mockups.

In 1843 New Granadian Treasury Secretary Rufino José Cuervo considered some European paradigms damaging, favoring instead Latin American models. In his annual report, while suggesting the development of rescue banks in New Granada, Cuervo argued that “in businesses of this kind, which present an identity of principles, interests and needs, I consider imitation of our American brothers’ practices to be as useful as damaging, and indiscreet is the imitation of some European uses and laws.” Likewise, in 1848, before engaging the Chorographic Commission and while championing the creation of the Instituto Caldas in Colombia—a progressive establishment for the “preservation of morals, the diffusion of primary education, and the development of industry”—Manuel Ancízar stated that “those who claim that we must transport to these regions [Spanish America] the already made European civilization, pretend the impossible.”

12 Arjona, Informe del Secreatario de Hacienda al Congreso Constitucional de 1849, 33.
13 Ancízar, “Instituto Caldas,” 5.
unscrupulous paupers, and of the black slags of past centuries,” Manuel Ancízar advised
his fellow countrymen to look critically to Europe “because there is a profound
disharmony between the physical, moral, and political qualities of present-day America,
and the social results of the uneven civilization of the other hemisphere.”¹⁴ He believed
that Colombians as well as Latin-Americans in general could achieve progress in their
own right, and stated that “South American civilization must be developed within these
peoples, pondering from Europe only ideas and methods, the abstract.”¹⁵ Moreover, in an
article analyzing Peruvian models to improve Colombia’s mint in 1849, the editors of El
Día—the editor in chief of which was José María Torres Caicedo—stated that “we are
opposed to blind imitations of the uses of the European nations […] and experience has
taught us that it is costly to copy slavishly some practices of countries much more
advanced in civilization.”¹⁶ Moreover, they believed that only neighboring countries
could offer appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. “When
in the Spanish-American Republics some improvement has had success,” the editors
affirmed, “there is a good chance that the same thing will be applicable to the others, and
since the experience of the political swings that suffer all of them is of little use to us, let
us take advantage, at least, of what has contributed to the material progress of public

¹⁴ Ancízar, 5.
¹⁵ Ancízar, 5.
¹⁶ “Casa de Moneda,” 388.
establishments of some [of these republics].” In Colombia, Latin American countries were widely perceived as relatively uniform and qualified to teach one another, an idea that printed materials would perpetuate.

Yet Rufino Cuervo, Manuel Ancizar, and José M. Torres Caicedo were not alone in perceiving European models unsuitable to Colombia and Latin America in general. Many other intellectuals condemned North Atlantic imitations and favored analyses and adaptations of appropriate models within the hemisphere, which would enrich the idea of Latin Americans embodying a unified social and cultural body. Progress brokers came to believe that only Colombia’s neighboring countries could offer appropriate models because they were all similar in heritage, customs, religion, language, and practices.

In Colombia, ideas of a relative uniformity within Latin America were widely shared during the mid-nineteenth century. “We are in Mexico the same as in Buenos Aires, in Central America as in Bolivia, in Venezuela as in New Granada, in Peru as in Ecuador, and the same as in the tropics and in the middle of the temperate zones,” stated nom de plume Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta in an article published in in 1849. They claimed that “the same principles work everywhere,” and that “in vain we have become foreigners

17 “Casa de Moneda,” 388.

18 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmolíta, 21, 46–53; “Establecimiento de una sociedad literaria en Santiago,” in El museo de ambas Américas, vol. 1, 1842, 278; José Victorino Lastarria, Historia Constitucional Del Medio Siglo: Revista de Los Progresos Del Sistema Representativo En Europa i América Durante Los Primeros Cincuenta Años Del Siglo XIX (Imprenta del Mercurio, 1853); Lastarria, La América.

19 Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta, “¿La cuestión que nos divide, es la cuestión moral?,” El Día, November 21, 1849, 1–2.
among us, the children of the same parents, when language, customs, education, worries, habits, tastes, vices, ignorance, bad faith, lack of virtues are proving us at all hours that we only compose a single family scattered between immense distances.”

Similar opinions were held by a variety of Colombian intellectuals and politicians, like the anonymous “R. A.” and Mariano Ospina Rodríguez. The former supported the idea of Latin Americans’ uniformity on black-legend notions, implying a negative, widely shared Spanish legacy throughout the former Spanish colonies within the Americas. “The society embedded in the plains and slopes of the Andes grew with the vices imported from overseas by its founders,” argued R. A. in 1853. “Here are the bases on which the new peoples rose the concentration of wealth, the ecclesiastical oligarchy, the military retreat, the monopoly of the industry, in a word, the restriction in all senses,” he concluded.

Mariano Ospina, on the other hand, did not blame Spanish heritage but the French intellectual traditions that succeeding generations had adopted. He argued that “it is not the habits of our parents [Spanish ancestors], but the contrary habits we have acquired that produce evil. […] Neither the young nor the trained men read anything other than French books, whose purely theoretical ideas were less appropriate for forming practical republicans.”

These kinds of conceptual differences regarding the Spanish

20 Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta, 1–2.


22 R. A., 1.

23 Ospina Rodríguez, “Qué es la civilización,” 5. On Mariano Ospina’s views of practical knowledge, see: Safford, The Ideal of the Practical; Alberto Mayor Mora, ética, trabajo y productividad en
heritage and French influence would contribute to circumscribing liberal and conservative mindsets in Colombia.\textsuperscript{24} The United States was also largely perceived as a model in Colombia during the first half of the nineteenth century, “but it would be as unfortunate to imitate the institutions of the United States as to implement the utopias of the French ideologists,” as \textit{El Pasatiempo} stated in 1853.\textsuperscript{25} Although conceptual differences of the Spanish, U.S., and French legacy would fuel struggles between Conservatives and Liberals in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America, politicians and intellectuals would largely agree that Latin Americans shared identifiable commonalities.

Disregarding ideological and political affiliations, many Colombians believed that Latin Americans had failed in developing their own institutions since independence, instead importing foreign political and economic traditions that were unsuitable to their own contexts. For instance, the abovementioned R. A. and Ospina agreed that Latin Americans statesmen widely ignored domestic cultural traits, incorporating delusive foreign models. While the former stated that Latin America’s customs and legislation were mutually opposed and inconsistent (”\textit{en la sociedad americana las costumbres i la legislación republicana siguen diversos caminos; aquellas contradiciendo lo que esta consagra}”), the latter argued that “[Hispanic] America was as ready for independence then as it is now, or a century before, […] but it] was not ready for the political institutions

\textit{Antioquia: una interpretación sociológica sobre la influencia de la Escuela Nacional de Minas en la vida, costumbres e industrialización regionales}, 1984.

\textsuperscript{24} Loaiza Cano, \textit{Poder letrado}, 147; Martínez, \textit{El nacionalismo cosmopolita}, 36–43.

\textsuperscript{25} “Cual es la situación actual de las repúblicas del Centro y del Sud-América,” 3–4; Campuzano-Hoyos, “Hemispheric Models of Material Progress in New Granada and Colombia (1810-1930),” 265–70.
it received; which means only that these institutions were not in accordance with the [local] doctrines, habits, customs, and laws.”

Although political and economic circumstances would shape the Latin American nations differently and unevenly from the 1850s, commonalities would continue to be emphasized towards the end of the century. “If we go through the pages of the contemporary history of all the republics of our continent of Latin origin,” stated Colombian newspaper *El Conservador* in 1883, “we will find that the same causes produce identical effects: that they all have more or less natural resources, more than enough to make their prosperity, but that this prosperity cannot be reached while their vital forces are employed to destroy each other, their fields are uncultivated, and their mines are untapped.”

Two decades later, from a similar historical perspective, Bogotá’s *La Opinión* started publishing a series of articles about administrative reform in Colombia by the renowned statesmen and intellectual Antonio J. Uribe. He stated that his study was “not limited to the conditions of national life only, but must be done in a comparative way, extending it to the examination of what happens in other countries, especially those that, by community of race, of forms of government, etc., have gone through similar vicissitudes and have had to solve similar social and political problems.”

Convinced that analyzing and circulating Latin America’s experiences would contribute to the betterment of Colombia’s political system, Uribe

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concluded by saying that “this is why we have committed to show, broadly and based on the most recent official documents, the situation of the American Republics.”

The rejection of blind imitations, the idea of uniformity within Latin America, and the circulation of references to neighboring countries took form because *la república de las letras* had already eased the circulation of global ideas. However, Colombia’s progress brokers, who had engaged actively with a complex network of interactions among Latin Americans, systematically exchanged critical information allowing regional comparisons and the identification of useful lessons for action. Deliberately, they sought to provide valuable information on industry, colonization, and trade to compel Colombians to draw appropriate models from the transmission and diffusion of Latin American history, news, and currents. Some Colombian intellectuals and diplomats stood out on this matter, opening diplomatic missions and promoting commercial and intellectual exchanges in Latin American countries, mostly in Argentina and Chile during the last third of the century.

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29 Uribe, 278.
3.3 Brokering Progress. Between Colombia and Latin America

In Colombia, many intellectuals, businessmen, and politicians looked for models of material progress because they believed in and desired economic growth. They widely accepted that progress was imperative after the North Atlantic economies signaled an upward trend of growth after the so-called first industrial revolution (ca. 1760-1840), with its fruits on public display at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Convinced that progress was truly feasible (and fearful of their fate if their countries might prove unable to keep up), these people looked for models to prosper in their own right during the second half of the nineteenth century. The historiography on nineteenth-century Colombia has largely linked the role these brokers played with a North Atlantic model of civilizing process. Yet these important historical actors looked at Latin America as much as they looked at the North Atlantic countries, and sought to draw from neighboring countries the appropriate models that the North Atlantic was not able to provide to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances.

A network of intellectuals, diplomats, artists, and merchants eased communications between Latin Americans during the second half of the nineteenth century. Among them were Colombian progress brokers who travelled around, or were


32 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita; Loaiza Cano, Poder letrado.
settled in major Latin American, European, and U.S. cities. They contributed to raising awareness of the Americas’ currents all over the world, and provided intellectual matter to forecast real possibilities and appropriate models to prosper based on neighboring nations’ developments and political circumstances. If physical isolation was the rule, the circulation of ideas knew few limits in nineteenth-century Colombia.

Intellectually, many Latin Americans were well connected during the second half of the nineteenth century. Transportation hindrances that slowed the movement of people and goods, particularly challenging in the Andean region, were less onerous on the movement of ideas. They could be overcome, for example, by shipping books and printed materials from places like Argentina to Colombia via Paris and New York, like the correspondence between Colombian intellectuals Miguel Antonio Caro and Argentinian Juan María Gutiérrez in the late 1870s, with the intermediation of Ezequiel Uricoechea in Paris and Roberto de Narváez in New York.33 These exchanges are normally assumed to correspond to North Atlantic rather than Latin American exchanges. However, just as some Colombian exports that had to go first to ports like Hamburg before reaching Latin American ports like Valparaíso during the early 1870s, mutual Latin American exchanges required levels of intermediation because the contemporary infrastructure did not provide better alternatives.34 Though it often required long and complex intertwined logistics chains, Colombians connected with other Latin Americans.


34 Oficina Central de Estadística, Estadística comercial de la República de Chile correspondiente al año de 1873 (Valparaíso, Chile: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1874), XXI.
Panama, as a strategic middle point, was vital to the circulation of goods and ideas from all over the world to Colombia’s principal ports, from where printed materials like newspapers were distributed to urban hubs. In fact, in 1891 a Canadian traveler in Panama, Wolfred Nelson, stated that “perhaps the best way of giving my readers an idea of the commercial importance of the Isthmus of Panama will be by referring to some of the steam companies connecting with it.” After providing a list of seven regular lines on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus, and three on the Pacific side, including a “new South American line that has just inaugurated a regular service between the Isthmus, Ecuador, Peru, and Valparaiso,” the author stated that, returning to the Atlantic side, “The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company have an immense service, for their steam lines connect the Isthmus of Panama with ports in Colombia, Venezuela, the West Indian Islands, and Southampton.” In the circulation of global goods and ideas progress brokers played a major role, aided by the improvement of steamship navigation from the 1860s and by the expansion of telegraphic lines since the 1870s, which interconnected the world like never before. While both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans were the natural bridges rather than moats through which Colombians drew models of material progress, the promotion of *canjes* (mutual exchanges of publications) was perhaps the most effective way to circulate useful Latin American knowledge to Colombia.


36 Nelson, 136.

Colombia’s progress brokers fostered official and informal *canjes* among Latin American governments and periodical publications during the late 1860s. Decree 23 of January 1868 dictated to establish in the “National Library of Colombia a central office of *canjes* of national publications with those of the other countries of America.”38 The primary goal of this office was to exchange scientific and literary productions, which “is the most effective means of developing among the American sections their illustration and progress,” as the Colombia Minster of Foreign Affairs communicated to his Chilean counterpart.39 In pursuit of this objective, Colombian officials managed to start getting official printed materials from different Latin American Governments like Mexico, which reported in 1875 that Mexico’s President had agreed to make “a collection of official publications, since the fall of the so-called empire,” and send it to Colombia via Acapulco and Panama in “four boxes containing the books and documents that the attached catalog expresses.”40 Personal donations, and *canjes* would also enrich the National Library during the 1880s.

In 1883, the appointed Colombian diplomat José María Samper advertised in the Colombian newspaper *El Conservador* that, “traveling to Chile and the Argentine

38 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del Gobierno de Chile con el de la Nueva Granada. 1824-1881, Caja 212, Carpeta 208, 96-97

39 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del Gobierno de Chile con el de la Nueva Granada. 1824-1881, Caja 212, Carpeta 208, 96-97; Colombia, Memoria Del Secretario de Lo Interior I Relaciones Exteriores Al Congreso de Nacional de 1872 (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1872), 3–6.

40 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del Gobierno de Mexico, 1824-1899, Caja 650, Carpeta 139, 84-84v
Republic, I wish to take advantage of my trip in the service of the letters and sciences of those republics and of our republic, [and] to that end I intend to take a donation in the name of the Colombian writers to the national libraries of Santiago and Buenos Aires of the works published in Colombia; and then bring and donate to the National Library of Bogotá as many [Latin] American books as I can procure in Chile, the Argentine Republic, Montevideo, etc."⁴¹ Moreover, after reaching the Southern Cone, Samper would sign in 1885—along with representatives of Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina—a “Latin American Convention on promotion and dissemination of useful publications,” which was intended to promote mutual cooperation between the Austral countries and Colombia.⁴² Thanks to these kinds of individual initiatives and official accomplishments, in 1888 the National Library of Colombia received “from the Ministry of Public Instruction sixty-one newspaper collections, all incomplete, from Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, Santo Domingo, Cuba, Curaçao, the Philippines, Jamaica, Central America, France, Italy, and Austria.”⁴³ In the context of rapid economic growth in neighboring countries, Colombian progress brokers like Samper sought not only to learn from them but also to endorse commercial and


⁴² Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Colombia, “Memoria del Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores dirigida al presidente de la Unión Para el Congreso de 1885” (Imprenta de Vapor de Zalamea Hermanos, 1885), 15.

literary conventions, which would allow a faster and more efficient examination of neighboring republics through collecting and sending useful printed materials.

The Colombian diplomatic body in Latin American countries played a key brokerage role by collecting and sending to Colombia a variety of useful publications. For instance, in 1892 the Colombian consul in Argentina Antonio Samper reported the shipment of a dozen of Chilean official volumes, via Paris, to Bogotá. In a letter to the Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Samper informed that “I have sent directly to the Ministry of Development through the trading house of Mr. Antonio Samper and Company in Paris, so that they can go more safely, the statistical publications that I have been able to gather.” 44 He also informed that Alberto B. Martínez, then General Director of Municipal Statistics of Buenos Aires, had “given the necessary orders so that all the publications published by the Statistical Office can be sent to this consulate.” 45 Likewise, in October 1900 Colombian Consul in Chile, Clímaco Valdez, reported that he was about to ship to Colombia “thirty-seven volumes of state reports, statistics, fiscal budgets, general account of the treasure, etc., some of which were requested by that ministry of finance, and others that I have judged of interest for our public administration.” 46 A month later, Valdez wrote again to Colombian government, correcting the former figure,

44 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado de Colombia en Argentina-Buenos Aires. 1872-1910, Caja 43, Carpeta 110, 88-88v

45 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado de Colombia en Argentina-Buenos Aires. 1872-1910, Caja 43, Carpeta 110, 88-88v

46 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1899-1902, Tomo 44, 54
and informed that he had shipped sixty-eight Chilean books to Colombia, among which forty-seven were “bulletin of laws and government decrees.” The package also included a “mining bill,” commercial statistics, Memoirs of Foreign Relations and of “Culto y Colonización,” “astronomical observations of the observatory of Santiago de Chile,” a study of “cholera prophylaxis,” reports on “telegraphs and post office,” and a variety of volumes regarding “education and instruction.” Like Samper and Valdez, Colombia’s progress brokers often managed to allocate Latin American official publications and literary productions to Colombia’s libraries and government offices—before and after endorsing official conventions.

During the late-nineteenth century, many Colombian periodicals established direct *canjes* with Colombian, hemispheric, and (a few) European counterparts, enriching the circulation of ideas among Latin Americans and contributing to drawing appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. As an illustrative case, the number of publication exchanges involving periodicals like Bogotá’s *Anales de Jusrisprudencia*, which was the Organ of the Colombian Society of Jurisprudence, reveals not only its far-reaching national impact, but also exemplifies the greater interest and wider orientations that Colombian progress brokers had towards Latin American mutual interactions (see Table 3.1). By 1904 the Society stated that its official organ had

47 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1899-1902, Tomo 44, 70

48 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1899-1902, Tomo 44, 70
established many canjes, and had received from and sent publications to “Spain, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Central America, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay.”

TABLE 3.1
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CANJES OF BOGOTÁ’S ANALES DE
JURISPRUDENCIA, 1896-97

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucaramanga</td>
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<td>Cali</td>
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<td>Cúcuta</td>
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<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>San José</td>
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NOTE: First year of circulation
Source: Anales de Jurisprudencia. Organo de la Sociedad Colombiana de Jurisprudencia, 1896 and 1897.

3.4 Early Diplomatic Missions in Argentina

By the 1860s, the Colombian diplomatic body worked primarily on resolving border issues. Thereafter, Colombian diplomats began to analyze the possibilities for material progress and economic growth.\(^{50}\) In 1866, Law 23 “Orgánica del servicio diplomático y consular” exhorted Colombian diplomats abroad to report foreign trade statistics as well as any information useful to Colombia’s prosperity, such as news on modern scientific, industrial, and artistic developments.\(^{51}\) The number of Colombian diplomatic missions grew, and more countries gradually, although inconsistently, began to host Colombian statesmen (Figure 3.1). At the same time, Colombian businessmen also began to seek relations within the Americas and Europe, opening new paths for Colombia’s material prosperity.\(^{52}\) Seeking to foster ways to achieve progress, Colombian diplomats developed far-reaching relations within Latin America. The Colombian government had traditionally send representatives to adjacent countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru. Since the 1870s, however, special attention was given to Argentina and Chile because of their inspiring contemporary developments. Mexico would also receive a few Colombian diplomatic missions in 1899 and 1903.


\(^{52}\) Rivas, *Historia diplomática de Colombia, 1810-1934*. 
As strengthening bonds with Spanish-American nations became key, countries with no Colombian diplomatic representation such as Argentina received the first diplomatic missions in the early 1870s. In 1872, President Manuel Murillo Toro appointed the renowned intellectual Florentino González as General Consul of Colombia in Buenos Aires to “promote political and literary relations between Colombia and this country.”53 One of González’s main goals was to establish a postal convention between these two countries. “For now, our relations with this country will not be many,”

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53 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado de Colombia en Argentina, Buenos Aires, Carpeta 110, f. 3.
González anticipated in a letter to the Argentina’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs. “They may be limited for some time to a mere exchange of ideas on political and literary subjects.”\textsuperscript{54} However, he stated that “even under this view, we should fix an easy mode of communication, because Colombia and the Republic of Argentina, having institutions that have more points of similarity than those of other countries in South America, the events […] unfolding in one of the two nations will serve the other to appreciate their goodness or defects.”\textsuperscript{55} Since 1859 Florentino González had already resided in both Peru and Chile as a Colombian diplomat. \textsuperscript{56} González was well aware of South American realities, and indicated that the core of the Colombian government’s aims was to learn from these countries’ resemblances. “It is therefore very useful [our] reciprocal knowledge,” González affirmed, “I’ve always had the conviction of the utility that this [knowledge] would bring to us.”\textsuperscript{57} As a key figure in the first Tomás C. de Mosquera administration (1845-49), González had witnessed similar governmental approaches when seeking the United States’ protection. Florentino González died in Buenos Aires in

\textsuperscript{54} Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado de Colombia en Argentina, Buenos Aires, Carpeta 110, f. 3

\textsuperscript{55} Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado de Colombia en Argentina, Buenos Aires, Carpeta 110, f. 3

\textsuperscript{56} Florentino González, \textit{Memorias}, Bolsilibros Bedout 91 (Medellín: Bedout, 1975), 9.

\textsuperscript{57} Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado de Colombia en Argentina, Buenos Aires, Carpeta 110, f. 3
1874, and no further diplomatic relations between Colombia and Argentina were
developed until the 1880s.  

Looking for reliable information to devise feasible ways to achieve their own
country’s progress, Colombian statesmen strengthened bureaucratic efforts in Argentina. In May 1888, Antonio Samper was appointed as Colombian General Consul in Buenos Aires. Besides opening the Colombian Consulate office, Samper focused on acquiring official documents to provide the Colombian government with background information about Argentina. In a letter dated September 1890, Samper requested from the Argentinian administration a copy of every Argentinian official publication regarding its legislative, executive, and judicial branches. By making clear that he had already purchased and sent to the Colombian government the publications available in the marketplace, he insisted on receiving directly any unpublished documents and novelties. “The Colombian government,” Samper said, “has the greatest interest in studying everything that relates to the Republic of Argentina’s government and its progress. […] Please excuse my plea, Dear Minister, and believe that it stems from both the admiration that Argentina’s progress and development causes the [Colombian] government, and from the very lively sympathy that this nation inspires in it.”

58 González, Memorias, 10.

59 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Caja 444, 13-13v

60 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Caja 444, 6-7.
government responded positively to this petition, which encouraged Samper to keep searching for information about Argentinian strategies to prosper.61

Having spent two years in his diplomatic mission, Antonio Samper reported with a great deal of detail relevant observations for Colombia’s prosperity. In March 1891, Samper sent to the Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs a comprehensive manuscript about Argentina’s drivers to progress. In his “Informe,” besides explaining the benefits of the Argentinian cattle industry, its railway system, and other economic enterprises, Samper delved into Argentinian strategies and types of immigration. The Colombian consul observed how Colombia could learn from these practices, emphasizing the importance of considering topographic, cultural, and political differences between these two South American countries. Because Samper considered European immigration as one of the most relevant forces of Argentina’s prosperity, and based on his observations of the Argentinian systems, he advised to follow specific guidelines to encourage migration to Colombia. Samper concluded by suggesting that because immigration was suspended in Argentina at the time, there was an opportunity to encourage European immigration to Colombia, where “everything is to be created in regards of immigration.”62 The brokerage role Samper played in Argentina exemplifies the way Colombia’s progress brokers sought to draw appropriate models of material progress, and lessons for action, from neighboring countries.

61 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Caja 444, f. 9.

62 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina, Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Caja 444, 56-57
3.5 Looking to South America’s Pacific

Like Argentina, Chile received scattered diplomatic missions from Colombia during the second half of the nineteenth century. From the 1870s, Colombian diplomats in Chile urged the Colombian government to expedite commercial interaction between these two republics by, for instance, constructing appropriate roads to coastal ports in the Pacific and reducing tariff barriers. While commercial exchange was scarce during the first half of the century, shipments from Colombia’s state of Cauca to Chile began to grow towards the end of the nineteenth century. As Chile began to show signs of prosperity earlier than other Latin American republics, Colombia’s progress brokers came to perceive Chile as exemplary and had sought to develop mutual relations with and draw appropriate models from Chile since the 1840s.

The limited nature of Colombian transport infrastructure, however, hindered real possibilities of establishing a steady trade along the Pacific. In the early 1870s, Colombian exports from Buenaventura—Colombia’s primary Pacific port—went mostly northwards, meeting the Atlantic markets through the Panama railroad. These exports also went southwards, reaching Ecuadorian and Peruvian seaports. In 1872-73, agricultural products comprised 97% of Colombian exports from the port of Buenaventura. The Colombian quina (cinchona bark) represented 51% of these exports, followed by tobacco (37%), rubber (6%), and coffee (3%) (Figure 4.2). When looking for international commercial opportunities, the promotion of Colombia’s natural riches abroad and official agreements became key, and diplomatic missions embodied the means to achieve trade objectives.
Aiming to strengthen international trade and intellectual relations, Colombian diplomats advertised Colombia’s natural riches and promoted treaties abroad. They also sought to draw models of material progress from neighboring countries like Chile, which many believed would provide, unlike the North Atlantic countries, appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. Jorge Isaacs’ diplomatic mission epitomizes this kind of effort.

Figure 3.2. Exports from Buenaventura, 1872-1873. Source: Colombia, Estadística del comercio exterior i de cabotaje i de los demás ramos relacionados con la hacienda nacional correspondiente al año de 1872 a 1873, Bogotá, Imprenta Gaitán, 1874, p. VII
Jorge Isaacs was not only a passionate writer and a diplomat; he was also an experienced adventurer, businessman, and a progress broker eager to promote his homeland’s international relations, as well as to learn from neighboring countries' experiences. Born and raised in a well-to-do family in 1837, Isaacs grew up surrounded by the hacienda environs (plantations) in Cauca. His father, George Henry Isaacs Adolphus, who was of English descent, undertook local agricultural businesses in Cauca, and committed to the region’s development, especially to the Cali-Buenaventura road project. A drinker and gambler, however, he left his family deeply indebted after his death in 1861, forcing his wife and descendants to face bankruptcy. Looking to provide for his family, Jorge Isaacs transcended his regional milieu and his father’s failure. By 1863, he had already visited Antioquia and other states, mainly while fighting against Tomás C. de Mosquera’s uprising that led to the civil war of 1860-63. He moved to Bogotá, where he established La Caridad—a shop of imported goods—and mingled freely with influential figures in the capital. In the “Athens of South America”—as Bogotá was widely known—Jorge Isaacs endured a deep financial crisis while gaining

63 Restrepo, *Jorge Isaacs*.


increasing fame as a talented writer. But neither the shop nor his writings sufficed to maintain his family back in Cauca, where he returned as an official employee in 1864. Appointed as *sub-inspector* (assistant inspector) of the Cali-Buenaventura road’s laborers—the most important piece of infrastructure in the region at the time—Isaacs settled in the jungle along the Dagua River, almost dying from malaria shortly thereafter. Surviving this tropical illness, Isaacs went back to Bogotá, but this time as a Congressman, serving periodically from 1866 to 1870. Jorge Isaacs’ experiences had made him acutely aware of his homeland’s critical circumstances and needs before heading to Chile on a diplomatic mission, where he would look for models adaptable to Colombia’s local conditions.

Widely known for his novel *María* (1867), “probably the most popular nineteenth-century novel in Latin America,” Jorge Isaacs was appointed as the general consul of Colombia in Santiago from 1870 to 1872. His purpose was explicitly “to foment commerce of our Pacific coast with Chile.” Isaacs was eager and openly

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72 Colombia, *Memoria Del Secretario de Lo Interior I Relaciones Esteriores Al Congreso de Colombia* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1871), 52.
optimistic about the opportunities the Colombian state of Cauca—his homeland—would have when fixing a trade route along the Pacific. Once in Santiago, he devoted long manuscripts to analyzing the general situation of Chile, studying the possibilities of establishing regular and promising commercial relations with this southern neighbor, and drawing suitable models for Colombia’s particular circumstances.

Jorge Isaacs believed that by advertising Colombia’s potential riches and promoting official treaties Colombia would engage with the Pacific trade. Besides building roads in Colombia, he believed it was crucial to inform Chileans about the fecundity of Cauca’s soil as well as telling Colombians about market conditions in Chile. He embraced this task by publishing articles in both Chilean and Colombian newspapers.  

Promoting mutual knowledge and understanding between Colombia and Chile was at the center of Jorge Isaacs’ priorities. Upon his arrival in Chile in late 1870, Isaacs lamented Chileans’ lack of knowledge about his motherland, indicating that “the way to begin the task of fomenting commerce of our Pacific coast with Chile is straightforward; but the current situation of Cauca and the fecundity of that country [Colombia] are completely unknown here.”  

Optimistic and particularly confident about his writing skills, Isaacs naively anticipated his impact in the Chilean public sphere: “I will make some publications on the subject and they will undoubtedly produce the result that I

73 Colombia, 52.

74 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19
Jorge Isaacs, then, not only strived to inform Cauca’s people about trade opportunities with Chile; he also actively published informative articles about Colombia and the Cauca region in Chilean newspapers, mostly in Santiago and Valparaíso. Expanding Colombian merchants’ reach was central, but attracting Chilean investors to Cauca’s uncultivated lands was also essential. Writing was his most powerful tool.

Jorge Isaacs believed that advertising Colombia in Chile was not as strategic as enlightening Colombians about Chile’s business opportunities. While some trade had already taken place between Colombia and Chile, it was still very little. “Up to now,” Isaacs said on December 1, 1870, “few Cauca merchants have consigned goods from that state [Cauca] to Chile, and although they obtain profits in such remittances and in the [Chilean] goods that they carry back, most of the merchants have kept the result secret, and others have waited too long because of the lack of Colombian agents that I will seek from now on.” In the meantime, Isaacs suggested that if Cauca’s merchants wanted to place goods and to gain prestige in Valparaíso, they needed “to choose the best [goods] and modify the packaging,” a topic that Isaacs would address in a forthcoming newspaper article. Towards the end of 1871, Isaacs spent time in Valparaíso expanding his analyses of commercial prospects. In September, he reported to the Ministry of

75 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19

76 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19

77 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19
International Relations that “I have moved to this city [Valparaíso], and will remain in it three or four weeks, in order to make a more detailed study of everything that must be brought to the attention of Cauca’s merchants for their relations with Chile.” 78 By emphasizing the relevance of broadcasting his observations, he advised that “some reviews, to be published in Cali, are enough for now.” 79 While circulating information was relevant, endorsing a postal convention was vital to facilitating information flows and to furthering commercial exchange between Colombia and Chile. Expanding trade with Chile would promote the circulation of goods and ideas, which was key to drawing appropriate models from Chile, a critical goal of the Colombian progress brokers.

Without a postal convention between Colombia and Chile, a steady commercial exchange between these republics would have little hope. Former Colombian consul in Chile Pedro A. Torres had already pointed this out in 1869, indicating that a convention like this would avoid the “estorbo” (nuisance) that shipments’ delays and high costs created. 80 He wrote: “the trade that is beginning to develop between this [Chile] and our country demands the necessity of a postal convention equal to the one that this Republic [Chile] has celebrated with Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and the Argentine Confederation.” 81

78 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 37

79 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 37

80 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 64

81 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 64
This kind of institutional infrastructure was essential for the kind of information and idea exchange that progress brokers had been fostering since the mid-nineteenth century.

But a postal convention was not only about commercial relations. It was also about strengthening bilateral interactions of all sorts. Jorge Isaacs had argued exactly this upon his arrival in Santiago, indicating that “without it, commercial, political, and literary relations between the two countries are almost impossible.” 82 For this reason, in a letter to the Colombian government dated December 1, 1870, Isaacs claimed that “a postal convention is urgent, indispensable.” 83 In fact, the lack of a postal convention was also harming the diplomatic exercise and its finances. Official correspondence from Colombia to diplomats in Chile was subject to fines by the Administración de correos de Santiago (Santiago’s Postal Services office) because “they had neither stamps nor other conventions Chilean law had established in this regard.” 84 During his first year in Chile, then, Jorge Isaacs explored ways to get a postal convention endorsed by the Colombian and Chilean governments. In September 1871, after penning a full proposal, Isaacs sent the general terms of a convention to Bogotá, urging that Colombia’s administration review and endorse it without delay. “The Postal Convention’s bases I am sending will completely fulfill its objective, I believe,” Isaacs wrote. “It will be the best support that

82 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19

83 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19

84 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 18-19
our nascent trade with Chile can receive today.”85 This document laid the groundwork for a long-awaited treaty, a consular and postal convention between Colombia and Chile took place in June 1872, and it was officially endorsed in February 1875.86 In the meantime, examining other aspects of Chilean development and ways to draw appropriate models for material progress filled the Colombian’s diplomatic agenda in Chile.

Jorge Isaacs was a man of letters who saw the need to consider a broad and historical perspective. Along with promoting official conventions and business-related knowledge, Isaacs advocated for a more practical, thoughtful understanding of the Chilean past and present. “It is a necessity to study the history of material progress enjoyed by this republic [Chile],” Isaacs wrote in the same letter introducing the Postal Convention proposal in 1871. “It is necessary to follow it [Chile] step by step from 1848 to the present, and not to lose sight of it in the future in order to take advantage of its teachings and to escape from its mistakes.”87 Having analyzed the southern cone’s recent history, markets, and political conditions, Jorge Isaacs suggested that Colombia’s longed-for material progress could build on this analysis of Chile’s experience—and that of other

85 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 23-24

86 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del Gobierno de Chile con el de la Nueva Granada. 1824-1881, Caja 212, Carpeta 208, 106. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia, Anales diplomáticos y consulares de Colombia, 2:114.

87 Underlined in the original. Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 23-24
South American countries like Argentina. Regarding Argentina, Jorge Isaacs wrote in 1871: “Four to five months in permanence in the Argentine Republic, would suffice. […] The importance of its amazing progress in six years, the way in which federal institutions have become practical there; the current of immigration that [it] has managed to attract to its soil, increased year by year; […its] popular education; everything encourages me to believe that my journey of a few months to that republic will be profitable.”

By then, Chile and Argentina had already developed not only growing patterns of economic growth, but also a large body of historical research and publications. In a period of roughly two years, Jorge Isaacs managed to study, broadcast, and advertise the potential benefits that both Colombia and Chile would get if trade and wider relations were developed. In September 1871, he boasted that, in terms of fostering commerce between Colombia and Chile, “the difficulties I was able to destroy, are destroyed.” Isaacs also managed to elaborate a protocol on the exchange of scientific and literary publications between the two countries, which was eventually approved by Colombian Law 99 of 1873. Besides authoring both the postal and consular conventions, Isaacs

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88 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, Tomo 37, 23-24

89 Maiguashca, “Historians in Spanish South America: Cross-References between Centre and Periphery.”

90 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, f. 38v

believed that the circulation of scientific and literary knowledge was also critical to learning from countries like Chile and to drawing appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances.

But this exchange surpassed the literary sphere. During his stay in Chile, Isaacs found in some natural resources and scientific developments specific traits worthy of being adapted to his home country. In November 1871, he started collecting some Chilean plants and seeds, aiming to promote their practical use in his homeland. “On my return to Colombia, I will carry a collection of seeds and sprouts of unknown plants, [which are] very useful for farming and decoration,” Isaacs wrote.\(^{92}\) Confident about the convenience of these crops adoption and adaptation, he concluded by announcing that “I think that by gradually improving the seeds of wheat, barley, and other grains, the country’s rutinaria agriculture [crop rotation] would benefit greatly.”\(^{93}\)

But not only seeds interested him; he also studied Chilean crop-growing practices. In January 1872, he reported that he had spent some time at the Valdivia de Maipo, where he headed “aiming to improve my health and to study the way the cereal harvest is done in this country.”\(^{94}\) The adoption of crops in Colombia also received official support from Chile. In a letter to the Colombian government dated August 8, 1871, the Chilean consul

\(^{92}\) Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 46v

\(^{93}\) Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1862-1871, Tomo 37, 46v

\(^{94}\) Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, 1872, Tomo 41, 2-3v.
in Bogotá, Manuel Antonio Cordovez, informed that a cure for hepatitis had been
developed out of the “cierto arbusto” (bush) commonly known in Chile as “Boldo,” and
that he had already requested seeds in order to acclimate this medicinal plant in
Colombia. As liver diseases were “too common” in Colombia, three kilograms of this
plant were delivered and distributed in this country.\textsuperscript{95} Eager to distribute this seed and
therefore contribute to his fellow citizens’ wellbeing, Secretary of Internal Affairs Felipe
Zapata instructed his subalterns to “give thanks, and distribute properly the seeds of the
Boldo among individuals of all states who offer guarantees of putting all necessary care
to acclimatize this production in Colombia.”\textsuperscript{96} In order to ensure the suitable distribution
of this valuable resource, Zapata also instructed to “form a list of individuals to whom
seeds are given, who will accept the condition of informing this office about the results of
their acclimatization operations.”\textsuperscript{97}

Exchanges of this nature were neither unique, nor new. In 1846, the government
of New Granada had already shared with the government of Chile the newly discovered
cure for goiter, which was successfully developed in the form of “Pomada antivenérea”

\textsuperscript{95} Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular,
Transferencia 2, Chile 1864-1871, Tomo 38, 72.

\textsuperscript{96} Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular,
Transferencia 2, Chile 1864-1871, Tomo 38, 72.

\textsuperscript{97} Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular,
Transferencia 2, Chile 1864-1871, Tomo 38, 72.
(Antivenomous ointment). The Chilean government was thankful for such a “humanitarian expression” because Chilean scientists had not been able to find the cure for this common illness in Chile. As most of the diplomatic documentation evidences, expressions of friendship and high esteem reinforced a long-standing relationship between Colombia and Chile.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Colombian diplomats and intellectuals gathered and circulated useful primary information to enhance knowledge and understanding of what could be learned from other Latin American countries. Along with Jorge Isaacs and Antonio Samper, a group of diplomats exemplified the brokerage role some Colombians played between advanced Latin American countries like Chile and Argentina and Colombia, looking for appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. Among them were the diplomatic missions of José María Samper (1883), Clímaco Gómez Valdez (1899-1902), Antonio José Uribe (1904), and Rafael Uribe Uribe (1905). They all observed and circulated useful information regarding colonization practices, immigration systems, industrial developments, agricultural techniques, and

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98 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del Gobierno de Chile con el de la Nueva Granada. 1824-1881, Caja 212, Carpeta 208, 12.

99 Archivo General de la Nación, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Correspondencia del Gobierno de Chile con el de la Nueva Granada. 1824-1881, Caja 212, Carpeta 208, 12.

100 “Agentes Diplomáticos de La República (1820-1907),” Boletín de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia 1, no. 4 (December 1907): 157–58; José María Samper, Chile y su presidente (Bogotá: Imprenta de Vapor de Zalamea Hermanos, 1881); Clímaco Gómez Valdez, Informe del secretario del Enviado Extraordinario y Ministro Plenipotenciario de Colombia en Chile. Sobre el trabajo de la legación en el periodo transcurrido de diciembre de 1899 a enero de 1902 (Lima: Imprenta de “El Lucero,” 1903); Uribe, La reforma administrativa en Colombia; Uribe Uribe, Por la América del Sur.
economic and political institutions as suitable models for Colombia. Besides the Colombian diplomatic body bringing models for progress to Colombia from other Latin American countries, many intellectuals and statesmen performed as Latin America’s contact point in the United States and Europe.

3.6 From Paris and New York to Colombia

Colombia’s progress brokers sought to draw appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances directly from Latin American countries. However, they also looked to neighboring countries via intermediaries who were established in both Europe and the United States. During the second half of the nineteenth century, New York and Paris hosted many Latin American intellectuals who gathered, debated, and published works that would be useful for devising their home countries’ plans for progress. In the form of periodicals, books, and manuscripts, useful knowledge widely circulated in Europe and throughout the American continent during the nineteenth century, with increasing dynamism and numbers of publications since the 1880s. While some of these Latin Americans were looking for models in the United States and Europe—e.g., influential men like Argentinian Faustino Sarmiento and Colombian Eustacio Santamaría—other intellectuals promoted South-South mutual relations and learnings, fostering publications with such an end.\textsuperscript{101} Colombia’s progress brokers,

convinced that the North Atlantic could not provide suitable models for Colombia, engaged with associations, funneled useful information, and brokered between Latin Americans residing in Europe and in the United States with Colombian citizens.

Associations like “Biblioteca Bolívar” in Paris and the networks of intellectuals creating, translating, and circulating printing materials in the United States exemplified the brokerage role some Colombians played in the quest for appropriate models of progress from neighboring countries.

During the 1880s, societies like Sociedad Latino-Americana, “Biblioteca Bolívar” would be strategic to discussing and broadcasting Latin American currents from Paris to the world. By creating a massive library, and by hosting conferences and publishing its member’s works, this society would enhance the circulation of useful knowledge about Latin American countries.

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se vé. O la economía política en una lección, dada a sus paisanos de Francia por Federico Bastiat, é interpretada y ofrecida á los suyos de Zipaquirá por Eustacio Santamaría (Nueva York: Imprenta del Correo de Los Estados Unidos, 1853); Eustacio Santamaría, Primer libro de instrucción objetiva para el aprendizaje combinado del dibujo, la escritura i la lectura con nociones rudimentales de historia natural, geometria, arimetica, jeografia i agricultura (Havre: impr. de A. Lemale Aîné, 1872); Santamaría, Conversaciones familiares sobre industria, agricultura, comercio, etc., etc., etc.; Cardona, La nación de papel.
3.6.1 Sociedad Latino-Américana, “Biblioteca Bolívar”

By the 1880s, cosmopolitan Paris had become the most important international meeting point for Latin Americans.102 From the City of Light, many intellectuals, artists, politicians, and businessmen from all over Latin America worked diligently on getting to know each other, promoting their countries, and sharing their ideas of material and intellectual progress. Most of this work was carried out by establishing associations like the Sociedad Politécnica de Colombia, the Sociedad de la Unión Latinoamericana, the Sociedad América, and the Sociedad Latino-Americana “Biblioteca Bolívar.” Most of them were created during the 1870s and among their founder members were Colombians like José Tomás Henao, Jorge Enrique Delgado, José María Torres Caicedo, Ignacio Gutiérrez Ponce, and Ramón Santo Domingo Vila.103

“Biblioteca Bolívar” was formed in Paris to celebrate Simón Bolívar’s first centenary of birth, on July 24, 1883, and the Sociedad Latino-Americana was created to manage it.104 Paris, as the Colombian statesman Carlos Holguín believed, was “virtually […] the capital of Latin America, whose children, if living fraternally, will be able to


103 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 153–54.

104 Streckert, Die Hauptstadt Lateinamerikas; Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 153–54; Ignacio Gutiérrez Ponce, Reminiscencias de vida diplomática, 1879 a 1923, y Crónicas de mi hogar en la época colonial, 1536 a 1816, (London; Tonbridge: Whitefriars Press, 1926), 19.
consolidate and put on track their common interests.”105 In fact, many Latin Americans had made Paris the center of, and inspiration for the idea of Latin America during the second half of the nineteenth century.106 The Latin American population residing in Paris grew from 4,000 to 6,000 from the 1870s to 1900, without counting many others who frequented Paris transitorily.107 The 1883 centenary celebration of Simón Bolívar’s birth, and the inauguration of a library in his honor, was “the first time residents of Latin America in Paris give proof of union and patriotic enthusiasm, as if it were a family celebration.”108 Ignacio Gutiérrez Ponce and Ramón Santo Domingo Vila would play a prominent role in this society.109

Seeking to publicize the American countries abroad, and to strengthen bonds among Latin Americans, Biblioteca Bolívar operated as an independent library from 1883 to 1890. In 1885, the library had already collected three thousand volumes of official publications and original works, most of them by Latin American authors.110 In 1889, the

105 “Virtualmente es París la capital de la América Latina, cuyos hijos si se conducen fraternalmente, podrán consolidar y poner en via de progreso sus intereses comunes.” “Unión Latino-Americana,” La Estrella de Panamá, October 22, 1887, 4.


107 Streckert, Die Hauptstadt Lateinamerikas, 75–76.

108 Pedro S. Lamas, “Centenario de Bolívar en París,” El Conservador, September 18, 1883, 3.

109 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 154; Gutiérrez Ponce, Reminiscencias de vida diplomática, 1879 a 1923, y Crónicas de mi hogar en la época colonial, 1536 a 1816, 105.

110 Gutiérrez Ponce, Reminiscencias de vida diplomática, 1879 a 1923, y Crónicas de mi hogar en la época colonial, 1536 a 1816, 105.
library’s then board president, the Colombian intellectual Ignacio Gutiérrez Ponce, published the library’s first catalogue, which was divided into fourteen categories: “law and legislation, history, literature, philosophy and religion, economics and finance, geography, navigation, travel, philology and pedagogy, science, arts, commerce and industry, maps and periodicals.”

Towards the end of the 1880s, this library became perhaps the largest specialized collection on Latin America in Paris, as many Latin American newspapers reported. However, lacking consistent benefactors to maintain it properly, the Sociedad Latino-Americana, “Biblioteca Bolívar” donated the library to the French government, which was the original objective. It was annexed to the Institut de

111 Gutiérrez Ponce, 105.

France’s Bibliothèque Mazarine in 1890, remaining accessible to worldwide visitors and mainly to Paris’s Latin American population.\textsuperscript{113}

The history of Sociedad Latino-Americana, “Biblioteca Bolívar” is a history of Latin Americans promoting abroad their own countries and the entire region. Venezuelan José Antonio Carrillo y Navas, who initiated the association, convoked Latin Americans to support the endeavor. In September 1882, the Bolivian newspaper La Industria, reproducing correspondence from Copenhagen to the Chilean newspaper El Trabajo, reported that Carrillo y Navas was organizing this “Latin American library [which will compile] all the laws governing our peoples, all the international treaties, all the official publications, all the works that las plumas americanas [Latin American writers] have produced and continue to produce, in science, in literature, in everything. [...] Our wit can be estimated there.”\textsuperscript{114} Endeavors of this sort would allow Latin American countries to promote themselves abroad, and to get to know each other’s history and current events more easily.

Latin American governments enthusiastically welcomed this initiative, and some even passed laws to ensure the delivery of their publications to the library. In June 1882, the library promotors had sent invitations to Latin American governments asking them to “agree to enact a law ordering to send there [to the Biblioteca Bolívar] two copies of any

\textsuperscript{113} Gutiérrez Ponce, Reminiscencias de vida diplomática, 1879 a 1923, y Crónicas de mi hogar en la época colonial, 1536 a 1816, 106.

\textsuperscript{114} “Biblioteca Bolívar,” September 4, 1882, 2.
Among other benefits, the library organizers believed key to “centralize all our intellectual works and to give us this way to know each other, our compatriots (which I call all the children of America) finding in it as much as they wish to know about any of those regions.”

Responses came quickly. In September 1882, the Guatemalan president José María Orantes issued Decree 281, proclaiming that along with every official publication, “any brochure, newspaper, book or paper that is published in the country” must be sent to the Biblioteca Bolívar. As an expression of the ways Latin American countries came to know one another, this decree was widely broadcasted within the Americas. The Colombian newspaper El Conservador published the decree by quoting the Guatemalan newspaper El Oriental on November 25, 1882. A week later, the Mexican newspaper El Siglo Diez y Nueve republished the same decree, along with a note from Buenos Aires’ La Prensa, which had respectively published an official note from the Ministry of Public Instruction asking Argentina’s provincial governors to “dictate the appropriate measures so that a copy of works of general interest and of available official publications be sent to this Ministry as soon as possible, and to facilitate the shipment of those that individuals wish to destine to the expressed object


116 Argentina, 1:296.


Honduras’ government also supported this endeavor, issuing a decree donating ten thousand francs to the library, and mandating the national archive to send two copies of every official publication and work subsidized by the government to the Biblioteca Bolívar. After learning about this new decree, nom de plume Alfredo Herrera exclaimed: “Honor to the enlightenment and Americanism of the Honduran, Argentine and Guatemalan governments! [...] Honor to all the governments of Hispano-America! To this date it is possible that all, or almost all, have issued respective decrees.”

Later, soon after the library was inaugurated, the Chilean Consejo de Instrucción Pública also communicated that it “would provide a copy of all those [printed materials] that were in the University [of Chile’s] archive.”

Alfredo Herrera was the nom de plume of Hilarión Antich, one of the library founders. He was widely known for having published in the principal Latin American newspapers for many years. He had devoted his articles to economic, social, and political matters, mainly of Latin America.

In one of his writings Antich asserted that Biblioteca Bolívar would


121 “Sesión de 13 de agosto de 1883,” in Anales de la Universidad de Chile, 2a sección. Boletín de Instrucción Pública (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1883), 451.

“constitute the intellectual link between our republics,” which was, in fact, one of the library cofounder’s explicit objectives.\textsuperscript{123}

Along with eighteen fellow Latin Americans, the pioneer J. A. Carrillo y Navas had been working diligently to promote the library since 1882. Aiming to “establish definitively the Biblioteca Bolívar’s board of directors,” they reached out to other intellectuals like the Colombian intellectual Rufino José Cuervo.\textsuperscript{124} The invitation to the meeting was signed by Carrillo and by Colombians Pedro F. del Castillo, Pedro F. del Castillo Jr., A. R. Hurtado, and José Triana; Peruvian Luciano B. Cisneros, Ecuadorian Juan José Flores; Mexicans Pablo Castellanos, Juan Gamboa Guzmán, Jacobo García, Juan Hernández Acevedo, Benito Juárez, and Eugenio Michel; and Venezuelans Antonio Parra Bolívar, Luis Theodor Ravelo, Miguel A. Troconis, Modesto Urbaneja, Luciano Urdaneta, and Hilarión Antich.\textsuperscript{125} Mostly representatives of the Andean countries, interestingly, had taken the primary lead in this intellectual enterprise. Over the next months, they continued to hold meetings and discuss the statutes of the society, which were officially released in Paris, on July 14, 1883. The creation of a center for thinking and promoting Latin America was chief among their objectives.

The statutes of the Sociedad Latino-Americana, “Biblioteca Bolívar” circulated widely in Latin America. In Colombia, along with different tributes to Simon Bolívar on

\textsuperscript{123} Herrera, “Correspondencia. Biblioteca Bolívar,” 2–3.

\textsuperscript{124} Rufino José Cuervo, Rufino J. Cuervo Cartas de su archivo, vol. 2 (Bogotá: Imp. Instituto gráfico, limitada, 1941), 136–39.

\textsuperscript{125} Cuervo, 2:136–39.
the centennial of his birth, the official periodical *Anales de la instrucción pública* published the society’s entire articles of association, which comprise ten titles and thirty-nine articles. Besides formally establishing the library, the society aimed to “create a meeting place for Americans of Latin race, in which they can devote themselves to studies, conferences, conversations related to science, letters, education, industry, commerce, etc., etc., and everything else vis-à-vis the progress and union of the New World.”¹²⁶ Moreover, the society intended to “organize annual competitions and to award prizes to the authors of studies of high American importance,” to publish its own periodical giving “light to the Society’s works and to what would be of interest to [Latin] Americans,” and to “organize in their salons, or in any more suitable place, ethnographic, industrial expositions, etc., relative to America.”¹²⁷ These activities were devised as a complement to the establishment of the actual library, to which the founders expected to “bring together all the ancient and modern productions of American intelligence, as an archive of all its literary history,” which would require the compilation of “everything printed in each Latin American country since its discovery, all works printed in Europe by Americans or by Europeans who have written something of interest to the New World, all periodical publications of the American press, maps, plans and other manuscripts that refer to the New Continent.”¹²⁸ Having established both the society and the library,


emblematic representatives of the Latin American community in Paris designated capable officers to manage these institutions.

*Biblioteca Bolívar’s* associates like Uruguayan Pedro S. Lamas—who was elected the Society’s first Vice-President—would contribute notably to the circulation of ideas of Latin America from Paris.129 Besides publishing books promoting Latin American countries, particularly Argentina, Lamas was the editor of *Revue Sud-Américaine* from 1882 to 1890.130 This was a fortnightly periodical until 1888, when it became a weekly magazine. Several Latin American governments and private entrepreneurs used this periodical to showcase their progresses and trade statistics. Moreover, chronicles about Latin American and European currents and specific studies about Latin American countries or regions were often published.131 Also, each edition included financial and economic reviews, bibliographic information, and useful announcements (*Revue...*)


économique, Revue financière, Bibliographie, and Annonces). Reporting commercial and cultural possibilities of the Latin American countries, the Revue Sud-Américaine’s main target was European readers. However, it also aimed to strengthen ties among Latin Americans. This publication circulated widely, allowing many Colombians and Latin Americans to enhance their knowledge about Latin American countries’ history and currents. Revue Sud-Américaine was available through subscription and purchases at post offices. It was also available free of charge in reading rooms, public establishments, and trade unions. Although direct distributors of international newspapers were not many in Colombia, publications like Revue Sud-Américaine circulated and were quoted in some Colombian publications.

Colombian progress brokers expanded the reach of publications like Revue Sud-Américaine within the country. By translating and republishing excerpts and speeches from this French periodical, editors of Colombian newspapers like El Conservador circulated articles regarding the anniversary of Simón Bolívar’s birth in July 1883, and


135 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 79 [footnote 52]; La Crisis Económica; Gutiérrez Ponce, Reminiscencias de vida diplomática, 1879 a 1923, y Crónicas de mi hogar en la época colonial, 1536 a 1816.
the celebration in October 12, 1883, of the Americas’ discovery. Likewise, as newspaper editors expanded their networks during the second half of the century, Colombian periodicals enriched their contents by incorporating information about Latin America that circulated widely in Paris. While in 1870 only four Parisian publications addressed topics related to Latin America, and the access of news depended on the importation of Latin American newspapers, since the proclamation of the French Third Republic in 1870 the number of publications about Latin America grew, many of them directed and edited by Latin Americans living in the French metropolis. Some examples of them were *El americano: ilustrado, politico y literario* (1872-1874), *Europa y America. Revista quincenal ilustrada de literatura, artes y ciencias* (1880-1895), *Le Brésil. Courrier de l’Amérique du Sud* (1881-1922), *La estrella de Chile. Órgano de la colonia chilena en Europa* (1891), *América en París. Revista quincenal* (1891-1892), *La République Cubaine. La República Cubana* (1896-1897), and *Revue Sud-Américaine* (1882-1890, 1913). Together, these periodicals provided the foundation for a thriving intellectual community and exchange of ideas among Latin American intellectuals abroad. These papers became, in other words, a critical extension—or part of—a regional exchange of ideas among Latin American countries.

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138 Rojas, 255–56; Streckert, *Die Hauptstadt Lateinamerikas*. 

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In Colombia, people also accessed *Revue Sud-Américaine* and periodicals alike in public libraries like Bogotá’s *Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia*, where global publications were sent regularly, especially after the endorsement of many different official exchange agreements.\(^{139}\) During the second half of the nineteenth century, the influx of global books and periodicals enhanced private and public libraries in Colombia, feeding debates about Latin American countries’ histories, current developments, and potentialities.

Bookstores also eased the circulation of Latin American ideas in Colombia.\(^{140}\) One of the most influential bookstores in Colombia was “Librería Torres Caycedo,” which was named in honor of José María Torres Caicedo, a *Biblioteca Bolivar*’s member and widely esteemed Colombian who “was the protector and mentor of all South Americans and, especially, of the Colombians who arrived in Paris.”\(^ {141}\) Torres Caicedo was the editor in chief of the Colombian newspaper *El Día*, which was founded in 1840, and the Parisian *El Correo de Ultramar*, “the most popular newspaper in Latin America until its absorption in 1886 by *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, a magazine founded

\(^{139}\) Hemeroteca Nacional De Colombia and Biblioteca Nacional De Colombia, *Catálogo de publicaciones seriadas. Siglo XIX* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia; Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1995), 734.

\(^{140}\) Murillo Sandoval, “La aparición de las librERías colombianas. Conexiones, consumos y giros editoriales en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX.”

\(^{141}\) Quijano Wallis, *Memorias autobiográficas, histórico-políticas y de carácter social*, 172.
in Madrid in 1870.” Librería Torres Caycedo was publicized through the periodical Revista Bibliográfica, which reached thirty-four installments between 1878 and 1889.

Belonging to the Colombian intellectual Lázaro María Pérez, Librería Torres Caycedo was “the best internationally connected bookstore in the country.” This library developed a Latin American collection, resulting from the network of exchanges its owner weaved with Latin American booksellers, mainly from Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua and México. Among other connections, the relationship between Pérez and the Chilean Roberto Miranda was key, lasting for about a decade and resulting in the circulation in Colombia of original Chilean manuscripts like Exposición razonada y estudio comparativo del Código Civil Chileno (1868) and Código civil ante la Universidad (1871) by Jacinto Chacón. Aiming to draw appropriate models for Colombia’s particular circumstances from neighboring countries, the circulation of books on Latin American legal institutions were among the critical materials Colombia’s progress brokers circulated in Colombia towards the end of the century.

Besides selling books, bookstores also offered subscriptions to global periodicals. Although in Bogotá the first modern bookstore was opened by Juan Simonnot in 1851, which offered subscriptions to Correo de Ultramar y el Eco de Ambos Mundos, Librería

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142 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmpolita, 44, 69.


144 Murillo Sandoval, 56; Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmpolita, 64.

Torres Caycedo promoted subscriptions to a large variety of Latin American periodicals like *Revue Sud-Américaine* and *Revista del Mundo Latino* from Paris, and *El Educador Popular, La Industria, El Ateneo y La América Ilustrada* from New York.  

The creation of Latin American associations in Paris, as well as the circulation of useful knowledge of their countries from Europe to Colombia, was critical in allowing intellectuals and politicians to draw appropriate models for Colombia’s particular circumstances from neighboring countries, rather than only from North Atlantic societies. In fact, towards the end of the nineteenth century Latin Americans were also circulating useful ideas from the United States, where the movement of printed materials from New York southwards was also vital to the realization of Latin American models of material progress for Colombia.

### 3.6.2 Latin Americans in New York and the Circulation of Useful Knowledge

Colombian progress brokers engaged with fellow Latin Americans in New York as much as they did in Paris towards the end of the nineteenth century. By fostering either official or private businesses, they sought the promotion of their home lands by creating and circulating useful knowledge from the United States. Some Latin Americans encouraged the translation of useful works into Spanish, and pushed for the publication and distribution of periodicals addressing a variety of scientific and intellectual novelties.

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146 Murillo Sandoval, 56; Martínez, *El nacionalismo cosmopolita*, 64; “Anuncios. La Librería Torres Caycedo,” *El Conservador*, October 9, 1883, 1.
within the Americas.\textsuperscript{147} Initiatives to translate and circulate European or North American school texts, scientific knowledge, and industrial developments had flourished over the second half of the nineteenth century. Being a vibrant, international city of immigrants, New York became the Latin Americans’ hub of early translation movements, focused specifically on texts produced since the 1870s, when an acceleration of industrial production (known as the second industrial revolution) was taking place in advanced North Atlantic economies.\textsuperscript{148}

Many Latin American intellectuals worked closely with U.S. industries and associations that sought to strengthen commercial relations with Latin America. These companies’ main goal was to open new markets for useful publications in Spanish.\textsuperscript{149} New York publisher D. Appleton & Co. was the pioneering enterprise in publishing books in Spanish with scientific and educational purposes, which “constituted in itself a small but interesting chapter in inter-American cultural relations.”\textsuperscript{150} Since the 1840s, this company had intentionally published books for a Latin American audience and Spanish speaking countries in general, where they established branches for distributing their books. By 1885, the House of Appleton had opened eighteenth branches in Hispanic

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Beatty, \textit{Technology and the Search for Progress in Modern Mexico}, 57.
\item Kanellos and Martell, \textit{Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography}, 43–74.
\item José De Onís, \textit{The United States as Seen by Spanish American Writers, 1776-1890} (New York: Hispanic Institute in the United States, 1952), 96.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
America, Brazil, and the Philippines.\(^\text{151}\) Aiming to disseminate useful knowledge throughout the Hispanic portion of the hemisphere, D. Appleton & Co. recruited some of the most renowned Latin Americans who were at the time living in New York. Among them were Argentinian Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Cuban José Martí, Puerto Rican Eugenio María de Hostos, and Colombian Rafael Pombo.\(^\text{152}\) While Appleton prioritized profit making, progress brokers focused on benefiting their home countries by disseminating useful knowledge.\(^\text{153}\) They worked on either translating or publishing original works, which eventually were integrated into some Latin American school systems, including works for teachers’ coaching like the Appleton series *Biblioteca del Maestro.*\(^\text{154}\)

Some of the works published by Appleton were used to instruct Colombians. In 1871, the renowned Colombian intellectual Miguel Antonio Caro was appointed agent of Appleton and Co. for Colombia’s interior. Although he was allowed to expand the distribution of printed materials in Colombia, and thus was looking for a publishing house to represent in Spain, Caro asserted in a letter to his dearest friend Rufino José Cuervo that “I am committed not to sell others [textbooks] that may compete with those


\(^{152}\) Miguel Cané, *Notas de viaje sobre Venezuela y Colombia.* (Bogotá: Imprenta de La Luz, 1907), 211; Shearer, “Pioneer Publishers of Textbooks for Hispanic America.”

\(^{153}\) Shearer, “Pioneer Publishers of Textbooks for Hispanic America,” 24, 27.

published by these gentlemen [Appleton & Co.].”\textsuperscript{155} Moreover, Caro invited Rufino Cuervo, who resided in Paris, to engage with the promotion of textbooks in Colombia. “I hope you study this issue of textbooks and bring those that can be translated and accommodate our circumstances, and we will contract them with Appleton,” Caro advocated.\textsuperscript{156} Although little is known about Cuervo’s commitment to this end, the agreement Caro made with Appleton would open the road for introducing pedagogic novelties to Colombia, benefiting the country’s education system. In 1878, Caro and Cuervo founded \textit{Librería Americana} in Bogotá, which continued to represent Appleton as the publishing house’s exclusive agent in Colombia.\textsuperscript{157}

During the early 1880s, the Colombian government showed interest in adopting works published by Appleton to enhance the public-school system. In fact, in 1881 the Colombian Treasury Minister reported expenses “to legalize the expense that the same Consul made in the payment to Messrs. Appleton & Co. for the value of books sent by the Consul to the General Director of Public Instruction.”\textsuperscript{158} By 1900, the Colombian public school system had already adopted several books printed by Appleton, like \textit{Primer libro de geografía de Smith} (1867)—a geography book by Asa Dodge Smith which was translated into Spanish and adapted to the schools of South America, the West Indies, and

\textsuperscript{155} Cuervo, \textit{Rufino J. Cuervo Cartas de su archivo}, 2:58, 63.

\textsuperscript{156} Cuervo, 2:36, 57–58.

\textsuperscript{157} Murillo Sandoval, “La aparición de las librerías colombianas. Conexiones, consumos y giros editoriales en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX,” 57.

\textsuperscript{158} Simón de Herrera, \textit{Memoria del Secretario del Tesoro dirijida al Presidente de la Unión para el Congreso de 1881} (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1881), 56.
Mexico—and *El lector americano: nuevo curso gradual de lecturas compuesto para el uso de las escuelas hispanoamericanas* by José Abelardo Núñez (1888), a reader designed “for the use of Hispanic American schools.”

Private education also benefited from Appleton. Besides the widely known *Manual de urbanidad y buenas maneras* by the Venezuelan Manuel A. Carreño, Bogotá bookstores retailed a collection of original manuscripts by the Colombian poet Julio Arboleda as well as the *Tratado elemental de algebra*, which was an adaptation for Latin American schools by the Colombian priest Rafael Celedón. Either officially or privately adopted, Appleton books boosted the education system in Colombia, and helped promote the work of Colombian intellectuals who came to embody in the United States the brokerage role some intellectuals were playing in Europe. They were looking for appropriate models from within the region for Colombia’s particular circumstances.

Some Appleton books were explicitly projected to impact the Latin American education system more broadly. This publishing house also circulated works by Latin American intellectuals like the Chilean Pedro P. Ortiz. Aiming to revolutionize education practices and contents in Latin America, and playing a prominent role as *miembro*

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correspondiente (correspondent member) of the University of Chile’s Humanities Department in the United States, Ortiz composed the books *Principios Fundamentales Sobre Educación Popular i Los Nuevos Métodos de Enseñanza, Etc.* (1866) and *Principios elementales de física experimental y aplicada, incluso la meteorología y la climatología para el uso de los colegios, escuelas superiores y liceos hispano-americanos y de las personas estudiosas* (1887). Like Ortiz, Latin Americans working along with Appleton were looking to foster public education systems and to widen the circulation of useful knowledge, which they deemed critical for fostering material and intellectual progress in their home countries.

Women and the youngest children also benefited from the relationship between Latin American intellectuals and the publishing house Appleton & Co. While some Latin American countries would adopt Appleton’s *Economía doméstica e higiene* to educate women, illustrated tale books would circulate widely to support early childhood education. Regarding the latter, in 1877 the Colombian intellectual Rufino J. Cuervo

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161 Pedro P Ortiz, *Principios fundamentales sobre educación popular i los nuevos métodos de enseñanza, etc.* (Nueva York: D. Appleton y compañía, 1866); Pedro Pablo Ortiz, *Principios elementales de física experimental y aplicada, incluso la meteorología y la climatología para el uso de los colegios, escuelas superiores y liceos hispano-americanos y de las personas estudiosas.* Conteniendo todos los últimos descubrimientos y aplicaciones recientes a la industria, artes, etc., y a los usos y objetos de la vida común. Y una numerosa colección de grabados explicativos e interesantes, intercalados en el texto. (Nueva York: D. Appleton y Compañía, 1887); “Sesión del 6 de diciembre de 1860,” in *Anales de la Universidad de Chile. O repertorio de Instrucción Pública, humanidades, literatura, filosofía i ciencias matemáticas, físicas, médicas, legales, políticas i sagradas*, vol. XVII (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta del Ferrocarril, 1860), 1081.

wrote to his friend Miguel Antonio Caro that “I have always looked with envy at the children’s booklets, illustrated with pictures, that the house of Appleton published in English: in view of them, I said many times, why do not we have something equal for our schools?” Yet Cuervo continued by describing that “one day, when I least expected it, I saw the libraries of Buenos Aires flooded with identical books in Spanish, and what is even more satisfying, they were put in verse with a skill and a mastery that only a truly talented translator could reach. If this translator is, as I believe, Mr. [Rafael] Pombo, he deserves to be esteemed by friends of education as one of the benefactors of South American childhood.”163 Thousands of Appleton’s illustrated series for children were sold within the Americas.164 The renowned Colombian intellectual Rafael Pombo had authored some of these books, “which we have all seen in the hands of all of America’s children,” as the Argentinian statesman and intellectual Miguel Cané stressed in his memoirs.165 As the authorship of these books were not explicitly stated, in 1879 Pombo himself wrote a clarifying note stating that “[o]f the books for children of the Appleton

163 Guitarte, Cartas desconocidas de Miguel Antonio Caro, Juan María Gutiérrez, y Ezequiel Uricochea, 57–58.


165 Miguel Cané, Notas de viaje sobre Venezuela y Colombia., 211–12.
house in New York, only the twelve notebooks entitled Cuentos pintados, and the twelve largest entitled Cuentos morales para niños formales are written by me.”

Although catalogues of Appleton’s publications in Spanish are rare to find, the 1908 catalogue indicates that there were already eight agentes y corresponsales (agents and stringers) in Colombia, who covered the markets of main cities such as Bogotá, Barranquilla, and Cartagena. D. Appleton & Co. also had agencies in smaller cities such as Bucaramanga, Ocaña, and Pamplona, which by proximity could attend the frontier area shared by Colombia and Venezuela. Among these agents was Salvador Camacho Roldán, a Colombian politician and entrepreneur who founded the well-known bookstore Librería Colombiana in Bogotá, which was stocked with books he himself purchased in the United States and Europe, as noted in his Notas de Viaje.

The circulation of printed materials from the United States to Colombia reached significant levels towards the end of the century. It is worth noting that Colombians spent roughly as much money on U.S. printed materials as on sewing machines—roughly $90,000 per year in imports in each category, from 1891 to 1900. Although the value tells us little about the actual quantity and quality of the imported printings, the comparison with the sewing machine is telling because, according to the U.S. Consul at

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167 D. Appleton y Compañía, Catálogo general español (D. Appleton y compañía, 1908), 79.

168 Camacho Roldán, Notas de viaje, v.

Barranquilla, towards the end of the century “the sewing machine [was] the only machine that [was] sold in large numbers [in Colombia], and these are all of American manufacture.”

Although in terms of technology transfer Colombia could only import large numbers of sewing machines from the United States, trading with the north allowed Colombia’s progress brokers to circulate useful information they would convey from New York to Colombian readership, seeking to draw appropriate models for Colombia’s particular conditions from Latin American interactions.

Appleton also published works of reference about Latin America. From 1870 to 1910, they published influential books like *Life and Nature under the Tropics* by Henry Morris Myers, *Ambas Américas* by Ramón Páez, *Around and about South America* by Frank Vincent, *Brazil: Its Condition and Prospects* by Christopher Columbus Andrews, *Porfirio Díaz* by Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, and *Viva Mexico!* by Charles Macomb Flandrau. Although most of these works were penned by North Americans, perspectives on Latin America from the United States enriched a broader outlook by Colombians and Latin Americans alike who were looking for models and for a better understanding of their own republics. In fact, a robust and diverse body of books,

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newspapers, and periodicals circulated widely from New York to Colombia and to other Latin American countries alike. Along with European periodicals and manuscripts on Latin America that circulated from Europe to Colombia, U.S. newspapers and journals reached the Colombian reader, mostly from New York, towards the end of the century.

Major Colombian periodicals had typically included information about Latin American countries’ history and currents since the 1840s. However, it was during the 1880s when some newspapers such as Colombia Ilustrada (1889-92) established canjes with U.S. counterparts. In the race for material progress, scientific and industrial developments were among the priorities of this newspaper’s editors. In the first number of Colombia Ilustrada, José T. Gaibrois, the periodical’s director, declared that, along with a variety of topics, “we will allocate good space to scientific works in general, which in a style appropriate to the spirit of this magazine, are presented to us by their authors, and we will record the progress and discoveries that resonate for their importance in the thinking world.”172 As the circulation of useful knowledge was critical to drawing appropriate models of progress, Colombia Ilustrada promoted canjes with national and international counterparts, gaining rapid recognition within the hemisphere. In October 1889, in its eighth issue, the editors noted their active exchange not only with Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York but also with more than twenty newspapers from different Latin American countries, and a dozen more from different Colombian cities (Table 3.2). Throughout the following editions, while gradually revealing the growth of

172 “Prospecto,” Colombia Ilustrada, April 2, 1889, 4.
the journal’s mutual exchanges, the editors proudly hinted at the vibrant trade of ideas and useful knowledge that was taking place between Colombia and the rest of the hemisphere. Most of the publications exchanged focused on either industrial, commercial, or technical matters, hinting at Colombian progress brokers’ increasing interest in models of material progress and lessons for action (Table 3.3).

If canjes with Latin American periodicals would provide perspectives on the region’s own history, currents, and projects for progress, canjes with U.S. periodicals would allow Colombians access both to ideas of the magnitude of the spillover of technology from the North Atlantic to Latin American countries and perspectives about Latin America from the northern country. In fact, when in early 1890 the influential New York periodical *Scientific American* launched its Spanish edition entitled *La América Científica e Industrial* (1890-1908), Colombia Ilustrada’s editors acknowledged receipt of its first issue less than two months after its original publication in New York.173 The English version of this magazine as well as its Spanish edition were perhaps the richest publications available in Spanish America in regards to cutting-edge scientific knowledge, industrial developments, and patent systems.

Although short-lived and inconsistently delivered in general, Colombian periodicals republished news excerpts of different printed materials from Latin American countries and from Latin Americans hubs like Paris and New York which the editors considered noteworthy and, more importantly, useful for Colombian contemporary needs.

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Seeking to make scientific articles and useful knowledge more widely accessible to Colombians, progress brokers even reduced the scientific jargon when necessary.¹⁷⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical</th>
<th>Colombian City</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Promotor</td>
<td>Barranquilla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anales de Instrucción Pública</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Instituto</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
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<td>El Taller</td>
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<td>La República</td>
<td>Bucaramanga</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Provenir</td>
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<td>El Registro Oficial</td>
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<td>La Revista Escolar</td>
<td>Cartagena</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Tarde</td>
<td>Medellín</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Voz de Antioquia</td>
<td>Medellín</td>
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<td>Notas y Letras</td>
<td>Medellín</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revista Comercial e Industrial (de la casa de D. Manuel J. Álvarez C.)</td>
<td>Medellín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Cronista</td>
<td>Panamá</td>
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<td>La Estrella</td>
<td>Panamá</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Unidad</td>
<td>Tunja</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Colombia Ilustrada, Bogotá, Nos. 8 and 11, 1889-90.

¹⁷⁴ “La flora colombiana,” Colombia Ilustrada, October 15, 1889, 126.
### TABLE 3.3.

**INTERNATIONAL CANJES OF COLOMBIA ILUSTRADA, 1889-1890**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodical</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Porvenir Militar</td>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Diario de La-Plata</td>
<td>La Plata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revista de Artes y Letras</td>
<td>Santiago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Habana Elegante</td>
<td>Havana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boletín de la Librería de Bethancourt e Hijos</td>
<td>Country of Curaçao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Boletín</td>
<td>Santo Domingo</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Teléfono</td>
<td>Santo Domingo</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Globo</td>
<td>Guayaquil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Diario Oficial</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Repertorio Salvadoreño</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Telégrafo del Salvador</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Juventud Salvadoreña</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Nueva Enseñanza</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Debates</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Palmera del Valle</td>
<td>Guadalajara</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Familia</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Perú Ilustrado</td>
<td>Lima</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Opinión Nacional</td>
<td>Lima</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Universidad</td>
<td>San Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La América Científica e Industrial</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revista Ilustrada de Nueva-York</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Pastor</td>
<td>Barquisimeto</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Economista</td>
<td>Caracas</td>
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<tr>
<td>La América Ilustrada y Pintoresca</td>
<td>Caracas</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Opinión Nacional</td>
<td>Caracas</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Fonógrafo</td>
<td>Maracaibo</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Zulia Ilustrado</td>
<td>Maracaibo</td>
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Source: *Colombia Ilustrada*, Bogotá, Nos. 8 and 11, 1889-90.
3.7 Conclusions

Colombian progress brokers made possible the circulation of a large body of knowledge about Latin American experiences that would be useful to devise Colombia’s own prosperity. They were well informed about global currents and historical processes. As travelers and businesspeople, many of them accessed and circulated printed materials from all over the world. As statesmen and diplomats, they promoted agreements (like postal conventions) to ease the circulation of official documents, correspondence, and printed materials in general. Newspapers and books circulated widely, although irregularly, throughout Colombia’s main urban centers, letting concerned citizens stay aware of global affairs. Political disturbances and rainy seasons made this level of circulation difficult in the hinterland, isolating most of Colombia’s population for some periods. However, people in Panama and in the major ports of the Caribbean and the Pacific coastlines remained relatively up-to-date, transferring news and printed materials to the interior whenever possible. Bureaucrats, intellectuals, and commercial agents stimulated a continual flux of information into the hinterland. The capital city as well as other major cities were located in the highlands. As global printed materials were largely collected in public and private libraries, contemporary intellectuals and politicians had access to them. Besides periodical publications and monographs collected and circulated by individuals, many Latin American officials, libraries, and associations donated works to the Colombian national library and international libraries like

175 Safford, “El problema de los transportes en Colombia en el siglo XIX.”
Biblioteca Bolívar in Paris, easing the examination of neighboring countries’ history and developments. Publishing houses like Appleton & Co. of New York would also stimulate and ease the circulation of educational printed materials.

Global news and printed materials that circulated from Latin American countries via Paris and New York to Colombia were key to expanding mutual knowledge and drawing appropriate models for Colombia’s particular circumstances. Colombian progress brokers came to trust that Colombia would reach analogous ends if following in Latin American countries’ footsteps, rather than following North Atlantic models. This was particularly important at the turn of the century, when a bloody civil war unfolded in Colombia, causing a period of critical reflection. Some Colombians realized that their country was not only falling well behind other Latin American countries, but it was regressing. Working to incorporate lessons and models from their Latin American neighbors, some progress brokers analyzed and debated historical lessons within the hemisphere.
CHAPTER 4:

THE IMPERATIVE FOR PEACE AND APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONS: CRAFTING MODELS AND ANTI-MODELS

4.1 Introduction

Historians of Colombia have largely focused on Colombia’s conservatives and liberals shaping projects of nation-state making from the late 1840s, as well as on their views of the North Atlantic intellectual and economic referents, overlooking the brokerage role some Colombian intellectuals and politicians played within Latin America, which is the core of this chapter. Based on success and failure stories, some Colombian progress brokers fashioned well-defined narratives regarding regional models and antimodels during the mid-nineteenth century. They had engaged actively with a complex network of interactions among Latin Americans, who systematically exchanged critical information allowing regional comparisons and the identification of useful lessons for action. Deliberately, progress brokers sought to provide valuable information indicating that with the exception of Chile, neighboring countries did not provide valuable models or lessons before the 1870s. To them, while Chile represented order and progress, Mexico and Argentina embodied chaos and backwardness, which would shape critical approaches to these countries’ systems of government, policies, and socio-
economic activities. Intellectually curious, and fixated on an ideal of material progress, progress brokers looked for answers to Colombia’s constraints to progress in neighboring countries’ experiences. They sought to make sense of why, among the group of Latin American countries, only Chile seemed to be developing relatively well. They aimed to pull useful lessons from neighboring experiences and identify appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances.

The French historian Frédéric Martínez argued in his 2001 book that in nineteenth-century Colombia a shifting process from European idealisms to pragmatism stemmed from intellectuals’ and politicians’ rejection of external influences, mostly from Europe. However, my evidence suggests that pragmatism also stemmed from a process of weighing Colombia against the Latin-American countries, drawing pragmatic models and antimodels from within the region. In fact, representatives of all political spectrums came to believe that only the Latin American nations could provide appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. They trusted that Colombia’s neighboring countries rather than the North Atlantic nations embodied proper experimental fields of politics, legislation, and economic activities from which Colombians could draw useful knowledge and models for action towards material and intellectual progress. To them, this was feasible because Latin Americans shared a set of cultural traits and historical backgrounds. Hence, Colombian progress brokers did not build a pragmatic narrative by exclusively adopting or contesting European idealisms, but primarily by greeting and
contesting Latin American “externalities” since the mid-century, to borrow the expression upon which Martínez built his argument.¹

Colombian progress brokers believed that, by analyzing neighboring countries’ past and present, they could devise solutions appropriate to Colombia’s context. Historians of Latin America have largely emphasized that the North Atlantic countries were the model par excellence for Latin American countries. However, such was not necessarily the case. Although the Atlantic world had been actively interconnected since the sixteenth century, and cross-references abounded within printed materials, some Latin American countries began in the 1830s to shift from European idealism to more pragmatic models and institutions appropriate to these countries’ particular circumstances. Works by Jeremy Adelman and Gabriel Cid offer significant challenges to the traditional assumptions, delving from different perspectives and approaches into debates about constitution-framing in countries like Chile and Argentina, where policymakers dropped universalistic claims and crafted legal institutions responding to local norms and practices.² Colombian progress brokers realized this from the 1840s and looked at these countries for models. The Colombian intellectual Carlos Martínez Silva, in a historical account about Chile he published in 1869, emphasized that since the early 1830s in Chile projects had been discussed calmly and based on the principle that statesmen “should legislate according to the condition and needs of the nation, and not try

¹ Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 21–22.

to fill it into the mold of a constitution formed on abstract theories or governmental systems of other countries, a radical vice of all the constitutions that the liberal party forges.”³ Although logistically challenging, the circulation of ideas among Latin Americans could be done because, as Ecuadorian historian Juan Maiguashca pointed out in 2011, the intellectual common market known as la república de las letras had grown in size and complexity after independence, and places like the southern cone had become a critical center of intellectual production to other Latin American contemporaries’ views.⁴ Cross-references, then, abounded among Latin Americans, and some Colombians played a brokerage role by funneling useful knowledge to their fellow citizens.

During the mid-century, Colombian progress brokers emphasized that appropriate models for Colombia were directly associated with the history and contemporary affairs of neighboring countries. Aware that tensions between political opponents made up much of Colombia’s daily life (like elsewhere), progress brokers aimed to transcend these political debates by redirecting focus from local, national, and European levels, to a more inclusive Intra-American plane. Not only did they intend to demonstrate that Colombia’s struggles were unexceptional but also that particular inclinations towards a federative system of government, for instance, were a broader Latin American phenomenon. They also sought to raise awareness of successes and failures in Latin America that, in their view, entailed useful lessons for Colombians.


Historical and cultural aspects were deemed critical to understanding how blindly imported institutions would not bring prosperity to Colombia and Latin America overall. A notion of relative uniformity supported progress brokers’ claims regarding the appropriateness of Latin American models in contrast with the more distant and alien settings, practices, and cultures of the North Atlantic—however enviable their wealth and power. “Why does the representative democratic republic in Hispanic America not produce effects analogous to those it has produced in the United States?” asked the renowned politician and intellectual Mariano Ospina in 1849, to which he partially responded by affirming that “the weakness and inefficiency of the [adopted] institutions depended, as we have already stated, on the fact that the habits, opinions, laws, and circumstances of the peoples were not consulted in their formation; that political constitutions were not cortadas a la medida [drafted according to] the bodies they were to govern, but they were literally translated from those that had been given to countries that were in very different circumstances.”

Ospina, although openly admiring of the United States, was particularly critical of the way political constitutions were adopted in most of the Latin American countries, and stated that “the constitutions and laws regarding the opinions, customs, and circumstances of the people are like different pieces of a machine—if they do not correspond exactly the machine never runs, or it runs wrongly. These [Hispanic American] constitutions, being to [their countries’] customs

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5 Ospina Rodríguez, “Qué es la civilización,” 4.
and circumstances entirely foreign, were an indifferent or odious thing for the people.”\(^6\)

Moreover, in 1850 Mariano Ospina criticized Colombia’s “fatal” political and administrative idealism, which in his view stemmed from legislators ignoring “in their rightful value” the circumstances of the country for which they formulated institutions. In his view, Chile had made “notorious advantages, in contrast with the other Hispanic American states,” regarding “scientific politics,” which Ospina described as policymaking resulting from “practical knowledge of all the social circumstances of the nation.”\(^7\) Colombian progress brokers like Ospina came to believe in the viability of ideas promoting the possibility of replicating experiences from societies sharing a similar set of cultural traits and backgrounds, rather than lessons from unfamiliar North Atlantic peoples.

By continually analyzing neighboring countries’ history and contemporary affairs, progress brokers came to believe that progress was virtually impossible in countries lacking peace and appropriate republican institutions. This narrative captured their certainty that a linear sequence was necessary to achieve progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America during the second half of the nineteenth century: after securing domestic peace, the maturity of appropriate republican institutions would follow, which would in turn encourage population growth (through immigration), industriousness, and, eventually, economic growth and material prosperity. Economic

\(^6\) Ospina Rodríguez, 4.

\(^7\) “Empirismo,” *La Civilización*, July 4, 1850, 182.
growth would provide the means necessary to develop sciences and fine arts, underlying intellectual progress.

In this story, Chile initially embodied the quintessential appropriate model of progress, while Mexico and Argentina represented the antimodels due to their prevailing political chaos through the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Progress brokers selected and circulated materials providing information that began to establish ideas regarding the prerequisites that countries needed to achieve before embracing actual plans of material progress. Internal order—described vaguely as “peace”—was the most critical foundation in this view. Historian Gregorio Weinberg noted in 1998 that in the race for progress, peace was deemed the foundational need, and stated that the recipe for peace was evident in Latin America: to end forever revolutions and confrontations between conservatives and liberals, which were often nothing but coups d’État.  

However, the mechanisms to end armed revolutions and confrontations were not obvious to contemporaries’ eye. To Colombian progress brokers, however, the remedy began by raising awareness of and tracing parallels between Latin American countries which were in their view either lagging or developing. They esteemed peace or the lack thereof as the major driver of these separate outcomes. Hence, although specific prescriptions were rarely penned, during the 1840s and 1850s progress brokers sought to convince their readers that Colombia could either reach advanced stages of progress by examining neighboring countries’ history and by adopting appropriate models from countries like

Chile, or remain stationary—and even regress—by disregarding the factors leading countries like Mexico and Argentina to anarchy and chaos.

As this chapter will illustrate, evidence of these views flowed from within the country and from all over Latin America during the mid-century, a period in which Latin American peoples were struggling to establish robust republics simultaneously, although separately, after three centuries of colonial rule. In the race for progress in Latin America, achieving peace and furthering appropriate republican institutions were highly regarded values. Colombian progress brokers built on this idea during the second half of the nineteenth century and looked to some neighboring countries for models.

This chapter focuses on how Colombia’s progress brokers perceived developments in other Latin American nations primarily during the 1840s, and it delves into the creation of narratives of models and antimodels that were appropriate and inappropriate to adapt in Colombia. It argues that by focusing on neighboring countries’ history and developments, Colombian progress brokers identified and explained that a combination of domestic peace, appropriate and strong republican institutions, population growth, and industriousness were imperative in order to achieve material and intellectual progress in Colombia. They believed that these foundations would encourage growth in Colombia as much as they did in other Latin American countries during the second half of the nineteenth century.
4.2 Crafting Models and Antimodels in Latin America

Domestic analyses, as well as inter-American observations during the 1840s, allowed Colombian progress brokers to assert that Colombia’s lack of progress was, as in other Latin American countries, primarily linked with its internal political disorder. The Minister of Finance Mariano Calvo reported to the Colombian Congress in 1841 that the Government had hoped that “peace would allow the gradual development of industry and that this optimism would attract both foreign hands and capital to the country,” but social unrest had frustrated these expectations. Calvo had written his report in the midst of a bloody civil struggle—the War of the Supremes (1840-1842), which led him to claim that “now that the factions have squandered large sums, forcing the Government to considerable expenditures, industrial enterprises are paralyzed, public fortune and particular wealth are undermined, and the credit and even the future of the Republic are compromised.” The absence of internal peace, Calvo continued, had led to “the prostration in which the national treasury is today,” which in his perspective had constituted “a clear proof that domestic peace is the foremost need of New Granada.”

Calvo’s report reflected a common sentiment in contemporary Colombia.

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In 1842, Mariano Ospina Rodríguez informed the Constitutional Congress of New Granada that “very slow and almost imperceptible has been the development of industry in its different kinds during the long series of years that has just passed.”\textsuperscript{12} Ospina, who was then the Secretary of State, the Interior, and Foreign Affairs of New Granada, conveyed that the lack of industrial development in his homeland had not resulted, “as before,” from [colonial] laws prohibiting the exercise of some industrial branches.\textsuperscript{13} On the contrary, he stressed that “the widest freedom has been granted for [New] Granadians to choose a lucrative occupation, and the Nation has opened its doors to industrious foreigners.”\textsuperscript{14} In contrast with other Latin American countries “less favored by nature” and which “prosper with a speed that is staggering,” his homeland, “the so rich and fertile New Granada,” Ospina stated, “remains almost stationary.”\textsuperscript{15} The comparative approach to Colombia’s neighboring countries allowed him to conclude straightforwardly that without domestic peace, material progress was doomed in Colombia. “I think that nobody ignores today that the cause of this misfortune is insecurity, stemming from the little or no firmness that public order has had.”\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, he stated that although “there are vast uncultivated lands of an amazing fecundity [in New Granada], which invite to their

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} Ospina Rodríguez, Antología del pensamiento de Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, 565. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Ospina Rodríguez, 565. \\
\textsuperscript{14} Ospina Rodríguez, 565. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Ospina Rodríguez, 565. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Ospina Rodríguez, 565. 
\end{flushright}
cultivation […] and thousands of emigrants [from Europe] go to remote regions to seek subsistence, it is rare that one goes to New Granada” due to the lack of public order.\textsuperscript{17} He came to believe that “the safest means” to promote industry in Colombia effectively was threefold: “to remove everything that gives rise to divisions and strife,” like empleomania habits, to “strengthen the public authority that should repress disorder,” and “to affirm peace and tranquility.”\textsuperscript{18} In fact, he emphasized that the principles of order and legality ought to “triumph anywhere over rebellion and the anarchy,” which among different benefits would contribute to the promotion of European immigration.\textsuperscript{19}

Mariano Ospina, like many contemporaries, considered immigration necessary to promote projects of national betterment in Colombia.\textsuperscript{20} He believed that Latin American countries would become attractive to European emigrants after achieving peace. In this view, waves of European immigrants would represent to Latin America what immigration was achieving in the contemporary history of the United States: opportunities for both population and economic growth.\textsuperscript{21} In a mostly unpopulated,

\textsuperscript{17} Ospina Rodriguez, 565.
\textsuperscript{18} Ospina Rodriguez, 565.
\textsuperscript{19} Ospina Rodriguez, 565.
unexploited and belligerent territory like nineteenth-century Colombia, immigrants were chiefly perceived as saviors because they would contribute to national improvement by means of bringing capital, modern technologies and technical knowledge (to produce wealth and to train locals), as well as by developing new industries and exploiting untapped lands. “A man dressed next to the broken man, a laborious man next to the indolent, here is the great means of civilization,” quoted *La Civilización* referring to some advantages of immigration in 1850.\(^{22}\) In fact, this article continued, “these benefits to [our] material interests [are] worth more than all institutions, and as long as they [immigrants] are lacking, the institutions will be a building erected on the sand.”\(^{23}\) Mariano Ospina and José Eusebio Caro were then the editors of *La Civilización*.\(^{24}\) To many intellectuals and politicians, stable peace was imperative for promoting population growth via immigration, which would contribute to the stability of institutions and the creation of public wealth.

Latin Americans in general hoped to attract to their territories waves of European immigrants who were seeking better life conditions. French publications like *Annales de l’extinction du paupérisme* and societies like *Compagnie générale pour l’émigration et la colonization* both created in 1849, promoted migration from Europe to Latin America as a means to alleviate the situation of the European poor, mostly farmers facing increasing


\(^{23}\) El Mercurio, 4.

\(^{24}\) Antonio Cacua Prada, *Historia del periodismo colombiano* (Sua, 1968), 121.
land restrictions and tillage hindrances in a highly convulsive period of Europe’s history.\textsuperscript{25} During the second half of the century, however, most of the incoming immigrants settled in countries like Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay, and Brazil, disregarding territories like Colombia, which was less attractive to European emigrants, in part because Colombia lacked internal order and ordinarily offered lower wages.\textsuperscript{26}

From the early 1840s, perceptions and expectations of material progress would depend heavily, and increasingly, on degrees and periods of domestic peace in Colombia. Neighboring countries’ experiences would become key for Colombians grasping a broader idea of internal order, its practical effects, and suitable means to achieve it.

Along with Colombia’s contemporary history, the circulation of references to Latin American currents contributed to creating and continually reinforcing ideas indicating that internal order was the foundational link of a chain of prerequisites to achieve progress in Colombia. Steady domestic peace, appropriate republican institutions, population growth, and industriousness constituted this chain of requirements. All of them were deemed vital, but internal peace was considered the essential prerequisite of economic growth and intellectual progress.


\footnotesize\textsuperscript{26} García Estrada, Los extranjeros en Colombia, 26, 44, 54; Safford, The Ideal of the Practical; Moya, Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930.
During the mid-nineteenth century, a variety of Latin American printed materials circulated in Colombia, previously selected by progress brokers generally acting as newspapers’ editors. They aimed to highlight the imperative to ensure peace and to foster representative institutions if Colombians were expecting material and intellectual progress. By gathering, selecting, and republishing newspaper articles regarding Latin America’s history, news, and currents, Colombian progress brokers fashioned well-defined narratives regarding regional models and antimodels. Deliberately, they sought to provide useful information to compel Colombians to draw appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances, and sought to foster projects of national improvement by stressing examples of peaceful, and therefore more civilized societies to contemporary eyes. In many progress brokers’ view, Chile represented the model par excellence.

4.2.1 Archetypal Chile

After analyzing neighboring experiences, Colombian progress brokers came to perceive that the principles of republicanism and domestic peace were closely related. In their view, moreover, it was vital to achieve them before fostering any plans for material and intellectual development in Colombia. Progress brokers assumed that, while internal peace represented political stability with low levels of social unrest, appropriate republican institutions began by creating policies reflecting the conditions and needs of Colombia’s society, the defense of constitutional power and the rule of law, and the need for personal guarantees and political liberty in democratic rather than authoritarian
contexts. In fact, in a context where extermination instead of uncensored debates prevailed between opponents, they often stressed the imperative for strong governments capable of securing peace and law enforcement. These ideas were primarily drawn by progress brokers like Mariano Ospina, who looked at Chile consistently during the 1840s and 1850s. Chile had finished the revolutionary independence era by establishing the constitution of 1833, which created a “popular representative” system that favored order over freedom.27 The country had remained relatively stable ever since, inspiring observers from across Latin America.

Colombian progress brokers perceived domestic order as the cornerstone of growth in neighboring Latin America during the 1840s. They often drew optimistic referents exemplifying this from Chile’s history and appealed to other Latin Americans’ perceptions of Chile to vindicate their logic. Acting as Secretary of State, the Interior, and Foreign Affairs of New Granada, Mariano Ospina in 1842 reported to the Colombian Congress that unlike other Latin American countries, “Chile prospers and acquires positive improvements because it enjoys order and peace.”28 In 1844, the Colombian periodical El Día, republishing an article of the Ecuadorian counterpart La Concordia de Quito, invited its readers to reflect on Chile’s history, and asked: “what, then, is the cause or the secret of Chile’s present happiness? A rational constitution, which has cemented

27 Cid, “Terminar La Revolución,” 42.

28 Ospina Rodríguez, Antología del pensamiento de Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, 572.
peace, which is Heaven’s daughter and producer of the greatest goods.” It continued by arguing that peace was central to prosperity, and compared the Chilean civil war of 1829 with the stable peace Chileans managed to establish in the aftermath. “Were freer and happier the Chileans of 1829, who held over the field of Lircay to slaughter one another, than the Chileans of 1844 who are in the bosom of peace, with the flattering perspective of great development, and with the pleasant consolation of a happy future under the protection of a tutelary government?” Interestingly, the author continued by stressing the importance of mirroring in Chile’s history other Latin American countries’ predictable future. “It is precise to say it […] so that the lack of warning does not complete the ruin of the new republics. […] Personal guarantees are rooted in the shadow of peace and order, and peace and order are strengthened and consolidated when the constitution twins order and freedom.” Warnings like this, although not always so explicit, embodied a common perception that one Latin American country’s fate was liable to propagate within the region. This was particularly important in a context where notions of social Darwinism shaped the race for progress in the Atlantic world, implying the success of the fittest and the failure of weakest, represented by countries unable to self-govern and to further plans of material and intellectual progress. Channeling this preoccupation through printed materials, Colombian progress brokers played the crucial


30 La Concordia de Quito, 7.

31 La Concordia de Quito, 7.
role of selecting and funneling useful global information to promote similar levels of prosperity that neighboring countries like Chile had been developing—and that Colombians were envying.

The Colombian intellectual and statesman Florentino González also weighed the current state of Colombia against some Latin American nations.32 While politically antagonists, both Mariano Ospina and González believed that Chile could provide appropriate models to Colombia’s context. In his 1847 article “Una ojeada sobre el mundo” (A Glimpse into the World), González’s references to neighboring countries were primarily related to how far they had reached in the race for progress. Domestic and international peace was deemed critical throughout González’s report. Regarding the “prosperous and happy” country of Chile, González stated that because Chile was “assisted by its happy geographical situation, by the policy of order of its Government, and by its good mercantile laws,” Chile was “at the vanguard among the nations of that section of the continent.”33

Although Chile experienced exceptional periods of unrest in the mid-century, publications about Chile as an exemplary country continued to circulate widely in Colombia. In 1849, Bogotá newspaper El Día republished a Chilean article through which the editors of El Comercio de Valparaíso classified their home country as a role model for Latin American nations, an idea the Colombian journalists did not contest.

32 González, “Una ojeada sobre el mundo,” 1.

33 González, 1.
“Three years now Chile has not had one month in events as varied as the expiring month of June,” the article introduced.34 “For the happiness of this country and envy of the America to which it belongs, those events have passed without blood or disturbances, acting exclusively in the circle of law and the field of parliamentary law,” which in their view made Chile become “more than ever creditor to the title of escuela normal de la república representativa en Sur América” (the training school of the representative republic in South America).35 Likewise, after Chile experienced disturbances due to the election of President Manuel Montt (1851-1861), the editors of the Colombian newspaper El Pasatiempo lamented that Chile had entered “into the fateful race of revolutions, and this sad learning will make her retreat, or at least stop for a few years in the beautiful career of progress in which she marched, if not with much decision, at least with firm steps.”36 However, the Colombian journalists continued by stressing how Chilean currents ought to be exemplary. “One more lesson, however, dictates to the American people the recent Chilean revolution,” the article continued, “which is that governments […] should not commit the imprudence of wanting to impose on peoples their will and opinion.”37 The article editors believed that Chile was offering critical matter to reflect on because “this fruitful lesson has been repeated several times in South America, and it will

36 “Esterior. Chile,” El Pasatiempo, November 8, 1851, 94.
37 “Esterior. Chile,” 94.
have to be repeated as long as some governments do not change their system and persuade themselves that elections should be the exclusive work of the people in full and absolute freedom and independence.”

Reflections on popular elections were particularly crucial in the aftermath of the revolutions of 1848 (both in Europe and Colombia), and of the creation of the Conservative and Liberal parties in Colombia towards the election year of 1849. This discussion was also crucial in a context in which efforts to mobilize urban workers politically were being made in countries like Colombia, Peru, and Chile since the late 1840s.

Colombian progress brokers’ references to Latin American peoples varied little during the 1850s and 1860s, perceiving Chile as the quintessential model, in contrast with the rest of Latin America, which was still relatively chaotic. From 1850, some Colombian politicians began to suggest the adoption of some Chilean institutions like the Civil Code, which was being drafted by “one of the most distinguished intellectuals of America, Mr. Andrés Bello.” Juan de Francisco Martín, who was then running for Colombia’s Vice-Presidency, suggested in 1850 that “this work [the Chilean Civil Code] should be adopted in New Granada, whose circumstances of industry, civilization, customs, and legislation

38 “Esterior. Chile,” 94.


40 Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, “Candidato para la Vicepresidencia de la República Sr. Juan de Francisco Martín. Informe del Sr. Secretario de Gobierno. (Artículo II),” La Civilización, April 18, 1850, 1.
differ very little from those of Chile.”  

In fact, this code was intensely studied and adapted in Colombia’s states, with some adjustments to their “habits, vices and our special way of being” that some Colombian lawyers and analysts examined, developed, and debated in printed materials from the late 1850s.

Colombian newspapers publicized Chile as the model of not only democratic values but also material prosperity. In April 1852, Bogotá’s El Pasatiempo published an article indicating that in Chile “confidence is reappearing; institutions have returned to recover their empire and industry to deploy their activity, as in the most serene days.”

Hinting that the lack of order and politics were a distraction from what they believed essential, the editors added that “the fever of work and enthusiasm about all kinds of improvements succeeded the fever of politics; and the press, the legitimate organ of the public will, moving away from the field of politics, deals only with the practical interests

41 Ospina Rodríguez, 1.


and material convenience of the country.”

This article suggested that material progress ought to be at the center of both government and journalistic activity. “The most worrisome projects today are the railroad between Santiago and Valparaíso, and the one of an electric telegraph between both capitals.”

The article continued by offering Chile’s trade data, dazzling the readership with extraordinary figures. “The customs of Chile, during the year 51, has received natural and manufactured products worth $15,684,972,” the article indicated.

Compared with other Latin American countries, Colombia had developed one of the weakest foreign trade incomes during the century, hindering the Colombian government’s collection of revenue. In fact, in nineteenth-century Colombia, customs duties were the foundation of state funds and Chile, with only about half of Colombia’s population, produced three times Colombia’s export revenue circa 1850.

Some contemporary Colombians believed that Chile’s exceptional and exemplary developments resulted because Chile had chiefly managed to establish steady peace and developed institutions appropriate to the country’s context, like a robust centralist system of government. The growing circulation of printed materials with Latin American news was contributing to reinforce ideas in Colombia of Chile as a


47 Safford and Palacios, Colombia, 13; Bulmer-Thomas, The Economic History of Latin America Since Independence, 37, 68.
paradigmatic model, which would become key to the definition and preservation of
models and antimodels in Latin America.

Colombian progress brokers continued to highlight Chile’s prosperity as a model for Colombia. By broadcasting statistics and descriptions of Chile’s material progress, they sought to make two points: that progress was equally possible in Latin America, and that peace was its primary driving force. In 1858, the *Panama Star and Herald* republished an article that its Chilean counterpart *Diario* had published weighting Chile against the rest of the Latin American countries. The author believed that, among them, Chile was a “shining exception.”48 Disregarding hints of self-promotion tinting these lines, the article’s author delved into details illustrating Chile’s material progress, stressing infrastructure works and trade statistics that would allow readers to perceive the level of prosperity Chile had reached. Among factual material improvements, the article emphasized railroads “traveling the country in all directions,” the electric telegraph interconnecting Chile’s main cities, and the public gas lamps filling streets.49 But, as the authors categorically stressed, these achievements did not grow in a vacuum, neither were they fortuitous. “What has caused this state of advancement and material and intellectual development? Its political stability,” they stated.50

48 *Diario*, “Chile y su situación entre las repúblicas Hispano-Americanas,” 3.

49 *Diario*, 3.

50 *Diario*, 3.
As many Latin American printed materials had already pointed it out, Chile’s domestic peace was vital to achieving progress by 1860. The Panama Star and Herald’s editors republished and circulated widely the article that El Diario had first published in 1858, stating that Chile had reached these levels of prosperity, in contrast with other Latin American countries, “because the country is in a state of external and internal peace.”\(^{51}\) By republishing these kinds of articles, Colombian newspapers assumed similar sentiments, unless otherwise stated. Like many other newspaper articles, El Diario’s report on Chile highlighted that although Latin America was struggling to pave a way to progress, there were alternatives, and the Chilean way was the most obvious of these. In fact, the article indicated that “news of the other republics, for the most part, is nothing but about endless and aimless revolutions. While a steamer brings the news of the fall of a President Fulano and the elevation of the Mengano to power; the other informs that the latter experiences the same fate as his rival, overthrown in turn by a new candidate.”\(^{52}\) Stating that “facts rather than words” had represented liberty in Chile, whose citizens respect their constitution, this article concluded by suggesting that “to preserve the peace which is so necessary to the welfare of the republic,” rulers ought to set a good example of “respect and obedience” to the constitution and laws, and “the people” ought not to “rush into hostile measures to the free course of government.”\(^{53}\) These remarks would

\(^{51}\) Diario, 3.

\(^{52}\) Diario, 3.

\(^{53}\) Diario, 3.
speak directly to the contemporary Colombian readership, which was witnessing a hostile struggle for power in Colombia. Progress brokers then underlined that, like in Chile, institutions and laws by themselves did not provide progress, but the general respect of them.

Reflecting on Chile’s political stability was vital in a decisive period of Colombian history. During the 1850s, Colombia had gone through the liberal revolution of 1849-1854, which resulted in civil strife in 1851 and 1854, as well as in the establishment of new constitutions in 1853 and 1858. Overall, the 1850s were an epoch of convulsion and intense partisan conflict in Colombia. Within ongoing power struggles were political leaders representing opposing outlooks like Mariano Ospina Rodríguez and Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, who even held personal discussions regarding whether or not Chile served as a good model for Colombians to follow. Mosquera had already ruled the country from 1845 to 1849, and they both had run for the presidency in 1856, the first presidential election by universal male suffrage as stipulated in the Constitution of 1853. This constitution had also established the abolition of slavery, the separation of Church and State, and laid the groundwork for a federal system of government. Ospina won the elections to run the country from 1857 to 1861 and

54 Safford, “Politics, Ideology and Society in Post-Independence Spanish America,” 93; Grusin, “The Revolution of 1848 in Colombia,” 18; LaRosa, Mejía, and Murray, Colombia, 59; Safford and Palacios, Colombia, 188–224; Eduardo Posada Carbó, La nación soñada: violencia, liberalismo y democracia en Colombia (Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma; Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2006); Posada Carbó, “La tradición liberal colombiana del siglo XIX: de Francisco de Paula Santander a Carlos A. Torres.”

55 Martínez, El nacionalismo cosmopolita, 82; Safford and Palacios, Colombia, 210, 215–18.
sought to reestablish a centralist government. Tomás C. de Mosquera became the
governor of the state of Cauca, leading the opposition to Ospina’s government. Mosquera
would eventually overthrow him as a result of a civil war Mosquera would power to
uphold the federalist system in 1860.\textsuperscript{56}

Before turning to arms, Ospina and Mosquera had corresponded, confronting
ideas and views of the world. Some of their letters discussed their perceptions of Latin
America and Colombia within it. In October 1859, having exchanged private
correspondence discussing primarily government issues, Mariano Ospina and Mosquera
devoted prolific lines to debate about revolutions and use of the military to contain them.
Building on Chile’s experiences, Mariano Ospina asserted that “after a tremendous
struggle, astutely prepared very much in advance and powerfully aided by the furor of the
printing press against the Government of the Republic, Chile enjoys perfect tranquility,
and why? Because its Government had the wisdom to prepare in time for the defense and
put into action all the resources of the country to crush the factions soon.”\textsuperscript{57} Ospina
considered internal order as the country’s foundation towards progress and, supported by
Chile’s lessons he came to believe that, to achieve peace, the respect of law was
imperative, as well as the state’s force if otherwise. Displaying a resolute attitude towards
Mosquera’s latent menace, Ospina emphasized in his letter that “what would become of
that prosperous Republic [Chile] today if its Government had been intimidated by the

\textsuperscript{56} Estanislao Gómez Barrientos, \textit{Don Mariano Ospina y su época} (Medellín: Imprenta editorial, 1913).

\textsuperscript{57} Ospina Rodríguez, \textit{Antología del pensamiento de Mariano Ospina Rodríguez}, 94.
threats of the conspirators and by the furious shout of the anarchist printing press, and
had not acted with the foresight and energy that it did? Chile would offer to the world the
sad spectacle of anarchy and blood that Mexico and Venezuela offer today.\textsuperscript{58}

Mariano Ospina had been looking at Chile over the prior two decades, and often
underlined singular lessons. The creation of institutions appropriate to Chile’s specific
circumstances was among his models. However, Ospina considered that even more
inspiring was the way Chilean policymakers managed to prevail order over liberties,
enforcing the law when it was disobeyed, and “crashing the factions” when spreading
violent revolutions.\textsuperscript{59} In view of Chile’s consistent political and economic growth, Ospina
had been expressing sympathy for Chile since the 1840s; and, besides stating that Chile
was exceptionally prosperous “because it enjoys order and peace,” he also believed that
Chile was the sole appropriate model for Colombia because “we do not see anywhere, but
in Chile, the necessary vigor” to secure peace, which was imperative for material and
intellectual progress.\textsuperscript{60} Mariano Ospina perceived in Chile’s history not only lessons for
his government. He also viewed Chile as paradigmatic towards Colombia’s prosperity.
Not in vain had he affirmed in 1842 that, to foster industrial development in Colombia, it
was necessary to steady peace and to remove what produced divisions and strife. He also
believed that the government ought “to strengthen the public authority that should repress

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{58} Ospina Rodríguez, 94.
\textsuperscript{59} Ospina Rodríguez, 94.
\textsuperscript{60} Ospina Rodríguez, “Qué es la civilización,” 5; Ospina Rodríguez, Antología del pensamiento de
Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, 572.
\end{quote}
disorder.” Signaling this conviction, three maxims accompanied the front page of the newspaper *La Civilización* that Ospina had founded with José Eusebio Caro in 1848: “There is no freedom where law and justice do not prevail,” “Social progress is security’s son,” and “Violence degrades and ruins nations.”

By disseminating Latin American news and historical narratives, Colombian progress brokers engaged with self-criticism and invited Colombians to reflect on broader perspectives and appropriate models. They persisted in examining Latin American experiences and found it key to raise awareness continually of how neighboring countries had been shrinking or growing. Thus, they often emphasized the dualism between nations stuck in civil wars and despotism and peoples achieving unprecedented levels of material progress after ensuring domestic peace and strong republican institutions. Many Colombian progress brokers came to believe that Colombia would reach analogous ends if following in Latin American countries’ footsteps. Based on neighboring countries’ experiences, many Colombians believed vital the combination of domestic peace and the rule of law thriving in Latin America. Besides Chile, no other country offered exemplary institutions at the time. Then, concomitant with the narrative of Chile as a model, followed a story of Argentina and Mexico embodying antimodels to Colombia. This narrative would strengthen Colombia’s progress brokers’ certainty that a linear sequence was necessary to achieve progress in Colombia: after securing domestic peace, the

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61 Ospina Rodríguez, *Antología del pensamiento de Mariano Ospina Rodríguez*, 565.

62 Ospina Rodríguez, “Qué es la civilización.”
maturity of republican institutions would follow, which would in turn encourage population growth, industriousness, and, eventually, economic growth and material prosperity.

4.2.2 Argentina and Mexico. The antimodels

In contrast with Chile, which to Colombian observers embodied the quintessential appropriate model of progress, Mexico and Argentina represented antimodels. In their view, because chaos, authoritarianism, and backwardness prevailed there during the mid-nineteenth century, Colombians should look with suspicion upon any models leading their country to similar outcomes. The creation of this narrative of Latin American antimodels was carried out primarily by Colombian progress brokers who gathered, selected, and republished external information in Colombian newspapers.

In 1842, Bogotá’s newspaper *El Día* reproduced an article by the anonymous author “Brasilero Monarquista,” who after comparing an eleven-year period of both General Juan Manuel de Rosas’ dictatorship in Argentina and the democratic rule in Uruguay, came to conclude that peaceful Uruguay embodied a history of success in contrast with convulsive Argentina’s failure. This was the perfect example to highlight the benefits of representative institutions, the rule of law, and internal order in Colombia after the War of the Supremes (1840-1842). By bringing a set of statistics showing the

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supremacy of Uruguay in terms of material and intellectual progress during this period, this article emphasizes that, while peace had prevailed in Uruguay, “half of the 14 provinces that make up the Argentine nation have been almost always in arms against General Rosas, who has not ceased increasing his army a single day for 10 years now.”

Brasilero Monarquista considered representative institutions and steady peace as drivers of unprecedented progress in Uruguay, unlike the lack of them representing Argentina’s decadence. He reported in 1842 that, over the prior decade, Montevideo’s population had tripled, European immigration had risen exponentially, urbanization projects had skyrocketed, international trade had grown, the hospital of charity had been enhanced, and a university had been created for the first time in Montevideo. He also highlighted the fact that several newspapers, as well as many political, scientific and literary publications, had been published in Uruguay’s capital. On the other hand, the author coupled dictatorial rule and the state of permanent violence with retrogression in Buenos Aires. He reported that not only had Buenos Aires’ population decreased by one third under Rosas’ regime, but also that European immigration had contracted to only two ships with less than one thousand people (in contrast to the fifty ships and nearly 25,000 people who had arrived at Montevideo in the same period). Moreover, he accentuated that urban development had sunk, international trade had dropped dramatically, the Jesuits’ school had been shut down, and that only three periodicals had been published in

64 Brasilero Monarquista, 2.

65 Brasilero Monarquista, 2.
Buenos Aires during this time.\textsuperscript{66} Thus, he questioned, “can someone argue that the
government of General Rosas and his system of irresponsible dictatorship are better than
the responsible, representative, constitutional government of Montevideo?”\textsuperscript{67} As for
material and intellectual progress, the author continued by asking: “Where is the
excellence of a system that in eleven years of practice has not achieved a single day of
inner tranquility, has not produced a single advantage, […]and] has destroyed the
population, capital, industry, commerce, navigation, public establishments, the printing
press, and the material and intellectual progress? How is it that, at the same time and with
much fewer elements than Buenos Aires, Montevideo has thrived in all those branches in
the same proportion that Buenos Aires has declined?”\textsuperscript{68} Brasilero Monarquista concluded
by asserting that, concerning these questions “there is no answer, there is no other
explanation for the phenomenon, but the difference of governmental systems.”\textsuperscript{69} By
providing empirical evidence of systems working better than others in a context of
general reflection regarding political institutions in Colombia as well as elsewhere in the
region, Colombian progress brokers sought to raise awareness of the reasons leading
countries to take off in the race for progress while others remained stationary. Like
contemporary reflections on Chile’s experience, and through Brasilero Monarquista’s

\textsuperscript{66} Brasilero Monarquista, 2.
\textsuperscript{67} Brasilero Monarquista, 2.
\textsuperscript{68} Brasilero Monarquista, 2.
\textsuperscript{69} Brasilero Monarquista, 2.
voice, *El Día* underlined political and constitutional order as the imperative of Uruguay’s material and intellectual progress, whereas Argentina’s despotism had brought nothing but stagnation and chaos.

While creating narratives of antimodels, Colombian progress brokers intentionally sought to portray frightening scenarios. In November 1844, after criticizing Argentina’s despotic regime sharply, the editors of the Colombian newspaper *El Día* explicitly stated that “we fear that in narrating the contemporary history of an unhappy people [Argentina] we are not sketching the future history of other peoples of America.”

Intrinsic to these narratives they cultivated an idea of contagion or reproduction of outcomes by tying foreseeable effects like chaos and backwardness to already identified causes like despotism and the lack of internal peace. Likewise, by praising democratic values, the article authors invited its readers to respect and make respect the law if progress was desired. They claimed that “we are all interested in helping each other [Hispanic Americans] reciprocally, in contributing as soon as we can to extinguishing the fire that threatens to consume the little civilization that exists and is slowly increasing in Hispanic America”; for this, they believed it was key to compel parties and doctrines to “fight and triumph on the constitutional terrain,” as well as to raise a “general cry of indignation” to welcome “anyone who dares to proclaim the destruction of the fundamental principles of civilization and social order.”

In fact, by 1845 evidence from Chile, Argentina, and

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71 “Los tribunos del pueblo,” 1–2.
Uruguay had suggested that domestic peace seemed possible only in combination with strong republican institutions, and more precisely under political constitutions guaranteeing both the rule of law and personal freedom.

Florentino González also stressed in his article of 1847 that while Chile was typifying a successful fusion between domestic peace and the rule of law, several of the Latin American countries contrasted sharply. He reflected on some neighboring countries’ disorder and economic stagnation, which he believed resulted from tyrannical governments and the absence of internal peace. In fact, González delved into the Argentinian and Uruguayan state of affairs in a fashion similar to the abovementioned article of 1842. He defined southern cone politics, and mostly the caudillo Rosas’ government as a “spectacle of a wild struggle between civilization and barbarism”—an appreciation most likely drawn from the book Civilización y Barbarie that Argentinian Domingo F. Sarmiento had published two years prior.72

By publishing comparative articles regarding success and failure stories in Latin America, Colombian newspapers’ editors played an important brokerage role in illustrating possible outcomes of different political systems in neighboring countries. This awareness was particularly important in a historical moment when caudillismo (a strongman’s arbitrary rule coupled with the militarization of politics) characterized Spanish America generally, with the striking exception of Chile.73 Identifying the

72 González, “Una ojeada sobre el mundo,” 1; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Facundo: civilización y barbarie (Buenos Aires: Editorial Claridad, 1845).

practical results of democratic and dictatorial systems was key to Colombian readership, and the broad circulation of printed materials contributed to clarifying it. In the view of many contemporaries, peace and republican institutions were paramount to paving roads to material and intellectual progress.

Resembling criticisms of Argentina’s government, some Colombian intellectuals and politicians deemed the contemporary history of Mexico as a representation of how the lack of peace and republican institutions would lead to chaos, poverty, division and, ultimately, to a loss of autonomy and even territory. Historians have mostly linked the latter with the independence of Texas (1836) and its annexation to the United States (1845), documenting it as the foundation of a long-lasting threat from the United States to some Latin American countries.\(^{74}\) However, the U.S. invasion of Mexican territory was perceived not only as the result of a greedy and powerful country pursuing its “manifest destiny” and “jumping like butchering vultures over neighboring towns,” as many reported.\(^{75}\) It was also linked with the “power vacuum” of the Spanish-American nations, which also “lacked strong institutions and the education needed to administer the State


successfully,“ as renowned contemporary intellectuals Mariano Ospina Rodríguez and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento coincided to assess in 1846.\(^{76}\)

Crafting narratives of Mexico as an antimodel could be even more significant to Colombian readership. Mexico and New Granada had long been considered plentiful in natural resources (like precious minerals) and thus the most intrinsically wealthy territories in Latin America, and therefore, according to the contemporary prevailing physiocratic understanding of the economy, destined to prosper.\(^{77}\) By portraying Mexico as a failure, progress brokers sought to raise awareness of Colombia’s foreseeable future if it followed in Mexico’s footsteps. In August 1847, the editors of *El Día* reported that due to Mexico’s population and wealth, “it was called to be the model that the Hispanic American states should follow in the race for order and civilization; to be the protector of these States; to lead their policy, and to enforce the Spanish race in America.”\(^{78}\) However, and speaking directly to Colombians holding similar ideas of their place in the world, the article continued by stating that because of the lack of peace, Mexico “with its eight million inhabitants, with its advantageous situation, with its immense wealth, is the discredit of the republics and the insult of Hispanic Americans.”\(^{79}\) Likewise, while

\(^{76}\) Ospina Rodriguez, *Antología del pensamiento de Mariano Ospina Rodríguez*, 7.

\(^{77}\) Caldas, “Estado de la Geografía del Vireinato de Santa Fé de Bogotá,” 1849, 7; Beatty, “Riqueza, polémica y política: pensamiento y políticas económicas en México (1765-1911),” 245; Richard Weiner and José Enrique Covarrubias, “Political Economy, Alexander Von Humboldt, and Mexico’s 1810 and 1910 Revolutions.”


\(^{79}\) El Restaurador, 2.
lamenting Spain’s alleged interest in disputing with the United States over control of Mexico, *El Día* wrote in their December 25, 1847: “unhappy Mexico that has become a prey whose parts are fought over by foreign powers! Terrible lesson of the evils that produce civil war and anarchy, and much more when there are plenty of usurpers and ambitious who want the opportunity to become owners of the favors that nature has denied them.”

Florentino González also reflected on the lack of domestic peace and representative institutions leading Mexico to internal crises like the then-current Mexican-American War (1846-1848). “The former Goatimozin Empire,” González wrote referring to Mexico, “which is governed by the most absurd laws imaginable, stolen by the military horde that created political commotions, humiliated by a high-handed clergy, […] plagued by robbers, and continually towed from despotism to anarchy, and from these to despotism […] is a country that could be nothing in the world.” Moreover, he added that Mexico “was presenting nothing but an example to slander republican institutions, which have never existed there. It has served only to be the scorn of other nations, and to give reason to those who insult us as barbarians, confusing the enlightened and liberal people of America with the people of Santaana [sic] and the imbeciles who have suffered their blunders and attacks.”


81 González, “Una ojeada sobre el mundo,” 1.

82 González, 1.
Mexico intermittently from 1833 to 1854, represented the archetypal caudillo in Mexico’s history.\textsuperscript{83} Florentino González concluded his reference to Mexico by affirming that “it is sad for me to make this portrait, and it is even sadder because I know that Mexico is one of those countries that have the most elements to prosper in the world.”\textsuperscript{84} Bearing in mind the “prosperous and happy Chile” and the “civilized” Uruguay, as well as the “barbaric” Argentina and the “despot” Mexico, González concluded by inviting Colombians to reflect on them and to strive to fulfill the prerequisites to prosperity. “If we have good judgment, if we live in peace and then let our liberal economic laws exercise influence,” he affirmed, “it is easy to foresee that it will not take us many years to acquire the political and commercial importance that we must have in the world.”\textsuperscript{85}

Colombian progress brokers believed that countries like Mexico and Colombia plentiful in natural resources could not thrive in the absence of domestic order, and although many Colombians continued to hold expectations about their economic potential, they came to believe that Colombia’s natural riches and strategic geographical position were not enough to achieve progress. From the early 1840s, they had begun to perceive that rather than progressing, Colombia (along with Mexico) was falling further behind neighboring countries like Chile, which had started to show signs of prosperity earlier than other Latin American republics. The lesson was straightforwardly drawn


\textsuperscript{84} González, “Una ojeada sobre el mundo,” 1.

\textsuperscript{85} González, 1.
from these newspaper articles; a linear sequence was necessary to achieve progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America: after securing domestic peace, the maturity of republican institutions would follow, which would in turn encourage population growth (through immigration), industriousness, and, eventually, economic growth and material prosperity. Economic growth would provide the means necessary to develop sciences and fine arts, underlying intellectual progress.

In contrast with Chile, Mexico had been an example of chaos and undemocratic authority since the 1840s. Mexico seemed to many Latin Americans a laggard country in midcentury Latin America and, for many Colombians, it represented the antithesis of everything they considered necessary to achieve progress. Since the lack of steady peace was categorical, Colombian newspapers widely circulated negative references to Mexico. In 1849 the anonymous authors “Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta” perceived it as a “demoralized nation which is still called the Republic of Mexico, for laughter and ridicule of America.”86 “Go inside,” they continued, “register its entrails, and until the depths of it, you will find nothing but corruption, misery, and grief. Look for the moral, and you will not find it; look for industry, and you will not find it; look for democracy, and you will stumble upon the reign of the saber.”87 Resembling it to Colombia’s contemporary situation, the authors depicted Mexico as a fearful specter: “Do you know where we [Colombians] are heading to? Well, look at it [Mexico], we are following Mexicans’

86 Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta, “¿La cuestión que nos divide, es la cuestión moral?,” 2.
87 Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta, 2.
routes step by step!” Warning Colombians about this foreseeable fate, Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta concluded by asserting that “Mexico could have become a Republic! Mexico could have become a happy country!” Likewise, in 1852 Fabio published an article in the Colombian newspaper El Pasatiempo stating that “[in] opulent Mexico, which due to its population and wealth should be at the forefront of its sister Republics [...] civil war was the common situation.” Similarly, in 1857 the Panama Star and Herald stated that Mexico was “condemned to be the victim of certain men who believe that power is the only thing that gives name and fame,” and a year later the same newspaper re-published an article stating that although Mexico was one among “the most favored of all of America by nature, [it is] the most plunged into deep misery by the baneful hand of petty and ambitious caudillos.” This article continued by stating that Mexico, “placed among all the most disastrous extremes, is not given to discover the center that should serve as the basis for a prosperous and calm march. [...] Anarchy or tyranny; here are the only extremes that Mexico’s Caudillejos (sic) know; but reasonable freedom, never; this does not agree with their selfish ambitions.” In the same year of 1858, while highlighting Chile’s progress, an article re-published in Panama Star and Herald also emphasized a

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88 Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta, 2.

89 Los Jóvenes de Cúcuta, 2.


92 Eco del Pacífico, “Perú y Méjico,” 3.
general problem for Latin America but represented mostly by Mexico. “Sometimes, as in Mexico, it is not enough for the country to be divided into two political groups; it seems that generals with armies sprout from the earth and four or five parties at the same time tear each other apart, today Confederations are formed, tomorrow they dissolve; today three or four neighboring republics meet to face an army of vampires; tomorrow they use the swords with which they threw out the invaders in bloody and fratricidal struggles.”

Colombians regarded Mexico as a promising but long mismanaged and devastated country. Unlike the positive models they drew from Chile’s history, Colombian progress brokers warned about following the Mexicans’ steps, who were in their view developing a regressing path.

Colombian progress brokers continued highlighting the sharp dichotomy among Latin American countries’ developments during the 1860s. Considering Chile and Mexico the most extreme cases, they focused on them. During this period, some Colombian newspapers stressed that, while Chile continued to grow solidly, Mexico sank dramatically, enduring social crises, civil wars, and external interventions. In fact, Mexico had to deal with the so-called “Second Mexican Empire” in the second French invasion from 1861 to 1867. Speaking to Colombians who were still far from reaching

93 Diario, “Chile y su situación entre las repúblicas Hispano-Americanas,” 3.

steady peace and strong republican institutions, Colombian progress brokers used the examples of these two countries to reinforce the idea that success and failure stories in Latin America were easily transferable to Colombia if following similar steps. The countries’ experiences upon the adoption of the centralist or federalist system of government were generally used as a powerful example.

4.2.3 Contrasting Specific Models. Centralism vs. Federalism

Having analyzed the contemporary history of neighboring countries like Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, Colombia’s progress brokers like Mariano Ospina came to believe that no group of laws was powerful enough to make a country prosper in the absence of peace. Contrasts with the United States were relevant to demonstrate that institutions required specific local conditions to thrive and that even the most perfect institution (as many observers perceived the U.S. constitution) could not produce similar results. In 1849, while analyzing Latin American countries’ history after independence, Ospina stated that in these territories “laws were passed to favor the development of industry, ports were opened to foreigners, immigration of men and capital was called, and [because of that] everyone expected that the prodigious trajectory of United States in industry and wealth would be repeated in those [Latin American] countries.”95 Ospina emphasized that institutions themselves did not suffice and that peace was instead the

95 Ospina Rodríguez, “Qué es la civilización,” 4.
fundamental prerequisite to a nation’s improvement. In part, the extraordinary progress of the United States “might have happened if the new Republics could have offered peace, order and full security,” Ospina stated, “but unfortunately they did not.” In contrast, he continued, “deplorable vertigo has dragged almost everyone from revolt to revolt until persuading the foreigner that civil war, disorder, and anarchy are the ordinary state of these countries.”

Contrasts with the United States were crucial because the U.S. federative system was widely debated as the appropriate model for Latin America, against which progress brokers came to argue that it was unpractical in countries with sharply different historical backgrounds, cultures, and resources.

Some Colombians found in Chile, as well as in other Latin American countries, examples to support their positions in an ongoing debate regarding the convenience for Colombia to adopt either a centralist or a federalist system of government. In 1852, while debates were taking place to establish the federal constitution that was actually passed in 1853, the Colombian newspaper *El Pasatiempo* published an article by the anonymous author “Fabio,” who argued that because “the fundamental laws of a State must be established taking into consideration the character, moral situation, illustration, customs, religion, habits and even concerns of the people or peoples to whom they should govern,” a federative government, like that of the United States, “has not benefited, it is not beneficial, and perhaps will not benefit in a long time the Republics that were formed

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96 Ospina Rodríguez, 4.
from the Spanish Colonies of America.”

Colombian progress brokers had long before claimed the imperative of developing institutions appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances, and to look at neighboring countries like Chile for models in mid-century. Fabio also called for establishing a historical consciousness, as well as a more practical approach to Latin America’s politics. He claimed that for over one hundred years before obtaining its independence, the United States “were practicing as British provinces” the system of government that in 1787 would become their Constitution; then “will our learning take less time? We do not believe so.” Hence, Fabio concluded that to constitute a nation “the legislator must not only attend to theory but more particularly to existing facts,” which in his view explained why “the constitution of any country cannot be used for another.” Fabio argued that Latin American countries and the United States were radically different, and therefore any attempt to incorporate U.S. institutions within the Americas would result problematic. Regarding the federative system of government, if dividing the whole Spanish dominion into independent states after independence was a mistake in Fabio’s view, dividing those countries into “pygmies or


98 Fabio, 245.

99 Fabio, 245.

100 Fabio, 245.
ridiculous *estaditos*” (minuscule states) like New Granada was attempting to do at the time was, in his view, “a real political delirium.”

By bringing historical evidence from within Latin America, Fabio argued that a federation was by no means suitable in Colombia. “Let’s begin this review with opulent Mexico, which due to its population and wealth should be at the forefront of its sister Republics,” he introduced. “Mexico, to its misfortune, adopted in 1824 the federal government, forming sovereign and independent states from its provinces, breaking the unity to which its inhabitants were accustomed […] and civil war became the normal situation of that beautiful country.” Blaming the federative system that Mexicans readopted after losing not only Texas but also one third of its territory in the Mexican-American War, Fabio affirmed that “in the midst of the greatest natural riches, the General Government does not have a peseta in its coffers […] See here in two words, anarchy and dissolution, the goods that the federal government has poured on unhappy Mexico.” Fabio continued this analysis by delving into different cases of federative systems adopted in Latin America, which in his view caused nothing but chaos and poverty. “Anarchy and dissolution have also spilled over Central America and

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101 Fabio, 245.
102 Fabio, 246.
103 Fabio, 246.
104 Fabio, 246.
Guatemala. This Confederation did not last long. It was dissolved by bloody civil wars […] Forever, Guatemala dissolved into *republiquitas*” (minuscule republics).105

Although examples of devastation were drawn from Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, and Peru to illustrate the inappropriateness of the federative system in Colombia, Fabio brought the case of Chile’s centralist system and sought to make it exemplary of a successful change from one model to another. “Chile adopted or wanted to adopt once the system of the American confederation,” Fabio related, but “it took little time to start civil wars from province to province, an anarchic state that lasted for some time.”106 He believed that for Chile’s fortune, the central government was reestablished, and “since then Chile has remained in peace and all its provinces prosper.”107 Like in narratives linking antimodels with threatening scenarios, stories of Chile as the model par excellence were carefully tailored as a flattering promise.

Having presented how the federative system had been detrimental to every country that had adopted it so far in Latin America, Fabio concluded by affirming that “based on the previous facts, which are authentic, we form the following reasoning: it cannot be good or applicable to New Granada a form of government that within it, as well as in the other States of Spanish America, has produced only civil wars, appalling anarchy, and complete dissolution of the Republics that have adopted it from 1810 to

105 Fabio, 246.

106 Fabio, 246.

107 Fabio, 246.
1852.” However, clashes between powerful men and political factions often resulted from disagreements regarding the system of government convenient to Colombia. Whether to adopt a centralist or a federative system had been and would continually be a highly debated matter in Colombia through the nineteenth century.\footnote{Fabio, 246.}

In his concluding remarks, Fabio stressed that Colombians were fundamentally different from the United States’ inhabitants, which was categorical to understanding better why the North Atlantic could not provide suitable models to Colombia. “We have about two-tenths of Indians without any instruction, seven-tenths of blacks and mulattoes, shepherds and miners, who never think about who governs, nor what system of government governs […] thus it does not suit us, nor do we have the capacity […] to adopt their political institutions.”\footnote{Edwin López and Salomón Kalmanovitz, “La idea federal en el nacimiento de la República colombiana 1810-1828,” in Ideas y políticas económicas en Colombia durante el primer siglo republicano, ed. Andrés Álvarez and Juan Santiago Correa (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2016), 123–54; Álvarez and Correa, Ideas y políticas económicas en Colombia durante el primer siglo republicano; Safford and Palacios, Colombia; Robert Gilmore, “Federalism in Colombia, 1810-1858” (University of California Berkeley, 1949).} Like Fabio, many Colombian progress brokers appealed to historical evidence to link Latin American countries’ history with Colombia’s foreseeable outcomes. Due to historical and cultural similarities, models for progress could be more easily drawn from neighboring countries than anywhere else. Then, not only Colombians but also Latin Americans alike developed historical arguments indicating that neighboring countries’ experiences evidenced that adopting the federal
system was inconvenient to their countries, and these arguments circulated widely in Colombian newspapers. In fact, from the 1840s to 1850s some Colombian newspapers like *El Día* republished articles from Latin American counterparts like the Chilean *El Mercurio*. One of these columns was the lengthy study entitled “Centralismo-Federación,” in which the Chilean author argued that the federative system was not appropriate for Chile, or for any Latin American nation. “From the Río de la Plata to Mexico, there are only two well-constituted republics, and in both of them the regime of unity governs and it take more roots every day,” the author introduced. Later, he continued by saying that it can be guaranteed that in all of the Latin American nations “the unitary element combined with democracy will prevail, because this is the form of government more analogous to our antecedents, the most appropriate to govern such new nations, and the one that best satisfies the demands of our time.” Finally, as a defense

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112 Mercurio de Valparaíso, “Centralismo-Federación,” 1; Mercurio de Valparaíso, “Centralismo-Federación (Continuación),” June 30, 1844, 1–2; Mercurio de Valparaíso, “Centralismo-Federación (Continuación),” July 7, 1844, 1; Mercurio de Valparaíso, “Centralismo-Federación (Continuación),” July 21, 1844, 3–4.


114 Mercurio de Valparaíso, “Centralismo-Federación (Continuación),” June 30, 1844, 1–2.
of the system Chile had implemented, he concluded by saying that “our constitution, eminently unitary as it is [...] is not a democratic monument, but it is a monument of sanity and wisdom because its authors did not allow themselves to be carried away by the spirit of routine, and they wrote what was adaptable to a country taken from a colonial regime by the violent hand of the revolution.” Likewise, in 1852 Chilean intellectual Epifanio Canto gave a talk at the Chilean National University’s Law School, and like many other Latin American intellectuals, he argued that the logic of Chile’s constitutional orientation was straightforward. He explained that “to remind the United States to prove that the federal system would be convenient in Chile is, in my opinion, a true contradiction. The States of the Union adopted that system, after its revolution, for the same reasons that our legislators should have in view to reject it, that is, in order to avoid disunity and the hotbed of domestic wars.” Ideas stemming from Chile as well as from other Latin American countries contributed to framing narratives of models and antimodels in Colombia. Colombian newspaper editors like those of *El Día* and *La Civilización* played a crucial role in broadening debates and bringing useful information aiming to compel their readers that while federation would bring violence and backwardness to Colombia, centralist governments like the Chilean would offer models of peace and prosperity.

115 Mercurio de Valparaíso, “Centralismo-Federación (Continuación),” July 7, 1844, 1.

116 Canto, “Memoria sobre el sistema central en la administración pública,” 524.
Similar perceptions regarding the U.S. federative system of government and generally imported unsuitable institutions were held for many other intellectuals in Colombia throughout the mid-century. The newspaper El Pasatiempo’s statement of 1853 summarizes the view of many Colombian progress brokers, who came to believe since the early 1840s, “it is true […] that the Yankee spirit and it alone is a principle of work, business, and regeneration for the South American States, but it would be as unfortunate to imitate the institutions of the United States as to implement and execute the utopias of the French ideologues.”117 Progress brokers aimed to pull useful lessons from neighboring experiences and identify appropriate models to adapt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. From this perspective, internal order could be reached only by establishing appropriate institutions like Chile had proved possible. Then, the linear sequence progress brokers deemed necessary to achieve progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America would flow with relative ease: after securing domestic peace, appropriate republican institutions would mature, which would in turn encourage population growth via immigration, industriousness, and, eventually, economic growth and material prosperity. Economic growth would provide the means necessary to develop sciences and fine arts, underlying intellectual progress.

117 “¿Cuál es el efecto de la emigración en las Repúblicas Americanas?”
4.3 Conclusions

Having analyzed Colombia’s neighboring countries’ current developments and history, Colombian progress brokers came to believe that Chile was the only Latin American country reaching the longed-for material prosperity, gradually but consistently, and thus the only republic worthy of examination and imitation during the mid-nineteenth century. Pursuant to this narrative of Chile embodying the model par excellence followed a story of Mexico and Argentina representing antimodels, which was widely promoted as representing everything Colombians needed to avoid if material progress was expected: violence, tyranny, poverty, and backwardness. These narratives were primarily built on the assumption that to achieve progress in Colombia as in the rest of Latin America, besides adopting appropriate models to Colombia’s particular circumstances, a linear sequence was necessary: after securing domestic peace, the maturity of republican institutions would follow, which would in turn encourage population growth (through immigration), industriousness, and, eventually, economic growth and material prosperity. Economic growth would provide the means necessary to develop sciences and fine arts, underlying intellectual progress. Colombian progress brokers trusted that Colombia’s neighboring countries rather than the North Atlantic nations embodied proper experimental fields of politics, legislation, and economic activities from which Colombians could draw useful knowledge. To them, this was feasible because Latin Americans shared a set of cultural traits and historical backgrounds, and the intellectual common market known as la república de las letras had grown in size and complexity after independence, easing intra-Latin American communications, cross-references among intellectuals and politicians, and a brokerage role by Colombians funneling useful
global knowledge to their fellow citizens. This would allow progress brokers to draw specific models, like the imperative for strong governments capable of securing peace and law enforcement in Colombia, as to contemporary observers Chile’s constitutional system had proven useful to the country’s improvement.
CHAPTER 5:

MODELS APPROPRIATE FOR COLOMBIA’S PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES

5.1 Introduction

Chile, Mexico, and Argentina constituted the primary Latin American referents of material progress in Colombia after the late 1870s. To Colombian progress brokers, these countries had achieved domestic stability and peace, developed institutions appropriate for their contexts, and bridged paths to material prosperity that would allow regional comparisons and the identification of useful lessons for action. Drawing from personal experiences and their analyses of global printed materials, Colombian progress brokers believed that Colombia shared many common traits with other Latin American countries, and that success and failure stories in Latin America were easily transferable to Colombia if following similar steps. Moreover, this circulation of printed materials allowed Colombian progress brokers to draw useful information about Colombia’s neighboring countries from newspapers like Revue Sud-Américaine, América Pintorezca, and South American Journal, and from countries’ handbooks, commercial directories, and bulletins
by organizations like the International Bureau of the American Republics.\(^1\) Besides the press and a variety of printed materials, Colombian diplomats and intellectuals gathered useful, primary information about specific programs and policies. North Atlantic references mattered, but Colombia’s progress brokers came to focus on Latin American models. Although Colombian progress brokers were neither a unified, identifiable group in Colombia, nor in general agreement on a range of political and policy issues, all of them developed ideas of national betterment based on the examination of neighboring experiences.

With the common objective of moving their country from chaos to order and progress, Colombian progress brokers created well-defined narratives of models and anti-models of progress during the mid-nineteenth century. On the one hand, by providing vivid details of neighboring societies’ politics and policies, they sought to sow fear by

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mirroring Colombia’s future against chaotic Mexico and tyrannical Argentina. They consistently argued and illustrated that while the lack of peace and republican institutions could turn Colombia into these antimodels, internal order and political stability on the other hand could take Colombia to brighter stages of prosperity, as in Chile. In Colombia, however, these narratives were essentially ineffective: civil wars and political instability continued up to 1880.

During the 1880s and 1890s, the consistent narrative progress brokers had previously tailored became more compelling after Argentina and Mexico emerged as new models. They now had powerful examples of countries moving relatively fast from disorder to order, and from general poverty to sustained growth. Progress brokers, then, reinforced their narrative: after crediting peace and appropriate institutions with the fundamental role of paving paths for progress, they now focused on illustrating how, by augmenting population via immigration and fostering productive economic activities rather than bureaucratic careers, Colombia could develop intellectual progress and economic growth. By the turn of the twentieth century, Mexico, Argentina and Chile had developed steady peace, economic growth, and industrialization, offering in the eyes of some Colombians suitable models of material prosperity.²

² Beatty, Technology and the Search for Progress in Modern Mexico; Edward Beatty, Institutions and Investment the Political Basis of Industrialization in Mexico before 1911 (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001); Martin Lagos, Claves del retraso y del progreso de la Argentina (Buenos Aires: Temas, 2011); Yovanna Pineda, Industrial Development in a Frontier Economy: The Industrialization of Argentina, 1890-1930 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Fernando Racchi, Chimneys in the Desert Industrialization in Argentina during the Export Boom Years, 1870-1930, Social Science History (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006); Leslie Bethell, Chile since Independence (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Bulmer-Thomas, The Economic History of Latin America Since Independence.
Colombian progress brokers went beyond disputes and political analysis at the local, national, and North Atlantic level, aiming to place Colombia in a much broader perspective. In their view, and from a continental perspective, during the late nineteenth century Colombia embodied the antimodel Mexico and Argentina had represented decades prior. They also suggested that Colombians had demonstrated themselves unable to self-govern and to foster plans of material and intellectual progress, which entailed risks of being devoured by more powerful nations. This failure encompassed far-reaching economic and political consequences. In a context in which nations like Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico were praising the value of order and progress, chaotic countries like Colombia would struggle to develop their international relations, which were increasingly dominating world trade and politics.\(^3\) Chile’s government, for instance, declared as early as 1865 that Latin American countries ought to achieve domestic peace before looking for inter-American agreements. Chile’s government representatives of the American Congress held in Lima in 1865 declared that “we are far from imagining that the American Union is a remedy for the unstable and agitated reality of some of our Republics. Quite the contrary, we believe that, whatever the international pacts drawn up to consecrate the union, it will be illusory and will not increase the force and respectability of the states of America, so long as each of them has not found in the stability of domestic peace, the permanence of public order and security, and the

enjoyment of a tranquil liberty, the conditions indispensable for the development of its elements of prosperity and power.” In the race for progress, achieving peace and furthering republican institutions were highly regarded values (and scarce characteristics) in Latin America, and Colombian progress brokers built on this idea to advise their compatriots to draw appropriate models from neighboring countries and take actions accordingly.

Colombian progress brokers crafted narratives capturing their certainty that a linear sequence was necessary to achieve progress in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America during the second half of the nineteenth century: after securing domestic peace, the maturity of appropriate institutions would follow, which would in turn encourage population growth (through immigration), industriousness, and, eventually, economic growth and material prosperity. Economic growth would provide the means necessary to develop sciences and fine arts, underlying intellectual progress. They drew this sequence by analyzing the history and currents of countries like Argentina and Mexico during the nineteenth century. Contemporary politicians and intellectuals like Colombia’s President Rafael Núñez indicated in 1883 that Argentina “had to go through the long purgatory of Rosas to return to the life of a civilized people,” and that Mexico reached the “beautiful hopes of progress” only after enduring “opprobrious tyrannies like those of Santana and Miramón,” as well as after having gone through the “bitter test of the Empire, which

ended with the murderous execution of Maximilian in Querétaro.”

Only Chile, Núñez stated, “through a different path has solved the problem of a respectable political organization, occupying the vanguard [...] alongside the Argentine Confederation.” In fact, as historians like Jeremy Adelman and Charles Hale have argued, Argentina and Mexico illustrate a sequence of conjunctures that moved from revolution, to anarchy, and to order and progress. This echoed the progression of some of Latin America’s statesmen from an idealistic European liberalism to a more pragmatic outlook, seeking systems appropriate for Latin American countries’ circumstances. Reflecting the mental orientation of Latin Americans who were concerned above all with political stability and order as imperatives for achieving material progress, Colombia’s progress brokers, increasingly pragmatic, derived many of their ideas not by comparing Colombia with the North Atlantic nations, but with other Latin American counterparts.

Contemporary observers perceived the evolution of Chile, Mexico, and Argentina through the analyses of global printed materials that since the 1840s Colombian progress brokers had been gathering, selecting, republishing and circulating through personal writings and periodicals with nation-wide circulation. This chapter examines how Colombia’s progress brokers perceived developments in Latin America towards the end of the nineteenth century, and argues that rather than drawing models from the North


6 Núñez, 357.

7 Adelman, Republic of Capital, 166–67; Hale, Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853; Hale, The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico.
Atlantic countries, they sought to make sense and draw from Chile, Mexico, and Argentina models of immigration, industry, and economic and governmental systems appropriate for Colombia’s particular circumstances.

5.2 Redefining Latin American Models

While perceiving their home country as relatively stagnant, Colombian progress brokers regarded highly the rapid economic growth as well as the intellectual and material developments that Chile, Argentina, and Mexico were achieving during the last third of the nineteenth century. By 1868, the general situation was still disheartening in contemporaries’ view. The Panama Star and Herald summarized the situation of Latin America by re-publishing an article stating that in 1868 “South America, as always, remains prey in most of its States to the horrors of war and the ravages of anarchy,” and that “Chile is the only Republic which in the midst of peace and the broadest order and freedom, has taken gigantic steps in the way of its political, intellectual and material progress.”

However, beginning in the early 1870s countries like Mexico would experience significant changes and, with these changes, many Colombians would start pondering Mexico as a new, positive model. Although weakened during the 1850s and 1860s, Mexico had begun to recover. The French had withdrawn from Mexico in 1867, clearing the path for Mexicans striving for peace, representative institutions, and material

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8 La República de S. de Chile, “1867 y 1868.,” Panama Star and Herald, January 25, 1868, 3.
progress. In 1867 Mexico had proven a triumph of democracy, “the democracy of order and progress, not violent demagogy,” as Panama’s newspaper insinuated.  

To many contemporaries, Argentina was also gaining a better name after the defeat of Rosas and the subsequent establishment of stability and political order under constitutional rule during the 1860s. In his visit to Argentina in 1866, the Colombian traveler Filomeno Borrero reported in his travelogue that besides having the reputation of being “the most advanced city in the illustration and literature of Hispanic America,” Buenos Aires also had “a very active trade and a population of 200,000 inhabitants, of which no small part is composed of foreigners who, attracted to the beauty of her climate, the opportunities for acquiring wealth, and the hospitable and kind character of the inhabitants, have established their residence there.” Moreover, Borrero assessed that “with some years of peace, Buenos Aires will become a rival to the European capitals [...] four railroads, and many telegraph wires leave [from it] to the interior of the Republic, [it is] the largest, most beautiful and most commercial of South America’s Spanish cities.”

Along with Chile, Mexico and Argentina would remain in relative internal order during the 1870s, allowing rapid developments during the last third of the nineteenth century.

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9 Dabbs, The French Army in Mexico, 1861-1867; a Study in Military Government.; Beezley and Rankin, Problems in Modern Mexican History; Richmond, Conflict and Carnage in Yucatán; Brittsan, Popular Politics and Rebellion in Mexico.

10 La República de S. de Chile, “1867 y 1868.,” 3.

11 Filomeno Borrero, Recuerdos de Viajes En America, Europa, Asia y Africa En Los Años de 1865 a 1867 (Bogotá: Imprenta de Ortiz Malo, 1869), 30.

12 Borrero, 30.
Having reached steady peace and developed republican institutions that bridged paths to material prosperity, these countries constituted to Colombian progress brokers the primary Latin American referents of material progress.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Latin American printed materials of all sort portrayed these three countries as exemplary. During the 1880s and 1890s, a significant brokerage role between Latin American history and the Colombian readership was played by newspapers and periodicals with nationwide circulation like *El Conservador, La República, La Opinión, El Correo Nacional, El Comercio, Revue Sud-Américaine, El Repertorio Colombiano, Anales de la Instrucción Pública, Anales de Jurisprudencia*, and *Papel Periódico Ilustrado*. By accessing Latin American countries’ history, statistics and currents through published studies and personal visits and expeditions, Colombian progress brokers drew models of growth from neighboring countries which represented a successful transit from a general state of distress, political chaos and poverty to steady domestic peace, strong republican institutions and economic growth.

Colombian progress brokers came to believe that statistics were vital for drawing images from neighboring countries, and countries like Mexico had begun to frame projects of nation and state building based on statistical information.\(^{13}\) Although an office of national statistics was delayed in getting properly established in Colombia, the *Oficina de Estadística Nacional* was opened in 1873 and began to collect statistical works of

Latin American countries, mostly from Chile, Venezuela, and Argentina. In some of them, however, mentions were made of the statistics from Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Ecuador. Latin American statistical works became highly valued in Colombia, and some of them were even deemed comparable with “the most excellent works of this kind published by the Governments of Europe,” as in 1876 the director of Colombia’s Oficina de Estadística assessed Commercial Statistics of Chile of 1873. The flux of figures and narratives about Latin American countries would contribute to Colombian progress brokers’ assessments of their homeland’s as well as Latin America’s place in the world.

5.2.1 Argentina: Model of Population Growth and Industrialism

Argentina experienced extraordinary patterns of development and growth during the last third of the nineteenth century. Commercial exchange between Colombia and Argentina was virtually nonexistent at the time, but the circulation of global, Latin-American-centered publications, travelers’ travelogues, Latin America’s official publications, as well as reports shipped by diplomats contributed to shaping ideas regarding the transformation of Argentina’s society, economy, and politics after Rosas’s dictatorship.

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14 Oficina de Estadística Nacional, Anuario Estadístico de Los Estados Unidos de Colombia (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1876), ii.

Like Chile since the 1840s, Argentina became for many in Colombia an example of how steady peace would foster internal order, population growth, and industriousness.

Colombian progress brokers would observe with interest the expansion of Argentina during the last quarter of the century. Local newspapers and personal publications circulated personal observations and excerpts of global periodical publications, disseminating reports and statistics of trade, industry, and population growth that would depict Argentina as a country reaching higher stages of material and intellectual progress. Even contrasts between Argentina and countries like the United States were often used to picture the level of development the austral republic was reaching. For instance, in 1881 the Colombian newspaper *El Conservador* indicated that “while Argentina produced 240,000,000 pounds of wool, the United States only produced 208,000,000.”

Likewise, the *Revue Sud-Américaine*, whose director Pedro Lamas served as one of the major promoters of Argentina abroad, circulated statistics and reports describing the state of Argentina, some of them by Europeans who had visited the newly prosperous country.

Consequently, the editors affirmed that by looking to offer “unbiased” reviews, they published reports by Europeans like M. F. Simonet, who wrote a detailed description of Argentina’s progress. “Progress is real,” Simonet affirmed, “agriculture, industry, and public education are growing everywhere; the colonies are melting away from the


provinces of Santa-Fe and Entre Ríos, which are, it is true, still large agricultural centers, but will soon no longer be the only provinces to which the immigrant will go.”¹⁹ Based on global printed materials, not only Europeans migrants but also Colombians developed increasingly optimistic ideas about Argentina during the 1880s.

Inviting to imitate the example of Argentina, the Scientific Commission of Colombia reported in 1882 that in countries like Argentina “every consul appointed […] received a bonus, more or less considerable depending on the case, and was praised by the official press,” after acclimatizing foreign products in their home countries, “or whenever that consul or consular agent managed, through active propaganda, to direct a group of immigrants, farmers or useful artisans […] to the beaches of the country he represented.”²⁰ In their view, this was the way through which some neighboring countries had prospered. “This is how patriotism is shown,” (“así es como se hace patria”), continued the article, indicating that by means of diplomatic activity Argentina, Chile and Brazil “came to be the most prosperous of South America and those who walked and continue to walk more and better the peaceful path of progress and well-being.”²¹ This article’s authors believed that besides promoting their country’s potential abroad, Colombian diplomats ought to bring to Colombia elements of progress like industrious people, foreign capital to exploit natural riches, and useful knowledge. “Let Colombia imitate that example,” they stated, “let this

¹⁹ “Courrier d’Amérique. République Argentine,” 63.


²¹ Comisión Científica Colombiana, 108.
model be imitated in this country, which is so rich in the most precious natural products, and [Colombians] will see how soon it gathers the fruits.” 22 Along with Colombian publications which contributed to enhancing optimistic views of Argentina, statistics of immigrants, trade, and figures of all sort circulated widely in Colombia—mainly after the results of Argentina’s national census of 1883 was publicized. 23

Statistics reflected how, in twenty years, Argentina had moved from a chaotic state to become a leading republic in Latin America. “The progress in Argentina has been truly extraordinary,” stated a Colombian newspaper article summarizing Argentina’s census in 1883. This article highlighted significant contrasts between 1861 and 1883, and showed that Argentina’s occupied extension had risen from 116,000 km² to 300,000 km², the population had grown from 344,000 to 800,000 inhabitants, the number of schools had increased from 331 to 600, the number of newspapers had augmented from 42 to “more than 100,” and infrastructure projects had skyrocketed, moving from 40 to 1000 kilometers of railroad built, and from 40 to 4000 kilometers of telegraphic lines in operation. 24

Hence, besides the renewal of former, friendly relationships, reestablishing Colombian diplomatic missions to Argentina would bring new insights to a country still struggling to set a forward movement towards material progress. Argentina’s new census had offered impressive

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22 Comisión Científica Colombiana, 108.


24 “Estadística Argentina,” El Conservador, November 22, 1883, 1303.
figures to a global audience, and some fields of development would become particularly interesting for Colombia’s government. Colombian progress brokers looked at Argentina for useful knowledge and models, and Colombia’s diplomatic body in Argentina played a central role to this end.

The role diplomats played in neighboring countries raised the interest of some Colombian observers. For Colombian progress brokers, diplomacy was a way not only to strengthen relations with, but also to learn from Argentina. In September 1883, the renowned Colombian intellectual José María Samper was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for Chile and Argentina. Carlos Sáenz Santamaría would join him as secretary.25 “It is the mission of Mr. Samper to strengthen the bonds of fraternal friendship that unite us with Argentines and Chileans,” said the periodical El Conservador after their departure from Colombia in November 1883.26 Up to then, Colombia had developed only intermittent diplomatic relations with Argentina. Florentino González had served as the last General Consul of Colombia in Buenos Aires from 1872 to 1874, and no other mission had been established after his death in 1874.27 In the official reception by President Roca in Buenos Aires on July 15, 1884, Samper’s words of admiration to Argentina aimed to represent “the feeling of fraternity that the

25 Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Legación de Colombia en Chile, Box 188, Folder 1, 106-109


27 González, Memorias, 10.
peoples of Colombia harbor for their brothers in El Plata.”\(^{28}\) In his speech, moreover, Samper stated that “the distant but brilliant spectacle of the prosperity of this Republic rejoices the children of Colombia,” which other words was a revelation that his role as a diplomat implied gathering useful information and drawing models for action in Colombia.\(^{29}\) “The great material progress that in every sense is made,” Samper continued, “the high intellectual development, which gives such a nice luster to the Argentines, and the high spirit with which this government follows a policy of American peace and harmony […] are facts that deserve the applause of the whole civilized world.”\(^{30}\) While Samper was offering tokens of admiration, in Colombia newspapers expressed the government’s official expectations about establishing relations with Argentina. When Carlos Calvo y Capdevila, the Resident Minister of the Argentine Republic in Colombia, arrived in Bogotá, a formal reception was held by the Colombian president, Rafael Núñez. The Colombian president welcomed Calvo by stressing the historical process Argentina had experienced, and the way Colombians were expecting to follow in their footsteps. As many progress brokers, Núñez underlined the role that peace and strong republican institutions ought to play in the race for progress. The Latin American republics, Núñez said, “after securing their political personality in the world are today on the diligent path of their final constitution.” Argentina, he continued, “is happily near, at


least, to placing the final stone of the new building.”

With the help of God, and overcoming natural obstacles,” stated Núñez, “we will also reach that inevitable destiny of our history.”

In his speech, Núñez extolled the imperative for peace and appropriate institutions, and asserted that “under different forms, the identity of efforts continues in search of institutions that, because they are essentially free, respond in practice to the imperative needs of civilization, which are precursors of progress.”

Raising expectations about processes of intellectual exchange and mutual learning, these formal acts and diplomatic relations overall contributed to developing in Colombia optimistic ideas about Argentina and its progress. Key to this end was the collection of books that José María Samper collected and donated to the National Library of Bogotá from the Southern Cone, as well as the endorsement of a “Latin American Convention on promotion and dissemination of useful publications” between Colombia, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, which would allow a faster and more efficient examination of neighboring republics’ policies, economic activities, industrial developments, technological innovations and, overall, the methods used to reach material progress.

Although Samper’s stay in Buenos Aires lasted only a few months—because he concentrated his mission in Chile—Colombian newspapers continued circulating news

31 “Legación Argentina,” El Conservador, December 18, 1884, 2226.
32 “Legación Argentina,” 2226.
33 “Legación Argentina,” 2226.
and ideas from Argentina, enhancing the image of this country as exemplary. Colombian newspapers widely disseminated Argentina’s statistics, often republishing borrowed articles. “The material progress of the Argentine Republic is truly astounding,” stated El Conservador in January 1884. Following this statement, the newspaper inserted a report full of statistics and descriptive information about the new city of La Plata, which had recently been created as the administrative center of the Buenos Aires province. Likewise, in April 1884 El Conservador portrayed in numbers the size and importance of Argentina’s Merchant Navy, which “currently consists of 1552 vessels larger than 6 tons, with 6882 crew.” The same year of 1884, the Colombian Newspaper El Comercio republished a speech Pedro S. Lamas had given at the Geography Society of Paris in which he provided detailed statistics. “In 1883 there were more than 4,623 kilometers of railway in operation,” Lamas stated. “The national telegraph lines managed to transmit 438,000 telegrams [...] The passengers transported by the tramways were 18,246,400. There are 2,023 educational establishments in the Argentine Republic with 4,097 teachers and 136,928 children of both sexes. In the Province of Buenos Aires, there are 49 public libraries with 77,381 volumes, 98 newspapers and newspapers are published, 3 of them in German, 5 in Italian, 3 in French and 3 in English. In the whole Republic, there were 224


newspapers in 1882, 124 of which were political and the other scientific and literary.”

In Colombia, the idea of Argentina developing unique patterns of development of growth stemmed mostly from the wide circulation of its statistics during the 1880s. Some illustrations of emblematic places in Argentina also contributed to this end.

In the view of Colombian progress brokers, however, these figures represented little to Colombians if domestic peace was still missing in the country. In 1884, the Colombian priest Federico Cornelio Aguilar, who dedicated several decades to the comparative analysis of Colombia with the rest of the Latin American countries, stated that Colombia had more people and natural resources than Argentina, but that Colombia lacked internal order and industriousness, which in his view were vital elements for progress. “We have eight hundred thousand inhabitants more than the Argentine Republic, we are half of their distance from Europe and the United States, we have greater mineral and vegetable wealth, more navigable rivers and a people, by confession of [the Argentinian intellectual] Mr. [Miguel] Cané, more intelligent,” stated Aguilar. However, Aguilar continued, “last year Argentina exported and received three times more than what we exported and collected.” Aguilar considered that Colombians ought to follow the example of nations like Argentina, representing a successful transition from


40 Aguilar, Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas, 195–96.

41 Aguilar, 195–96.
a general state of distress, political chaos and poverty to steady domestic peace, strong republican institutions and economic growth. “The progress is such in that country, which once was a victim like us of party politics, laziness, and revolutions, that in the first third of this year was exported almost seven million [pesos] more than in the same third from last year. In Argentina, neither the continuous struggle of our politics nor the apathy of our laziness, but life, activity, and work are perceived today.”

The prescription in Aguilar’s view was, then, to develop commercial enterprises, financial muscle, infrastructure, and a strong maritime defense system in Colombia. “We must persuade ourselves that as long as we do not have active and substantial commerce,” Aguilar affirmed, “a well-supplied treasury, many leagues of railroads, and strong warships that sail the two seas of Colombia, our language, philanthropy, and enlightenment will serve only for our brothers to look at us with pity and foreigners with contempt.”

In fact, he argued that “persuaded of this truth,” countries like Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador “have stopped theories and have put to work, as the figures prove.” A strong government was also critical in his opinion, and he referred to Mexico’s history as an example and stated that especially this country, “once agitated by perennial revolutions, torn by the hatred of the party and discredited by the vandalism that unfolded in its territory, has embarked on a new path since 1877, or rather, since

42 Aguilar, 195–96.

43 Aguilar, 203.

44 Aguilar, 203.
1879, the year in which the civil wars and the struggle and swing of politics ended completely, under the powerful influence of General Porfirio Díaz. Among these lessons was a profound conviction that to achieve peace, appropriate republican institutions, and material progress in Colombia the rule of law and universal respect for it, “especially by the political leaders,” was paramount.

Colombian progress brokers also analyzed immigration systems, industrial sectors, and monetary and legal institutions in Argentina towards the end of the nineteenth century. In May 1888, Antonio Samper was appointed as Colombian General Consul in Buenos Aires. Having studied this country for over two years, in 1890 Samper wrote a massive report with a detailed account of several topics regarding Argentina’s currents like its politics, commerce, and the “causes of Argentina’s progress.” Samper believed that Argentina was exemplary in many aspects, mainly in the way Argentinians were fostering immigration from Europe. In fact, he stated that Argentina “owes its rapid development to the external impulse that immigration provides.” By detailed specific guidelines, Samper suggested ways to promote

45 Aguilar, 203.
46 Aguilar, 288.
47 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 13-13v.
48 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 52v-53.
49 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 53v.
European migration to Colombia based on Argentina’s methods and warned about the imperative to take into account topographic, cultural, and climatic differences between Colombia and Argentina before establishing immigration policies.\(^{50}\)

Samper explained that Argentina had developed three systems of immigration, some more efficient than others. In the first system, Samper explained, private landowners divided their plots into smaller units of 50 to 100 hectares and sold them by charging 10% cash and 90% in nine yearly installments, plus 5% of annual interest. “They usually equip the lots with a well, a house, a horse, some sheep, and they often trace the area of a town as the center of the field lots.”\(^{51}\) This system, then, worked by selling this land to wealthy immigrants, who in case of successfully exploiting the land would “inform their compatriots, and if they also do well they are induced to join them and as these, in turn, would do the same thing with their relatives and, as the land is fertile and the work applied by owners, this system produces so many wonders, and a progressive chain of immigration is established.”\(^{52}\) Moreover, Samper continued by explaining that after important nuclei of farmers are organized, “entrepreneurs appear scouring the fields,” seeking to sell machines that could be used by “large businesses and

\(^{50}\) Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 53v-57.

\(^{51}\) Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 54.

\(^{52}\) Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 53v-57.
the richest farmers.” This system, the first and most effective in Samper’s view, contributed greatly to the development of Argentina’s agriculture and international trade. Moreover, Samper explained that this system had also contributed to reduced maritime freights and fares, “to the point that copious *peonadas* [great number of farm workers] come from Italy temporarily, only to pick the harvest in the moments when they demand a greater number of hands.” Samper believed that this system had created a set of facilities that “matches the formation of an immigrant’s capital, wealth, well-being, and the shape of the lands and businesses of Argentina.”

The second system of immigration used in Argentina implied the government’s action. Having granted up to sixteen square leagues to entrepreneurs, and up to two endowments per entrepreneur, the government established some conditions. It expected entrepreneurs to survey and make a map of the plot, to map an area of a new town including the field’s plots, to sell each lot for a fixed price, to establish fifty families minimum per endowment, and to equip parcels with some comforts, as well as farm animals. The government, on the other hand, would provide the immigrants’ fares from the arriving port to the colony. This system, in Samper’s view, “has produced good

53 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 54-54v.

54 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 54v.

55 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 54v-55.

56 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 54v.
results, but on very rare occasions because in general it has served only as a pretext to allocate large and very valuable portions of land to influential speculators who have not colonized anything, who lack both resources to colonize and intentions to comply with the law, and interposing themselves between the colonizer and the law, rendering the dispositions and spirit of it useless.” 57

In the third system, the government was in charge of promoting immigration via agents located in Europe who would gather and embark migrants to Argentina. 58 In this system the government also covered travel expenses, including lodging upon their arrival “in a comfortable hotel built to that purpose, to which the demands for immigrants concur; in this hotel, the supply and demand of labor meet.” 59 To Samper, this system was particularly useful because it “facilitates the acquisition of large peonadas for railway companies and others that demand many hands, as well as workers, servants, etc., for the city.” 60

57 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 55-55v.

58 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 55v.

59 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 55v.

60 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 55v.

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After providing this detailed analysis of Argentina’s immigration systems, Samper argued that in Colombia, regarding immigration, “everything is to be created.” He continued by warning that if the Colombian government wanted to promote immigration, it was necessary to start by creating appropriate laws to make it easier, bearing in mind Colombia’s particular circumstances like topography and climates. He suggested to take into account that “the lands where Europeans can settle are those of [Colombia’s] interior, in the [Andes] *cordilleras* with temperatures of ten to twenty-two degrees Celsius, whose climates are healthy and pleasant; that to reach them the travel expenses are considerable; and that our agricultural lands demand clearings and in some points unravel, which implies higher expenses than in Argentina and greater delay to plant and collect the fruits.” With this in mind to create appropriate legislation, Samper believed that it was foreseeable to populate Colombia’s cordilleras by implementing an entrepreneurial model in which the government granted wastelands, a system similar to the second Argentinian model he had explained.

Analogous models were implemented to colonize empty lands in Colombia during the nineteenth century. Instead of European immigrants, however, nationals opened the internal agricultural frontier, creating new towns by either colonizing lands

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61 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 55v.

62 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 55v.

63 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 57-58.
spontaneously or by responding to colonizing companies that were directed by both entrepreneurs and Colombia’s state.64

Antonio Samper also drew different lessons regarding the economic crisis Argentina was facing during the late 1880s, which would lead to the internationally known Baring crisis of 1890.65 Samper, as well as several concerned Colombians, had been examining the Argentinian paper currency system and the crises it had created.66 In Colombia, paper currency was also generally used; thus the Argentinian crisis potentially represented a threatening outcome. In fact, after offering a detailed explanation and his point of view about the causes of and the adopted solutions for this crisis, Samper stated that “I fervently hope that Argentina will find the formula for her well-being, and I present its example to my country to learn from it, assuring to you [Minister of Foreign Affairs] my belief that Argentina has not progressed thanks to paper currency as some

64 Michael J. LaRosa and Germán R. Mejía, Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 44; Catherine LeGrand, Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936 (University of New Mexico Press, 1986); Keith H. Christie, Oligarcas, campesinos y política en Colombia: aspectos de la historia socio-política de la frontera antioqueña (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1986); Alvaro López Toro, Migración y cambio social en Antioquia durante el siglo diez y nueve (CEDE, 1976); James Jerome Parsons, Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).


argue by obfuscation, but in spite of it.” Likewise, in May 1890 the Colombian newspaper *El Porvenir* published a study of the paper money system, which drawing from the Argentinian experience stated that “the danger to which we have alluded comes from the temptation offered by the incentive of spending accompanied by the ease of dealing with new issues of paper currency, which, converted into an ordinary resource, lead to catastrophes like the one that threatens the Argentine Republic today.”

Based on Argentina’s experiences, besides drawing useful ideas from immigration systems and currency lessons, Antonio Samper also studied its political system. Seeking models appropriate for Colombia, he argued that regarding politics, the only thing Colombians needed to learn from Argentina was to stay away from armed revolutions and to maintain internal order at all costs. To him, domestic order continued to be the most regarded prerequisite to prosperity in Colombia. “The written laws of Argentina reveal the depth of science, industriousness and very advanced civilization,” stated Antonio Samper in 1890. “But in practice,” he continued, “we have nothing to learn in Argentina in matters of government, except that since the domination of Rosas [Argentinians] have acquired a panic terror for revolutions and [they] try always to solve difficulties without resorting to them; […] the country has a civilizing feeling that

67 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 69v.

68 Samper, Miguel, ed., *Crisis monetaria. Artículos publicados en “El Relator”, precedidos de fragmentos del folleto titulado Banco Nacional (1880) y del titulado Nuestra circulación monetaria (1890)* (Bogotá: Imprenta de La Nación, 1892), 52–53.

69 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 63v-64.
condemns armed revolutions.” To establish peace, respect for the law, and institutions appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances were also lessons that Samper drew from Argentina.

Immigration, however, encapsulated the primary causes for Argentina’s progress, and the solution to problems affecting other Latin American countries was often coupled with immigration benefits. For instance, Colombian progress brokers learned that although evils like the often-noted empleomanía persisted not only in Colombia but also in Argentina, its damaging effects were reduced in Argentina after immigrants began to create wealth and develop economic activities that Argentinians customarily disregarded. This was the lesson at which the Colombian newspaper La República hinted in 1894 when its editors republished an article analyzing the increasing number of public employees in Argentina, and stating that while most of the productive economic activities were carried out by immigrants, Argentinians of origin were mostly bureaucrats. “The proportion is really scandalous,” they said, and by quoting La Revista de Buenos Aires, they recalled “the prophecy of the deceased D. Domingo F. Sarmiento, who once said that the children of the Argentines, founders of the Argentine nationality, would contribute in future times with very few human elements to the increase of wealth and of the material progress of the nation that their ancestors founded with so much sacrifice of lives and fortunes.”

70 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 444, 1890, 63v-64.

71 “Como marcha la Argentina,” I.
The circulation of articles and studies of Argentina’s progress reflected the way Colombian progress brokers went beyond disputes and political analysis at the local, national, and North Atlantic level, aiming to place Colombia in a much broader perspective. They had been examining Colombia’s neighboring countries’ developments and appropriate models and lessons for action, drawing models from Argentina’s institutions and its migratory, industrial, and banking history during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

5.2.2 Chile: Model of Republican Institutions

During the 1880s and 1890s, Colombian progress brokers continued to regard Chile as paradigmatic. They had been praising its democratic institutions since the 1840s. If years prior a Chilean newspaper considered Chile as “the training school of the representative republic in South America,” towards the end of the century some Colombians believed it in actuality and sought to learn from Chile’s rich experience.72 In an article analyzing Colombia’s literary, artistic, and scientific stasis, the renowned Colombian intellectual Sergio Arboleda stated in 1880 that “there will be no lack of those who, comparing the [current] republic with the viceroyalty [of New Granada], blame the [principles of the] democratic system for our scientific decline.”73

73 Arboleda, “Las letras, las bellas artes y las ciencias en Colombia,” 53.
institutions, he believed, were not the reason hindering the development of arts and industries in Colombia. In fact, he invited its readers to look at Chile, where “institutions similar to ours govern”—like the Civil Code—and where “the political and economic well-being attract as much attention as its progress in science and fine arts.”

Arboleda aimed to illustrate how Colombians could learn from Chile by adopting democratic institutions appropriate to Colombia’s context. If the lack of progress in Colombia was related to the adoption of republican institutions, it was because, in Arboleda’s view, there were both good and bad democracies, and Colombia was the latter. “There are, then, two species of democracy,” Arboleda stated, “or rather, two different and opposed systems to which this name is given, and which, if they have something in common, is a certain similarity in the formulas and the one frequently being degeneration of the other.” He described the first type of democracy as a system in which power is provided to virtue and intelligence because “the sensible majority prevails.” In this view, this system represented the classic expression *Vox populi vox Dei*. In contrast, he described the “false democracy, the irony of democracy,” as the system in which “the number reigns” and due to “the irritated factions have no other

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74 Arboleda, 53.
75 Arboleda, 53.
76 Arboleda, 53.
77 Arboleda, 53.
language than that of the passions, they are the masters of power.”\textsuperscript{78} The later corresponded, in Arboleda’s view, to the Latin expression \textit{vox ira vox Diaboli}. From this perspective, while Chile represented the former system of democracy, Colombia represented the latter.\textsuperscript{79} To Arboleda, the model appropriate for Colombia could be drawn from Chile, to avoid the “bad democracy” which was in his view hindering Colombia’s material progress. Hence, Arboleda concluded by asking, “What does Colombia need? What any nation needs: that it should not be tyrannized, that it should be left free to fulfill the destiny that Providence has pointed out to it; that it should not be diverted from the center to which it tends by force of the laws that govern society in the moral and political order: it needs God.”\textsuperscript{80} In Arboleda’s view, Colombia like Chile had the necessary elements for prosperity. “Colombia is an admirable country,” he said, “it has in its rich soil a fortunate climate, all the elements it needs for its political, moral well-being, for its mercantile economic prosperity, for its aggrandizement by the arts industry for its scientific intellectual glory.”\textsuperscript{81} In a country like Colombia, with abundant natural riches and a strategic geographical location, but traditionally disputed between militarism and civil institutions, progress brokers would find in Chile’s democratic values a model to follow.

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\textsuperscript{78} Arboleda, 53.
\textsuperscript{79} Arboleda, 53.
\textsuperscript{80} Arboleda, 53.
\textsuperscript{81} Arboleda, 53.
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Besides a long tradition of Colombian progress brokers admiring Chile’s institutions, in 1881 the Colombian intellectual José María Samper wrote a book extolling the democratic values Chile had exhibited in the presidential election of 1881. The civil politician Domingo Santa María had been elected president, defeating the Chilean General Manuel Baquedano. The latter was running for president after bringing Chile to military success in Lima, in the midst of the War of the Pacific, which had given him considerable fame and respect in Chile. This historical moment in Chile’s history inspired Samper to dedicate a full volume to these men and, in his view, to Chile’s exemplary behavior. He stated that “the feeling of respect and esteem that we have always harbored for that country, model of prudent Republics, had never had better occasion to be fixed with a mixture of scientific curiosity and interest of comparative study [than now,] in the accumulation of outstanding facts that characterize the political movements of that remarkable people.”

In the book’s introductory lines, and having described the historical context in which the presidential election took place, Samper continued by saying with manifest admiration that “this is a great and beautiful spectacle of a people who, peacefully and instinctively, save themselves, with no more caudillo than their good sense, with no more prestigious force than that envisaged by law, and with no other advice than that of the need for good and the need to keep the vast field of law free of hindrances!” Samper, in fact, was not only publishing a book on Chile’s

82 Samper, _Chile y su presidente_, 5–6.

83 Samper, 7.
internal affairs to praise a republic he admired openly. This book was meant to present appropriate models for actions to the Colombian readership.

By applauding Chile’s democratic attitudes, Samper also criticized Colombia’s politics and sought to draw models from this sister nation. His book was an open invitation to learn from Chile and to move towards stronger civil statesmanship in Colombia. Along with direct criticisms of Colombian politicians’ traditional habits and disputes, he invited his readers to learn from Chile’s example, where “the moderate liberal party has governed since 1861, without the conservatives or the radicals being excluded from a more or less considerable participation in the Administration, in the Parliament and the Magistracy.”

This attitude towards collaborative administrations was exemplary in Samper’s view. “And a curious fact that proves the power of order and legal habits,” he continued, is that “the liberals govern in Chile as if they were conservative, because they respect the institutions, and these, as a general point, have even conservative tendencies, although in their essence they are and more or less liberal.”

Drawing neither from the North Atlantic countries’ experiences nor from abstract nation-making theories, but from Chile’s history, José María Samper openly called for tolerance as the dominant civic value for achieving progress in Colombia, a country hitherto engaged in highly destructive partisan disputes.

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84 Samper, 7.

85 Samper, 7.
Tolerance was, in fact, the government’s maxim of the time. During the early 1880s, many Colombians were musing on methods to establish peace for good. Aiming to take Colombia further in the race for progress, the then-President Rafael Núñez fostered a plan of national and administrative reformation. From 1881 to 1884, Núñez published many different articles promoting his program of *Regeneración* (regeneration), which in sum sought to develop tolerance to contrast bigotry in Colombia. He perceived the latter a significant evil and one of the principal drivers of civil wars in Colombia.

After disapproving of the former governments’ lack of “gradual renewal,” and after enumerating a series of contradictions that had them move from one extreme to another (e.g., “from over-compression to excess of freedom”), Núñez stated that “there is no reason to continue this series of antitheses, which together form a kind of vicious circle that hinders all progress.” 86 He continued by affirming that new efforts were needed to “return to our political life its tutelary balance [and,] therefore, the regeneration’s formula is tolerance” (*la palabra sacramental de la regeneración es tolerancia*). 87 To shape his ambitious project, and striving to find models appropriate for his homeland, as well as to convince his fellow Colombians that peace and strong republican institutions were vital to foster progress, Rafael Núñez used global historical evidence, mainly from other Latin American nations. “All these [Latin American] republics had the same origin and the same traditions,” said Núñez in 1883, “and at some distance, they are all considered to be

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87 Núñez, 27–29.
placed on a slope of common misfortune. However, the political forms and the way of being of each one have not been, nor are they, the same.”88 Along with domestic tolerance, administrative reforms were deemed necessary, and Chile had offered useful examples since the early 1880s.

Colombian progress brokers sought to draw from Chile appropriate models of democratic institutions as well as practical administrative methods during the 1880s. Worried about questionable practices in the way Colombian governments appointed their diplomatic body, in 1881 El Conservador editors published an article suggesting the adoption of the Chilean system in Colombia. They believed that the Chilean diplomatic service was designed to ease the transitions between governments, which would help Colombians avoid their “chaotic” system.89 “The natural way to train skilled diplomats would be to make this a career, as is the case in European monarchies; but the natural instability in the republics does not allow us to introduce such a practice among ourselves,” said the authors.90 They continued by explaining that government changes and the mutation of parties in power require the replacement of public officials, which “is natural and therefore inevitable because we have adopted the republican form as more adequate to our needs.”91 Although officials changes were expected, they believed that


89 “Servicio diplomático,” El Conservador, July 25, 1881, 37.

90 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.

91 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.
“even in the midst of alternation, some order could be introduced in the diplomatic service that would partly avoid the evils that our anarchic system brings,” and Chile was an example of it. From the El Conservador editors’ perspective, the Chilean system was an appropriate model for Colombia’s context. That is, a diplomatic career guaranteeing job security to its public servants, and a system of promotion based on a principle of ascendant movement always disregarding a public servant’s political affiliations. El Conservador explained that, contrary to what usually happened in Colombia, in Chile “a person who has not previously served in a lower category is not named a first-class diplomatic minister; thus, from Secretary of Legation they are transferred to Charge d’Affaires, from there to Resident Minister or Plenipotentiary, so that there is gradual ascent and never descent.” Regarding places, they also described that “the respective rank among the nations is also determined, so that one also ascends, without changing the diplomatic category, passing from Ecuador, for example, to the United States.” Like many Colombian progress brokers who believed that the diplomatic body could bring to Colombia elements of progress like industrious people, foreign capital, and useful knowledge, El Conservador’s editors looked to provide a system appropriate for Colombia by drawing it from Chile. They argued that with this diplomatic system, “which does not prevent the exchange of diplomatic agents with parties and

92 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.

93 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.

94 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.
administrations, a certain hierarchy is established, which is a stimulus for the nominees and a pledge of success in the performance of the functions.”

Highly critical of the Colombian diplomatic system, in which in their view “there is no order of any kind,” the article’s authors considered that correctives could be made by adopting models from neighboring countries like Chile. To them, these “irregularities” of the Colombian system could not be corrected exclusively by passing laws, thus they invited Colombian statesmen to incorporate Chile’s system spontaneously, hoping that time would contribute to improvement because, as they stated, “practices can be established little by little, which in the long run are more respectable than the written laws themselves.”

By analyzing the institutions and habits of nations like Chile, Colombian progress brokers aimed to draw models appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances. Chile was perceived in Colombia as an archetype, primarily because “the progress of Chile in every way is not due to fortuity, but to the competence, probity, and decorum that characterize its public men,” as El Conservador, quoting the Argentinian newspaper Los Andes, stated in 1882. In fact, Colombia’s President Rafael Núñez, in an article calling for the imperative of peace in Colombia to progress, stated in 1883 that “the

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95 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.
96 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.
97 “Servicio diplomático,” 37.
contemporary history of Chile is eloquent teaching.”

In fact, Núñez stated that Chile, as the only Latin American republic that had remained in constant peace after independence, and in which “the truest material and moral advances have been made,” had institutions that “seemed defective to our impatient liberalism, and perhaps they were, theoretically examined.”

However, by hinting at specific lessons for Colombia’s particular circumstances, he praised what he believed were drivers of progress in Chile, that is “long presidential terms, parliaments served without remuneration, absolute administrative centralism, [and] a severe penal system.”

Peace was the simultaneous “cause and effect of law” in Núñez’s view, and to him, Chile was a provider of models appropriate for Colombia because, in spite of governance’s severity and the restriction of some individual liberties, it had managed “to find a serious, respectable, and relatively powerful political existence.”

Likewise, in a critique of Colombians looking at the North Atlantic rather than to Latin America, Rafael Núñez reasserted in December 1883 that Chile’s history provided an appropriate model for Colombia’s imperatives of peace and progress. “More than France and the United States,” Núñez stated, “we have had to make a constant study of what was happening in the very few republics of the same

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100 Núñez, 611–12.

101 Núñez, 611–12.

102 Núñez, 611–12.
origin that escaped chronic anarchy.” He believed that Colombians—liberals, in particular—had “completely neglected that study,” and had “devoted much more to following the course of French politics.” In fact, he affirmed that “we knew well who was Armando Carrel, Emilio Girardin, Odillon Barrot, Guizot, Julio Favre, Luis Blanc and others; but there are only few Colombians who know the political men of Chile who have been the creators and main actors of Chile’s relative prosperous situation.”

Continuing his argumentation, he claimed that Colombians could have drawn critical lessons from Chile’s historical process, because its government “was almost from its cradle strictly conservative and authoritarian, almost dynasty and oligarchic, but it has gradually been liberalized, [and] it would have been important to follow it carefully in this natural evolution.” In such evolution, he noted in a different article of 1884, Chile’s constitution of 1874 was “much less authoritarian,” than its preceding one of 1833.

While some progress brokers stressed Chile’s republican institutions and civic values, diplomats like José María Samper also examined Chile’s economic growth, which encouraged Colombian progress brokers to look for not only appropriate models but also

103 Núñez, 665–66.
104 Núñez, 665–66.
105 Núñez, 665–66.
107 Núñez, 700.
trade agreements to foster their home country’s commercial development. When José María Samper was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for Chile and Argentina in 1883, he remained most of the time in Chile, where besides diplomatic duties he “visited the main industrial and manufacturing establishments in that region and picked up interesting portfolio notes.” In June 1884, *El Conservador* published three lengthy reports Samper had sent from Chile. An admirer of Chile, Samper began by praising its institutions. “If for many years the political institutions of Chile left much to be desired regarding democratic progress, that is liberty and the majorities governing with the triple strength of suffrage, press, and opinion,” Samper stated, the logic of the republican regime “was slowly producing its inevitable results, and in the social conscience the ideas were elaborated to the point of being one day the Chilean nation, in fact, much freer and more progressive than its institutions.” Because of this, political reforms were made in Chile for ten years with neither social unrest nor harm of commercial interests. He exemplified this by arguing that “without violence of any lineage” laws had recently been passed in Chile regarding cemeteries, civil marriage, and the civil list, “which in many other countries have caused strong commotions, or have

108 “Chile,” *El Conservador*, April 2, 1884, 1571.

109 José María Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Primer artículo),” *El Conservador*, June 14, 1884, 1787; José María Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Segundo artículo),” *El Conservador*, June 19, 1884, 1799; José María Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Tercer artículo),” *El Conservador*, June 21, 1884, 1807.

110 Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Primer artículo),” 1787.

111 Samper, 1787.
been the result of convulsive movements.””  

After a detailed account of Chile’s political history, Samper concluded that “born in apparent poverty, because the soil lacked the spontaneous and exuberant fertility of other countries, the Chilean people have become rich by hard work, economy, and accumulation of values created with intelligence […] Its prosperity has been great and solid, precisely because it has not been artificial or fictitious, but the fruit of national labor.”  

Chile, then, represented in Samper’s view a tactical ally. Besides describing the main economic sectors Chile had developed, along with its challenges, mistakes and some useful knowledge on agricultural and commercial matters, Samper strove to promote Colombia’s trade with Chile.  

He sought to reactivate previous attempts consuls like Jorge Isaacs had made to develop an active exchange of the products produced in the area of influence of the Buenaventura port, mainly agricultural products like the sugarcane and tobacco. This was key in a historical moment when the Atlantic world was longing for the inauguration of the Panama Canal, which in Samper’s calculations would be in operation by 1890. Samper believed that Chile, a country with several ports in the Pacific Ocean, would face some

112 Samper, 1787.

113 Samper, 1787; Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Segundo artículo),” 1799; Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Tercer artículo),” 1807.

114 Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Primer artículo),” 1787; Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Segundo artículo),” 1799; Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Tercer artículo),” 1807.

115 Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Segundo artículo),” 1799.

116 Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Primer artículo),” 1787.
challenges as well as benefits by trading along the Panama Canal. Fulfilling his diplomatic mission, Samper promoted commercial exchange with Chile, advising Chileans not to grow tropical products but to develop manufacture industries whose raw materials its neighbors Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia could supply.\textsuperscript{117} “In sum,” Samper wrote, Chile and Colombia “could be granted, for a term of ten years, reciprocal franchises,” which would benefit Chile because it “would obtain in Colombia importation franchises for wines, wheat and flour, cheese and butter, potatoes and many grains, coal, saltpeter and all Chilean natural products; and thus it would increase its production and its commerce.”\textsuperscript{118} An agreement of this nature would also benefit Colombia, Samper argued, which “would obtain in Chile the same franchise for its cocoa and coffee, its varied and excellent woods, its raw tobacco and its sweets or raw sugars and other natural products: and with this, in addition to prospering this production in Colombia, and developing its trade with Chile, the Chilean factories would gain much in importance.”\textsuperscript{119}

Among appropriate models that Colombians drew from Chile was its Civil Code. Although it was being adapted to Colombia’s states during the federative era (1863-1886), the Colombian Civil Code was adopted by the whole territory of Colombia by Law 86 of 1887, right after a centralist system of government came to be established by the constitution of 1886. Although it was not copied identically, Chile’s Code served as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Segundo artículo),” 1799.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Samper, “Chile y sus intereses económicos. (Tercer artículo),” 1807.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Samper, 1807.
\end{itemize}
mediated base.\textsuperscript{120} By then, as Fernando Vélez explained in detailed analysis of this code’s history, “the comparison of our Civil Code with that of Chile shows that in 1873, instead of issuing a Code, nothing was done other than adopting the Chilean one with some modifications, following the example of other Hispanic American Republics and the Colombian States.”\textsuperscript{121} Colombian legislators made, however, some adjustments to Colombia’s particular circumstances. For instance, by comparing the first version of the Chilean code of 1857 with that of Colombia of 1887, Vélez found that in contrast with Chile, whose ecclesiastical authority was granted only the authority to perform matrimony—as well as its nullity, and divorce—in Colombia, it was first granted to the civil authority and after 1886, when religious marriage was recognized by the new constitutions, it was also granted to the ecclesiastical authority.\textsuperscript{122} Moreover, the Colombian civil code abolished the civil death that the Chilean code acknowledged, and it established the age of twenty-one years old as coming of age, whereas Chile fixed it at twenty-five.\textsuperscript{123} Adaptations to this code were also made through Colombia’s Constitution of 1886, in which a new difference between foreigners and nationals was established concerning acquisition and enjoyment of civil rights. Article 11 of the constitution stated that “foreigners will enjoy in Colombia the same rights that Colombians are granted by

\textsuperscript{120} Vélez, \textit{Datos para la historia del derecho nacional}, 79.

\textsuperscript{121} Vélez, 84.

\textsuperscript{122} Vélez, 85.

\textsuperscript{123} Vélez, 85.
the laws of the Nation to which the foreigner belongs unless otherwise stipulated in Public Treaties.”¹²⁴ Other than these dissimilarities, some secondary changes differentiated the Colombian and the Chilean civil codes—which to some critics, although representing no structural changes, were often the cause of “contradictions, omissions, and confusions.”¹²⁵

The circulation of printed materials and Colombia’s diplomatic missions in neighboring countries were critical to enhancing progress brokers’ analyses of Chile’s path towards material progress. Like in the case of Argentina, Colombian progress brokers came to believe that Chile could provide models appropriate for Colombia’s context. Since the 1840s, Chile had represented to them a model of internal order and economic growth. However, during the 1880s Colombian progress brokers found in Chile lessons for action regarding Chileans and appropriate republican institutions, represented mostly by Chileans’ civic values and their system of government exercising tolerance and collaborative governance between political parties. Likewise, Chile’s diplomatic career system inspired Colombians to adopt a similar scheme to promote international relations with a well-trained and appropriately rewarded diplomatic body, disregarding political affiliations.

¹²⁴ Vélez, 86.
¹²⁵ Vélez, 85.
5.2.3 Mexico: Model of Internal Order and Economic Growth

For a long time during the nineteenth century, Mexico represented an archetype of chaos and poverty stemming from the lack of peace and republican institutions. Towards the end of the century, Colombia had taken this place within Latin America. During the 1880s Mexico began to develop steadily, becoming the quintessential example of how economic growth could be promoted by securing internal order through strong governance. Porfirio Díaz had been elected President of Mexico in 1876 and ever since this country had begun to prosper as never before. In 1881 *El Conservador* inserted an article by the Mexican *El Diario Oficial* in which the idea of Mexico growing fast corresponded to a system of government that had secured the internal order. “Peace continues unalterable, being fully consolidated throughout the nation, not only because of the justification and determination of the current Government but also because experience has demonstrated the infinite evils of revolutions,” the article stated.126 Considered the primordial engine to power projects of development, internal order allowed Mexicans to foster infrastructural works that would ease economic growth. “On the other hand,” the article continued, “both the great railway companies that have been established and some extraordinary impulse that the mining industry has recently obtained, had given occupation and profit to numerous arms and have necessarily produced a complete change in the sense of progress and order, in the way of Mexico’s

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political and social character.”\textsuperscript{127} In Mexico like elsewhere, the railroad was coupled with the idea of progress. It was then a matter of pride to report that in Mexico, “at the time we write, there are more than 40,000 men employed in the construction of railroads in the country.”\textsuperscript{128} Colombian progress brokers believed that in Mexico, along with the construction of railroads, the internal order had attracted immigrants who, like in Argentina but with a difference in numbers, would contribute significantly to the development of economic enterprises. In November 1881, \textit{El Conservador} reported that Mexico “is progressing rapidly thanks to the peace it currently enjoys,” which in their opinion had allowed large companies to multiply their national and foreign capital, build railways “from North to South and from East to West,” establish the tram system in Mexico’s main cities, and promote immigration, which “grows day by day.”\textsuperscript{129}

“Undoubtedly Mexico is the most prosperous and advanced of the Latin American nations, in spite of the convulsions that, like her other sisters, have agitated her for more than half a century,” stated the Colombian newspaper.\textsuperscript{130} The article’s authors believed that this level of development was even more exemplary due to Mexico’s “brightness and prosperity” and had been of Mexicans’ own efforts, in contrast with “the Republics of the Pacific and in El Plata, where most of the commercial and industrial progress is created

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\textsuperscript{127} “Méjico,” 65.
\textsuperscript{128} “Méjico,” 65.
\textsuperscript{129} “Méjico,” \textit{El Conservador}, November 10, 1881, 161.
\textsuperscript{130} “Méjico,” 161.
\end{flushright}
by the foreigners who are going to settle in those countries.” Lamenting the lack of progress in Colombia, the authors concluded that in Colombia, “where immigration is almost insignificant, we can also say that much of the little material progress we have is owed to ourselves, with few exceptions, [but] if there were at least half a million foreigners in our country, we would perhaps be at the height of Mexico.” Colombian progress brokers drew images of Mexico’s progress, like in Chile and Argentina, from the circulation of illustrative printed materials like national statistics.

Statistics of Mexico’s industrial development circulated in Colombia, allowing the Colombian readership a clearer idea of how the formerly chaotic country had become an example of industriousness and economic growth. After achieving peace, Mexico had built railroads and had brought immigrants and capital, all of which allowed an extraordinary industrial development. In 1883, El Conservador reported that, according to the Mexican newspaper La Producción Nacional, the mechanization of production in Mexico was increasing, and that “the industrial establishments of the Republic that use machines, strictly speaking, exceeds 3,000.” This number represented three industrial categories in which 2,000 corresponded to the food industry (e.g., production of flours, oils, brandy, sugar, wines, pastries, chocolates, sweets), 145 to the textile industry, 800 related to ironworks and foundries, and the rest were tanneries and factories of soap, wax, and

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131 “Méjico,” 161.

132 “Méjico,” 161.

chemical and lighting products, all of them, along with mining activities, distributed within the country, with more or fewer specialties according to the Mexican state. Besides circulating statistics and useful information, progress brokers like the editors of *El Conservador* aimed to raise awareness continually of the imperative need to secure peace before fostering plans for economic progress in Colombia.

Newspapers like *El Conservador* declared their interest in drawing models of progress from neighboring countries’ experiences. They believed that like Chile and Argentina, Mexico was going through processes of material and intellectual improvement that Colombians ought not to ignore. In 1883 the editors of *El Conservador* stated that “everything that refers to the Hispanic-American republics has to attract the attention and awaken the interest of our readers.” Consequently, they would continue to circulate the information that in foreign newspapers and a variety of publications they found useful to the Colombian readership. As progress brokers, they believed that by offering Colombians the intellectual means to weigh themselves against the rest of the Latin American republics, their compatriots would take actions to move forward and try to catch up with countries like Mexico that were leaving Colombia behind. In the same edition of February 1883, *El Conservador* republished an article from Mexico’s *El Diario Oficial* in which the Mexican government stated that “the news that we have to give to our foreign readers every month about the state in which Mexico is since it entered fully

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134 La Producción Nacional de México, 855.

into a path of peace and progress must continue to be satisfactory.”\textsuperscript{136} With an explicit interest in promoting Mexico’s developments abroad, the Mexican editors continued by affirming that from that moment on “the main and obligatory subject of our reviews is and must be the description of the advances that are made regarding all kinds of our material improvements.”\textsuperscript{137} From the perspective of the Colombian readership, Mexicans were at that time experiencing unprecedented levels of material prosperity, which could be only achieved by securing internal order as Porfirio Díaz had managed to deliver.

Like most of the newspaper articles examining the material progress of Latin American countries, the Mexican report of 1883 also highlighted the imperative need for peace to reach material progress. “Conquered by the Mexican people,” introduced the Mexican \textit{El Diario Oficial}, “the republican and democratic principles that govern us, the perfect state of tranquility that Mexico enjoys since the end of the year of 1876 [supports] the great enthusiasm and activity through which all kinds of materials improvements are undertaken in the country.”\textsuperscript{138} This article delved into details regarding Mexico’s \textit{Secretaría de Fomento} (Ministry of Development) contracts and the state of many of the infrastructure works that were then being developed in the country, information that circulated in Colombia monthly along with details showing Colombians Mexico’s economic expansion. News of international interest also circulated, such as the visit of

\textsuperscript{136} Diario Oficial de México, 867.

\textsuperscript{137} Diario Oficial de México, 867.

\textsuperscript{138} Diario Oficial de México, 867.
“the distinguished German journalist M. A. Goegg,” who aiming to establish a German colony had studied appropriate lands and colonization systems in the United States, in Australia, Brazil, and the Argentine Republic.  

In 1883, Mexico as well as most of the Latin American countries were enjoying peace and its benefits. Colombian newspapers often highlighted it. “Guatemala progresses because it also enjoys peace,” said El Conservador, republishing an article of El Correo del Valle, from St. Louis, Missouri.  

“Ecuador also made some progress under Garcia Moreno’s dictatorship because it remained calm,” said the same article, and although a tranquility produced by an authoritarian ruler “is not to be desired,” nevertheless “the dictatorship produced good for the people, whereas now nothing progresses there due to the generally insecure state the internal disturbances created.”

Peace leading to progress was then the message that Colombian progress brokers spread, and they sought to achieve both of them by looking at Latin American countries’ success and failure stories, that is by drawing appropriate models for policies, as well as appropriate economic and political systems. “If we go through the pages of the contemporary history of all the republics of our continent of Latin origin,” said El Correo del Valle editors, “we will find that the same causes produce identical effects: that they all have more or less natural resources, more than enough to make their prosperity, but

139 “México,” El Conservador, March 1, 1883, 883.


141 El Correo del Valle, 967.
that this cannot be reached while their vital forces are employed to destroy each other, their fields are uncultivated, and their mines are untapped.”\textsuperscript{142} From this perspective, no longer was a country’s natural intrinsic wealth and its strategic position (like that of Colombia) enough to develop economic growth and national well-being—as had been perceived by some physiocratic-minded intellectuals some decades earlier.\textsuperscript{143} Work was the only way to prosper in contemporary observers’ view, but work was primary lacking wherever war dominated. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Latin American intellectuals perceived peace as the engine of their countries’ progress. Many of them called for a reflection of Latin American countries’ history and to realize that, as it had repeatedly been stated since the 1840s, internal order was the primary means to begin fostering progress. Although no explicit consensus came to be perceived in Colombia, many progress brokers perceived Chile’s and Mexico’s strong governance as exemplary towards the end of the century.

Due to the progress that some Latin American countries were experiencing during the early 1880s, \textit{El Conservador} highlighted that Colombians could have achieved and still been able to accomplish material and intellectual progress if following countries like Mexico. “We read in \textit{El Correo del Valle},” introduced the Colombian newspaper, that “many people ask where the current prosperity that is evident in the affairs of Mexico comes from, which is still surprising the unbelieving Yankees who […] have attributed it

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\textsuperscript{142} El Correo del Valle, 967.
\textsuperscript{143} Richard Weiner and José Enrique Covarrubias, “Political Economy, Alexander Von Humboldt, and Mexico’s 1810 and 1910 Revolutions.”
\end{flushright}
to their railroad companies in that country.”\textsuperscript{144} Skeptical, the authors continued by arguing that “this is not the real cause, because of the railroad concessions made to American companies, the most advanced ones are in their beginnings, and the others are still embryonic.”\textsuperscript{145} To them, railroads “cannot be the immediate cause of its prosperity, but it is the peace of ten years that is counted until today since its last revolution ended […] What happens in Mexico today would also happen to all our Hispanic American republics if they completely eradicated the spirit of internal turmoil that consumes them,” they asserted.\textsuperscript{146} The authors believed that concerned Latin Americans could identify useful lessons for action in Mexico’s contemporary history because all Latin American peoples “have in their womb the germs of incalculable prosperity.”\textsuperscript{147} Mexico’s “children had no faith in the course of time at first, but observing its [peaceful] permanence, have begun, little by little, to undertake and invest their money in remunerative speculations,” the authors stated.\textsuperscript{148} Mexicans’ money in fact “lay hidden by the gloomy fear of the forced loans raised to sustain \textit{pronunciamientos} [military uprisings],” they explained, but after reaching this period of peace this money “now goes out into free circulation and

\textsuperscript{144} El Correo del Valle, “Exterior. México,” 967.
\textsuperscript{145} El Correo del Valle, 967.
\textsuperscript{146} El Correo del Valle, 967.
\textsuperscript{147} El Correo del Valle, 967.
\textsuperscript{148} El Correo del Valle, 967.
encourages all the country’s industries in Mexico.”\textsuperscript{149} This newspaper’s editors perceived as exemplary the story of Mexico, as well as of other Latin American countries which were reaching domestic order and developing economic growth. By stressing the sharp contrasts between countries like Mexico and Colombia, the article’s authors contributed fuel to debates regarding Colombia’s future. “The United States of Colombia,” they said, “which has as many natural resources as Mexico, would make the same progress if it eradicated its daily revolutions.”\textsuperscript{150} Besides material damages, domestic strife bleed the treasury, hindering plans of material progress, which remained for a long time in Colombia only on paper.\textsuperscript{151} “As soon as [Colombia’s] treasury begins to have funds, a revolution breaks out in one of the States and it is necessary to send federal forces to suffocate it and disburse the few funds, in cash, and also issue paper currency of difficult circulation, because the funds destined to its amortization are used to quell another disturbance.”\textsuperscript{152} Thus not only Colombian progress brokers insisted on the imperative need for steady peace in Colombia—Latin American counterparts were also stressing it.

In 1883, warning that the rapid progress of Mexico ought to be taken as a call to action in Colombia, Rafael Núñez under the nom de plume \emph{Laboremus} published an article in Cartagena’s \emph{El Porvenir} examining the industrial development of Latin

\textsuperscript{149} El Correo del Valle, 967.

\textsuperscript{150} El Correo del Valle, 967.

\textsuperscript{151} Sánchez Cabra, “Las ideas de progreso en Colombia en el siglo XIX.”

American countries. He stated that Mexico had “finally entered a new era,” and that it had “more than 600 miles of railroads in service, and it rapidly builds others.” Moreover, Núñez stressed that “incomes increase every day,” “the feeling of peace is diffused and rooted,” and that no longer was seen in Mexico “the troubled and deleterious scene of Santana (sic), Almonte, Miramón and a group of caudillojes as quarrelsome as ignorant.” With an evident feeling of frustration, Núñez stated that while Mexico was “getting ready to make its coffee compete [against] Brazil’s coffee,” Colombians were still stationary. Hence, he stated, “the moment has arrived to enter the current if we do not want to stay stuck like poles on a still and arid bank; we are in the Cape of storms, so we bend resolutely, or we succumb.” Rafael Núñez regarded Mexico’s history as exemplary and reminded how the studies of his compatriot Federico Cornélio Aguilar had allowed Colombians to understand better the way Mexico had achieved internal order and material development after decades of chaos. “How has that miracle happened?” Núñez asked in 1884, “for the unforgettable lessons of suffering” he responded. In fact, he explained that “the Franco-Austrian Empire made Mexicans feel to what extreme intransigent political passions lead the people, then they at last began to prefer the work

153 La Crisis Económica, 35.
154 La Crisis Económica, 35.
155 La Crisis Económica, 35.
156 La Crisis Económica, 35.
of the railways rather than the work of destruction.”\textsuperscript{158} As Núñez had pointed out, both Chile’s and Mexico’s history offered lessons for Colombians for action: the promotion of internal order required strong governance when otherwise impractical. The Colombian Federico Cornelio Aguilar, in fact, had quoted in his 1884 book a variety of newspapers and repeatedly stated that “many ask where the current prosperity of Mexico came from, and the cause is peace of ten years.”\textsuperscript{159} Like many other Colombian progress brokers, Aguilar also believed that Colombians would reach similar levels of development if securing peace as many other neighboring countries had done. Resembling \textit{El Correo del Valle}’s article of 1883 (and actually by using the same wording), Aguilar insisted that Mexico’s prosperity could be replicated in all Latin American republics if “the spirit of internal turmoil that consumes them” was eradicated.\textsuperscript{160}

Voices from many Colombian progress brokers coincided to believed that, during the 1880s, Latin American countries had already set the route Colombians had to follow if they wanted to achieve material and intellectual progress. With reasons, when in Colombia the constitution of 1886 sought to reestablish the centralist system of government and looked to secure internal order, Colombian progress brokers believed that their country was following “the logic of Hispanic American history,” as the editors

\begin{footnotes}
\footnoteref{158} Núñez, 668.
\footnoteref{159} Aguilar, \textit{Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas}, 271–72.
\footnoteref{160} Aguilar, 271–72.
\end{footnotes}
of the Colombian newspaper *El Correo Nacional* argued in 1891.\(^\text{161}\) By following the example of neighboring countries like Chile, Argentina, and Mexico, Colombians began to regard peace as the chief virtue. Without peace, Colombia was inhibited from achieving progress, as progress brokers had for decades argued through Latin American countries’ historical evidence. “Peace is the first of goods, equivalent to the health of individuals, just as the state of fever is equivalent to the state of war,” concluded the editors of *El Correo Nacional*.\(^\text{162}\) Vice-President Miguel Antonio Caro also believed vital to secure peace before fostering the example of neighboring republics like Mexico. “In addition,” he stated in 1893, “trusting in the permanence of peace and in the future, the Government has not hesitated to commit public revenues to the promotion of the construction of railroads that it considers a powerful element of peace for peoples of the conditions of our own, as has demonstrated with eloquence the contemporary history of Mexico.”\(^\text{163}\) In 1899, the Colombian intellectual and statesman Lorenzo Marroquín was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Mexico and Central America. Although he remained in Mexico for a short time, he managed to study several aspects of Mexico’s sciences, arts, and letters, visited the Academy of San Carlos, schools, colleges, and teaching schools, and “collected good national works of all branches and has requested reports of interest to write something about our country and


\(^\text{162}\) Periódico El Porvenir de Cartagena, 2–3.

\(^\text{163}\) Miguel Antonio Caro, “Alocución del Vicepresidente de la República, encargado del poder ejecutivo,” *La República*, July 22, 1893, 45.
adapt in his, as legislator, the adaptable and appropriate within their special circumstances,” as reported the Mexican newspaper *La Voz de México* in November 1899.\(^{164}\) He also “devoted much attention to everything related to money circulation, the rent system, and public education, considering these factors as indispensable for the development of the countries of the Americas,” the Mexican newspaper reported.\(^{165}\) An open champion of peace and of intra-Latin American union, as well as an admirer of Mexico’s achievements, Marroquí stated in a discourse to President Díaz that “peace is not a spontaneous fruit: it is born of the common effort, of the happy agreement between the Government and the citizens; it has had to arise in this soil thanks to that harmony, and Mexico marches resolute and decided towards its high destinies. The triumphs and advances of the Mexican United States, more than a living example that is not to be sterile, also shed a splendor of glory on the great American homeland.”\(^{166}\) A year later, in a speech delivered in El Salvador in December 1900, Marroquí called again to follow the example not only of Mexico but also of the Austral Latin American countries. “Let us imitate the republics that close Latin America from end to end, and that are shouting by their example that peace and freedom are not incompatible; that deposed the sinister sword of the civil wars, treasures and riches hidden behind their bloody glare arise.”\(^{167}\)

\(^{164}\) “El ministro de Colombia en México,” *La Voz de México*, November 23, 1899, 1.

\(^{165}\) “El ministro de Colombia en México,” 1.

\(^{166}\) Lorenzo Marroquí, *Informe del Ministro de Colombia en México y Centro América* (Bogotá: Imprenta de La Luz, 1901), 10–11.

\(^{167}\) Marroquí, 10–11.
Marroquín also promoted the establishment of a line of vapors between Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia—although negotiations were suspended because in Colombia the Thousand Days’ War broke out—and, like José María Samper had previously done in the Southern Cone, he collected Mexican books and sought the establishment of exchanges of publications by endorsing a treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation in September 1899.\textsuperscript{168} He also fostered treaties of intellectual property and extradition with Mexico.\textsuperscript{169} Establishing relations with Mexico was deemed necessary because, in addition to creating commercial opportunities, strong governments like those of Mexico and Chile embodied models appropriate for Colombia in some contemporaries’ view.

At the turn of the century, Colombian progress brokers lamented that, in contrast with other Latin American republics, their homeland remained mostly stagnant after almost one century of political independence. Many of them attributed this to the waste of energies in party politics, which lead to revolutions. In fact, from 1899 to 1902 Colombia experienced its bloodiest and last civil war, which would fuel the independence of Panama in 1903, one of Colombia’s most strategic territories. In 1900, Colombian intellectuals like Francisco Posada and Antonio José Uribe published several newspaper articles inviting their readers to look at neighboring countries for models of progress. “Saner than we have been are peoples like those of Mexico, Argentina, and Chile, who have dedicated the forces of the nation to material development, to the creation of wealth,

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\textsuperscript{168} Marroquín, 12–38.

\textsuperscript{169} Marroquín, 38–47.
to social welfare,” said Uribe after lamenting the lack of progress in Colombia in 1900. Similarly, after publishing speeches by Argentina’s and Chile’s presidents, in which statistics and narratives of progress flowed, the Colombian newspaper La Opinión stated that the two presidential messages to which they had referred “coincide in the central points of a good public administration for these countries of Hispanic America: the arrangement of the Treasury, the amortization of paper money, the exploitation and colonization of vacant lands, the reform of primary instruction to make it eminently practical, and the increase of national industries.” Moreover, they stated that “in this redemptive task they work in concert, rivaling each other, all the peoples of Hispanic America, except, painful to say, from Colombia, which is now not only torn apart in fratricidal war but, during peace, has vegetated in inaction and isolation.”

Peace was, then, the foremost prerequisite for progress in Colombia. Without it, neither institutions nor material progress could thrive. A sensible summary of this sentiment was expressed in La Patria in 1901: “No other country has issued as many constitutions as Colombia [has issued…] Ninety constitutions since 1811! […] In these constitutions, all possible combinations within the republican regime have been adopted […] Thus we need neither more constitutions nor more laws […] What we need is to reform national customs to reduce the Government’s burden and to develop individual

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170 Uribe, “La administración,” September 13, 1900, 81.

171 “En Chile,” La Opinión, September 3, 1901, 1214.

172 “En Chile,” 1214.
enterprise in order to increase wealth and all the social forces.” Thus, Drawing models of productive enterprises, then, would contribute partially to solving the hindrances progress brokers identified in nineteenth-century Colombia. However, to many contemporary observers, the model of firm governments like that of Mexico was critical to Colombian early twentieth-century material progress.

The model of Mexico was associated mostly with President Porfirio Díaz’s character. As Francisco Posada once affirmed in 1900, “the sanity, patriotism, and greatness that has made General Díaz a model ruler resides in having executed everything at the same time: procuring employment for the proletariat, attracting foreign immigration, opening interior roads, solving credit, promoting public education, giving powerful impulse to the nascent national industries.”

Like the example of Mexico, Latin American models were commonly cited when devising the future of Colombia towards the end of the century. Aguilar had pointed out repeatedly that to achieve peace, appropriate republican institutions, and material progress in Colombia, the rule of law and universal respect for it, “especially by the political leaders,” was paramount. In Colombia, however, General Rafael Reyes stood out for his admiration of Porfirio Díaz and his government.

173 “Las constituciones,” La Opinión, July 6, 1901, 1020.
174 Posada, “De lo teórico a lo práctico,” 415.
175 Aguilar, Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas, 288.
Rafael Reyes had made a long visit to Mexico in 1901-1902, during the Second Pan-American Congress, and as a note of *El Nuevo Tiempo* expressed on April 29, 1903, he did not hide his admiration for the progress that country had made, especially in industrial and political order, and by the person of Porfirio Díaz.\(^{176}\) Reyes became President of Colombia in 1904, adopting a very strong and centralized government, becoming a dictatorship “from the date of the dissolution of the Congress of 1904, just as much a dictator as Porfirio Díaz was in Mexico,” as described the British writer Francis Loraine Petre in a parallel he drew between both these countries’ history and their dictatorial regimes in a book about Colombia he published in 1906.\(^{177}\) Petre stated that Reyes “openly expresses his admiration for Diaz’s methods, and is generally believed to accept them as his model.”\(^{178}\) It was still too early to perceive patterns of success or failure comparing with the long-run Díaz government, but in Petre’s view President Reyes had already rendered improvement to Colombia, and “it must be admitted that there is much in it showing considerable progress, and the rise in the price of Colombian bonds alone indicates that, in the markets of Europe and America, the state’s credit has improved vastly.”\(^{179}\) Contemporary observers and historians alike have also linked the Reyes government with the Díaz regime, mostly after Reyes began seeking to attract

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\(^{178}\) Petre, 317.

\(^{179}\) Petre, 320.
foreign capital to Colombia (primarily from the United States) and stressing the need to develop the railroad system. Lorenzo Marroquín, who had served as a diplomat in Mexico and Central America in 1899, affirmed in 1909 that Rafael Reyes’ descriptive motto “more administration and less politics” was borrowed from Porfirio Díaz, but as the admiration of both unfolded it became “mismanagement and bad politics.”\(^{181}\)

Marroquín stated that Colombia had tried her “own Porfirio Díaz,” but the experiment had come to frustration because Reyes’ government was the “dictadura de la incapacidad” (incompetent dictatorship), proving in his view that to Colombia “cannot return either the dictatorial system or the ‘good tyrant’ who are entirely linked.”\(^{182}\) He acknowledged that in the case of Mexico, “the only merit of Porfirio Díaz” was the “opportune and tenacious impulse of railroads drawn with intelligence” by bringing foreign capital, but the Reyes government in his view had spent the national budget “on fluvial ways that do not improve, on railways that are not built, on roads that do not exist.”\(^{183}\)

But Reyes’ interest in Mexico was not unique. At the turn of the century, some Colombian politicians and entrepreneurs like Jorge Holguín, Jorge Roa, and Pedro Nel Ospina sought to follow “the example of Mexico” by visiting the country’s factories and

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182 Marroquín, 47.

183 Marroquín, 44.
drawing models appropriate for Colombia’s particular circumstances, like the textile industry that the Ospina family would pioneer in Colombia beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century.184

Since the late nineteenth century, Mexico had become a model of not only internal order but also of material progress. Seeking to draw models appropriate for Colombia’s context, Colombian progress brokers visited the country, as well as accessed, gathered, and circulated newspapers, periodicals, and Mexico’s self-promoting books like *Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, sus progresos en veinte años de paz* (1899) and *Porfirio Díaz* (1908) by Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, and *El Florecimiento de México* by Francisco Trentini (1906).185

5.2.4 Giving up Colombia. Looking for Personal Progress Abroad

During the 1870s, and increasingly during the 1880s, progress brokers sought to reinforce the long-forged idea that Colombia was in imperative need of steady peace and solid and appropriate republican institutions. They believed that these were prerequisites to fostering projects of national progress, preconditions that became even more critical when neighboring countries’ internal order and economic growth begun to attract


Colombian emigration. In fact, Colombia had come to embody everything Mexico and Argentina represented when Colombian progress brokers labeled them as antimodels during the 1840s.

Colombian official reports and newspapers indicated that some Colombians had been seeking to emigrate since the 1870s when neighboring countries were showing signs of order and material progress. The emigrating Colombians were primarily individuals and families who were tired of their homeland’s uncertainty and had begun to look for better living conditions abroad. Then, countries like Argentina that were emerging as model republics due to their rapid development started to attract immigration not only from Europe but also from Latin American countries. Although emigration from Colombia during the nineteenth century is an understudied phenomenon, scattered evidence suggests that significant intellectual, political and economic figures of Colombia sought to leave the country during the 1870s and 1880s.

In 1875 the Colombian intellectual and politician Miguel Antonio Caro attempted to move to Buenos Aires and devote himself to the literary life. In a letter to his Argentinian friend Juan M. Gutiérrez, who was the University of Buenos Aires’ rector from 1861 to 1873, Caro asked “Do you think that if I moved to that capital I could get a literary arrangement, for example in that University, enough to allow me to live with some decency and ease in union with my small family?” Caro, however, remained in

186 Guitarte, Cartas desconocidas de Miguel Antonio Caro, Juan María Gutiérrez, y Ezequiel Uricoechea, 32.
Colombia and developed an influential political career, becoming President of Colombia during most of the 1890s.¹⁸⁷

Like Caro, influential men such as Jorge Isaacs sought refuge in Argentina as a result of political struggles in Colombia during the 1880s. Isaacs already had high expectations about Argentina. In 1871, when he conducted a diplomatic mission in Chile, Isaacs reported to the Colombian government that he was planning to visit Argentina, a country he believed plentiful in useful lessons for Colombians. “Four to five months in permanence in the Argentine Republic would suffice,” Isaacs stated, and “the relationships I already have in that country would greatly facilitate my tasks there.”¹⁸⁸

Deeming the visit and analysis of Argentina as a worthwhile enterprise, Isaacs noted that “the importance it has acquired by its astonishing progress in [the last] six years, the way in which federal institutions have become practical there, the current of immigration that it has managed to attract its soil, which increases year by year, the way [...] its popular education is organized, everything encourages me to believe that my journey of a few months to that republic will be profitable.”¹⁸⁹ In 1884, however, the Colombian periodical Folletines de “La Luz” republished an article published in the Chilean El Ferrocarril, reporting that Jorge Isaacs had sent a letter to Argentina’s President Julio A. Roca, “making him aware of the difficult circumstances he was going through in

¹⁸⁷ Guitarte, 6.

¹⁸⁸ The emphasis in the original. Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, Tomo 37, 23-24

¹⁸⁹ The emphasis in the original. Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Transferencia 2, Consulado de Colombia en Chile, Tomo 37, 23-24
Colombia, where he had lost, along with the political party he belongs to, the modest position he had acquired in several years of struggle and labor.”

“Given the terms of both letters,” the article concluded, “it is to be assumed that Isaacs will set upon the journey upon the receipt of the [positive] reply that General Roca has sent him.” In fact, President Roca had responded to Isaacs with “a warm letter in which he assures him that in the Argentine Republic he will not lack work for him and for his children accompanying him because he will be very pleased to help an American of such outstanding intelligence.” Isaacs was only one of many Colombians seeking to move abroad.

In January 1884, the Colombian periodical *El Conservador* reported that Colombia was suffering a damaging process of emigration. “When in all the republics of the Pacific population, capital and industries increase with the constant immigration of Europeans, Colombia sees its population and its wealth diminishing due to the constant emigration of the men of capital,” *El Conservador* reported. This situation was deemed highly critical, mainly in a historical moment when Colombia, like the rest of the Latin American countries, was fostering population growth through European immigration. “At the same time that our population and our wealth do not increase with immigration, there


191 *Folletines de “La Luz” (Desde El Número 289 Hasta El 361)*, 95.

192 *Folletines de “La Luz” (Desde El Número 289 Hasta El 361)*, 95.

has been established, years ago, a movement of emigration that should draw the attention of the government and men who take part in active politics,” the editors warned. By citing figures of Colombians in Central America and in countries like Ecuador and cities like New York, London, and Paris, the articulated concluded that “it can be assured that in the last twenty years the country has lost more than one hundred thousand inhabitants [nearly 3% of the population of 1881], and capital of more than fifteen million pesos, which applied to trade and industry in our country would have raised those elements at a great height of power and aggrandizement of peoples.” Unlike neighboring countries’ peace and economic growth, which had been attracting waves of immigrants, Colombia’s lack of internal order not only hindered the arrival of the longed-for European immigration but also pushed many Colombians abroad. “What motivates this constant flux of [Colombian] capital and people to foreign countries?” asked El Conservador editors. “It is motivated only by the lack of property security, the struggle of constant anarchy and the eternal threat in which we live.” They continued by affirming that “if what happens today continues, we must lose all hope of improvement, and to ensure the future it is necessary to think seriously about the means of making peace solid, the daily threats of disorders impossible, guarantees of property effective, and the government

194 “La emigración,” 1382.


196 “La emigración,” 1382.
fruitful to promote the march of the peoples.”

Although Colombian progress brokers had been circulating similar warnings for decades, internal peace remained for a long time elusive in Colombia.

During the 1880s, emigration from Colombia developed as an inevitable outcome of social distress. Even the Argentinian consul in Bogotá, Carlos Calvo y Capdevila, reported to his government that many Colombians were asking him for advice on moving to Argentina. Tired of forced loans and similar exactions the Colombian government had imposed as a result of the civil war of 1885, he explained, “several respectable capitalists who have been in the difficult need to cover loans of twenty to thirty thousand pesos fuertes, have determined to emigrate from Colombia.” Calvo continued by indicating that “most of them plan to go to the Argentine Republic and have asked me for reports that are conducive to their purpose. This contingent of capital and labor that will bring to our country many distinguished Colombians will be very appreciable, and although my character prevents me from advising and propagating that inclination, I have encouraged it in all the people who have manifested it to me spontaneously.”

Facing a detrimental process of emigration from Colombia, which in the view of many would hold back any plans of national betterment, Colombian progress brokers continued to insist that internal order was the primary requirement of material and intellectual progress.

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197 “La emigración,” 1382.

198 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 294, 1885, 108

199 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 294, 1885, 108
Colombian progress brokers’ trope took shape upon the idea that only after securing peace could countries develop strong republican institutions, followed by population growth through European immigration which would contribute to material progress. However, in a context where material progress was perceived impracticable or too distant like that of Colombia, even after assuring relative peace after the fin-de-siècle civil war and during Reyes’ administration, the lack of strong institutions and an increasing sentiment of backwardness in contrast with the promotion of advanced Latin American countries as models created both a pushing and pulling effect on Colombians. Interestingly, not only deprived people sought refuge in neighboring countries. Also, merchants, entrepreneurs, and inventors like Plantagenet Moore sought to move to Argentina, where a wave of Colombians were attempting to move and settle. In a letter of October 1909, the Argentinian General Consul in Colombia Toribio Ruíz Guiñazú reported to the Argentine government that “due to the propaganda that this consulate has made on the celebration of the Centennial of the Argentine Republic, several Colombian industrialists will soon be moving there as emigrants.”

Among these people was Plantagenet Moore, “who is the inventor of the crystalline brick, with which the city of Paraná is paved.” Moore had also invented and patented both a system of “compaction of salt by percussion” and a “continuous coffee dryer” device in 1900, and a method of

200 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1105, 1909, Folder 6, 1-3

201 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1105, 1909, Folder 6, 1-3
“conglomeration and compaction of combustible materials” in 1902. Moore was also an entrepreneur. By 1910 he had also established Tubos Moore in 1906, a factory in Bogotá that produced vitrified sewer pipe, and had played an important role in different companies and economic activities in Colombia, such as mining. “Mr. Mwre [Moore], a Colombian citizen,” stated then the Argentinian diplomat, “believes that we have good reception in our country to be able to develop his industry, especially in the city of Buenos Aires.” The expectation of migrating from Colombia to Argentina had become general. In October 1910, Toribio Ruíz underscored that “very often people come to this legation to request tickets to travel to Argentina, or data on the means and conditions of life in our country. Among these people, there are some who have a capital of 3 to 10,000 dollars [and] other young people, usually, without the resources necessary to make the trip.” Interestingly, as in European countries, he stated that someone had offered him to take from Colombia to Argentina “from 800 to 1,000 Colombians.” In fact, in

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203 Editorial, “Colombia as a Trade Field,” The Clay-Worker, 1918, 747; Alberto Mayor Mora, Inventos y patentes en Colombia, 1930-2000: de los límites de las herramientas a las fronteras del conocimiento (Medellín, Colombia: I.T.M., 2005), 48–49; Rafael Domínguez A., Historia de las esmeraldas de Colombia (Bogotá: s.n., 1965), 80.

204 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1105, 1909, Folder 6, 1-3

205 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1157, Folder 25, 1910, 1-3

206 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1157, Folder 25, 1910, 1-3
November 1910 he had received hundreds of requests, and reported that among people asking to move to Argentina were “generals, lawyers, students, farmers, factory workers, etc.” He believed that “the current bad situation in this country” had motivated emigration from Colombia to Buenos Aires, or to closer countries depending on crossing fares. In one of the letters, which he attached to his report, he wrote, “I am an effective general of this republic, [...] I have practical knowledge as a professor in agriculture and trade, [...] my relationships are very high and a very considerable number follow me, [...] in such a virtue I can commit myself to form a colony of four to five hundred people, with a number of thirty to forty heads of family, offering of course to direct the agricultural, livestock and commercial company that I was commissioned.” Seemingly in Colombia, where over decades progress brokers had been shaping models and antimodels of progress from neighboring countries’ experiences, eagerness to progress had produced an opposite effect: increasing drainage of capital, the workforce, and brains, which the government had been longing to bring from industrialized countries since the early nineteenth century.

207 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1157, Folder 30, 1910, 4

208 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1157, Folder 25, 1910, 1-3

209 Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (AHCA), Diplomática y Consular, Consulado General de Colombia, Box 1157, Folder 30, 1910, 8-9.
5.3 Conclusions

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Colombian progress brokers continued focusing on Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, where internal order had contributed to fulfilling the prerequisites for achieving economic growth. They highlighted how following the establishment of internal order, republican institutions matured, population grew, and industriousness spread dramatically in these countries. They often stressed that if Colombians wanted to prosper, this linear sequence was necessary. Hence, they looked to neighboring and similar countries like Argentina, Mexico, and Chile for suitable models, rather than to the North Atlantic, where historical processes and cultures had been substantially different.

In Colombia, although a relative degree of internal order was achieved during the first decade of the twentieth century, republican institutions were weakened by an often-noted incompetent dictatorship, and the expected population growth via immigration remained unmet. Moreover, some Colombians sought to emigrate, tired of witnessing neighboring countries progressing while theirs stayed stagnant or regressing, with few opportunities to thrive. Emigration seemed to them a feasible way to pursue their own and their family’s progress, just like millions of international migrants had been experiencing for decades prior, to the advantage of countries like Argentina.
CHAPTER 6:

MODELS OF MATERIAL PROGRESS: THE COLOMBIAN FIQUE INDUSTRY

6.1 Introduction

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Colombian progress brokers looked for models of productive agricultural and industrial enterprises worldwide and found that Latin American experiences, rather than the North Atlantic developments, provided more appropriate models to adopt to Colombia’s particular circumstances. They examined and sought to adapt to Colombia’s different regions a variety of crops, pastures, animal breeds, as well as industrial sectors, methods, and technologies they believed were contributing to the economic growth of neighboring countries, like Argentina’s cattle, wool and manufacturing industries, Chile’s wheat production, and Mexico’s cotton and henequen-based textile industries.1 Likewise, Colombian progress brokers often study the

railway system in neighboring countries, and concerned citizens like the Colombian priest Federico Cornelio Aguilar also proposed from the 1880s to establish Schools of Arts and Crafts following the example of Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, and Venezuela.\(^2\) Progress brokers came to conclude that, as in the case of government systems and institutions, the productive structure of a nation was grounded in specific geographical, political, social, and cultural traits. Hence, although the North Atlantic was actively producing innovative know-how and technologies to mechanize agricultural and industrial production, the process of technology transfer from the north was not straightforward. In fact, for most of the nineteenth century, to reach Colombia’s main urban hubs in the Andean highlands, imported merchandise and technologies were required to travel several weeks by antiquated transportation systems (including indigenous *silleteros* and *cargueros*) through turbulent rivers, rough mountains, muddy roads, and tropical forests. Technological hardware was, then, scarcely introduced and adopted in Colombia up to the 1900s when, aided by a few rail lines connecting major productive centers with the Magdalena River—which was the sole trade artery flowing into the Atlantic during the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries—local entrepreneurs began a gradual process of mechanization of production in regions like

\(^2\) AGN, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomática y Consular, Legación de Colombia en Chile, 1907-1911, Caja 188, Carpeta 3, 15. Santiago Pérez Triana, *Resumen de labor (Asuntos Colombianos)* (Londres: Wertheimer, Lea, 1911); *Discusión relativa a la ley nacional sobre fomento de varias mejoras materiales y colonización de tierras baldías* (Medellín: Imprenta del Estado, 1871); *Mensaje que el Vicepresidente de la República encargado del poder ejecutivo dirige al Congreso Nacional en sus sesiones extraordinarias de 1903* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1903); Aguilar, *Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas*, 292–93; Railroad Gazette, “Los ferrocarriles de la República Argentina,” trans. Rafael Espinosa Escallón, *Anales de ingeniería* 1, no. 7 (February 1, 1888); “Ferrocarriles de Chile,” *Anales de ingeniería* 2, no. 24 (July 1, 1889).
Antioquia.\textsuperscript{3} In a context of limited introduction of North Atlantic technologies, technical expertise remained as the privilege of a few, including some foreigners and local inventors and engineers who founded foundries and ironworks to supply technologies appropriate to Colombia’s emerging industrial settings.\textsuperscript{4}

They came to perceive that new types of machinery and methods responded to particular questions, needs, and circumstances that differed radically from the issues, needs, and conditions of late nineteenth-century Colombia. Examining neighboring countries became highly relevant, then, because they offered to the observer’s eyes a context more similar than the North Atlantic. Colombian progress brokers found in countries like Mexico appropriate models not only of government but also of productive enterprises. Just as many Colombians perceived Porfirio Díaz’s administration as a reliable and efficient government which had established peace, order, and progress—in spite of its many critiques—progress brokers found that Mexico’s productive enterprises could be an appropriate model to adapt to Colombia’s context.


This chapter examines the origin of the Colombian fique (henequen) industry and technological change within that industry through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that this industry was established and could reach significant levels of growth in part because some Colombian intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and scientists examined global developments, disseminated useful knowledge, and sought to adapt suitable crops, practices, and technologies to Colombia’s particular needs, settings, and social traits, mainly from Mexico rather than from the United States.

The Colombian fique industry comprised both the cultivation and exploitation of fique and the manufacture of goods out of its fiber. Originally from tropical America, the Colombian fique (*furcraea*) and the Mexican henequen (*agave*) are essentially the same plants. Closely related, but taxonomically different, they yield a similar stiff fiber. Primarily known as fique, cabuya, and pita in Colombia, this thread was commonly used to handcraft a wide variety of items like ropes, coarse clothes, shoes, baskets, shoulder bags, blankets, and hats. Due to its quality and resistance, this natural fiber had fulfilled functions of protection, mooring, and packing since pre-Columbian times. During the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, some Latin American countries looked to develop a textile industry by exploiting this filament and

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focused on growing selected plant genera. While henequen had been cultivated and industrially exploited in Mexico since the 1850s, fique became the second most crucial textile plant in Colombia (after cotton) decades later. During the first half of the twentieth century, both growing fique and handcrafting cabuya goods became the primary economic activity of many smallholder and artisan families in rural Colombia. Although progress brokers did look at North Atlantic models and technologies, they found them not appropriate for Colombia’s particular conditions. In fact, this expansion responded to the successful adoption and local assimilation of affordable and suitable technologies that had been inspired primarily by Mexican models since the 1900s. Although three kinds of technologies were key to this industry (defibering machines and steam pumps to prepare the fiber as raw material, and looms to manufacture fique products), this chapter focuses on one specific technology transfer: the Mexican *Rueda de Solís*, an original Mexican invention that was adapted to Colombia’s particular circumstances.

   Mexico’s henequen industry had grown exponentially and had introduced cutting-edge machinery since the 1870s. However, older Mexican inventions turned out to be particularly useful to Colombians seeking to foster small productive units in rural areas. The Colombian fique industry developed initially as “*patrimonio de los pobres*” (“the asset of the poor”). Attempts to introduce sophisticated, expensive technologies proved

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futile. This chapter focuses on Colombian progress brokers like Alejandro López, the foremost promoter of and one of the major contributors to the expansion of the fique industry in Colombia during the first half of the twentieth century. He examined and drew appropriate models to adapt to Colombia technologies and expertise from neighboring countries like Mexico, nations that the historiography on business and economic history have traditionally considered as consumers rather than producers of useful knowledge and technology.

6.2 From the Pre-Columbian Carrizo to the Modern Rueda de Solís

The defibering machines developed in Mexico during the nineteenth century would revolutionize the fique industry in Colombia decades later. During the 1840s and 1850s, the first modern defibering machines were invented in Yucatán, with relatively good results.\(^8\) Adapting knives to one of the wheels of his carriage, the Franciscan priest Florencio Cerón solved the major mechanical problem regarding the henequen defibering process. His invention became known due to the pamphlet that Efraín Rivadeneira Ramírez published in 1846, entitled “El principio de la rueda desfibradora de hojas de henequén. Pbro. Florencio Cerón.”\(^9\) The rotary scraping principle that Cerón conceived became the model for several different machines of the same type. Necessary reforms

\(^8\) Fernando Benítez, *KI: el drama de un pueblo y de una planta* (México: Secretaria de Educación Publica Cultura SEP, 1985), 63–65.

were made according to the kind of blade and other variables considered by the respective inventor. In 1863, four different defibering machines, whose inventors were the Mexicans José María Millet, Ramón Juanes Patrulló, Manuel Cecilio Villamor and José Esteban Solís, were performing relatively well. In 1872, the Venezuelan intellectual Ramón Páez regarded this piece of Mexican invention highly. In a book he published to promote useful technologies within Latin American countries, Páez stated that “for many years, the mechanical ingenuity of Europe and the United States has been exercised, with very little success, in inventing machines to clear the maguey stalk, instead of the slow and painful work of scraping it by hand, as has been done in Yucatán and other parts of America from time immemorial. This honor was reserved for two Yucatecans, Solís and Patrulló, who have finally managed to perfect their inventions to the point of being able to clear with them a large number of stalks per day.” Solís’ invention, however, seemed to have offered the best results, because “the machine that is normally used in our field farms has taken his name,” said the Mexican engineer Rafael Barba in 1895. According to the Colombian inventor Alejandro López, who would carefully study these creations at the dawn of the twentieth century, the Mexican scraper (or Rueda de Solís, as some called him), was “a steering wheel with bronze blades on the

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periphery and with beveled edges; a curve that is applied exactly to the circumference described by the blades, and that can be made out of wood or bronze; [it also has] a press, whose design varies with each manufacturer, and whose function is to hold strongly half the plant sheet while the other half is being defibered.”

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the popularization of this and other similar machines contributed to the expansion and progress of the henequen industry in Mexico, and later to the adoption and development of industries alike in regions producing similar fibers within the Americas, like Colombia.

Based on the example of Mexico, during the 1880s some Colombian progress brokers regarded henequen and fiber plants alike as an opportunity to develop an export commodity, rather than a product to supply national market needs in Colombia. This search for cash crops in Colombia, and overall for a more extensive variety of natural sources of state revenue, was part of a broader export boom that Latin America was experiencing since the 1870s. Then, progress brokers believed that as fiber plants grew naturally in the intertropical areas, its production and commercialization could be suitable to Colombia’s natural, social, and economic circumstances. Since the 1880s, some official documents, newspaper articles, private correspondence and personal writings hinted that producing natural fibers like henequen in Colombia would promote there as

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much economic growth as this industry had developed in countries like Mexico. In fact, Mexico’s henequen industry had grown exponentially and had introduced cutting-edge machinery by 1880, offering useful experience to Colombia’s contemporary observers.16

The Colombian priest Federico Cornelio Aguilar, who dedicated several decades to the comparative analysis of Colombia against the rest of the Latin American countries, stated in 1884 that Colombia had great potential to develop the fique industry and that the quality of its fiber was better than the Mexican henequen. To him, the fique industry would contribute to developing Colombia’s export sector. He reported that the Mexican henequen industry was relatively new because “in 1877 it was newly established and only yielded $242,586 for export”; then in his view “Colombia could also add that item to its exports, because its soil abounds in fique stalks.”17 He also argued that while in Mexico in 1882 this industry had grown exponentially, exporting $3,907,585 of henequen, “Colombia does not export a single strand.”18 Aguilar believed that his home country was able to export as much and more fiber than Mexico because “Colombia abounds in aloe plants, and its fique is finer and silkier than the Mexican one.”19 In an article Aguilar published in the Colombian Anales de Instrucción Pública in 1884, he invited Colombians to engage with this industry and stressed how Mexico was exporting great


17 Aguilar, Colombia en Presencia de las Repúblicas Hispano-Americanas, 233.


quantities of henequen to the United States, and in a provocative tone he asked, “Could not we do the same in our country, where the plant that produces it is so much abundant?”

A year later in 1885, in a book Aguilar published narrating his “last year of residence in Mexico”—as he entitled it—he insisted that “in Colombia there is also abundance of fique or henequen and, in imitation of Mexico, their cultivation and exportation should be undertaken,” and affirmed that this industry augured a profitable future for Colombians because “our fique is finer and of better quality than the ixtle or Mexican henequen.” Although Aguilar’s cries seemed to have had no major practical effects, his pioneering considerations contributed to raising expectations of developing the fique industry in Colombia towards the end of the century, mainly after a pattern of steady growth in the Mexican henequen industry had developed.

Aguilar was not alone in this quest for following in Mexico’s footsteps. Towards the late 1880s, Colombian progress brokers began to perceive the Mexican economy and particularly its henequen industry as a model for establishing the Colombian domestic fique production. In 1889, two Colombian citizens sent a letter from Mexico to the president of Colombia Rafael Núñez and testified the advantages that the henequen industry had brought to the Mexican economy. In fact, only henequen exports were equivalent to one-third of Mexico’s merchandise exported yearly (not counting precious

20 Aguilar, “Ligero Estudio Sobre Las Minas de Méjico y Colombia,” 520.

21 Aguilar, Último año de residencia en México, 207.

22 The source does not reveal the name of these Colombians, and the author of this dissertation could not identify them in any other source. Zamosc, El fique y los empaques en Colombia, 44.
metals) from 1887 to 1890. They reported that the Mexican henequen industry could be a model for stimulating the cultivation of fiber plants like fique and its industrial exploitation in Colombia. Likewise, in 1890, after finishing his period as a consul in San Francisco, and on his way back to his homeland, the Colombian statesman and intellectual Ernesto Restrepo Tirado lingered in Mexico, “where he studied the cultivation of henequen,” as he reported in a book he published examining Colombia’s aboriginal population.

Within Colombia, interest in this economic sector also grew. In 1890, interested in grasping the difference between fibers like fique, henequen, sisal, sisal-hemp and Manila fiber, and how the Colombian fique was known in the New York market, the anonymous writer “E” asked the Bogotá newspaper El Correo Nacional to clarify his questions regarding this jargon, and complained that a useful book the Mexican government had sent to Bogotá’s “Agricultural library” with this information was borrowed by someone who had neglected to returned it. Two weeks later, the newspaper editors responded that “henequen, hemp, sisal, grass, cabuya, fique, etc. are the same thing—the product of the plant called maguey.” They also indicated that “the

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24 Zamosc, El fique y los empaques en Colombia, 44.

25 Restrepo Tirado, Estudios sobre los aborígenes de Colombia, iii.


Yucatán peninsula, formed by arid, dry and volcanic soils, is the place where this plant is most successfully cultivated, and whose product goes to the United States to serve for rigging, ties, sacks and various other uses,” and that the annual harvest “produces six to ten million dollars.”28 In January 1891, nom de plume A. G. V. also responded to E., and besides expounding on scientific explanations about differences among these plants and fibers—which helped the readership rectify some previous answers’ imprecisions—the author offered further details. Regarding the fique’s international market, A. G. V. explained: “So far our fiber is not well known in the New York market because large exports have not been made, only small shipments of samples which have been judged by their good quality, as better or equal to the fibers of henequen; and hopefully this will serve as a stimulus to establish among us, so scarce of export products, the henequen industry.”29 Days later, this newspaper published a note promoting publications of “industrial application,” and offered a review of Desplats & Gregoire’s Dictionnaire des Sciences, des Lettres et des Arts—a relevant scientific dictionary.30 In this review the newspaper editors delved into clarifying the term Abacá, which “is unknown, as we suspect, by the generality of our readers,” and explained that Abacá “is a textile substance extracted from the leaves of a variety of plantain, also known as Manila hemp, or simply Manila, an article that must exist in abundance in our country and which we could export


30 “Obras de aplicación industrial (en francés),” El Correo Nacional, February 11, 1891, 1.
or make use in large quantities. It makes fabrics that have the shine and softness of silk, and that would probably be more valuable than fique.” Encyclopedic knowledge about these fibrous plants and their potential industrialization had come to circulate more widely in Colombia towards the end of the century.

The increasing interest in fiber plants and the henequen industry in general was also disseminated through specialized periodicals in Colombia. The renowned Colombian naturalist and agronomist Juan de Dios Carrasquilla Lema had also looked at Mexico for appropriate models to Colombia. Founder of the Colombian periodical *El Agricultor*, Carrasquilla dedicated a full issue in 1893 to promoting the henequen industry in Colombia, a crop he believed would bring to Colombia export prospects as wide as neighboring countries were enjoying. Aiming to promote this industry in Colombia, *El Agricultor* continued to publish articles examining the henequen industry in countries like Mexico, El Salvador, and Cuba across the 1890s. During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the industrialization of fiber plants was capturing the attention of many Colombians, and the experience of Mexico became an essential reference due to its traditions and successful development.

As a matter of national interest, Colombian diplomats also contributed to raising awareness of the value of the natural fiber industry generally, exploring the

31 “Obras de aplicación industrial (en francés),” 1.
appropriateness of different species that were being cultivated in some of Colombia’s neighboring countries. Signed on September 30, 1900, an official memo reminded Colombian consuls that since 1866 (law 23) they were required to let Colombians know about “the most useful data on trade and industry, and on the advancement of science and arts in the consular district where performing consular functions.”

Colombian consuls in Latin American countries reported the benefits Colombia’s economy could get by cultivating crops like sansevieria, which yield a hard fiber—like fique and henequen, and could be used for the same purposes. In August 1901, the Colombian plenipotentiary minister in Caracas sent a report regarding the cultivation of sansevieria and the exploitation of its fiber, “with the purpose of recommending [its] cultivation in Colombia, which would give a magnificent article of export.”

During the 1900s Cuban periodicals would disseminate some diplomat’s reports, like the newspapers El Nuevo Tiempo and Revista de Instrucción Pública which published the Cuban consul in Lima Carlos Vallarino Miró’s study “on the cultivation and commercial and industrial value of the plant called sansevieria guineensis.” Based on his analyses and on Professor D. Augusto Dorco’s experiments, Vallarino advocated introducing this crop in

34 Carlos Martínez Silva, “Circular sobre los deberes de los cónsules,” La Opinión, October 3, 1900, 150.


Colombia and developing its industry. “There are a dozen species of this plant, whose
names I know,” introduced the Colombian consul, “but as it is not my intention to make
scholarly ostentation, but to transplant to my homeland a crop that can be extremely
productive to get Colombia out of prostration, […] I will speak only of the *sansevieria
guineensis.*”37 His report drew the attention of several Colombian statesmen, who
managed to send him 100 pesos towards the shipment from Peru to Colombia of “the
quantity that you consider convenient of some seeds of the mentioned plant, with the
necessary instructions on its cultivation.”38 Vallarino argued that sansevieria was “far
superior to fique or henequen due to the promptness with which it grows and the
superiority of its beautiful fiber, which is suitable even for fine fabrics, and it replaces
fique in all its applications and uses.”39 Based on these reports, the governor of Atlantico
department decreed “to establish in each municipality an area for the cultivation of this
fibrous plant.”40 Despite isolated efforts to foster it, the sansevieria industry did not
develop in Colombia. Plantations for fique rather than any other similar plant would


38 “Cultivo de La Sansevieria,” 303.


40 Alejandro López, “El henequén y otras plantas fibrosas,” in *Revista del Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Fomento* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1906), 95. Colombia’s’ administrative divisions are called *departamentos* (“departments”)
prevail. The circulation of printed materials detailing foreign and local crop experimentation was critical to this end.

Colombian entrepreneurs had also begun to regard fique as a potential agent for encouraging modern, domestic manufactures rather than an export commodity, as was generally advised by Colombian travelers and experts during the 1880s and 1890s. Beginning in the midst of the Thousand Days’ War (1899-1902), Colombian coffee exporters looked to foster the growth of the domestic sacks industry and start replacing imported ones. The Bogotá newspaper *La Opinión* reported in 1901 that “due to the high price of the bills of exchange, some of the members of the guild of exporters have thought to take advantage of the fique fiber in the manufacture of sacks to pack coffee, instead of those that were previously brought from Europe. We know that soon a factory will be established with appropriate machinery to take advantage of the precious [fique] plant, which is produced with such abundance even in the driest places of our territory.”

The fique industry was already quite significant in regions such as Santander where, according to “fairly accurate data” gathered by the historian and geographer Francisco Javier Vergara y Velasco, by 1892 there were thousands of industrial plants, among which he calculated 5,800 spinning mills, 1,640 workshops of wool and cotton textiles, 5,000 of fique cloth, and 10 of alpargates [espadrilles]. Despite Vergara y Velasco’s hint of exaggeration, Santander and Norte de Santander had taken the lead in developing

41 “Nueva industria,” *La Opinión*, March 15, 1901, 672.

42 Francisco Javier Vergara y Velasco, *Nueva Geografía de Colombia*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Imprenta de Vapor, 1901), 762.
the Colombian fique industry since the late nineteenth century (Table 6.1). At the turn of
the century, however, the production of fique twine and goods remained rudimentary in
Colombia, with no significant technological change. Pre-Columbian tools and devices
would continue to be used in this industry during the early twentieth century, when
innovative machinery would begin to displace traditional devices, boosting production
and standards of living for many Colombian smallholding and artisan families.

Aiming to provide Colombians appropriate models to Colombia’s particular
context from neighboring countries’ experiences, specialized local publications began
more often to circulate during the 1900s. Some of them sought to respond to specific
objectives and industrial interests like the development of the textile industry in
Colombia. Although entrepreneurs like Pedro Nel Ospina had already visited Mexico to
draw models of cotton-based textile industries for Colombia, and a few industrial
factories were already running in Colombia—mostly in cities like Barranquilla, Samacá,
Medellín, and Bello—this sector was still incipient.43 In 1906, the Colombian scientist
Juan Bautista Londoño published a book seeking to promote the textile industry in
Colombia, and along with some textile-plant samples, he presented it in the industrial
exposition that was held in Medellín in 1906.44 Aiming to offer appropriate information
to Colombians looking to establish textile plantations and factories, this book embodied

43 Montenegro, *El arduo tránsito hacia la modernidad*; Sergio Paolo Solano de las Aguas and
Jorge Enrique. Conde Calderón, *Elite empresarial y desarrollo industrial en Barranquilla 1875-1930*
(Barranquilla: Ediciones Uniaatlántico, 1993); Luis Ospina Vasquez, *Industria y protección en Colombia

an effort to synthesize knowledge produced in these fields during the last decades. Regarding the industrialization of hard fiber textiles, Londoño stated that “I have taken the trouble to consult several writings on agaves from Mexico and Central America […] with the sole purpose of knowing if it would be convenient to introduce any of them, and which ones I should recommend,” Londoño remarked.45 “If what is desired is to introduce henequen or sisal,” he concluded, “I consider unnecessary to make such an expense, given that our cabuya is at least equal, commercially, to the best henequen.”46 Londoño also stated that experts in the field shared his concept, including the renowned naturalist and agronomist Juan de Dios Carrasquilla, who had been publishing his observations regarding the henequen industry in El Agricultor since the early 1890s.47 Given the promising future that Carrasquilla and Londoño had predicted for the Colombian fique industry, Londoño invited his fellow Colombian readers to “establish good cabuya plantations, to keep them clean, and to exploit them with all diligence for domestic use”48 in the meantime, and to export it making good and inexpensive sacks for packing coffee.”49 Based on these assessments, a newspaper article glossing the Industrial

45 Juan Bautista Londoño, Algo más sobre los textiles de Antioquia. Para el certamen industrial de 1906 (Medellín: Imprenta oficial, 1906), 5.

46 Londoño, 5.

47 Zamosc, El fique y los empaques en Colombia, 44–45.

48 Footnote in the original: “to manufacture tapestries, sacks, guambias, espadrilles, bundles, ropes, strings, etc.”

49 Londoño, Algo más sobre los textiles de Antioquia, 6.
Exposition concluded that “the cultivation of sansevieria, henequen, pita, and corozo palm […] would give a powerful increase in our progress.”

The production of knowledge regarding fiber plants and their industrial exploitation in neighboring countries allowed people like Londoño to assert that the introduction of a new variety of fiber plant was unnecessary in Colombia, and that to make the fique industry succeed it was paramount to learn—seemingly from Mexicans—how “to manage well the cultivation and exploitation of the plant.” Key to this learning process was, in Londoño’s view, the adoption of appropriate defibering machines “like the one Dr. Alejandro López [invented and] entrusted to the skillful maquinista [engineer] Mr. Pedro Velilla,” who was one of the owners of Fundición Estrella (later Fundición y Talleres de Robledo), a reputable foundry founded in Medellín in 1900.

Rather than North Atlantic machinery factories, local ironworks were vital to the adaptation of technologies appropriate to Colombia’s particular context. The fin-de-siècle civil war, as well as topography difficulties, had incentivized Colombians to manufacture locally pieces of machinery that otherwise would have required importation at very high prices. A newspaper article illustrated the general situation of Colombia’s hardware-making industry in 1900, indicating that “despite the almost complete exhaustion of materials in the warehouses […], because of the [civil] war, and despite the high price of


51 Guía para viajar por el departamento de Antioquia. (Medellín: Tipografía del Externado Medellín, 1927); Londoño, Algo más sobre los textiles de Antioquia, 6.

52 Guía para viajar por el departamento de Antioquia.; Londoño, Algo más sobre los textiles de Antioquia, 6.
the bills of exchange imposes on imported goods, there is no other way for those who need machinery than to build it in the country.”\(^{53}\) To this end, only in Medellín and its surroundings—where the Colombian fique industry would grow exponentially soon thereafter—was there a relatively large number of industrial plants like Ferrería de Amagá, the School of Arts and Crafts, and many ironworks owned by “Pedro Velilla, Estradas, Quinteros, Restrepo, Alonso Ángel, and José D. Sierra […] who] can satisfy any mechanical requirement of our large industries,” the newspaper article stated. \(^{54}\) These workshops and foundries would support the Colombian fique industry process of technology transfer.

The process of technology transfer from Mexico to Colombia was led primarily by the Colombian civil engineer, entrepreneur, and diplomat Alejandro López (1876-1940). While conducting studies of the U.S. railway system, López received a letter from the Colombian entrepreneur Manuel José Álvarez, encouraging him to examine the extant defibering machines to extract hard fibers like fique, which was abundant in his native Antioquia.\(^{55}\) Álvarez was the leading figure in Medellín’s urban development and one of the founders of Antioquia’s pioneering textile company Compañía Antioqueña de Tejidos in 1902.\(^{56}\) Motivated to undertake this study, Alejandro López decided to analyze the

\(^{53}\) “Industria,” La Patria, November 27, 1900, 82.

\(^{54}\) “Industria,” 82.


\(^{56}\) Belín Vázquez, Gabriela Dalla Corte, and Michel Bertrand, Empresarios y Empresas en América Latina: Siglos XVIII-XX (Universidad del Zulia, Vicerrectorado Académico, 2005), 174; Hernán Darío Villegas Gómez, La formación social del proletariado antioqueño, 1880-1930 (Concejo de Medellín,
Mexican henequen industry rather than U.S. machinery. He was convinced that the North Atlantic did not provide appropriate models to Colombia’s particular circumstances. While observing U.S. railway developments, López published several articles with his observations in Colombian newspapers, stressing the imperative of grasping technology according to local needs and settings. “I have always believed that the progress of our land has to come necessarily by degrees and naturally, that is, without leaps, by successive chains,” affirmed López in an article published in June 1905. 57 By criticizing many Colombians who after witnessing firsthand the technological wonders of the North Atlantic returned to their homeland “dazed” and “mentally unbalanced,” he advocated for more people able not to copy blindly but to critically “reduce, translate and adapt” foreign technologies to Colombia’s particular circumstances. 58 To him, the appropriate way to reduce, translate and adapt technologies to Colombia’s context was by analyzing the least developed version among the countries using given techniques like defibering machines. 59 Hence, he believed that Mexico, although far more developed than Colombia regarding the henequen industry, was the closest step in Colombia’s technology-progress


ladder. “As an ideal to which the material progress of our country should be directed,” López continued in his article of June 1905, “it is unquestionable that to make the most of [technological advances] more substance is extracted from studying and learning the works of one similar to ours.”

He believed that rather than the “expression of amazement before marvels” common among Colombian travelers, the analysis of appropriate ideas leading to “the revelation that something is ready to be made in the country” was “one thousand times” more useful for Colombia’s material progress.

Seeking to draw appropriate methods and technologies for Colombia’s particular settings, and driven by his conviction to favor appropriateness over allurement, López examined Yucatán henequen’s history, plantation systems, and technology. “Having convinced myself that in the United States I would not find a field to make that study,” López stated, “and with the aim of contributing something to the knowledge of an industry that has long been presented in Colombia with flattering perspectives, I resolved to move to Yucatán, which is undoubtedly the most important center of fiber production that is extracted there from henequen, a species quite similar to our maguey.”

His notes were published in a booklet called El henequén y otras plantas fibrosas in 1906.


63 López, El henequén y otras plantas fibrosas, 1906.
Due to the relevance of this one of a kind study, beginning in June 1906 the Colombian government disseminated its content gradually through a number of issues of the Ministry of Public Works and Development’s official organ.64 Throughout his study, Alejandro López couples Mexicans’ industriousness and the country’s railways to the success of the Mexican henequen industry, reflecting on Colombia’s implicit need to continue working on developing the railroad system. “Without the network of more than a thousand kilometers of railroad tracks that cross the State of Yucatán in several directions,” López stated, “the fiber industry would not be what it is today.” 65 López was at the time the manager of one division of the Antioquia railroad, which was one of the few rail lines that was under construction (and partially working) during the 1900s in Colombia. From the perspective of López’s biographer, the Antioquia railroad became one of López’s passions.66 However, his visit to Mexico was primarily focused on grasping what was unique to Yucatán henequen history, and what could appropriately be adapted to Colombia.

Alejandro López believed that to promote the Colombian fique industry, it was necessary to start by reducing, translating and adapting Mexico’s techniques, methods, and technologies. Once he explained particularities of the terrain, sowing, cultivation, and harvest, he delved into examination of the defibering processes and machines used in the

64 López, “El henequén y otras plantas fibrosas,” 1906.
65 López, 379.
66 Mayor Mora, Técnica y utopía, 96.
Yucatán henequen industry. Most of his attention was given to the Solís wheel, the Mexican invention that revolutionized the henequen industry in Mexico decades prior. “Many thousands of the Solís machine were used in the childhood of this industry in Yucatán,” stated López, “and they are still used among the small growers, who are very few.” He then noted that because fique was primarily produced by scattered small growers in Colombia, and “since the maguey and the henequen are so similar, it is natural to hope that if we want to leave [pre-Columbian] carrizo in Colombia we begin by using the simple Solís wheel.” Based on Mexico’s experience, Alejandro López, like other progress brokers regarding economic and political systems, stressed the necessity to acknowledge historical processes and local particularities before devising projects of national improvement. To him, the Colombian fique industry was an infant that needed to learn from mature industries—like that of Mexico—to grow well.

Looking to providing appropriate machinery to generally poor fique growers in Colombia, some Colombian travelers and diplomats would report the benefits of similar industries in neighboring countries. Analyses of neighboring countries’ know-how stimulated local invention and contributed to the technological change that would bolster the Colombian fique industry in rural areas. In Colombia, a primitive tool called the carrizo had fulfilled for centuries the necessary function of extracting the inner fiber from


68 López, 31–32.
fique leaves. The carrizo was a sturdy wooden stick with a Y-shaped slot at the top through which fique leaves were forced to pass, removing the pulp and yielding the fiber. Fique laborers usually made and modified their carrizos at will, manufacturing them in advance or right before harvesting mature and ready-to-shred fique leaves. Artisans also manufactured carrizos that were sold at local markets. However, and despite minor modifications, the carrizo continued to resemble an archaic tool with modest productive margins. To establish a small or medium scale industry, however, the incorporation of a more efficient device was deemed necessary.

Since the late nineteenth century, many Colombians had devoted themselves to the study of the fundamental principles of defibering and the tools that could be adopted in Colombia. Their primary purpose was to create a machine able to fulfill the particular needs of local fique producers. The first Colombian invention in this field was the Desfibradora para Agave that Alejandro Gómez patented in Bucaramanga in 1894. However, little is unknown about this pioneering machine, and no evidence suggests that it was adopted and marketed successfully. In 1905, having traveled to Mexico and carefully studied henequen crops as well as the processes and machines used for defibering it, Alejandro López designed an original prototype of a defibering machine

69 López, El henequén y otras plantas fibrosas, 1906.
70 Zamosc, El fique y los empaques en Colombia, 24, 42.
71 López, “Máquinas desfibradoras de fique,” 1513.
72 Mayor Mora, Inventos y patentes en Colombia, 1930-2000, 74.
that he named Desfibradora Antioqueña. This defibering mechanism was the first one of its type patented in Antioquia, and its first unit was manufactured in Medellín by Pedro Velilla in 1906. 73 Local newspapers publicized this revolutionary creation by stating that “a single laborer would easily scrape from 2500 to 3000 stalks, with a minimum product of 100 pounds of cabuya [per day]. It weighs 20 fractionable arrobas, outside the bank or wooden frame that can be made in the locality.” 74 By then, the Colombian coffee industry had depended heavily on jute sacks that were imported from England. Thus, one of the virtues attributed to the Desfibradora Antioqueña was the contribution it would make to this industry. One of the witnesses of the public presentation of López’s invention, the Colombian engineer Roberto Botero Saldarriaga, acknowledged that “Dr. López’s defibering machine worked with precision, speed and cleanliness; it was a complete success, proclaimed by the assistants, who very effusively congratulated the indefatigable fighter.” 75 By indicating the economic contribution to the coffee industry, Botero stressed that there was no longer a need to spend the “40,000 dollars that the sacks for coffee packaging cost annually, […] which can now be replaced by those made here due to the cheapness of the raw material obtained with Dr. López’s defibering machine.” 76 For this and portability reasons, this machine was well received by Colombian farmers.

73 Londoño, Algo más sobre los textiles de Antioquia, 6.
74 Mayor Mora, Técnica y utopía, 101.
75 Mayor Mora, 102–3.
76 Mayor Mora, 102–3.
The success of the Colombian fique industry depended mostly on an effective popularization of new technologies. To promote both his invention and investigations in the field, Alejandro López continued to examine fique crops and feasible methods to perfect his defibering machine during the following decades. *Desfibradora Antioqueña* was awarded a prize in the National Exhibition that was held in Bogotá in 1910 to celebrate the first century of Colombian independence.\(^77\) Later, for his dedication and contributions to the fique industry in Colombia, and especially for his study called *El fique. Su cultivo y beneficio industrial*, López was awarded the first prize in the Agricultural and Livestock Exhibition held in Medellín in 1918.\(^78\) By 1918, López had also improved the defibering machine of his invention, offering a safer as well as a more durable, precise and productive model.\(^79\) He affirmed that although his machine produced some fiber waste, “due to the practice I acquired in Mexico, I can assure you that every single defibering machine wastes some fiber, but not as much as the fiber wasted by defibering in the manual apparatus that is commonly used in our fields.”\(^80\)

Striving to establish large-scale fique plantations and to mechanize fique extraction during the late 1910s, some Colombians sought to adapt North Atlantic technologies like steam and hydraulic machines that were used to exploit fiber crops in

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\(^77\) Mayor Mora, 100–103.


\(^80\) López, 610.
East Africa, the Philippines, and Mexico. However, although these machines were highly productive, they would exceed both the cost and dimensions suitable in Colombia, where fique production provided a livelihood to low-income, rural families. Moreover, transportation costs were often prohibitive in Colombia due to its inadequate internal transport system. In fact, Alejandro López stated in 1918 that owners of large-scale plantations of 100,000 fique plants—which was uncommon in Colombia—“should think about getting one of the [large] Mexican machines, although I doubt very much that our bad means of transport work to transport those machines and to distribute their products economically.” Thus, to expand the fique industry in Colombia, growers required equally revolutionary and highly productive machinery, but affordable and lightweight. Mexican expertise was critical to this development because it provided models appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances. Alejandro López once acknowledged that “between the manual apparatus of the aborigines [carrizo] and the large automatic machines used in Mexico, there is a middle ground, which is the one that suits our nascent industry, that is for plantations of 20 to 50,000 plants.” He was referring to the


82 Safford, “El problema de los transportes en Colombia en el siglo XIX”; Zamosc, El fique y los empaques en Colombia, 46–47.


84 Zamosc, El fique y los empaques en Colombia, 45.

85 López, El fique. Su cultivo y beneficio industrial, 17.
Solís wheel that was invented in Mexico in the 1850s and that had gradually been improved towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The defibering machine’s affordability, size, and weight were crucial to expanding the fique industry in Colombia. Alejandro López, aware of this, published announcements indicating that the device of his invention was suitable for small- and medium-sized plantations. He also advertised his invention as follows: “I am selling the *Desfibradora Antioqueña,* model of 1918, for $300 in legal gold, placed in La Virginia for Valle, in Manizales for Caldas, and in any port of Bajo Magdalena from La Dorada to Barranquilla, duly packed for transportation on the back of mules, in 6 or 7 packages, which together weigh approximately 400 kilos.”

Openly acknowledging that he had drawn from Mexican expertise, López stated that “my *Desfibradora* is an adaptation of Mexican models, [making it] transportable on the back of mules and suitable for medium-size industry.” López’s studies and developments became widely known in Colombia, stimulating inventive activity, mostly during the 1930s. Mostly based on his analyses and comparisons between Mexico’s henequen and Colombia’s fique, Alejandro López published some of the most relevant studies in this field from 1906 to 1932.

Based on the same Mexican defibering principle that Alejandro López had improved and adapted to Colombia’s circumstances, some Colombian inventors

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87 López, 610.

developed defibering machines that varied mostly in safety, durability, power, weight and productivity. Some of them were Antonio J. Álvarez R. and Gabriel Escobar Álvarez, who created the *Desfibradora Delta* and *Desfibradora Escovar*, respectively.  

Inventors like López even admired the latter. In 1936, López wrote to Escovar acknowledging that “of the machines of this class that until now I have had the opportunity to know and study, yours is the one that meets the best construction conditions for the simplicity of its manufacture and the quality of the materials; and from the knowledge that I have of this industry, not only in the country but [also] abroad, I believe that you make a valuable contribution with the ‘*Desfibradora Escovar,*’ since the conditions noted and its low price make it available to all of our fique growers.”

Local ironworks also manufactured their own defibering machines, mainly in Antioquia’s Talleres Delta, Ferrería de Amagá, Talleres de Robledo, and Talleres Nacionales de Escobar Londoño y Compañía, which produced the defibering machine *Londobar*. During the 1930s, inventive activity grew in Colombia, and several patents to fulfill the Colombian fique industry’s needs were requested. Even the National Federation of Coffee Growers patented in Bogotá a “*Máquina desfibradora de fique*” in 1934. The buoyant coffee economy and its

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92 For more technical details about these defibering machines, see Jairo Campuzano-Hoyos, *Tocando fibras. Historia del cultivo del fique (henequén) y del aprovechamiento industrial de la cabuya en
continually growing demand for sacks stimulated inventive activity in Colombia. The Colombian fique industry’s technological change would contribute directly to the expansion of the Colombian coffee industry, providing economic alternatives for many smallholding and artisan families.

Figure 6.1. Raspadora Mexicana or Rueda De Solís. Source: Ramón Páez, Ambas Américas. Contrastes, New York, Appleton, 1872, pp. 264-265.

Colombia durante la primera mitad de siglo XX. El caso de Antioquia (Medellín: Editorial Eafit, 2017), 73–97.
6.3 The Configuration of the Colombian Fique Industry

Since the late nineteenth century, the fique industry had drawn the attention of several Colombian politicians, intellectuals, and businesspeople who assumed that the higher the production and exports of coffee, the higher the demand for sacks for its packaging. Unlike Colombia’s production of export commodities like coffee, tobacco, and bananas, Colombian fique industry expanded unrelated to the global market for natural fibers and binder twine, which had been increasing since the late 1880s. In fact, mechanized cereal farming demanded high quantities of twine, and in “the United States the gigantic International Harvester Corporation played a dominant role as the major

purchaser of henequen from Mexico.” The Colombian fique industry was particularly responsive to domestic demand, mainly from coffee producers and traders. The sacks used for both coffee production and trading were made with natural fibers like the Bengal’s jute and tropical America’s fique. Hence procuring them in a predominantly rural country such as Colombia would stimulate smallholding and domestic manufacturing. By the early 1930s, the Colombian coffee industry had expanded dramatically, creating an unprecedented demand for sacks (Figure 7).

Figure 6.3. Coffee Production by Colombian Departments. Source: This chart was prepared based on “El despegue cafetero,” Jesús Antonio Bejarano, in: Historia económica de Colombia, José Antonio Ocampo, Bogotá, 1997, p. 238.

In 1930, foreseeing the importance of this industry, the Secretary of Agriculture and Development of Antioquia stated that “the day that the harvest of Colombian coffee is exported in national sacks, which would give the coffee an unequivocal stamp of its origin, the cabuya industry will have a demand of more than three million sacks for export only, a number that would gradually increase with the production of coffee.” Cabuya sacks were also demanded by several different agricultural and mining industries to pack articles like panela (brown sugar loaf), grains, tubers, coal, and salt. To supply the growing demand for cabuya goods in Colombia, expanding the fique cultivated area and introducing new technologies for processing it was paramount. Some trade associations and individual efforts were critical to these ends. Along with coffee exports, fique plantations and manufactures of cabuya goods grew during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia, which was established in 1927, played a crucial role in the expansion of the Colombian fique industry. In 1930, after holding the Fourth National Congress of Coffee Growers, the Federation declared that it would facilitate the means to develop the fique industry in Colombia and that its confederates would refrain from “importing jute or any other fibers of foreign production that can compete with the packaging manufactured in the country.” Since then, fique and

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95 Secretaria de Agricultura y Fomento de Antioquia, Cultivo de la cabuya en Antioquia (Medellín, 1931), 3.

96 Secretaria de Agricultura y Fomento de Antioquia, 2.

coffee production interlocked as never before—so much so that traditional coffee producing regions also became the leading producers of fique and cabuya sacks in Colombia.

The Federation’s official declaration of supporting Colombian fique industry stimulated inventive activity in Colombia. Seeking to foster the industrial exploitation of fique and its derivatives, some influential Colombians had encouraged practical adaptations and assimilation of foreign technology since the 1890s. This interest led to a process of technological change through which devices like mechanical scrapers and modern defibering machines displaced indigenous tools like the carrizo. Colombia had low levels of invention and patent registration during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, both the Federation’s official declaration of support and the passing of new tariffs protecting the Colombian fique industry in 1931 stimulated inventive (or imitative) and patenting activities in Colombia. In fact, an unprecedented number of patents was requested to fulfill the Colombian fique industry’s needs between 1931 and 1939. At least five defibering machines, as well as three spinning devices and processes, were patented in Colombia during the 1930s. These creations would seek to improve devices the Colombian pioneer Alejandro López had conceived decades earlier. By 1916 López had already invented, patented, and commercialized both the defibering machine known as

98 Campuzano-Hoyos, Tocando fibras, 116.


100 Mayor Mora, 123, 361, 525, 527, 528, 530–32.
Desfibradora Antioqueña and the cabuya loom named Hiladora Colombia. Mexican technologies and know-how mostly inspired his developments after years of fieldwork in both Colombian and foreign fique and henequen plantations. While examining foreign techniques, López realized that to develop the fique industry in Colombia, the introduction of suitable technologies was necessary, fitting not only local needs but also geographical settings. His developments would power the Colombian fique industry’s first technological change.

The Colombian fique industry’s first large-scale technological change took place once the expansion of the Colombian coffee industry led to demand for unprecedented amounts of cabuya sacks. This change unfolded as a process of technology transfer during the early decades of the twentieth century. While some Colombian and foreign inventors successfully adopted, created and commercialized new technologies, local engineers assimilated the necessary expertise to build, repair and improve technical hardware in regional workshops beginning in the 1900s. This process, then, stimulated local creativity, invention, and innovation towards the expansion of the Colombian fique industry. In fact, if local inventors like Alejandro López analyzed foreign creations and designed their own original devices, local foundries and ironworks like Ferrería de Amagá and Talleres de Robledo supplied domestic expertise to build the machinery needed to expand the fique industry to other emerging factories during the first decades of the twentieth century. In fact, by 1931 modern national technology was available to expand the fique industry in

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101 Londoño, Algo más sobre los textiles de Antioquia; Mayor Mora, Técnica y utopía, 101.
Colombia. A variety of defibering machines were locally made, as José Julián Echeverri reported in an article about the industrial exploitation of fique.  

Although the expansion of technological change was slow in Colombia during the first decades of the twentieth century, a growing pattern of inventions and improvements of specialized hardware unfolded during the 1930s. As Table 6.1 shows, Colombian fique industry expansion was concentrated in the departments of Santander, Antioquia, and Boyacá, contributing 74% of fique and 83% of cabuya sacks in 1934. Santander, however, was by far the most productive department. Most of this production was used to provide fique sacks to the Colombian coffee industry. During the 1920s and 1930s cabuya sacks displaced jute packaging, which was usually imported to Colombia from South Asia via the U.K. In fact, long before the famous Juan Valdez emblem was created in 1959, fique sacks had become an exclusive trademark of Colombian coffee.

Drawing mostly from neighboring countries, the Colombian fique industry experienced a significant technological change before the creation of the Compañía de Empaques S.A. in 1938, the first large-scale, urban factory of cabuya products in Colombia. Before establishing this company, its founders visited Mexican henequen

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103 Campuzano-Hoyos, Tocando fibras, 116.

104 The official document of incorporation of this Company is held in the Antioquia Historical Archive, notarial records, notary 3, Medellin, public deed 1.704 of 7 September 1938. Compañía de Empaques S. A., Compañía de Empaques S. A. Una historia entretejida (Medellin, 2004), 9; Cardona Franco Paola Andrea, “El fique: cultivo de la nostalgia,” Anales del Centro de Historia del Municipio de San Vicente Ferrer, no. 5 (December 2003): 66.
plantations and factories to analyze the machinery used there. Displacing artisanal livelihoods with mechanization (mostly the cabuya-sack making processes), the foundation of this and similar companies throughout the country would change the Colombian fique industry dramatically.

TABLE 6.1.
NATIONAL PRODUCTION OF FIQUE AND CABUYA SACKS BY COLOMBIAN DEPARTMENTS IN 1934

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Fique (tons)</th>
<th>Sacks (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antioquia</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>1,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyacá</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldas</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cauca</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cundinamarca</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huila</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nariño</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norte de Santander</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santander</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolima</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valle</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,063</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,953</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


105 Compañía de Empaques S. A., Compañía de Empaques S. A. Una historia entretejida, 9.

106 Campuzano-Hoyos, Tocando fibras, 122–27.
6.4 Conclusions

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many Colombians sought to establish in Colombia large-scale fiber plant plantations to develop Colombia’s export activity. However, although Mexico had its henequen industry and some other countries like Cuba and El Salvador were developing similar plantation systems, in Colombia it was only after the coffee industry took off that the fique industry became firmly established, but on a small and medium scale, responding to Colombia’s particular economic, social, and infrastructural circumstances.

Directly linked to the expansion of the Colombian coffee industry because of its demand for sacks, the Colombian fique industry boomed during the first decades of the twentieth century. It developed because rather than importing expensive and inappropriate machinery from the countries of the North Atlantic, some Colombian intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and scientists examined global developments and adapted more suitable crops and technologies to Colombia’s context. They sought to develop the Colombian textile industry—in which fique had become an essential raw material—by analyzing and attempting to adapt know-how from Latin American countries chiefly.

During the first third of the twentieth century, analyses of the Mexican henequen industry’s history, plantation systems, and technology became crucial to the success of the Colombian fique industry and its first technological innovation. While large defibering machines were installed in Mexico towards the end of the nineteenth century, former Mexican inventions like the Raspadora Mexicana or Rueda de Solís became useful for developing local devices that would foster smaller productive units in Colombia. Aided by talented people who adapted affordable, mid-sized and productive technologies, the fique
industry developed in Colombia as “the asset of the poor” (*patrimonio de los pobres*). Local ironworks were also crucial for easing the technology transfer process, providing locally-made hardware and specialized assistance. By adopting and assimilating Mexican expertise and mechanical hardware, Colombian inventors developed devices affordable and appropriate for Colombia’s peoples, economy, and topography.

The Colombian fique industry developed because some Colombian progress brokers, rather than drawing from North Atlantic models, drew from Mexico appropriate models for Colombia’s particular context. This history challenges the traditional assumption that Latin American countries generally developed a technological dependence on the North Atlantic nations. Countries like Mexico developed original inventions that Colombians like Alejandro López would believe more appropriate for Colombia’s circumstances than technologies devised for societies with radically different social, economic, and historical conditions. Alejandro López believed that in terms of technology and industrial development Colombia was still an infant at the beginning of the twentieth century, which would require fostering a process of learning from more mature counterparts, mainly Mexico, which was much more developed than Colombia but was at the same time the closest on the assumed ladder of material progress. Like the association between the Mexican henequen and the Colombian fique industry, other kinds of specific models of material progress—including technologies—were drawn from Latin American countries. This chapter signals the need to conduct further studies on intertwined processes of technological change and economic growth within Latin America, which would be critical towards a better understanding of the business and economic history of Colombia and Latin America in a more global perspective.
Teleological queries about failure and dependence relative to the North Atlantic have often framed modern historiography on nineteenth-century Colombia and Latin America. Historians, moreover, have often argued that political and intellectual leaders in Colombia either embraced or contested North Atlantic models exclusively when devising processes of nation and state formation—in which material progress was typically the desired end. From this perspective, only individuals mirroring or challenging European referents contributed to projects of nation making in Colombia, excluding intra-Latin American perspectives. As this dissertation has contended, however, a group of Colombian politicians, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs, whom I call progress brokers, held broader perspectives and examined neighboring countries’ historical processes as paradigmatic. They believed that progress was neither automatic nor rigidly linear towards the examples set by the North Atlantic. Instead, progress could be more elastic and regionally varied.

Progress brokers firmly believed and sought to prove that models of material and intellectual progress ought to be appropriate to Colombia’s particular circumstances. In the minds of these observers, Latin American conditions differed from Europe and the
United States not only in geographic location, environmental conditions, and historical processes, but also in religion and values. They came to believe that only Colombia’s neighboring countries could offer appropriate models more readily adaptable to local conditions because they were all similar in heritage, customs, religion, language, and practices. This notion of a relative uniformity would support progress brokers’ claims regarding the appropriateness of Latin American models in contrast with the more distant and alien settings, practices, and cultures of the North Atlantic—however enviable their material and intellectual progress. From the 1840s, countries like Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, then, became gradually for these progress brokers the countries from which more appropriate models could be adapted. Rather than focusing on the North Atlantic countries exclusively, Colombian progress brokers gathered, examined, and disseminated a large body of knowledge about other Latin American nations, drawing appropriate models of material and intellectual progress from them between the 1840s and the 1900s.

Examining progress brokers’ perceptions of Colombia and Latin America, this dissertation examined why and how some progress brokers focused on framing narratives about appropriate models for Colombia rather than on detailed discussions of specific policies, practices, and programs. While historians of Colombia have traditionally emphasized that, for most of the nineteenth century, Colombians remained physically and intellectually isolated from the rest of the world, especially from other Latin American countries, this dissertation has demonstrated that Colombian progress brokers developed an intense interchange of ideas with their fellow Latin Americans, which contributes to a better understanding of the politics, literature, trade, and economies of the region. In fact, many of them played the brokerage role of funneling information about other Latin
American experiences and practices to a broader Colombian readership. Hence, although commercial exchange between Colombia and some of Colombia’s neighboring countries like Argentina was virtually nonexistent during the nineteenth century, the circulation of global, Latin-American-centered publications, travelers’ travelogues, Latin America’s official publications, as well as reports shipped by diplomats contributed to shaping ideas regarding the transformation of Latin America’s societies, economy, and politics. Colombian progress brokers contributed to shaping ideas regarding Colombia’s neighboring counties’ historical processes of transformation from chaos to order and progress through personal writings and local newspapers. They had been gathering, selecting, republishing and circulating useful printed materials from the 1840s.

Based on success and failure stories, Colombian progress brokers fashioned well-defined narratives regarding regional models and antimodels during the mid-nineteenth century. Deliberately, they sought to provide valuable information on industry, colonization, and trade to compel Colombians to draw appropriate models from the transmission and diffusion of Latin American history, news, and currents. Progress brokers disseminated valuable information indicating that except for Chile, neighboring countries did not provide useful models or lessons before the 1870s. To them, while Chile represented order and progress, Mexico and Argentina embodied chaos and backwardness through much of the nineteenth century, which would shape critical approaches to these countries’ systems of government, policies, and socio-economic activities. The history of Latin America had convinced Colombians that the first step towards progress was to secure domestic peace, which in their perspective was merely the lack of local struggles and political violence and the establishment of an effective rule of
law. During the 1880s and 1890s, the consistent narrative progress brokers had previously tailored became even more compelling after Argentina and Mexico emerged as new models. They now had powerful examples of countries moving relatively fast from disorder to order, and from general poverty to sustained growth. Progress brokers, then, reinforced their narrative: after crediting peace and appropriate institutions with the fundamental role of paving paths for progress, they now focused on illustrating how, by augmenting population via immigration and fostering productive economic activities rather than bureaucratic careers, Colombia could develop intellectual progress and economic growth. By the turn of the twentieth century, Mexico, Argentina and Chile had developed steady peace, economic growth, and industrialization, offering in the eyes of some Colombians suitable models of material prosperity.

Colombian progress brokers’ ideas of a logical sequence towards material and intellectual progress drew mostly from the history of their American counterparts during the second half of the century. Having developed regular patterns of economic growth since mid-century, Chile was the first benchmark republic, becoming the model par excellence. Mexico and Argentina, which were anti-models for Colombia up to the 1870s, grew significantly thereafter and became enviable models as they achieved political order and stability towards the end of the century. References to Latin American countries as models and anti-models widely circulated in Colombian newspapers from the 1840s to the 1900s. Chile, Mexico, and Argentina constituted the primary Latin American referents of material progress in Colombia after the late 1870s, rather than the North Atlantic. To Colombian progress brokers, these Latin American countries had achieved domestic stability and peace, developed institutions appropriate for their
contexts, and bridged paths to material prosperity that would allow regional comparisons and the identification of useful lessons for action.

Colombia’s progress brokers were so fixated on appropriate models from other Latin American countries, and on the issues of political stability and order as essential prerequisites for material progress, because a constant pattern of political instability, social unrest, and civil wars characterized the history of nineteenth-century Colombia. They believed that internal disorder was the primarily challenge to foster any plans for material progress. Colombia’s progress brokers represented a group of intellectuals and politicians sharing a sense of social Darwinism, which filtered the way they understood Colombia’s place in the region and in the Atlantic world. International competition was not merely a matter of which country was taking the lead in the race for progress, it was also the result of a legitimate fear of being the weakest and becoming the prey of the great global powers. This, in fact, happened in Mexico during the 1830s, 1840s, and 1860s at the hands of the United States and France, and in Colombia with the independence of Panama in 1903—also orchestrated by the United States.

Stemming from the wide circulation of references to Latin American countries’ experiences, regulations, and statistics, the idea of a binding and linear evolutionary sequence had taken shape and consolidated continually in Colombia from the early 1840s. Colombian progress brokers deemed critical the examination of neighboring countries’ experiences rather than, or in addition to, the North Atlantic models which were perceived to some degree as an inappropriate model for Colombians and Latin Americans overall. From the 1840s to the 1900s, Colombian progress brokers developed an extensive intellectual and economic orientation toward neighboring Latin America,
rather than an exclusive and mimetic focus on the North Atlantic countries, as most historians have commonly argued.
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