

## My Experience at ISTR LAC 2017

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I am a current 2nd year PhD candidate at Fundação Getulio Vargas in São Paulo and being part of ISTR LAC in 2017, which took place in the amazing Quito, was a wonderful experience. This was my first Regional Conference and I have already attended two International ISTR Conferences (in Münster and Stockholm). But I must say that, due the proximity to other Latin American fellows, the cultural similarities and the shared challenges we face, this Conference was the one where I built more relevant connections.

Before the Conference, I attended the *Taller para Estudiantes de Doctorado (PhD Workshop)*, in which we had the opportunity to discuss relevant issues. The most significant to me were related to the difficulties PhD candidates are facing in Latin American political environments (in which some federal governments are reducing funds for postgraduate students) and how this is connected to health issues faced by PhD candidates due to overload and stress. We also discussed how we connect to the organizations that provide us with knowledge, shedding light on the potential of new research perspectives, in which we consider ourselves as participants and not outsiders.

Also in the *Taller (PhD Workshop)*, I had the opportunity to discuss my research project with outstanding professors who had great knowledge in my research topics (urban conflicts and collective action). This was fundamental to establish the next steps for my theoretical development, and to emphasize or question some of the topics that I have to further develop with the support of my supervisor. Sharing experiences with other PhD students also made me feel a bit more secure about my research development, especially for realizing that most of us face similar anguish during this period.

In general, I believe that the main topic of the conference, *Democracy and Civil Society in Latin America and the Caribbeans in Times of Change*, was very accurate. The discussions around the topic emphasized how the continent is dealing with these changes and the important role that we, as researchers and practitioners, have in this scenario.

As a constructive feedback, I believe that the format of the conference still has room for improvement. Especially considering that this is a small conference, we could take more advantage of this proximity by fostering activities as guided debates and round tables with practitioners and researchers. I am sure that other participants have other suggestions within this topic as well. I believe that advancing in the format of the next conferences is both a challenge (as we are very used to the same format for a long time) and an opportunity. We cannot miss the opportunity to increase the learning experiences and connections that will make our research even more relevant!