

Executive Committee Post: Public Outreach
Candidate: Julio Linares
Personal Statement

My name is Julio Linares. I was born in Guatemala, a nation-state which holds many different nations within its current borders. From an early age I was always puzzled at the complexities of social reality and angered by the inability of the hegemonic political institutions to provide dignity to its people. At the age of 19 I won a scholarship to study in the country known today as Republic of China (R.O.C.), Taiwan, a country perplexed by its historical relationship to its neighbor, the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). I decided to study Economics as part of a double major, as I believed that by understanding "the economy" I would be able to know how to best help in solving the problem of poverty in my own country and elsewhere. It was only by contrasting the historical realities of the East Asian nations and the birth of the modern nation-state that I realized the limits of (neoclassical) economics as it is taught and understood today.

I first came across the idea of Universal Basic Income in Taipei, reading the work and legacy of economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi. If money, land and labor were fictitious commodities, I thought, how to decommoify them? Surely, an unconditional income given to all would free people from the condition of wage labor and give them freedom. It meant the beginning of a transition towards other systems, commons systems. Together with friends, we co-founded the Taiwanese basic income network and began researching ways in which the policy could be financed, starting networks and doing basic income activism in different parts of the world. I left Taiwan after 6 years to follow Polanyi's legacy. I won the Chevening scholarship given by the British government to pursue a masters in the Anthropology department of the London School of Economics, where I met David Graeber. I was interested in his work on debt and the anthropological theory of value developed by him and others. Over time, I became increasingly interested in exploring practical and theoretical ways in which to make basic income systems come about at different scales (community, regional, planetary) with social forms beyond the nation-state. These questions lead me to Berlin, where I currently work on the CIRCLES UBI project which aims to distribute a basic income to communities using blockchain technology and direct democratic organization.

Having already served one term in the public outreach role, I have successfully kickstarted the organization of the Latin American Basic Income Network, which unites voices from all countries in Latin America to discuss basic income in the region. We also conducted an international survey together with Annie Miller and other BIEN members, to understand government responses to COVID-19 In relation to UBI, which will be presented at the Scottish congress in 2021. Furthermore, we have recently established the Basic Income Research and Action Lab (BIRAL), to organize seminars and municipal leader roundtables, connecting the municipal mayors and governors of the world that are either already issuing a basic income to their citizens or are interested in doing so. It has been a privilege to serve BIEN as public outreach and I look forward to serving one more term if elected to do so.