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Understanding Institutional Change – A Gender Perspective E-Newsletter, Issue 6, December 2015



Welcome to our winter newsletter. This issue gives you an idea of some of our activities over the last six months and of some of our future plans and events now that we are in the final 18 months of the project and trying to complete our data collection and analysis. We wish you a pleasant festive season!

Best wishes, The UIC Project Team

Chile Fieldwork Report

Carmen Sepúlveda, Santiago, December 2015

It is an exciting time to be in Chile doing fieldwork on the gender agenda of Michelle Bachelet's second administration. Although not fully defined as an agenda, the government, in office since March 2014, has supported a series of policies in relation to gender equality led by different institutions, including the women's machinery Sernam, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Secretary General of the Government and the Ministry of the Interior.



The approval of important policies such as quotas for women included in the law that put an end to the binomial electoral system, the Civil partnership Agreement (Acuerdo de Unión Civil), and the acceptance for discussion by Congress of the first executive-backed bill for the decriminalization of abortion under three circumstances (for the first time in 25 years) could give the impression that there is a political willingness to move forward on a gender equality agenda. Yet the overall sense amongst civil society groups and government officials and policymakers is that such an agenda is very limited. Many feminists feel that there has been limited dialogue and inclusion of social movements and civil society organizations. The general cautious optimism and disappointment is in part a consequence of the expectations raised by Bachelet's position as head of UN Women prior to her reelection. She was reelected by a large margin and some expected her government to bring back the parity measures in her cabinet that were in place at the beginning of her first mandate as well as to push for policies not advanced during her first term.

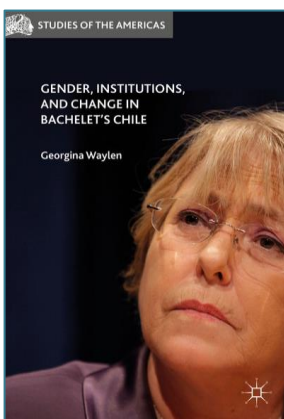
However, at the same time, women's activism outside the state continues. I was able to participate in the March to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25, and it was surprising to see the amount of young people involved. The numbers were smaller than



the enthusiasm of the protesters- and were really far lower than the students' protests of 2011. The media gave limited coverage to the event, which lacked the presence of many government officials, and those people in government who marched did so in a personal capacity. Claudia Pascual, the Minister for Sernam, did not attend the civil society march instead participating in an official event organised by the UN.

Finally over the past few days there has been a great deal of disappointment in the limited inclusion of women in the "Citizens' Advisory Committee" (or committee of observers) for the Constitutional Reform process announced by the President back in October. Although this institution seems to have limited powers, the lack of women and diverse social actors was perceived as a lost opportunity by the government and Bachelet to make gender equality a priority in the ongoing Constitutional Reform process.

The end of the year has arrived and this measure, together with the slow progress and barriers faced by the bill for the legalisation of abortion – a priority for the government and which is still being modified by conservative politicians in Congress - is leaving a bitter taste amongst those trying to push for gender change. Most gender initiatives seem to be scattered in the form of technical reforms within ministries and often seem to take the form of training. There has also been a clear decline in the political willingness to push for specific policies considered controversial since the government was hit by a series of corruption scandals at the beginning of 2015. This has left many sceptical about the amount of change that will be achieved by the end of Bachelet's second administration.



Gender, Institutions, and Change in Bachelet's Chile

An edited collection arising from our April 2014 workshop on 'Gender, Politics and Institutional Change in Bachelet's Chile' will be published by Palgrave in February 2016. It contains chapters by Peter Siavelis, Susan Franceschet, Gwynn Thomas, Silke Staab, Jasmine Gideon and Gabriela Alvarez Minte, Carmen Sepulveda and Georgina Waylen as well as a postscript by Maria de los Angeles Fernandez.

For further details see the [Palgrave website](#).

New Project Working Papers

Francesca Gains and Vivien Lowndes, [Making violence against women a policy priority - The importance of sub national institutions in shaping policy reform: A case study of the new Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales](#), No. 3, December 2015

Rachel Johnson, ["Transforming a notorious icon of repression into its opposite": The South African Constitutional Court and institutional 'newness'](#), No. 4, December 2015



Gender and Informal Institutions Workshop

10 -11th September 2015

Report by Faith Armitage

The UIC programme hosted its fourth workshop on Informal Institutions, on the 10th and 11th of September. Thirty participants from the UK, North America and Europe, met in the elegant surroundings of the Midland Hotel in central Manchester to present their ongoing research, and think collectively and critically on the challenges of researching informal institutions.

The workshop began with a roundtable on informal institutions, asking what do we know and what are the gaps in our understandings. Four panellists – Louise Chappell (University of New South Wales), Meryl Kenny (University of Edinburgh), Vivien Lowndes (University of Birmingham) and Georgina Waylen (Manchester) – provided an overview of current debates, arguing for particular definitions and criteria to distinguish formal and informal institutions, and raising questions that were taken up in the wider discussion. These included: how can organisations and networks be distinguished from institutions? How long do rules or practices have to be in place in order to become ‘an institution’? What is the role of sanctions, enforcement and rewards? What is the role of silences and gaps in institutional analysis? And what is the relationship between informal institutions, networks and informality? The roundtable helped to lay conceptual foundations for the remainder of the workshop.

After lunch, in the panel on gender and informal institutions in political recruitment, Elin Bjarnegard’s important concept of ‘homosocial capital’ emerged as a key theme, with papers given by Elin Bjarnegard (University of Uppsala) and Meryl Kenny, Leah Culhane (Manchester), Tania Verge and Silvia Claveria (Universtat Pompeu Fabra), and Madga Hinojosa (Arizona State University) exploring the informal roots of continuing male over-representation and female underrepresentation in politics.

The final session of the day was a roundtable on the 2009 UK MPs’ expenses scandal. The panellists – Rosie Campbell (Birkbeck College), Sarah Childs (University of Bristol), Emma Crewe (SOAS), Oonagh Gay (formerly of the House of Commons Library) and Faith Armitage (Manchester) – used ‘insider’ experiences and academic debates to address the balance and gendered effects of formal and informal rules in the old expenses regime and the new, independent one created in the scandal’s aftermath.

The second day kicked off with a lively roundtable addressing the empirical and methodological challenges faced by researchers investigating informal institutions. Panellists shared their experiences in the field, giving practical tips on data collection and discussing the merits of methods such as ‘rapid ethnography’, as well as to reflecting upon wider debates. Louise Chappell and Natalie Galea (University of New South Wales) discussed their fieldwork on building sites. Fiona Mackay (University of Edinburgh) outlined her collaborative research on UN Women. Elin Bjarnegard described some of her interview techniques and tactics when she conducted her PhD fieldwork in Thailand.

In the second panel on informal institutions and executives, Karen Beckwith (Case Western University) presented her research with Claire Annesley (University of Sussex) and Susan Franceschet (University of Calgary) on informal rules governing cabinet appointments in Spain, Sweden, and the UK. Claire Annesley’s comparative paper explored the informal rules of ministerial recruitment in the UK and Australia. Susan Franceschet’s paper explored the impact of the organization of Chile’s executive branch, including its informal dimensions, on recruitment of women to executive posts.

The final panel was on Informal Institutions: Policy and Practice. Francesca Gains (Manchester) and Vivien Lowndes presented their on-going research on Police and Crime Commissioners in England and

Wales. Jennifer Piscopo's (Occidental College) paper discussed informal networks and gender parity in the most recent Mexican election. Georgina Waylen and Ros Southern (Manchester) presented research exploring gender and corruption in the UK parliamentary expenses scandal.

The workshop concluded with a roundtable drawing together the major themes of the workshop. The panellists, Fiona Mackay, Louise Chappell, Shirin Rai (University of Warwick) and Pilar Domingo (Overseas Development Institute), also addressed the key directions for future research.

The workshop papers are currently being revised for an edited volume on gender and informal institutions to be published in 2017.

Conference and Workshop Presentations

- Georgina Waylen presented a paper entitled 'What can the study of institutions add to feminist IPE?' at the 9th EISA conference in Sicily which took place between 23-25th September.
- Georgina Waylen also presented on 'Women and Political Decision-making' at the ODI Roundtable on Women's Leadership and Access to Decision-making which took place in London on the 20th November.

Gendering Institutions and Institutional Change Workshop 20th and 21st June 2016 Elizabeth Gaskell House, Manchester



Our next workshop will be a small theory building one focused on re-evaluating our analytical frameworks and theoretical approaches in terms of the key themes that have arisen in our research to date. It will be taking place on the 20th – 21st June 2016. A more detailed programme will be circulated in the New Year.

Please contact Lisa Jenkins on lisa.jenkins@manchester.ac.uk for further details.

SAVE THE DATE!

A note for your diaries: Our final project conference will take place on **3rd and 4th April 2017**. It will be a larger event than our previous workshops and a call for papers will go out in Spring 2016. Please pass this information on to anyone who might be interested.

