

WEAK INSTITUTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA



The Bernard and Audre

RAPOPORT CENTER

For Human Rights and Justice

WORKSHOP

Friday, September 29

Julius Glickman Conference Center

Meeting Room CLA 1.302C

Weak Institutions in Latin America

September 29, 2017

The third wave of democracy swept rapidly over Latin America, so that by the end of the twentieth century nearly the entire region was democratic. Democracy brought with it, in Latin America as in much of the world, institutions that promised a number of improvements in care for the environment, in working conditions, in respect for the rights and cultures of long-neglected culturally distinct groups, in political, social and economic citizenship for all. Democracy expanded rights and empowered mobilized citizenries; their activism contributed to formal improvements to the region's institutions; these institutions promised better outcomes and conditions for many of the region's neglected populations.

Since then, however, much of the democratic discontent in the region has centered on the weakness of these very same institutions. The scholarship on Latin American democracies has thus focused on how and why the widespread institutional innovation and evolution has not led in many cases to the expected improvements in actual conditions. With support from Columbia University, this workshop brings us back to some of the basic building blocks for this burgeoning literature on specific instances of institutional weakness. We use the combined experience of some of the best researchers on Latin American institutions to further develop the conceptual and theoretical tools that will allow us to understand the common roots of this institutional weakness. The workshop will take a deeper look at the distance between the promise and the performance of these formal institutional innovations. Some of the papers explore the drivers of failed promises and unmet expectations that temper democratic accomplishments. Conversely, others explore the conditions under which successful institutional transformations deliver on the promise of a better reality. Finally, the workshop includes some instances of institutions that, somewhat ironically, perform as expected but fail to produce meaningful change, or fail to perform precisely in order to accomplish positive redistributive ends.

The workshop is partly funded by the Ford Foundation as part of a multi-year project of the Bernard and Audre Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice on human rights and socio-economic inequality, which focuses on the drivers of inequality. The papers in this collection make abundantly clear that inequality – political, social and economic – is at the root of many of the institutional failures we document here, and, conversely, that many of these failures are responsible for producing and reproducing inequality. Some of the papers make the additional point, however, that at least one of the strategies for addressing inequality is to push back against certain institutions that are themselves responsible for inequality.

Introduction

Friday, September 29, 2017

College of Liberal Arts, Julius Glickman Conference Center, Meeting Room CLA 1.302C

8:30 – 9:30 am *Paper 1*

Daniel Brinks (University of Texas at Austin), **Steven Levitsky** (Harvard University) and **M. Victoria Murillo** (Columbia University)
“Theorizing Weak Institutions”

On Institutional Instability

9:30 – 10:10 *Paper 2*

Zachary Elkins (University of Texas at Austin)
“Executive Reelection and Constitutional Fragility”

10:10 – 10:50 *Paper 3*

Ernesto Calvo (University of Maryland, College Park) and **Gabriel Negretto** (CIDE, Mexico)
“When (Electoral) Opportunity Knocks: Weak Institutions, Political Shocks, and Electoral Reform in Latin America”

10:50 – 11:05 *Coffee Break*

On Compliance with Institutions

A. Weak

11:05 – 11:45 pm *Paper 4*

Alisha Holland (Princeton University)
“Coercion Gaps”

11:45 – 12:30 *Paper 5*

Mala Htun (University of New Mexico) and **Francesca Jensenius** (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs)
“Institutionalizing Gender Equality: Antidiscrimination Laws versus Social Norms in Mexico”

12:30 – 1:30 *Lunch Break*

1:30 – 2:10 *Paper 6*

Matthew Amengual (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and **Eduardo Dargent** (Universidad Católica, Peru)
“Enforcement: Integrating Politics with Limited State Capacity”

2:10 – 2:50 *Paper 7*
Candelaria Garay (Harvard University) and **Belén Fernández Milmanda** (Harvard University)
“Enforcement of Forest Protection Laws in the Gran Chaco”

B. Strong

2:50 – 3:30 *Paper 8*
María Paula Saffon (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and **Juan González Bertomeu** (Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México)
“What/Whose Property Rights? The Selective Enforcement of Land Rights Under the Mexican Porfiriato”

3:30 – 3:45 *Coffee Break*

3:45 – 4:25 *Paper 9*
Andrew Schrank (Brown University)
“Imported Institutions: Boon or Bane in the Developing World?”

4:25 – 5:05 *Paper 10*
Tulia Falletti (University of Pennsylvania)
“Strengthening Prior Consultation in Bolivia”

Conclusion

5:05 – 5:30 *Summary and next steps*
Daniel Brinks, Steven Levitsky and M. Victoria Murillo