The Origins of Inclusion: Historical institutionalism approaches to gender equality in the case of the Philippines

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The Research Puzzle

The Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women - Beijing 1995 - initiated the mainstreaming of gender across the international development sphere. All United Nations agencies, the European Union, various development donors and numerous NGOs adopted gender equality and gender mainstreaming as one of their priority goals. Furthermore, gender equality has been embodied in an international legal instrument - the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which entered into force in 1981 and has been ratified by 174 countries. The introduction of the mainstreaming gender process entailed inclusion of gender perspectives in all phases of various policy making processes – political, social, environmental and economic policies (Krook and True 2012, Inglehart and Norris 2003).

The United Nations and the European Union are the main international agenda-setting actors regarding gender mainstreaming and gender equality. These multi-level governance bodies have the “normative power” to translate values and norms of gender equality and gender mainstreaming into development of new gender sensitized policies, gender quotas and gender budgeting worldwide (Bedford 2013, Diaz 2005, Manners 2008, Peto and Manners 2008). The Beijing Platform for Action, which was adopted at the Fourth Conference for Women also supported the creation of “gender machineries” worldwide, which started working under the gender normative framework of the United Nations. The term “gender machineries” refers to “formal government structures assigned to promote gender equality and/or improve the status and rights of women” (Mazur and McBride 2011). Although many developing countries have already had some kind of mechanisms developed for the advancement of women during 1950s and 1960s, the Beijing Platform gave the national mechanisms for the advancement of women the primary responsibility to foster gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. As True and Minton (2001: 30) have pointed out in their analysis of the drivers of diffusion of gender mainstreaming institutions across the world, “permanent gender machineries have been established by an overwhelming number of states”.

The international gender norms fostered the operating of state agencies established to promote women’s status and rights, often called women’s policy agencies or “state feminist”. The term “state feminism” could be defined as “the demand of the women’s movement inside the state” (Lovenduski 2005). Women Policy Agencies (WPA) changed the circumstances in which women’s movements can advance their aims as they offered the possibility to influence the agenda and to advance feminist goals through public policies from inside the state apparatus (ibid). One of the main goals of the WPA is to increase the access of women to political decision-making processes, and with that the overall political representation of women (ibid).

Despite the fact that most of the developing countries shaped their Women Policy Agencies in line with international norms on gender equality, these state agencies vary considerably in their effectiveness and capacity to achieve gender equality. For example, according to the Global Gender Gap 2013, the following countries occupy the top 10 positions regarding the closure of gender equality gaps.

1. Iceland
2. Finland
3. Norway
4. Sweden
5. Philippines
6. Ireland
7. New Zealand
8. Denmark  
9. Switzerland  
10. Nicaragua

The Global Gender Gap Index was introduced in 2006, and it is a framework for capturing the magnitude and the scope of gender based disparities. The Global Gender Gap Index measures national gender gaps on economic, political, education and health criteria (Global Gender Gap 2013). Nordic countries are well known for having high gender equality. They have developed democracies, well-functioning gender institutions/machineries, they are post-industrial and post-material societies, score high on the human development index and have solid social movements and activism (Inglehart and Norris 2003). On the other hand, the Philippines and Nicaragua are outlier cases, which trigger questions regarding the reasons behind the achievement of gender equality.

When looking at gender equality indexes and measurement, it is important to note that “gender equality” is a contested concept that frequently changes its meaning and it is constituted of two complex concepts – “gender” plus “equality”. Despite the multifaceted normative dimension of the concept “gender equality” (as well as of the two constituting concepts), the meaning of the concept has ranged throughout practical politics as well – from measures to improve female representation in politics, equal opportunity rules for the labour market, to essential transformation of gender relations (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). Thus, although gender measurements like the Global Gender Gap cannot measure and encompass all the complex implications of the “gender equality” concept, they provide a depiction of the gender (im)balance at least in terms of institutional and practical politics. Interestingly, measures like this one often show that gender equality outcomes in terms of institutional development (like the work of gender machineries, political representation etc.) are not always proportional to the gender equality conditions on day-to-day level, in a normative sense.

Hence, this paper departures the question why some countries have more successful gender machineries in terms of political representation achievements than others? In other words, under what conditions gender machineries perform well in achieving gender equality in political participation?

The remainder of the text is structured as follows. Section 1 outlines the state of the art; Section 2 states the main theoretical underpinnings of the research, whereas the Section 3 is dedicated to the case selection.

Section 1: The State of the Art

1.1 Empirical Literature

One of main of main goals of gender machineries is to increase the representation of women in the political sphere. Empirical literature has sought to analyze cross-national variations in the number of women elected in parliament through repeated statistical and case study analysis (Duverger 1955, Krock 2010). For instance, research that employs statistics concludes that the proportional representation electoral systems are more effective in enabling effective implementation of gender quota policies aimed at increasing the number of female candidates (Tripp and Kang 2008 in Krock 2010). Regarding the nexus between socio economic factors and political representation, some studies found a strong correlation between women’s overall rates of education and labor force participation (Rosenbluth et.al 2006 in Krock 2010).
On the other hand, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris in their very well known book *Rising Tide – Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World* (2003) argue that the achievement of gender equality is proportional to the level of modernization. They note that the gender roles in many societies have been changed due to a two-stage modernization process consisted of: the shift from agrarian to industrialized societies, and secondly, of the shift from industrial to postindustrial societies. Inglehart and Norris claim that cultural norms, beliefs and systems established in a certain country have a decisive role regarding the level of gender mainstreaming and gender equality. According to the modernization theory the authors propose, human development brings changes regarding the cultural attitudes towards gender equality. These phases reflect two major shifts of cultural variations – a transition from traditional to secular-rational values, and secondly - a transition from survival to self-expression values. Thus, the shift towards post-industrialism inevitably leads to a smaller gender inequality gap.

Inglehart and Norris’ worldwide study on gender equality is a valuable comparative analysis on the link between levels of development and gender equality. However, it does not provide a sufficient answer to questions like why countries with similar economic and human development have considerably different gender equality outcomes. Furthermore, the statistical case studies are very specific for one country and often fail to give a larger overview of gender equality processes, as well as to provide a more comprehensive long term analysis of institutional development and change.

### 1.2 State Feminism Scholarship

On a different note, the broad stream of scholarship “state feminism” has examined variations in successful working of women/gender institutions by analyzing their connections with women’s movements. From their inception, the gender machineries were conceptualized as bodies that will inevitably and closely cooperate with women civil society movements (Rai 2003). The vast field “state feminism” has been proclaimed by feminist scholars in the early 1980s to incorporate the notion that feminist ideas and actors could possibly develop inside the state. This stream of literature has challenged social movement theories that draw a sharp dichotomy between social movements and the state, and recognized that social movement actors have accepted the idea of cooperating, rather than continuously opposing the state (Bereni and Revillard 2011, Constain and McFarland 1998, Walker 2010).

The body of scholarship named *state feminism* is not a unified field. Rather, it has developed in various national contexts, and as a crosscut between different scholarly disciplines. Bereni & Revillard (2011) for instance have identified four main ways to conceptualize state feminism and to challenge the divide between protest and institutions– the feminist approach, the RNGS approach, the coalition approach and the intersectional approach. The main features of these subcategories of state feminism scholarship will be outlined in the proceeding paragraphs.

The femocratic approach to state feminism was primarily focused on individual feminists and marks the beginning of the state feminism scholarship. The concept “state feminism” was coined by Helga Hernes in 1987, as a name to the idea that governments could pursue feminist approaches through state policies. The state feminism concept – which was broad and unclear in its inception - was deepened further with the writing of Australian feminists, whose work initiated the “femocratic approach” (Eisenstein 1995). This approach connected the feminist presence within the state with the action of individual advocates of women’s rights. The individual actors were called femocrats and the inception of this term marked also the end of the long preserved notion that the state apparatus was always hostile to women’s movements (Bereni & Revillard 2011, 5).
Going beyond the role of feminist individuals, the RNGS approach was created in the 1990s and focused on institutional bodies – the women policy agencies. This approach was theoretically and empirically fostered by the scholars belonging to the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS). Although women’s policy agencies are in the center of the RNGS research approach, they are not studied for themselves (Bereni and Revillard 2011). Rather, the focus is on the question to what extent these agencies reflect the needs and demands of the women movements. In other words, they serve as an intervening variable between feminist movements and the policy-making processes. Hence, the state agencies can only be allies of the women movements, and not partners. This implies that the movements are autonomous and located outside of the state.

The next categorization of the state feminism literature is the coalition approach, which is based on the notion that there is no clear cut boundary between social movements and state institutions with regards to feminist struggles. Instead, the coalition approach recognizes the existence of cross-sectional alliances of women’s advocates.

The last categorization in the state feminism scholarship is the intersectional approach. By building on Banaszak’s concept of ‘movement-state intersection’, Bereni and Revillard (2011) propose the concept of field of women advocacy. The authors attempt to add another level to the proposition that the state may be a site for individual feminist contention. They add the potential of the women’s policy institutions as contentious collective actors inside the state. “Women’s policy agencies are part of the field of women’s advocacy as much as women’s autonomous associations and groups advocating for women in political parties, trade unions, academic institutions, religious bodies, economic organizations etc” (Bereni and Revillard 2011: 21).

As the section on the State Feminism delineated, this approach gained high prominence in both political science and gender studies regarding the ways social movements – which role is essential for the work of gender machineries – interact with the state. The coalition approach, the velvet triangle approach and the field of women advocacy approach that developed inside of this stream of scholarship have been particularly useful also for explaining alliance formations between social movements, as well as between social movements and other political actors. However, this project aims at explaining not only in what way movements interact with state institutions, but also why some feminist movements emerged and grew strong whereas others did not. Such questions have been insufficiently addressed by state feminism literature. Furthermore, this stream of scholarship has been primarily applied to Western cases.

1.4 Democratization Literature

The sections above - particularly the one on state feminism - showed that connections between women’s movements and state institutions have been considered crucial for achieving positive gender outcomes. In a similar manner, democratization literature that focuses on gender has also examined the nexus between women’s movements and the state, albeit with a focus on periods of democratic transitions. More precisely, this group of academic work analyzed under what conditions women’s movements mobilize, gain abilities to form strategic alliances in periods of transitions to democracy, as well as under what conditions the demands of women’s movements result in long lasting positive gender outcome after transition periods (Waylen 2007a). Hence, democratization literature that focuses on gender grapples with the puzzle why transitions to democracy result with tremendous differences between countries regarding gender outcomes.

Such outcomes are formulated in terms of women’s descriptive and substantive representation, as well with in terms of gender policies (ibid). Whereas descriptive representation entails the presence of elected women in parliaments and assemblies in numerical terms, substantive representation denotes the expression of women’s interest, particularly in policy making (Waylen 2007a, Mackay 2004). Examining gender outcomes after democratic transitions goes hand in
hand with analysis of the new, democratic institutional arenas, which can be conceptualized in three broad categories – electoral, constitutional/legal and the bureaucratic arena.

Regarding the bureaucratic arena, the role of state gender machineries is fundamental for achieving substantive representation of women’s interests (Stetson and Mazur 1995). The effectiveness of gender machineries is most commonly measured with two key indicators, policy influence and access (ibid). As the section on state feminism showed, the adoption of gender sensitive policies through the state women machineries is closely connected to the capacity of women’s movements. For instance, various scholars have argued that the role of women’s movements is particularly important regarding certain policy spheres, like for instance policies against gender violence. Weldon (2002) for example argues that women’s movements are always necessary for the early articulation of issues on gender violence. In a similar vein, Krizsan and Poppa (2015:1) argue that gender based violence is a policy field that has witnessed a tremendous improvements in the last decades, mostly as a result of pressures posed by women’s movements.

Although democratization literature that examines gender changes also focuses on the ability of women’s movements to influence state policies, the difference from state feminism scholarship is that it goes a step backwards. Instead of looking at the current capacity of women’s movements to alter certain policy provisions on gender, it examines entire processes of transitions to democracy that enabled or hindered gender issues to be articulated, placed on the agendas of transitions, and translated into policy outcomes (Waylen 2007a).

**Nexus between types of regimes, regimes breakdowns and gender outcomes**

Transition scholarship in general is mainly focused on the question why democratic regimes break down and transitions occur, as well on conducting a comparative analysis regarding the different outcomes after the transition phases. Furthermore, along with analyzing the differences between authoritarian regimes and regime breakdowns, democratization literature has examined variations between transitions paths. Classically, transitions can be positioned in two broad categories (O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986). The first category entails pacted transitions, which are extended over time and occur after a gradual opening when elites from the non-democratic regime make a pact with the moderate elite opposition (Waylen 2007a). In contrast to pacted transitions, rapid transitions entail hurried exits of non-democratic regimes. Authors that examined transitions to democracy with gender lens understood this delineation between pacted and rapid transitions as a crucial factor with regards to gender results after the transition phases. For example, Waylen (2007a, 2007b) compared gender outcomes in several Latin American and East European countries and concluded that there is a connection between the types of transitions and the number and the capacity of women’s movements. Namely, the cases that Waylen compared range from countries that experienced pacted or gradual transitions like Chile, Brazil and South Africa, to countries that experienced rapid transitions of power like in the case of Argentina and Czechoslovakia. Interestingly, the author observed that countries that experienced gradual transition – like Chile, South Africa and Brazil – had considerably strong women’s movements, whereas the others did not. Not only these countries had strong women’s movements, but these movements often were able to institutionalize their demands after the transition period.

Indeed, South Africa had one of the most successful transitions regarding gender outcomes (Waylen 2007a). The success of South Africa, as well as of other countries that had successful transitions in terms of gender, is connected to the capacity of women to organize as well as to the political opportunity structures right before and during the transition phases (ibid). The nexus between successful transitions, women’s organizing and political opportunity structures will be outlined in more details in the following paragraphs.
Firstly, one of the main enabling factors regarding the effectiveness of women’s movements is the potential for women’ organising, measured in terms of their ability to articulate gender issues, as well as to put them on the political agenda in order to be able to influence policy making processes through bureaucratic institutions. Example in this context would be the establishment and the successful working of gender state machineries.

Authors that examined variations in women’s mobilization across post-transition countries relied on the concept(s) of political opportunity structures (Waylen 2007a, 2007b, Baldez 2003). Political opportunity structure models examine political and structural contexts by looking at recourses external to the movements themselves. Political opportunity structures entail state institutions and political circumstances and traditions that both facilitate and hinder the work of social movements (Waylen 2007a, 2007b, Tarrow 1998). Thus, movements rise or fall in conjunction with altering political opportunities. The concept of political opportunity structures have also been broaden with notions of framing processes, or the ways in which participants collectively understand and define their actions. In other words, shared and socially constructed meanings and identities are crucial driving factors behind taking collective action (Waylen 2007, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald eds. 1996).

The few authors that analyzed transitions to democracies through gender lens have rightfully noted that we need to differentiate between women’s movements and feminist movements. Feminist movements rather than being perceived as synonymous with women’s movements should be analyzed as one subset. Feminist movements are identifiable by their particular feminist agendas and goals (Beckwith 2004). This delineation is particularly important regarding non-Western countries that experienced transitions to democracy. Some countries had women’s movements that were clearly connected to the national movements, without having clear feminist agendas. On the contrary, feminist movements with long traditions and capacity to push gender issues high on the policy agenda were present in other transitioning countries. Examining the contexts and the political opportunity structures that causally influenced such variations have been one of the driving puzzles of authors that examined gender outcomes in transitions (Waylen 2007a, 2000b, Baldez 2003).

The ways movements rise and fall in conjunction with political opportunity structures have been examined accordingly to the different regimes preceding the transitions – authoritarian or socialist - the types of regime breakdowns (pacted or rapid) as well as the immediate results after the transition phases (Waylen 2007a, Baldez 2003). For instance, authors working on Latin American countries generally agree that authoritarian regimes with high suppression of conventional forms of political activity in fact provided political opportunity structures for non-traditional actors and forms of participation to emerge (Alvarez 1990, Waylen 2007a, 2007b, Baldez 2003).

Analyses of the pre-transition periods in Chile and Brazil for example illustrate this claim. In Chile, after seizing power in 1973, the military government introduced draconian measures to secure economic stability and political order which under the military rule of Augusto Pinochet resulted in ferocious oppression of any expression of opposition. In this context, Chilean women played a prominent role in the opposition underground (Baldez 2003). They formed human rights groups that supported political prisoners, as well as women groups that dealt with economic crisis and social spending (ibid). Furthermore, university educated women formed feminist discussion groups that provided the basis for future organising.

In the context of having a highly repressive regime in Chile, the Catholic Church provided safe places for feminist groups to meet and organise their activities. Thus, by early 1980s, Chilean women
had a robust organizational network (ibid). In a similar vein, the Catholic Church provided safe spaces for organising in Brazil. When the military regime seized power in 1954, women mobilized around three main sets of issues: human rights violations, economic subsistence and women’s rights (Baldez 2003: 8). More than 100,000 community organizations supported by the Catholic Church emerged in this period, and more than half of the members were women (ibid). Under the auspices of the Catholic Church, the organizations that emerged in this period were largely social and economic in orientation. As it was outlined above, not all women’s organizations were feminist. In this period, the community organizations that emerged were primarily women’s organizations, but they had political agendas. However, although in the beginning they did not have clear feminist goals, the experience of collective organising in the public sphere sparked higher levels of awareness for gender issues and sense of empowerment (Alvarez 1990). Indeed, feminist organizations in Chile, Argentina, Peru and Brazil (re)emerged again (Waylen 2007a). Alvarez (1990) in “Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women’s Movements in Transition Politics” concurred that the biggest space for development of feminist movements existed in the countries in which the regimes have pushed for certain state-led development programs like in Brazil and Peru. Such programs led to increased expansion of educational opportunities and increase in professional and technical employment for middle class women. Exactly these women were more aware of gender issues and sparked the re-emergence of feminist organising (Waylen 2007a). Throughout the 1980s, the re-established feminist organizations maintained close ties to the left, which leads us to another main feature of the concept of political opportunity structures – strategic alliances.

Women’s movements and Strategic Alliances

Another crucial factor that profoundly altered political structures was the formation of strategic coalitions and alliances. The case of South Africa is an excellent example in this context. South Africa had one of the most successful transitions in gender terms. The wider opposition struggle against authoritarian rule tremendously shaped the opportunity structures for women’s organising (Waylen 2007a, Wayen 2007b). Many of the authoritarian regimes often had very fragmented oppositions. In contrary, South Africa had a coherent opposition that dominated the political scene. Georgina Waylen (2007b) explains that wider opposition against the apartheid was crucial for the fact that women’s movements were not active only before the transition, but managed to articulate gender issues and to translate them into policy outcomes.

Although for example in Brazil and Chile many women organizations mobilized before the transitions, they did not manage to increase the levels of women’s descriptive and substantive representation in the post-transition periods. The situation in South Africa was different. South Africa is one of the very few cases where women managed to put input into the new political system after the transition to democracy. In this context, the activities of the broad umbrella organization – The Women’s National Coalition – had a major influence (Waylen 2007b). Waylen (2007b) and Baldez (2003) concluded that the formation of such broad coalition as the WNC would have not been possible if certain conditions regarding recourses and political opportunities would have not been fulfilled. A long-history of women’s organising existed in South Africa as part of wider opposition against the apartheid. Exactly these fulfilled conditions that existed prior to the 1990s tremendously contributed gender concerns to be taken seriously in the new political system (ibid). Furthermore, the framing of gender issues and the channels for their articulation were shaped in conjunction with the importance of the discourse on Rights and Citizenship within the opposition.

Another crucial factor that facilitated the successful transition in gender terms was the fact that the opposition - which was dominated by the African National Congress (ANC) - was open towards gender issues. The support that women’s movements received from the ANC sparks the argument that forming strategic coalitions and alliances is fundamental for achieving positive gender outcomes. Namely, the WNC was a coalition that entailed ‘triple alliances’ of women academics, politicians and activists which strategically articulated gender concerns as a vital point during the transition (ibid).
The previous section showed that authors like Waylen and Baldez argued that favourable political opportunity structures – facilitated through institutions like the Catholic Church that provided safe spaces for mobilization – were crucial enabling factors women and gender organizations to be formed. These authors have also recognized the importance of the types of regime breakdowns. Namely, pacted transitions provided opportunities for longer and more profound mobilizations which were more likely to result with gender sensitive policies in the new political systems. The South African transition is again an interesting example in this context. The apartheid regime affected White and Black women differently, but informal and multiracial women networks were nevertheless created despite the high levels of repression. The influence of these networks was visible during the transition periods. For instance, such multiracial women networks were also precedent for the formation of the WNC. Among them, the Federation of South African women (FSAW) – a self avowed multiracial umbrella women’s organization – was the most well known and its federal structure brought together women from a number of ethically based organizations (Walker 1991).

Fighting for women’s rights as part of a broader discourse on rights and citizenship created additional opportunity structures for women’s movements, which were crucial during the transition period (Waylen 2007b). As the ANC was banned, women organizations were in synergy with ANC women in exile and developed common activities (Hassim 2002, Waylen 2007a). They all came together at the Maligbongwe conference in 1990 in order to discuss ways to achieve gender equality in the new South Africa (ibid).

As women movements used the organizational structures of wider nationalist movements against the apartheid, in the transitioning moments, they were able to influence the actual negotiations which shaped the new institutions. The negotiations were dominated by the ANC and the National Party, and women – who were already part of galvanized women movements – pushed gender issues to be a legitimate part of the negotiation process. The most significant development in this period was the Women’s National Coalition, which as a broad umbrella alliance connecting academics, politicians and activists. The synergy of the triple alliance allowed successful gender interventions to be made and gender issues to be translated into policy making in the government. In this regard, the national gender machinery became the main institution for promoting substantive gender equality. Established in 1997, the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) was founded in a manner envisaged by feminist activist during the transition period (Waylen 2007b).

The section above showed that South Africa has often been taken as an example of a successful transition to democracy in gender terms. Some of the most compressive studies of the South African case (Waylen 2007a, 2007b, Baldez 2003) concurred that the pacted transition period strongly influenced the successful gender outcomes. As women’s movements were a part of the wider opposition movement against apartheid, they were able to develop strategies that are responsive to unfolding events (Waylen 2007a). The case of South Africa also showed that strategic alliances were fundamental factors that altered the existing political opportunity structures. The interconnectedness between women’s movements and the oppositional ANC – and particularly their ‘triple coalition’ constituted of academics, politicians and activists – opened new spaces for gender issues to be pushed high on the policy making agenda in the transition and in the immediate post-transition periods.

Examples of other cases that experienced pacted or gradual transitions demonstrate that having solely extended periods of transition which would enable women’s movements to develop gender strategies in a not a sufficient factor. Strategic alliances are needed as well. Case in point is Chile, which serves as a classical example of a gradual transition to democracy. Numerous women’s movements – including feminist organizations, popular movement organizations and human rights organizations mobilized to express gender issues as part of the mass opposition to the Pichochet regime (Baldez 2002). In this period, an alliance of feminists and center-left political women created a women’s Concertacion in 1988 in order to make sure that the winning opposition will seriously take gender issues into consideration. Despite such efforts, the Chilean case was considerably less
successful than the South African. Significant improvements of women’s descriptive and substantive representation did not happen. On the contrary, fewer than 6% of the deputies were women in 1990, as parties did not adopt quotas and even parties on the Left did not feel obliged to select women candidates (Waylen 2007b). On the other hand, through the analysis of cases like Argentina and Czechoslovakia, this stream of literature concluded that rapid transitions did not result with positive gender changes as women did not have sufficient amount of time to organize and develop strategies according to unfolding events related to the transition (ibid).

The academic works on gender in transitions delineated above have undoubtedly provided rich and in-depth analyses of often neglected gender aspects and puzzles. Such works are tremendously important for understanding not only the ways transitions to democracies affected gender matters, but also for understanding the current variations of gender outcomes between countries. However, this stream of literature has also been myopic and insufficient on several accounts.

Firstly, by dominantly focusing on short periods before, during and after the transitions, it overlooks a wide array of institutional influences over alliance formations before the transition periods. For instance, this scholarship argues that institutions like the Catholic church often provided safe spaces for various movements – and not only feminist – to consolidate and develop strategies and programs. Furthermore, by working closely together, such movements often used each other’s resources and formed alliances. The emergence of such unconventional methods of mobilizing is connected to the fact that these countries had highly repressive authoritarian regimes that sparked such types of mobilization due to the lack of any other viable resources and opportunities. Yet, the countries that are used as case studies in these scholarship works are also former colonies that have a history of repressive regimes. Thus, even before the emergence of dictatorial regimes, various groups mobilized against colonial rules - which similarly as during the transition periods - resulted in finding unconventional ways for organising, planning and forming alliances.

This leads us to another core argument of this literature, which is the different impacts of pacted and rapid transitions over the capacity of women’s movements not only to organize, but also to impact policy decisions. As it was delineated before, authors like Waylen and Baldez claimed that pacted transitions that endured for several years enabled activists to develop mobilization strategies and form stronger coalitions and alliances. What is obscured by such claims is the fact activists formed organizations before the emergence of the dictatorial regimes and often these organizations re-emerged. It is insufficient to examine the speed and the capacity of women and feminist movements to organize in periods of transitions to democracy only in light of the immediate periods around the transition processes. The longer existence of women’s movements and alliances could in fact provide deeper and more comprehensive answer to the question “why movements in some countries were able to galvanize swiftly in critical moments of history and not in others”? As the reviewed literature rightfully claimed, critical periods in history significantly alter the political opportunity structures which shape the destiny of social movements. But non-Western countries had more than one such critical moment which set the country on a different path, like for instance periods of decolonization. Such episodes often served as precedent events for the “performance” of social movements in periods of democratic transitions.

Section 2: Theoretical Framework – Unstable Political Environments, Stable Institutional Spheres

The section showed that several different groups of scholarships sought to answer questions similar to the one of this research project. Among them, state feminism literatures and scholarship that examined gender aspects of transitions to democracies provided most comprehensive accounts.

As we saw above, state feminism scholarship in general examines the ways social movements interact with state institutions. Yet, it obscurely touched upon the puzzle why strong women movements emerged and fostered their agendas in some countries and did not in others. This goes
particularly true for cases beyond Western contexts. On the other hand, literature that analyzed how transitions to democracies were gendered gave thorough accounts on the ways feminist organizations mobilized and consolidated their activities in periods of high political uncertainty. This stream of scholarship analyzed under which conditions women movements were able to galvanize their agendas in transition periods. As examples from Chile and Brazil showed, this scholarship claimed that authoritarian regimes often sparked non-traditional ways of social movement mobilization. Through providing secure spaces or sharing knowledge on social movement organizing, Church institutions or other political actors like for instance labour unions fostered the work of social movements. This scholarship stream claimed further that in countries that experienced gradual transitions to democracy, women movements had more time and better opportunities to strengthen their activities and agendas as they could slowly develop strategic alliances and coalitions with different players.

The following section will propose a new theoretical framework. It will show that the support social movements received from stable institutional formations was not essential only in the immediate periods before the democratic transitions. On the contrary, stable institutional spheres recurrently and over long periods of time fostered the work of social movements. While most scholars focus on changing political regimes and the way they alter political opportunity structures when analysing social movements in non-Western cases, this project will show that long term institutional paths were not absent in such contexts. Such institutional paths in fact played essential roles regarding the emergence and the consolidation of social movements.

Researching long term institutional developments has been a tenet feature of historical institutionalism which developed as an elaborated scholarship within the field of comparative political science (Erdmann et.al. 2011, Hall/Taylor 1996, Thelen 1999, Mahoney 2000). Traditional historical institutionalism approaches view institutions “as relatively persistent features of the historical landscape and one of the central factors pushing historical development along a set of paths” (Hall 1996, 941). Furthermore, they cover very long periods of time, a century or longer (Erdmann et. al. 2011). For instance, Barrington Moore traced the developmental paths of democracy and dictatorship based on sources ranging from the fourteen and the fifteen centuries in England, whereas Mahoney (2002) examined the origins of liberalism in Latin America in the early nineteen century (ibid).

Although some authors applied historical institutionalism approaches to shorter periods of time - like for instance Collier and Collier (1991) - historical institutionalism has predominantly been applied to long time spans, mostly regarding Western cases. Historical institutionalism approaches often suggest a twofold model of institutional development marked by relatively long periods of path-dependent institutional stability and reproduction that are punctuated by institutional flux or critical junctures, which are periods in which dramatic changes are possible and the chosen paths produce long lasting effects (Cappocia and Kelemen 2007:341).

Such choices close off alternative development paths, and generate self-reinforcing path-dependent processes (ibid). Cappocia and Kelemen (2011) argued that we can define critical junctures as “relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agent’s choices will affect the outcome of interests” (Cappocia and Ziblat 2011: 348, emphasis in original). By substantially heightened period the authors conceptualize that the probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest must be high compared to the period prior to the critical juncture. In other words, agents face a broader range of feasible options, which is likely to have long term impact (ibid). Historical institutionalism approaches are often criticized for being conceptualized in a way that explains continuity better than it explains change (Pierson 2000, Hall 1996). Thus, critical junctures are moments in history when agency is much more prevalent, and understanding such highly contingent momentums can explain why big political shifts (did not) happen at certain moments.
Decisions in such periods could have “lock in” effects and produce long enduring path dependent processes. Paul Pierson (2000: 2) for example argues that the identification of “path dependence” mechanisms can improve our ability to develop arguments about temporal processes that are convincing and at least have limited portability as “the temporal ordering of events or processes has a significant impact on outcomes”. Furthermore, he elaborates further that in path-dependent sequences, the main mechanism at work is positive feedback loop – meaning that initial moves in a particular direction encourage similar movement along the same path. This implies that an early event triggers a self-perpetuating process – cause and effect are affected by history (Pierson 2000).

The reason why historical institutionalism has not been widely applied to non-Western cases is related to the fact that these countries experienced many critical junctures – for instance frequent regime changes – over short periods of time. Applying historical institutionalism is indeed a challenging endeavor if we try to analyze regimes as a “whole” in countries in Africa or Asia as these countries experienced frequent regime changes. However, a deconstruction of a political regime into partial regimes and selected formal and informal institutional spheres shows that institutional continuities exist despite the overall recurrent regime shifts (Erdmann et. al. 2011). Although studying critical junctures in classical ways similar to the examples above might not be always applicable to non-Western contexts, delving into partial regime specificities in fact shows that historical institutionalism can be applied – albeit differently – even to countries that experience recurring political upheavals.

Erdmann et al. (2011) for instance attempted to apply historical institutionalism to countries in Africa, despite repeating arguments of political science scholars that formal institutions do not really matter in African contexts. Despite the establishment of numerous democracies in Africa that are based on the adherence to formal institutions, a big scholarship stream on Africa concurs that formal institutions are irrelevant, and that patrimonialism and “personal rule” are the main tenets for understanding African political constellations (ibid: 7). To counteract such claims, Erdmann et al. (2011) went underneath the regime level of analysis and searched for continuities and discontinuities in formal single institutions, groups of institutions or partial regimes. Although such meso or micro level institutional developments are often neglected, they in fact can be crucial for the development of a regime as a “whole” (ibid: 12). This means that small events and institutional changes might be determining instead of “big bang” changes of political regimes (Pierson 2000, Erdmann et al. 2011).

This project aim at refuting arguments saying that historical institutionalism can hardly be applied to non-Western cases as in those countries we see more ruptures than continuities. It attempts to demonstrate that Historical Institutionalism approaches can particularly provide interesting accounts on post-colonial countries regarding some of their institutional “colonial legacies”. Traditionally, literature on post-colonial cases is belonging either to the “colonial” or “post-colonial” lines of thought. While colonial scholarship assumes that colonial legacies die out when countries gain their independence from the colonial powers, post-colonial literature assumes absolute continuity. In other words, post-colonial literature in general claims that institutional legacies initiated by colonial rulers persist long after the de-colonization periods. In this context, historical institutionalism could serve as a middle ground between the two. HI does not assume an overarching continuity of colonial legacies left by the colonial regimes, but it does recognize the “longue duree” features of certain institutional spheres that kept being stable despite continuous regime changes (Cooper 2002). By looking into the juxtaposition of contemporary institutions and institutional legacies, historical institutionalism uncovers the past of the present (ibid). “It may be that the ballot box is a “European” institution, but that does not mean that the same way that is used in Ghana has the same meaning and consequences as the way is used in Switzerland” (ibid: 23).

The first departing point of this project’s theoretical framework is precisely the argument that despite re-occurring regime changes in non-Western countries, certain institutional spheres stay stable over a long course of time. These stable set of institutions often provide organizational capacity for various social movements to emerge and galvanize their agendas. Although movements
and the strategic alliances they make change over time, what stays stable is the capacity provided by long term institutional spheres. Such examples are evident through various regions and countries.

One notable example is the way the labour movement in South Korea emerged and developed over time. Organized labour movement started in 1970 when a protest emerged in a garment district, known as Pyunghwa Market, in the Western part of Seoul. The protestors were members of a small labour group called Samdonghoi (Koo 2001). Majority of the protestors were women working in the garment industry who demonstrated against the harsh working conditions in the Korean factories, especially generated by the rapid process of export-oriented industrialization. Faced with low response from the state regarding the demands of the protestors, the leader of the labour movement called Chun Tae-II, sacrificed his life as a severe sign of protest. This event hence serves as a symbol of a moment when “industrial workers had entered the stage of history as a critical force of social contention and social transformation in South Korea” (ibid).

The act of sacrifice of the leader of the labour movement considerably increased the awareness of different social groups in the South Korean society – intellectuals, political elites and students among the others – and inspired them to fight more fiercely against the difficult conditions of the industrial workers. Gradually, the need for independent labour unions became stronger and stronger (ibid: 72). In the beginning, the majority of the industrial workers were unorganized, and when some kind of unions existed they were heavily controlled by the companies (ibid). Thus, the struggle for unionization in the 1970s aimed at forming independent labour unions or capturing the control of the existing company unions. In this period, following the example of the protest at the Pyunghwa Market mentioned above, several new protests in various factories emerged. Interestingly, they were predominantly led by women.

Although the awareness of labour issues and interest in forming independent labour unions increased tremendously, the resources and the capacity for such organizing were very limited. These obstacles were considerably overcome with the help of Church organizations. The close relationship between union activists and church structures was in fact the most unique feature of the labour movements in South Korea. Furthermore, the reason why the protests that emerged in this period were principally led by women is not only connected to the fact that such protests started in the garment factories (where most of the workers are women). Another crucial reason is the fact that almost without exceptions, the women unionists – before the emergence of the labour movements – had been actively involved in small-circle activities of worker’s night schools under the auspices of Church institutions. Here they obtained the initial awareness of the importance of unions, as well as the basic knowledge on how to mobilize and strengthen their organizational capacities (ibid: 74).

Through their smaller organizations, both the Catholic and the Protestant Church in South Korea provided support to the labour grassroots movements. Both Churches in the 1950s started labour oriented missions. Some of the priests working on labour issues mobilized numerous young people from different parts of the country (workers, students etc.) and inspired them to fight for better working rights (ibid: 75). In this context, of crucial importance has been the formation of the so called “small-circle” activities. Small groups of people started working together under the Church auspices and in this way they developed strong bonds and sense of solidarity. Exactly these small group activities became the stepping stones for labour grassroots activism to flourish and fortify later on. As Koo (2001) pointed out, the reason why the labour movements aligned with the Church is because they could not seek help from anywhere else. The Church provided the safest spaces for mobilization and organizing, whereas state institutions like for instance the Bureau of Labour was more concerned with calming the social unrest than with improving the working conditions of the protestors.

In the following years, the activities and the scope of the labour movements diversified and broadened in scope. They also altered with regards to changes in national and international politics. For instance, in more recent history, South Korea witnessed a massive nationwide strike in 1997 to
protest new labour laws (ibid). Although the movements, their agenda and scope changed over time, the support they gained from stable institutional formations - like the Christian churches – stayed relatively stable.

Developments with similar trajectories occurred in Brazil as well. The landless social movement which galvanized in the early 1980s is a case in point. From the colonial era, Brazil inherited very unequal structure of land distribution, and only a small number of wealthy landowners controlled much of the accessible farmland. Over the course of time, several attempts by landless workers to pressure authorities for land reform emerged in Brazil, and by the early 1980s they developed a more organized character (Ondetti 2011:49). In his book “Land, Protest and Politics”, Ondetti (2011) thoroughly examined why the landless movement emerged in this period, as well as why its activities were solid despite the fact in the 1980s the social movements scene in Brazil was in a general decline. He concurs that one of the crucial reasons why the movement emerged precisely in this period is because the capacity among the landless grew considerably thanks to the progressive stream of the Catholic Church during the 1970s. In this period, the progressive church movement played an essential role in mobilizing workers to fight for land rights, as well as in organizing numerous events and protest activities. Even the creation of MST – the national and the most influential landless movement organization – was formed out of these grassroots activities facilitated by the church.

The examples above delineated that in different instances many instance the Catholic Church increased the organizational capacity of grassroots organizations and provided secure spaces for various groups to form strategic alliances. However, this argument can be expended to other institutional spheres as well. Case in point is the nexus between feminism and labour unionism in South Africa. Women’s organizing has been present in South Africa all over its history. Women organized numerous protest activities sparked by different campaigns, like for instance a campaign against a restriction of women’s economic activities in the 1920s. In the 1920s, women also increasingly became active in trade organizations and attempted to increase their rights through non-racial class based organizations (Walker 2005: 21). In the labour unions, women developed leadership skills and became aware that class inequalities go hand in hand with gender oppression (ibid). Knowledge and awareness gained in the labour unions regarding class-gender issues were the basis for the ideological underpinnings of the Federation of South African women developed in the 1950s. Hence, the participation of women in the labour unions is considered to be an essential factor for the development of the women’s movements in South Africa (ibid).

Throughout the Literature Review Chapter it was briefly outlined that feminist social movements played an important role in the democratic transition in South Africa. Furthermore, it was delineated that women’s and feminist organizations increased their organizational capacity throughout the pacted transition period as they were part of the broader opposition against the apartheid. Interestingly, the feminist movements in South Africa in the transition period can be conceptualized as part of a broader network of social movements, among which the labour movements had a particularly important role (Alder and Webster 1995:4). This well mobilized civil society network shaped and legitimized the transition process (ibid). The first national trade union body – The Federation of South Africa Trade Union (FOSATU) – emerged in 1979 with 20.000 workers organized in ten industrial unions. The federation advocated for building of a broad unity between the emerging smaller unions and in 1985 the “super-federation” COSATU (Congress of South Africa Trade Unions) was created. COSATU was the biggest labour union known in the history of South Africa (ibid).

The fast growth of the labour union was accompanied with a wide spread of social movements, which established community-based unions. In this period, alliances between the industrial unions and the social movements were formed and they mutually participated in numerous protests (ibid: 8). Here, it is important mentioning the concept of “social movement unionism”, which was often applied to South Africa (Alder and Webster 1995, Waterman 1991). The
concept “social movement unionism” implies that the demarcation between unions as formal organizations and social movements as loosely structured networks is blurred. “A form of social movement unionism exists when the formal organizational features characteristic of unions are fused with the organizational capacity and looser structures of social movements” (Alder and Webster 1995: 16). Waterman (1991) pointed out that among the most notable social movements that blurred their boundaries with labour organizations were in fact feminist organizations. Together with labour unions — most notably with COSATU — they feminist organizations were fighting for better working conditions for women, but also for increased gender equality in the union itself.

The previous sections showed that in numerous cases social movements galvanized their organizational capacity and fostered their activities due to receiving support from older and stable institutional formations like churches and labour unions. Even when regimes and political circumstances changed, such institutions recurrently influenced the work of social movements. Similar arguments can be made for other institutional spheres as well, like for instance education. As the beginning of the Theoretical Chapter showed, if we delve beyond the overall regime types of post-colonial countries we will see that certain institutional spheres are marked by long stability. Education legacies serve as such examples as well. Grier (1999) for instance empirically demonstrated correlations between types of educational legacies and future economic growth. He argued that as the British imposed more decentralized colonial rules, their educational provisions incorporated more local, indigenous components than those of the French. Such educational practices stayed deeply rooted into the educational systems of the countries and created long term legacies. The Third Chapter of this project will also delineate that long educational legacies can be found also in other — often understudied — cases.

The importance of indigenous or older institutional spheres that gave impetus to social movements has been recognized and studied by a stream in social movement scholarship labeled as organizational capacity or resource mobilization scholarship. This theoretical perspective emerged and widely spread in the 1970s in the US, and its main arguments follow the notion that the ability to organize protests is facilitated by grassroots institutions and organizational networks that existed prior to the inception of a social movement. Recourse mobilization theorists perceive social movements as extensions of institutionalized action, and focus on those social movements that aim at changing institutionalized social structures (McCarthy and Zald 1977, Jenkins 1983).

This theoretical stream perceives indigenous institutions or organizational structures as critical for understanding why some groups mobilize whereas others do not (Ondetti 2011). Jo Freeman (1999) for instance argued that the civil rights movement in the U.S. was heavily supported by churches and black colleges, which later on were linked in a regional communication network. These institutions through their well developed networks in fact eventually formed the social bases for supplying civil rights activists.

The development of the Women’s Liberation Movement in the United States followed a similar trajectory. Two new communication networks in which women played roles sparked interest in feminist matters, to which Freeman (1999) refers to as an “older” and a “younger” branch. The first one — or the older branch of the network — was the National Organization for Women (NOW), and was founded in 1966. On the other hand, the “younger branch” entailed numerous smaller groups that started working on gender issues. Freeman (1999) elaborates further that the conditions for a liberation movement existed long before, but it was not until the new networks emerged among women concerned with gender inequalities that a movement could grow in a more organized fashion. She argues further that precisely the fact that two separate networks formed two distinct movements serves as evidence that pre-existing communication networks had an essential role.

The theoretical underpinnings of this paper follow a similar pattern or arguing regarding the importance of pre-existing institutional networks for the emergence and consolidation of social movements. However, this project goes a step further. While the organizational capacity scholarship
analyses the ways such pre-existing institutional networks fostered the inception of movements, this paper aims at examining stable institutional formations that supported social movements, not only in the beginning but recurrently over long periods of time. As the beginning of this chapter delineated, historical institutionalism can be particularly beneficial approach for tracing stable institutional trajectories over time. Such analysis could be especially beneficial regarding post-colonial non-Western countries that experienced various regime and political changes, but had certain stable institutional spheres which all over and over again gave impetus to social movements.

Stable institutional spheres constitute a necessary, but not a sufficient cause for the mushrooming and further galvanizing of social movements (Baldez 2003). As we saw above, the resources provided by older institutional formations can spur the emergence of social movements. However, different additional factors play a role whether these movements will endure over a longer period time; re-emerge even if their activities stop for a while, as well as whether they will form strategic alliances with other social movements or political actors. Scholarship on social movements often underlined that the (re)emergence of social movements or their demise is aligned to political opportunity structures. In the Literature Review we saw that the concept of political opportunity structures has been very much used in scholarships explaining variations in gender outcomes in periods of democratic transitions.

Although there are variations in the ways the notion “political opportunity structures” has been defined, the following conceptualization provided by Tarrow (1994: 85) has been one of the most widely used so far. He defined the concept of political opportunity structure as “consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success of failure”. In other words, shifts in the political environment can act as either fostering or hampering factors for the emergence of social movement actors. Such shifts entail opening of previously closed, authoritarian political regimes, occurrences of alliances or electoral instability, changes in the preferences of elite groups etc. (Tarrow 1994, Tilly 1978).

Scholarship on political opportunity structures, along with similar literature focusing on mobilizing structures and collective action frames constituted the classic social movement agenda which started in the 1960s and 1970s. Dogh McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly (2001) – authors who in fact wrote some of the classic works on social movements – later on argued that the classic social movement agenda is insufficient for explaining contentious episodes in non-democratic states. The authors argued further that previous approaches provided “still photographs of contentious moments rather than dynamic, interactive sequences” (p. 18). They therefore focus their work on conceptualizing and analysing contentious politics – as a broader concept - defined as collective political struggle which includes social movements, revolutions, strike waves etc.

Dogh McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly (2001) explain further that certain mechanisms concatenating into causal processes reoccur in various episodes of contention in different regions and countries. They define mechanisms as “delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations”, whereas processes are “regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar transformations of those elements” (p. 24).

Detecting and analysing such mechanisms in moments of contention can lead to better understanding of the ways social movement coalitions are formed, as well as of the ways new actors join already established social movement networks (ibid). Such analysis can be particularly useful regarding non-Western contexts, which are often characterized with frequent regime changes and insurgent politics. In such moments, forming alliances and coalitions happens in quick and dynamic ways.
Yet, by overly focusing on dynamic processes, scholarship on political structures overlooked that moments of dynamic opportunity structures are fostered by stable institutional spheres. The examples provided above in fact demonstrated that stable institutional spheres often are determining factors whether a social movement will have the necessary resources to emerge or not. Hence, this research paper is based on the following theoretical model:

- Despite having frequent changes of political regimes – and hence of political opportunity structures - certain institutional spheres stay stable. The stability of such institutional spheres can be examined with the use of historical institutionalism approaches.
- Such stable institutional spheres provide a constant potential for mobilizing of social movements.
- In period of altering of political opportunity structures – like for instance regime shifts – stable institutional spheres considerably foster the formation of strategic alliances and coalitions.
- The frequent formation of such strategic alliances and coalitions is recurrently increasing the capacity of social movements to influence policy making processes; hence, it eventually leads to better (gender) outcomes.
Section 3: The Case of the Philippines

This case of the Philippines can serve as an illustrative example of the theoretical framework proposed in this paper. The Philippines is an extremely interesting outlier in terms of gender equality outcomes. To begin with, the Philippines is among the top countries worldwide with the smallest gender equality gaps. According to the Global Gender Index Gap 2013, the Philippines occupied the overall 5th place on the list of countries with smallest gender gaps (out of more than 140 countries worldwide). Furthermore, the Republic of the Philippines was ranked 16th in gender equality in economic opportunities and 10th in political participation. Besides, it has the highest literacy rates in the region, with a higher percentage of women completing secondary education or higher than men, and it is the first country in the AESAN region that ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981. In a similar vein, the major Philippine political institutions like the legislature, bureaucracy, courts, local governments etc. have the highest percentage of women in Southeast Asia (Aquino 2012). Furthermore, the Philippines has very strong and vivid women's movements, and it is the only country in South East Asia that had female heads of state. The country also had the first female police general in the whole world in 1989. At the same time, the Philippines is also a contradictory case to be analyzed. It provides a big supply of domestic workers, the gender violence is relatively high, and women and children often bear the costs of high poverty. The gender-equality picture in the Philippines is intriguingly complex, and requires thorough understanding of various societal and political processes.

A preliminary research of the Philippines points out that certain long term institutional legacies might have played an important role with regards to the current gender outcomes of the country. Preliminary research uncovers such institutional paths in a relation to certain historical events.

The Philippines went through a lengthy period of colonial rule under Spain, the U.S. and Japan, spanning over more than 400 years. In the post-colonial era an authoritarian regime arose from the inside of the country. The Philippines witnessed a martial law regime under Ferdinand Marcos between 1972 and 1986, which was unprecedented since the country gained independence in 1946 (Aquino 2012). The Marcos dictatorship abolished the Congress, political parties, elections and other institutions. Furthermore, it suspended civil liberties and enforced media censorship.

As part of wider nationalist movements against oppressive regimes, as well independently from them, women's and feminist movements have been very active in the Philippines, and can be positioned in the following broad categories: 1) the resistance to authoritarian or oppressive regimes, in particular resistance against the colonial powers and against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos; 2) the struggle to achieve women suffrage in 1937, which was one of the earliest in a non-Western context; 3) mobilization against various social injustices including the presence of military bases of the U.S., human rights violations etc; 4) struggle of working rights women organizations for better working conditions (ibid).

As the Philippines had a lengthy colonial past and a dictatorial regime, the country witnessed myriad uprisings in which women often played prominent roles. Organized women's movements in the Philippines date back to the Spanish colonial era, which were initially connected to wider national movements. For instance, more than 200 rebellions culminated in the Philippine Revolution in 1896 (ibid). A movement led by a woman called Gabriela Silang against the Spanish colonization – which also had feminist agenda to a certain extent – is often cited as an example of one of the most vivid uprisings against the colonial occupiers. As early as in this period, church organizations facilitated various underground grassroots organising (Abinales and Amoroso 2005). Interestingly, the role and the position of the Catholic Church began to change when the U.S. occupied the Philippines in 1898. The U.S. had a more decentralized way of ruling and the Catholic Church slowly started losing its
super strong position in the society. This is how the Church shifted its activities more towards grassroots work and organizing. Some authors argue that this change was a determining precondition later on civil society movements to emerge in such a vivid manner (ibid).

The segmented anti-colonial women uprising – as part of wider nationalist struggles - sow the seeds for future nation-wide feminist movements to emerge and consolidate their activities (West 1992). Such example is the feminist women’s suffrage movement between 1910 and 1930s. The women’s movements - in particular the National Federation of Women’s Clubs - mobilized all major women’s groups to a victory in the in the 1937 plebiscite that recognized for the first time in Asia, women’s rights to vote (Horculada and Ofreneo 2003). The reasons for the success of the movements did not depend only on the movement’s ability to mobilize key resources, but also on the political opportunity structures that provided opportunities for the movement’s success (McCammon and Campbell 2001).

Favourable political opportunity structures were crucial enabling factors for the women’s suffragist movements in the Philippines to succeed. Throughout the suffrage movement’s period, there were – unlike in other countries in Asia – hundreds of Filipinas who had finished college education and entered public life by establishing schools, hospitals and other social institutions (Aquino 2012). The high visibility of women in public life is connected to the colonial past of the Philippines. A historical component that distinguishes the Philippines from other countries in the region is the colonial past under the colonial rule of the United States. After losing the Spanish – American war in 1898, the Philippines became a colony of the United States. The United States introduced a new public education system, and every child could participate – regardless of gender and social status, which in the following years significantly influenced the increase of both female and male literary and school participation. In 1903 the literacy rate was only 30 percent for males and 10 percent for females, whereas after the establishment and consolidation of the vast number of schools established by the U.S., the literacy rate rose to 57 percent for females and 60 percent for males (Sobritchea 1989, Go 2000). Furthermore, the professionalization of women in various occupations significantly increased, and they entered professional spheres traditionally occupied by men (ibid).

The moment when political opportunity structures truly opened in the Philippines for new social movements to emerge and old movements to galvanize their agendas was the overthrowing of power of Ferdinand Marcos, who had established a martial law regime between 1972 and 1986. The high point of escalation of popular opposition to the Marcos dictatorship was the assassination of the leading opposition leader Benigno Aquino. The enraged population overnight organized the so called “Yellow Revolution” or “Parliament of the Streets” – which embraced various demonstrations, boycotts, marches and other protest activities calling for the ouster of Marcos. This is the period when women’s organizations and mobilization efforts were galvanized. In fact, not only feminist, but wide array of civil society movements emerged and consolidated in this period of high political upheavals (Aquino 2012).

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) argue that the Yellow Revolution in the Philippines is a puzzling mix of long term processes and abrupt transformation events (p. 109). Although the Philippines gained independence from colonial rule in 1946, the independence did not do much with regards to changing old economic and power balances. The same number of oligarchic families that ruled the Philippines before the independence stayed the same (ibid). In the beginning, Marco’s anticommunist, “modernising” and “law and order” rhetoric initially attracted support from technocrats, peasantry and the urban poor. However, such support faded away as the regime turned out highly corrupted and oppressive (ibid: 110).

What is interesting about this period is that the Catholic Church – which has been a long ally of Marcos – started opposing him more fiercely and in the end totally supported his ousting. In fact,
the Catholic Church made a coalition with Cory Aquino, a widow of the assassinated oppositional leader Benino Aquino, who later became a president of the Philippines.

The Yellow Revolution blended together new organizations with already existing organizational formations like student organizations, women organizations etc. Some of these groups included: BAYAN (or new National Alliance), as well as KASAMA (The Federation of People’s Organization). Hence, the rich combination of sectoral associations (of students, farmers etc.) and the broad umbrella organizations served as fundamental actors in the struggle against Marcos.

In this context, existing feminist organizations fostered their activities and new organizations emerged or formed coalitions. The various women’s movements that emerged in this period could be positioned in two categories – underground and aboveground. The underground activities were dominantly in conjunction with the larger insurgency movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People’s Army (Aquino 2012, Abinales and Amoros 2005).

The unprecedented vast mobilization of women’s movements was particularly evident with the formation of the biggest alliance of women’s groups GABRIELA. The alliance had the objectives to 1) provide a framework for analysis of the problems of Filipino women, 2) forwarding women’s demands through a 1985 Declaration on Rights and Welfare of Filipino Women, and 3) building an international network of solidarity. By 1985, the alliance included more than hundred groups across the entire country (Aquino 2012). GABRIELA had close connections to the Catholic Church. In fact, some of the founding figures of the organization came from church ranks. Here again, the high participation of women in universities and colleges – which was not the case in other countries in the region – was a crucial factor for the high mobilization of women that joined feminist organizations.

Later on, GABRIELA extended its work in the sphere of protest for women’s working rights. Women’s worker unions and social movement activists formed the organization Women Worker’s Industrial Alliance, and later on formed the KMK or Women’s Workers Movement. KMK soon after its creation mobilized more than 24,000 members across the entire country, which fought against various gender discriminations (ibid). This was a crucial moment for the consolidation of women’s position in the public sphere.

Compared to any other country in the region, women in the Philippines were already very much included in political and economic activities of the country. This is also connected to the fact that females were early included in the educational system. This already favourable context for achieving gender equality contributed significantly to the consolidation of women’s movements in the wake to democracy.

Examining the success of the women’s movements in this period has to be seen in a conjunction with the wider NGO sphere in the Philippines. The ousting of Ferdinand Marcos and the presidency of Aquino were heavily supported by NGOs and people’s organizations (PO) (Abinales and Amoros 2005). The experience of NGOs and POs under the dictatorship – including women’s organizations – gave unprecedented influence in the Aquino government (ibid). “Outwardly, non-traditional, if not revolutionary origins of the Aquino Government...created a political climate in which the language of ‘people’s empowerment’, ‘democratization’, ‘social justice’ and ‘human rights’ and non-governmental organizations suddenly became the mainstream” (Abinales and Amoros 2005). Thus, policies could not be presented from above anymore. Gaining the role of extended executive bodies, NGOs considered, revised and even rejected governmental propositions (ibid). It is in this context that the strength of women’s movements needs to be examined in the case of the Philippines.

The participation of women in various governmental institutions and their active role in the NGO sector is visible also regarding the establishment of contemporary gender institutions like the
National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). The leadership of NCRFW is extensively drawn from academia and NGOs, and its major agenda setting goals are directly raised by the women’s movements (Horculada and Ofreneo 2003). Furthermore, the work of women’s movements in the Philippines was not visible only on the national level, but also on the international one. Two Filipino feminists, Leticia Shahani and Tatti Licuanan served as Secretary General of the World Conference in Nairobi in 1985 and as a Chair of the main committee of the UN Beijing Fourth Conference of Women in 1995 respectively.

Struggle for better working rights has been another important sphere of activism for feminist movements in the Philippines. As the paragraphs above outlined, the biggest umbrella organization that galvanized in the transition to democracy was GABRIELA, which exists until the present. A political party was born from its ranks as well. Another important organization regarding working rights that emerged in this period – and later formed an alliance with GABRIELA – was the Women Workers’ Movement (KMK). The major goal of the organization was “elimination of sexual inequality and all discrimination against women by winning full access to and participation in productive labour, just and equal compensation and educational opportunities for women and the realization of full potential in leadership, organization and mobilization” (Aquino 2012). The Women Worker’s Movement joined the struggle against Marcos and affiliated to other feminist organizations.

The activities of KMK diversified throughout the years and later on the organization very much focused its activities on campaigning against the U.S. military bases in the Philippines. Furthermore, the organization has been very vocal regarding the severe conditions in the export processing zones in the country.

Not only the Women Worker’s Movement, but many other smaller worker organizations mushroomed in the Philippines and directed their activities towards altering the oppressive working conditions surrounding the labour export zones. As local governments tried to silence the unions, innovative labour groups – in particular the newly emerged Workers Assistance Center – developed new organizational forms and strategies at various geographical scales (McKay 2006). Many feminist organizations joined grassroots and local activities organized by the Workers Assistance Center (WAC).

Interestingly, the Workers Assistance Center was established on the initiative of a local Catholic priest, Father Jose Dison, who had a long history of social movement activism. In 1997, he registered WAC as an NGO in order to be able to exploit its connection to the Church instead of openly organizing a labour union. Such tactics prove to be strategically useful given that the labour unions were constant targets for pressure from the state (ibid). The majority of the members that joined the organization came from women’s movements and Church – affiliated grassroots movements.

The previous chapter showed the labour unions in South Korea affiliated with progressive Church structures and women movements. The Worker’s Assistance Center in the Philippines followed a similar trajectory. Similarly as their counterparts in South Korea, the WAC launched educational and training programs, started livelihood programs such as a worker’s loan fund, and provided legal assistance (ibid).

Yet, the strategies for finding safe spaces for organizing and circumventing state pressure did not stop there. Inspired by the high success level of WAC, the organizers brought the organization on a new level: they supported worker’s self-organization. The WAC also founded a sister organization – Solidarity of Christian Workers (SCW) – which was less threatening than registering a labour union (ibid: 11). As a Church affiliated organization, SCW did not have to register with the Department of Labour and Employment and avoided strict regulations on labour union organizing. This strategic move enabled SCW and WAC to reach wide array of workers with their diverse activities. Not only these organizations managed to cover various regions within the Philippines, they also built
international solidarity and linkages. Furthermore, SCW and WAC did not only affiliate with numerous feminists organizations and women’s grassroots movements, but they very much promoted the idea that the leadership of the organizations has to be gender balanced, which was not often the case with other labour associations (ibid: 15).

The way these two sister labour organizations operated follows the concept of “social movement unionism” which was delineated previously with regards to the case of South Africa. In both South Africa and the Philippines, innovative labour organizers used the organizational capacity of existing institutional spheres and combined it with new tactics and newly formed alliances with various – very often feminist- organizations.

To conclude, preliminary research on the Philippines showed that long and stable institutional legacies – through feedback loops - might have played a crucial role regarding the current gender outcomes. The preliminary research indicated that the wide educational system introduced by the U.S. - which early included both male and female students – might have been a crucial factor for achieving high professionalization of women, as well as for the high participation of women in social movements. On the other hand, in numerous instances, the Church provided organizational support and increased the resource capacity of numerous social movements, including feminist. The preliminary research also pointed out that further analysis of strategic alliances formed between feminist movements, political actors and Church affiliated structures might give insights into the contradictory gender outcomes of the Philippines. Church affiliated organizations often gave organizational support to feminist movements, formed coalitions with them, and fostered gender equality in the political and the economic sphere, but often opposed progressive gender provisions regarding family laws or reproductive rights. Disagreement on these issues also exists inside of feminist organizations themselves. Hence, preliminary research points out that feminist organizations and the Church are not always opposing actors. On the contrary, coalitions are formed between more progressive ranks of the Church and feminist groups.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this paper proposes a new theoretical framework to be applied to the study of the emergence and the development of social movements. Understanding how social movements – including gender movements – emerge and galvanize their agendas is crucial for understanding their potential to translate gender demands into the sphere of policy creation. Given that gender machineries are generally the main policy making bodies regarding gender matters, the nexus between them and social movements has been studied by various different streams of scholarships.

This paper aimed at counteracting claims that historical institutionalism approaches cannot be applied to studying non-Western cases, as those countries experienced too frequent regime changes. For instance, some of the cases outlined above – like for instance South Africa, Chile and Brazil – showed that democratization literature that focuses on gender issues recognized the importance of the ways stable institutions (for instance Church organizations and labour unions) increased the organizational capacity of social movements. This paper aims at extending such arguments by claiming that instead of looking at instances when such stable institutional sphere strengthened social movements, they can be postulated as stable, long-lasting institutional spheres that recurrently influence the work of social movements.

The organizational capacity of (gender) social movements has most commonly and insufficiently been examined in a conjunction with changing political opportunity structures, hence in a conjunction with changing regimes and political environments.
The present paper attempted to delineate that while looking at constant changes of political opportunity structures, stable institutional spheres and their influence on social movements has been neglected by previous literature. Hence, the paper claimed that:

- Despite having frequent changes of political regimes – and hence of political opportunity structures - certain institutional spheres stay stable. The stability of such institutional spheres can be examined with the use of historical institutionalism approaches.
- Such stable institutional spheres provide a constant potential for mobilizing of social movements.
- In period of altering of political opportunity structures – like for instance regime shifts – stable institutional spheres considerably foster the formation of strategic alliances and coalitions.
- The frequent formation of such strategic alliances and coalitions is recurrently increasing the capacity of social movements to influence policy making processes; hence, it eventually leads to better (gender) outcomes.

The illustrative case of the Philippines demonstrated that two institutional spheres in particular – the Catholic church and education – recurrently influenced the work of gender social movements, which eventually is reflected in the current gender outcomes in the country.
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