

Podcast Transcript



Gender Equalities at Work – Introduction to the project

Louise: My name's Louise Jackson, and I'm a Professor of Modern Social History at the University of Edinburgh. As a researcher, I've looked previously at the history of women and gender in modern Britain, and I've also done extensive work on the history of women in policing – and it's that that brought me to the interest in gender equalities, and the history of gender equalities that this project picks up on and reflects. The purpose of the project is to produce the first interdisciplinary history of gender-based work equality legislation from 1964 up until the present day. And what we're doing in particular is to focus on two pieces of legislation: the Equal Pay Act of 1970, and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, looking at why those were introduced, how those pieces of legislation were created in the first instance, looking at their trajectories across time, their legacies, but also very importantly, their lived experience for lawyers, litigants, campaigners and activists who work with them.

Ashlee: My name is Ashlee Christoffersen, and I'm a Research Fellow on the project. My background which led me to this was, well, first of all, working in equalities and in the trade union movement, and then academically, so I worked at both gender equality policy and equality policy in practice more kind of broadly, from an intersectional perspective in the kind of contemporary period, from about 2006 onwards. So I think it's really useful to kind of historicise that. I'm really interested in looking at intersectionality in relation to the project, so both the relationships between race equality legislation and gender equality legislation, kind of how equality silos develop, and the influence and silencing of minoritized women's theory in activism in the process.

Hazel: Hello, my name's Hazel Conley, and I'm a Professor of Human Resource Management at the University of the West of England. I'm an industrial sociologist by training, and my area of research is gender equality broadly, but more specifically in recent times, I've become interested in the equality legislation, particularly in relation to equal pay and the Public Sector Gender Equality Duty, which is now just the Public Sector Equality Duty. I'm also very interested in trade union activism around equal pay, and looking at some of the disputes, both current and historical, in relation to equal pay. My area in relation to the project will be looking quite closely at the Equal Pay Act and how that developed, and looking at some of the political and industrial relations issues around that, but also looking at the connection between the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act, and obviously later, how that kind of blended into the Equality Act, and different types of legislation that surrounded it.

Colm: Hi, I'm Professor Colm O'Connell. I'm a Professor of Constitutional Human Rights Law at the Faculty of Laws, UCL. I've published and written in the field of equality and non-discrimination law, and I was also involved in the extension, quite significant extension of anti-discrimination law in areas such as sex and gender, race and disability, religion and belief, throughout the 2000s, culminating in the Equality Act 2010, when I acted as a Specialist Legal Adviser for the Joint Committee on Human Rights in the UK Parliament. So I have a longstanding interest in this area and the development of legislation in this field. My focus as part of this general project is on the legal developments that drove the extension and expansion of sex discrimination law in the UK in the 1970s, looking at the legal origins of the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and also the way this legislation was subsequently given effect in the Courts and Tribunals, and came under the influence, and influenced in turn, similar developments at the European level, and continued to exist in the sort of mutually reinforcing influence between the UK and Europe for the next couple of decades, all the way up to our current moment, post-Brexit.

Fiona: So hello everybody, I'm Fiona MacKay, I'm a Professor of Politics at the University of Edinburgh, and I'm currently Director of GenderEd, which is the University's interdisciplinary hub for gender and sexuality studies. I'm a feminist political scientist, in the broad field of politics and gender. I have interests in political representation, gender and institutions and institutional change, and gender and public policy. For the last 20 years or so, I've been particularly interested in what you might call the promise and the limits of new institutions – so doing work on devolution in the UK, but also at an international level, looking at new organisations like UN Women, and actually, looking to see the extent to

which new institutions can promote gender equality, can transform the gendered status quo, and what the limits and obstacles and challenges are to change.

I've always been interested, if you like, in the interaction between activism, law, politics and policy. I've done work, for example, over the long haul, looking at gender-based violence policy developments, equal opportunities and equalities policy developments. And sort of back in the day, I gave research-based advice on how to mainstream equalities to the Scottish Office in the run up to the Scottish Parliament. I've also been involved with colleagues over about, I suppose, 10 years or so, around developing something called feminist institutionalism. And this is about bringing together institutional theory, particularly historical institutionalism, with gender analysis, to try and answer big questions about how change happens or doesn't happen, the interplay between the formal rules and then the informal norms and practices, and to try and help us understand the dynamics involved in change over time, change over the long haul, if you like. And so the project then speaks centrally to my interests and my academic concerns. On a personal level as well, I was thinking about this, and I was coming of age more or less the time that the Sex Discrimination Act was passed, and the Equal Pay Act was enacted – so it's been, if you like, a backdrop to my own life, and my own career, first in journalism, and then in academia, both of which are, in their own way, very distinctively gendered institutions. And I suppose that what I remember about the time of the passing was, if you like, the kind of expectation that through these radical new rules, new laws, that actually, the problem had been solved, that equality had been achieved, that women would be full citizens. And of course, the reality has, of course, been much messier and much more complicated. As we know, progress has been not linear, and certainly not automatic, and I know that at times, feminists have felt like giving up on the law. And I think that what speaks to me, then, is that all change is difficult, but change that, if you like, seeks to overthrow the gendered status quo is all the more difficult. And the actors, the institutions, the structures, the legacies and practices, if you like, of inequality are really sticky and really hard to dislodge.

So the central question of the project, and the thing that fascinates me is what happens after new rules, what happens after laws are passed and landmark legal changes are in place.

Louise: The reason why we thought this project was absolutely crucial – and crucial to do now – was because of the 50th anniversary, actually, of the Equal Pay Act, which was celebrated in 2020, or at least marked in 2020. And we became very aware that despite the fact that

these kinds of legislation have been in place for 50 years, in some regards, very little feels as though it has changed, so that the challenges and problems and difficulties associated with getting equal pay are still something that hit the headlines on a regular basis. And this also relates to sex discrimination as well; I don't think there's a day in which we move forward, in which we do not see some kind of article or piece in the newspaper about the problem of workplace sexual harassment or workplace sexual discrimination, or we hear about equal pay tribunals that are being heard about in courts of law. So it raised the issue, I think, for us, as to why, despite the passage of 50 years, does there still seem to be such significant work to do. And we felt that part of the answer to that question was a historical one; to try and look at what were the missed opportunities in the past, to look at what had in fact worked in the past, as well as also trying to identify what were the fundamental reasons for why the legislation that came into being in the 1970s failed to tackle the problem fully.

So the central question of the project, and the thing that fascinates me is what happens after new rules, what happens after laws are passed and landmark legal changes are in place.

Fiona: So Louise and I incubated the idea of the project over a couple of years, and countless cups of tea, it would have to be said. And it grew wings when we brought Colm, Hazel and later Ashlee on board. So it's taken a long time, but I think the investment in thinking that we've all done as a group will pay off. As Louise says, we were very aware that there were these important anniversaries of these landmark acts on the horizon. The extent to which they would be marked or celebrated we were less sure of, but it seemed a good moment to stock-take, to take that longer view of the twists and turns of the last 50 years or so. And it also seemed an urgent moment, given the coincidence of the anniversaries with Brexit and the very real threat of backsliding and regression. And then also an urgent moment in the sense of that kind of resurgent activism we were seeing around #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, so really, if you like, social struggles becoming much more visible again around these big questions.

Hazel: Well, like Louise, I kind of started researching the history of equal pay back in 2018, largely because that was actually the 50th anniversary of the Ford Dagenham strike, which has been hailed as one of the catalysts that brought into being the Equal Pay Act in 1970. So I began with an interest in that dispute and how it happened, which was really very interesting, because it originally didn't start out as an equal pay dispute, it started out as a dispute between women, actually, who were receiving different grades for doing very

similar work, but it very quickly became apparent that this was a much bigger equal pay issue between men and women, but at that time there was no legislation to prevent discrimination in pay between men and women; in fact, it was quite common for women to receive a 'women's rate', a much lower rate, lower than unskilled men.

So it was an interesting dispute, and as I began to research it, I began to realise that the implementation of the legislation and the discussions around the legislation around that time were very closely related to Britain's entry into what was then the European Economic Community. And this was really kind of...it seemed to me prescient, because at the time, of course, we were going through Brexit, and were about to leave the European Union, having had the whole of entirety of our equality legislation shaped by the European Union, so it was a very kind of worrying time, about what might happen to the equality legislation. So I had started on some of this research in a kind of quite piecemeal way in 2018, but I was really delighted when I was approached by Louise and Fiona at Edinburgh University, who wanted to do a much bigger, more organised, funded piece of research, so I jumped at the opportunity to be able to finish my 'hobby' in a funded way with colleagues at Edinburgh and UCL.

Colm: Like Louise and Hazel, my trajectory of interest in this entire project follows their path in a way. I think the coincidence of Brexit and the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act very much served to highlight the way that, as Hazel has said, that sort of UK sex discrimination law had sort of grown up intertwined with the UK's membership of originally the EEC, and then the EU, and that meant that Brexit was certainly a time to take stock and reflect. Also too, you had the coincidence of Brexit and the anniversary coinciding with a lot of the turmoil triggered by the #MeToo movement, and the exposures that followed in the wake of the #MeToo movement and were driven by the #MeToo movement, and how that shed a light on what was frankly unfinished business, that four or five decades on since the original legislation was introduced, and certainly 30 years since the case law around sex harassment began to solidify before the Employment Tribunals. Here we were in this situation where it became clear that very important sectors in the entertainment industry, the legal industry and various sort of high-profile, high-earning areas of law and finance and entertainment and so on were effectively areas in which the sexual harassment provisions of law were having little or no impact, or at least were effectively being disregarded 30 years after, as I said, the case law solidified, 50 years since the Equal Pay Act began the process of legislating against sex discrimination.

So the coincidence of those different factors - #MeToo, Brexit, the anniversary, began to focus my mind in 2017/2018, that there's a wider discussion emerging among scholars of antidiscrimination legislation in general about the effectiveness of antidiscrimination law, linked into Black Lives Matter and other movements like that as well; this isn't just a conversation confined to sex and gender equality.

But that moment of taking stock then became crystallised by Louise and Fiona's invitation to take part in this fabulous project. And I think the great thing about this project is specifically its interdisciplinary nature, because I think that taking stock is only possible, taking stock of what's happened over the last 50 years and the lessons to be learnt from that for the future is only possible when considering things in the round, and sort of moving out of our own disciplinary silos to some extent, to think about the interaction of different factors, different areas of study, different areas of social dynamics together, and this project is very much a way of doing this, which is one reason why I'm so excited to be part of it.

Ashlee: When I was invited by Louise and Fiona to be involved in the project, just to build on everything everyone else has already said, from my point of view, kind of given increasing policy and practice interest in intersectionality, it's really useful to historicise how and why both equality policy and practice have kind of developed in anti-intersectional ways, in kind of very siloed ways, to gain a better understanding of what the kind of barriers to operationalising intersectionality are, and how they might be overcome.

Louise: I think it's really important to emphasise the interdisciplinary nature of the project, in part because I think the whole issue of workplace gender equality has been looked at almost nonstop since the legislation came into being, but it's tended to be looked at in sort of discipline silos; so it's been looked at from an industrial relations perspective, it's been looked at from quite sort of narrow legal perspectives, it's been looked at by policy experts, but those disciplines have tended not to encounter each other. And I was also actually very struck that historians actually have not really look at it at all, in part because it's been seen as too recent, it's not kind of the thing that historians would look at because it's still within living memory. And when gender historians and women's historians have written about the women's liberation movement and the feminist movements of the 20th century, they've tended to stop their studies in 1970 or 1975, as if that's the culmination of all achievement, and have not kind of looked to take the story on further.

So it seemed really important to bring together scholars from across this range of disciplines, and then also to construct what we wanted to call this interdisciplinary history, that effectively tried to look at all the moving parts.

Hazel: From a sort of industrial relations, human resource management perspective, one of the things that's really interesting is that right from the beginning, it was quite clear that the way in which the law had been constructed allowed employers to use different ways of trying to evade the law. And there was also an interesting issue that the trade unions were quite ambivalent, originally, about the law; they didn't know whether they support equal pay legislation – they certainly supported equal pay, or most of the unions did, not all of them – but whether they supported equal pay legislation was, you know, it took them a long time to decide, given the kind of fractious relationship, particularly in the 1970s, that the trade unions had with the law, because of the attempts to regulate them and control their power in the 1970s. So it's kind of a really ambiguous and ambivalent time for the trade unions in relation to equal pay legislation. But I was also kind of quite struck that for the Government at the time, looking back at some of the discussions at the time of the Government, there was also a lot of issue around how much this would cost. And although this is never actually obviously articulated, the cost of providing women with equal pay has always been at the heart of both the extent to which the Government would bring in legislation, and of course, the extent to which employers would implement the legislation.

So this issue of cost, which is really evident, even before the Equal Pay Act and the discussions about, "How much will this add to the national wage bill? Will it increase inflation?" – that debate has continued, although not quite as overtly, cost is always at the heart. And it's not surprising, given the fact that because of subsequent European legislation, that employers don't have to just implement equal pay if they're found to be discriminating, but they also have to recompense women for six years' backpay, which for some employers is a huge financial burden. So I'm kind of interested in these discussions about how much women's equality costs, and the discussion around cost of providing women what is actually a basic human right. So those things are important, as I said, I think the way that employers... It's really interesting to look back at some of the disputes, the historical disputes now, but also the current disputes that are going on at the moment, to see the different arguments that have been had by employers for not implementing equal pay, why they feel that equal pay isn't an issue in the cases that they find themselves involved in. And of course, at the moment... in the past, it started off in the private sector, interestingly, with Ford Dagenham, and in other companies that were in the private sector.

In the 2000s, and at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, it became a massive public sector issue, and there was around a number of collective agreements that revealed the extent of pay inequality in the workplace, in public sector workplaces.

And interestingly enough, we seem to have come back full circle, because the most recent spate of equal pay cases are back in the private sector, in the supermarkets and retail sector. So it's kind of quite interesting how this has gone from a private sector issue in the '70s, to a public sector issue by the end of the '80s and '90s and 2000s, and then back to a private sector issue in relation to the supermarkets. That doesn't mean to say that it's resolved in the public sector; it's clearly not resolved, there are still equal pay cases outstanding in the public sector. But it's really interesting for me to look at the way, the dynamics of the workplace and the barriers that employers erect in the face of employment tribunals which, you know, clearly are going to cost them significant amounts of money if they lose.

Colm: From my perspective, I think the interdisciplinary dimension is essential. You know, if you're a law professor, law academic, a lawyer, viewing anything through a legal lens, you're looking at the legislation, and yes, you can interpret the provisions of the legislation in line with the standard legal interpretative approaches, you can look at the case law, you can look at subsequent developments. But of course, that's only giving you, if you want one particular angle. And often, a legal analysis will lack explanatory power, it won't tell you, "Well, what happened and why?" So for example, Hazel's point about how equal pay emerged primarily as a private sector problem, as illustrated by famous examples like the Dagenham strike, and more recently, has tended to actually become something over the last 10-15 years which has predominantly become a public sector problem, though this may be changing with the high-profile Asda litigation that's ongoing as we speak.

Now, to understand that sort of shift, you don't get very far through the legal lens, there's no, if you look at the Equal Pay Act and subsequent case law, there's no differentiation between public and private bodies, there's no legal distinction between the nature of the employer in that regard, but what's actually happened, what explains those shifts, is background factors like the extent of trade union membership and active trade union bodies in public sector organisations increasingly since the 1970s/1980s, in contrast to ever decreasing levels of union engagement in the private sector. So that impacts upon equal pay outcomes and equal pay litigation, which is often driven by the unions nowadays, in contrast to the early days – mentioned by Hazel – when there was a degree of ambiguity about this. It's also things like the presence of transfer into pay scales; much greater

transparency in terms of pay structures, job structures and so on in the public sector nowadays than in the private sector, whereas in the private sector, you've much greater fragmentation of roles, much greater fragmentation of corporate structures, of contracting out, of all levels of firms and organisations. So as a consequence, you have all these background economic and social shifts, which then have an impact upon how the law is implemented, interpreted and applied. So the interdisciplinary perspective is absolutely essential if you want to understand what's going on.

To give another example, I've already mentioned sexual harassment; the case law on sex harassment, for lawyers is old hat; the key legal standards were laid down as early as the mid-1980s. They were effectively codified in legislation in the 1990s. This is all old news. When I teach the law of sex harassment nowadays, we're looking at cases from the '80s and '90s – in legal terms, the basic legal principles are straightforward. It's almost presented in a lot of the legal textbooks as a job that was done. But then you see #MeToo, and you look at the evidence, all that exposed stuff, wholesale non-enforcement. And to understand that, to understand how something can be settled in the law books, fixed and locked down, but not been applied – to understand that, you need to reach beyond, out of your disciplinary silo, and look at see what other scholars working in different fields have to say about that interaction. And of course, you also have the issues of multiple intersectional discrimination, as our societies grow ever more complex, become more and more and more pressing – but I'm sure Ashlee will have something expert to say.

Ashlee: Yeah, just to add to that, briefly, working in the field of intersectionality studies since I've kind of been in academia full-time, I guess that's always been very interdisciplinary for me, so I've been involved in politics, social policy and sociology for the past five years now. But I think just building on what Colm has said, when you're dealing with interdisciplinary concepts, it's really important to have a kind of interdisciplinary team to look at those. And I know that often, and particularly in law and in politics and social policy, we're talking about the same things, but in very different ways, and even using different language, the language of law and policy. So I think having those conversations is really important.

Fiona: I think Colm, Ashlee and others have already raised the point about the importance of interdisciplinarity, and for me too, this element was essential, but it's actually very hard to do. I had a colleague, Cathy Lyall, who's an expert on interdisciplinarity, and she talks about a classical Greek saying, which is that, "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog only knows one thing, but deeply," and she uses that to illustrate the difference between interdisciplinarity and traditional academic practice, and I think she captures that very well.

I think as feminist scholars, we're already problem-driven, which means that we tend to work across disciplinary boundaries, but the project remains a challenge. So we're all being challenged, if you like, to become more fox-like. And I don't underestimate the challenges of these collaborations across disciplines, with interdisciplinarity as a goal. It's going to involve translation, it's going to involve dialogue to develop common vocabularies, to synthesise different approaches and knowledge, whilst being mindful all the while of what's called a paradox of interdisciplinarity, which is that it's sought after, it's praised by funders, by institutions, etc., but in reality, it's poorly rewarded in the academic ecosystem, which still very much prizes disciplinarity.

So Cathy talks about moving from talking about what you know, to talking about what you don't know, so if you like, sharing ignorance. And through that, you build trust, and you generate creativity, and I think already, even now, we're starting to see that happening, and real sense of, I think, a stimulating, creative collaboration between us.

I've recently finished a north/south collaboration called Teaching Feminisms – Transforming Lives, between Edinburgh and Ambedkar University Delhi, and I've really learned so much from that, especially around multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and also intersectionality, and I'm really excited to be leading this strand of the working. I think there are very similar challenges, on the one hand, and urgent reasons to do it, on the other hand, around intersectionality. I think there are many lessons to be learned and shared, and in that regard, I'm really pleased that we have Ashlee, who brings such expertise to the team in that regard.

Hazel: So one of the things that, when I became interested in the law, really kind of...I've had, as I said, a longstanding interest in equal pay, but one of the things that really struck me in relation to the law was the introduction of something called the Gender Equality Duty, back in 2007, which was actually only applied to the public sector, and it's since been merged into the Equality Act, into the Public Sector Equality Duty. But the reason I became really interested in this piece of legislation, because it was a very different way of doing equality, it was quite different from the Equal Pay Act or the Sex Discrimination Act, which actually rely on something having gone wrong, and people willing and able to take that to an employment tribunal. Whereas the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Gender Equality Duty particularly before that, was what has been called proactive legislation, so it was legislation that required organisations, public authorities to do something about equality in their organisations before things go wrong or to put things right before people took cases to employment tribunals. So that there's no individual rights in the Gender Equality Duty,

but it seemed to me a really different way of doing things, a different way of looking at equality legislation, that I became really interested in.

Also particularly because in the Gender Equality Duty – less so in the Public Sector Equality and the Equality Act – there was quite an emphasis on consultation, and also the right for people to challenge decisions that they thought...that public authorities had made that contravened the Gender Equality Duty. So it seemed to me something that could be, even though it didn't give rights to individuals, it actually, in the same way that trade unions have mobilised around equal pay, it did have a collective element, it did potentially have a collective element in the early legislation, much of that, interestingly enough, I feel has been watered down in the Equality Act, which is sad. It's taken away, I think, some of the innovation of that legislation. But again, it's something that I'm really interested in looking at – different ways of doing things. As Louise opened, you know, the discussion, we've had Equal Pay for 50 years, and we still don't have equal pay.

We've got to think about doing things differently. We've got to think about how we change the way that we look at Equal Pay, and whether this can be done in a more proactive way, particularly when you see the devastating impact it has on often low paid women, who have 10 years of litigation in some cases, to get equal pay. In fact, you know, some unions have highlighted the fact that some women have actually died, sadly died before they've achieved equal pay, and the case, when it's won, is paid to their estate, which is tragically sad and should not happen. So that's one of the things that I think, why I'm really interested, even though this is a historic project, we can see it's got massive impact on the way that we still do things today, which I'm actually quite passionate about, and can't wait to get started, to be honest.

Colm: Possible useful outcomes of the research, I think, include an analysis of the dynamics that drive change. Because of course, the '70s were a very dynamic and very interesting decade, and the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts were, in many ways, extraordinary achievement. Legally, they're quite revolutionary, the notion, for example, with the sex discrimination legislation and the race relations legislation that followed it, and that in some respects came before it, but paralleled it in general – was that you could...the notion that you could go into an employment contract and insert a non-discrimination clause, and under the Equal Pay legislation, insert an equal pay clause into a private contract, agreed between an employer and an employee; that actually was legally quite revolutionary for the time, quite dynamic. And it is interesting to think about the sort of innovativeness and ground-breaking nature of those radical reforms in the 1970s, which, you know, we've

grown up taking for granted, so to speak; they're 50 years old, they're part of the furniture, but they were revolutionary and transformative in the 1970s.

And it's interesting to examine how those reforms were achieved and how they were implemented, and the reactions to those reforms, and how courts and tribunals and other bodies engaged with what was quite a radical new framework. And it's interesting to look at all of that and to extract lessons about how radical change operates or doesn't operate from that time period, and then to see how the impact of those changes were then handled and dealt with and negotiated over the following decades, until we get to our current moment. And in our current moment, we see again the pressures for radical change, and again, #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, a huge new focus on intersectionality, renewed focus on breaking down discriminatory structures and attempting to transform society. So all those lessons from 50 years ago become newly relevant again; they never went away, they were always important, they were always waiting to be looked at. But there's new...I think there's new appetite for thinking about transformative change and using legislation as a vehicle for transformative change, and the lessons from 50 years ago, and of the decade since, that can be extracted from this project have, I think, a lot to say to current events and to how, as a society, we may be developing and transforming over the next couple of decades.

Louise: Yeah. I'd add into that as well that our interest is in people, in large part, so it's about people working with the law, it's about the law in action, and the law as lived experience. So one of the things I think we can also do is to identify, yeah, what tools campaigners have used in the past that have been successful, and reflect on those. And that will have utility, actually, to assessments now for activists and campaigners who are wanting to work with the law and change the law further. It gives you a kind of galvanising sense, really, in terms of marking the achievements of past campaigners, seeing what worked for them, working out whether those strategies and those approaches are useful to us now. If they're not, and if they're now superfluous, what is it that's key about the present, and what are the new ways of working that need to be found?

Fiona: Just to add to what others have said, I think there are a number of key outcomes and benefits from the project. And the first one, I think, comes through the oral history part of the project. So I just think the very act of recording, of taking testimony, of sharing stories of lived experience of these laws, the developments in policy and practice are a really great contribution in and of themselves. We'll be including voices that have been side-lined or seldom heard, and I think that what it will create is both a sense of the bigger picture, and

also an archive and resource going forward. I like to think that the project will also provide greater understanding around these really thorny questions about the dynamics of change. And as I think I said earlier, you know, these questions of how legislation, including legislation, as Colm points out, was seen as radical and potentially transformative, like the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, how they interact with the wider environments in which they're nested, and the kinds of legacies with which they have to contend. So questions like how you can change something in one area or arena, but how that change might be, on the one hand, it might be supported, but on the other hand might be undermined by what's happening in another intersecting arena. So we can think of politics, policy, society and so on, and what the importance is of that interplay between the formal aspects, such as law and informal aspects such as norms and practices, and the kind of balance between actors and institutions. So I think that the project should generate new insights and new understandings in all of those areas, and those insights will not be just of academic worth, although hopefully they will be, they will really help us to understand and to build theory, but they'll provide practical lessons for legal experts, for activists, for campaigners, for practitioners and policymakers. And I think, again, just to reiterate a point that Colm makes; I think one of the real benefits of this particular project is that, if you like, these lessons in these radical reforms and what led to the radical reforms in the '70s, and then what happened afterwards, seemed to be newly relevant and resonant in the current times in which we find ourselves.



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