

# Forschung im Ausland Erfahrungsbericht

Studienfach: Ethnologie und Politikwissenschaft

Semesterzahl: 6

Ziel Land: Chile

Art und Zeitraum des Auslandsaufenthaltes: 4 Monaten Forschungsprojekt

## Personal and Academic Interest:

My research project focused on the concept of 'artivismo', the combination protest performance and protest. My decision to focus on the feminist movement in Chile, more specifically Santiago as my research field, was primarily due to prior interests in the recent surge of feminist action there in recent years. Since the eruption of protest during the *Estallido Social* (Social Outburst) in 2019 against authoritarianism neoliberalism, feminist protest groups have unified and Chile has seen a surge of feminist action and demands. This led to the performance of the now international feminist anthem 'un violador en tu Camino' by the Chilean collective LasTesis which transnationally repoliticized the topic of violence against women. I took part in a performance of this in Freiburg in 2019, and had been following the Chilean movement ever since.



## Preparation for the field:



In the months before arriving in Santiago I closely followed the news in Santiago from a range of sources from feminist instagram pages to international newspapers such as Izquierda Web. I followed closely news of the election of Gabriel Boric in 2021, the debates over rewriting the constitution, news of femicides occurring in the country, and also Mapuche voices on these topics. I emailed multiple feminist collectives in Santiago explaining to them my project and asking if I would be able to come along to their meetings and events when I was in Santiago. Those which replied were really welcoming and became my first contacts when I arrived. I also did a lot of background reading into my topic. I read about the feminist movement in Chile, the 2019 *Estallido Social*, anthropology of protest, among other relevant topics. I tried to focus on reading works from Latin American authors.

Despite preparing my Spanish to a B1 level for the trip, I struggled a lot at the beginning with the accent of most Chileans I met. Not only do they have a strong accent, but they have their own words that differ from the Spanish language which makes them difficult to understand if you have only been exposed to Spanish from Spain. I would definitely recommend to anyone else aiming to spend time in Chile doing a course or watching some YouTube videos to give you a small introduction into Chilean Spanish before arrival.

## My typical week in Santiago:

During my research time in Santiago I aimed to immerse myself in the feminist movement as much as possible. I attended workshops, meet ups, marches, demos, and tried to talk to as many people at these events as possible to gain an insight into the feminist movement in Santiago.

My weekly schedule varied greatly depending on whether there was a protest or not, whether there was an important femicide court case result that week, whether there were workshops on or not. I found that some weeks I would have a really packed schedule whilst others would be much quieter (such as over Christmas and New Year). When there was an important protest, the various feminist groups would arrange workshops, preparation meetings, and there would usually be performances throughout the week that I would attend. I was also asked on a few occasions to be the photographer for an event, which usually involved with me meetings with the rest of the media team before and after the event. On a typical day with workshops or protest, I would spend the morning reading up on the event or topic; during I would be taking photos, making notes, and talking to as many people as possible about the event; after my jobs would include organising my notes, downloading and editing the photographs, and then sending to the organising feminist collective.



There were some weekly activities that happened regularly, such as Thursday afternoons I would attend an embroidery workshop with a group of women who made patchworks for the protests. This became a key part of my research and I ended up organising a group interview with these women which will be used in my project. Friday afternoons there would always be a protest in Plaza de la Dignidad, however I did not attend many of these as they sometimes ended quite violently (for example setting fire to a bus, the police using tear gas and water cannons, and protesters throwing glass). After attending twice, I was advised not to carry on going to them, and I decided it was not so relevant for my project for me to be there, seeing as I was focusing on the feminist movement and performance. Every Tuesday there would be a meeting to organise on which days that week groups would go stand outside the courts as the verdicts of femicide and rape court cases were released.

A large part of my project was also to carry out interviews, which I organised during the weeks where there was not so many organised events. As well as notes made during informal discussions, I carried out 3 semi-structured interviews with artists, I had planned to carry out more but organising a time that fit for both of us proved difficult and twice I was cancelled on on the day and ended up never doing the interview despite preparing the questions. The three I did carry out however were with a singer who writes and performs songs with themes of feminist memory, a visual artists who aims to reclaim hate language against women online through photography and art, and the third another visual artist who, through her photography and performance aimed to represent dissident bodies and targets topics such as gordofobia .

## Making Contacts:

Instagram proved to be a really useful tool whilst I was in Santiago- for making contacts, finding out about events, and for integrating myself into the feminist groups there. I took my camera, which I was keen to use to document protests and performances as part of my project. To keep a log of events that I was going to, I began posting some of my photos on instagram with some information about the event. These were often used by the groups, and I was asked on multiple occasions to attend an event as a photographer.



It was also really important for me to make friends outside of my research project which was difficult to do at first, as the only people I was meeting were members of the feminist collectives who I would be working with during the day. I used the app Bumble to meet with people with similar interests to me at the weekends and in the evenings. This hugely improved my experience of Santiago as I ended up with a friendship group, all Chileans, who really showed me what it is like to truly live in Santiago, not just as a tourist. I would thoroughly recommend to anyone else carrying out a research project to try to find friends that don't have any tie to your research project either through a sports club or social media apps.

## Living in Santiago:



I loved living in Santiago. My first 2 months I lived in an area called Pedro Aguirre Cerda, which in hindsight maybe wasn't the safest place to be living on my own, but I personally did not have any bad experiences. Of course there are areas where you need to be more careful with your belongings, not walk around with your phone out, and maybe bear in mind what you are wearing (especially for women), but in general my experience in Santiago was good. Also to note, that it whilst in some bubbles, Chileans, especially younger generations, are very open to LGBT+ members, I did have one experience where I was not so welcome, and for my safety I had to very quickly change apartments. I would definitely recommend to someone going to try to find a room living with other young Chileans, as my favourite month, the last, was spent in an apartment living with 3 other Chilean women. Living on your own, and carrying out a project more or less on your own can get quite lonely, so its really important to put time into a social life in the evenings and at the weekends.

One thing to bear in mind is that prices in Chile are similar to in Germany. For rent I paid on average €380 per month, and supermarkets were much more expensive than in Germany. To source cheaper groceries, I would recommend going to one of the many Markets, such as the Mercado Central de Santiago which is

open every day until 4pm. The metro system is cheap and really good, and I often used the bus. Despite the buses sometimes being incredibly packed and hot, I found them a good way to get around the city. In the evenings, after the metro closes at 11, I would recommend using Uber, especially if you are on your own.

### **Criticisms and recommendations:**

It's very easy to feel quite lost on your own in a foreign country, with no organised weekly timetable. For me it was really important to plan my weeks on a Sunday night, and set myself goals for the week. It proved useful for me to be active on instagram during my time there, for my project and for making friends, and I would recommend documenting what you are doing on a social media platform so that others in the city with similar interests can find you. A huge recommendation would be to not get too drawn into only focusing on the research project, and to try to make friends, go to social events, go to bars, and meet as many people as you can. I have learnt so much from my time in Santiago, but the friends I made there and the memories I made with them really made my trip the best it could be.