

Research Trip Report for the Catharina Halkes Fund

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In pursuit of my master's thesis, which focuses on the Interreligious and Spiritual Alliance for Climate (AIEC in Spanish)¹, a Chilean multifaith informal alliance for climate protection, I conducted extensive research during a trip to Chile from October 16th, 2023, to January 10th, 2024. This, within the Master of Arts track in Religion, Conflict, and Globalization at the University of Groningen.

The thesis, titled "AIEC's Interfaith Dynamics: Navigating Gender, Sexuality, and Environmental Complexities," delves into the nuanced role of AIEC in Chile. It analyzes how AIEC addresses the intricate intersections of religion, environmental concerns, and gender and sexuality issues, aiming to offer a more comprehensive understanding of faith actors in development discourse, moving beyond oversimplified characterizations. Additionally, the thesis was graded with 8.1, allowing attainment of the master's degree with Cum Laude honors.

During this trip, I participated in three key events and conducted two interviews with AIEC members. The first event, held on October 24th at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights², commemorated members of religious communities who aided persecuted individuals during Chile's dictatorship, providing insight into the national context of religious communities in human rights advocacy. While this ceremony was not organized by AIEC, it involved the participation of AIEC members.

Subsequently, on November 9th, I attended AIEC's send-off ceremony for Chilean delegates to COP 28 at the Presidential Palace, La Moneda. Distinguished representatives from key national entities, including the National Office of Religious Affairs and the Chilean Ministry of Environment, were present³. Approximately 25 traditions participated in this event, which also included the Mapuche ritual of Llellipun, a prayer to Ñuke Mapu (mother earth) invoking Kimün (wisdom) and newen (strength) for well-being and gratitude to nature.

Lastly, on December 29th, an end-of-the-year meeting was held at the Saint Paul Methodist Church to review AIEC's past year's activities and discuss upcoming initiatives for 2024. This included spaces for reflection, team building, group work, and rituals. Additionally, I had participated in previous online meetings.

Regarding interviews, one was conducted online with the general coordinator of the Laudato Si' Movement Chile⁴, and the other was conducted in person with the executive secretary of the Mapuche Pastoral of Santiago⁵. Both interviews significantly contributed to enhancing the depth of my thesis database. This research experience enriched my understanding of AIEC's dynamics and coexisting perspectives on the environment, sexuality, and gender.

Unfortunately, the environmental awareness workshop for teenagers organized by World Vision Chile and the National Spiritual Assembly of The Bahá'ís of Chile (indicated in the application form) was rescheduled and held before my arrival in the country, preventing my attendance.

¹ More information through their Facebook website: <https://www.facebook.com/AIECChile/>

² More information through their website: <https://mmdh.cl/>

³ An article about this event can be found on the website of the National Office of Religious Affairs: <https://www.onar.gob.cl/acto-interreligioso-y-espiritual-en-la-moneda-de-cara-a-la-cop28/>

⁴ More information through their Facebook website: <https://www.facebook.com/MLSCChile/>

⁵ More information through their Facebook website: <https://www.facebook.com/kamaricun.santiago/>