

II REGIONAL SEMINAR  
ABOUT WOMEN'S POWERS AND WISDOM  
DEBATES ON POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND  
SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION



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# About women's powers and wisdom

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SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION



**DAWN**  
Development  
Alternatives with Women  
for a New Era



**REPEM**  
Red de Educación Popular  
Entre Mujeres de América  
Latina y el Caribe

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DAWN - Development Alternatives with  
Women for a New Era

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# Preface

**T**he II Regional Seminar on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation took place in the city of Rio de Janeiro, in October 22-24, 1999. This Seminar is part of DAWN's global programme about Political Restructuring and Social Transformation, of which Vivienne Taylor is coordinator. This event was organized by REPEM, DAWN's focal point in the region. Nothing would suit better for this presentation than recalling "The spirit of the Rio Seminar", so well depicted by Line Barreiro in her synthesis of the event.

"It would be excellent if this summary could transmit the spirit of the Rio Seminar, but this is difficult to convey. Beyond customary introductions and hot debates, and, apart from sharing information and deciding strategies and specific contributions to Beijing + 5 process, it was one of the few opportunities, for long-standing Latin American feminists of different countries, who are presently working in very different areas, to devote three days to gather again, think about new challenges and plan common strategies.

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\* *Line Barreiro's regional synthesis for the Interregional Seminar on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation, Cape Town, February 21-28, 2000.*

Intellectual strictness faced the daily practice of educators, promoters and political activists. It was undoubtedly a high level feminist political gathering, where the enthusiasm with which researches, criticism, and different opinions were expressed, did not inhibit, but, on the contrary, fostered the collective reflection needed to make feminism's contributions to knowledge and, above all, to Latin American societies' progress.

There were no more than 30 participants, but if we pay attention to the names, we find leaderships in the articulation of women's organisations at national and regional level, in academy and knowledge output, in political training, in development of feminist political-citizenship proposals, in thinking and daily exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, in poor women's promotion, in analysis and legal proposals, in lobbying State entities, in high positions in State and international organisations, in women and gender documentation, in NGOs of several productions and services, in intercontinental and regional thematic networks. The Seminar was attended by women from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Chile, Bolivia, Nicaragua,

Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and from other Brazilian cities such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Recife, Brasilia. The two UNIFEM colleagues, one from New York and the other one from Brasilia, actively took part in the debates, sharing the same concerns and interests with those who are active members of civil society, academy and State entities.

Meetings were held from 9 a.m. until midnight, because night-time was also productive. In the first one, two books were presented: the one on systematisation of the DAWN-REPEM Seminar held in Montevideo and the one written by Marcia Rivero on Gender and Structural Adjustment. According to the author, the book had been left pending since 1994, at one of the panels organised by the Regional Co-ordination of Latin American and the Caribbean NGOs in the preparatory regional meeting of the Beijing Conference, held in Mar del Plata. At that time, apart from the claims reported little could be said as regards the impact of neo-conservative policies on women in the continent. But the publication of the book



showed that feminists try to perform their duties without leaving anything unfinished. Five years after the meeting held in Mar del Plata, a sound reflection on adjustment impact on us was already available. The growth process did not end in Beijing.

The second night was probably the most thrilling one for participants who had the honour of being invited to dinner at Benedita Da Silva's house, the present vice-governor of Rio de Janeiro. She used to be a popular educator, and is the first black woman who fills an elective office of such rank in her federated State. We were received at her home, in one of the several "favelas" (slum quarters) of Rio de Janeiro. All of us felt that we were privileged to share an evening with one of the few women Latin American politicians who holds a highly-placed position, who is constantly in contact with people and who is always concerned about women's interests.

"Portuñol" (a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish) was declared the official language of the Seminar, and a full-time translator was hired for Linette Vassell from Jamaica because she only speaks English and was also helped by many people who volunteered to translate. The excellent organisation as well as the good selection of participants and subjects, undoubtedly owes to DAWN and REPEM. But, there was "something" else which owed to the fact that our colleagues of Rio de Janeiro are excellent hosts and made us enjoy their wonderful city".



# The State, women and politics throughout Latin American history

*Line Bareiro\**

**T**he revision of feminists' and women movements' debates on State and politics in Latin America had to be carried out through thousands of articles published in a vast range of magazines, declarations, proposals in different contexts such as electoral times and times of political openness, and also through a few books.

No debates have been found on the State's nature, such as the ones which are taking place in Germany, for example, where relatively recent critical works have started to appear on State's feminist theory,<sup>1</sup> which transcend clichés such as "Staat als Männerbund" (the State as a men's league or federation).

What does repeatedly appear is the notion of Patriarchal State, as a political way of domination in patriarchal societies. Although there seems to be wide-spread agreement on this idea, no critical approach can be found, that demonstrates that it is mainly patriarchal and not only class bourgeois, white and half-caste racist, in short, that it is the institution which, par excellence, produces and reproduces several

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kinds of domination and discrimination in Latin American societies. Moreover, the use of different epithets regarding the State is frequently found in the same text.

But, undoubtedly, The Latin American feminist movement and thought have described different aspects of the State or patriarchal States. Therefore, for example, lots have been written on military predominance for a long time, the repressive system and the lack of continuance of human rights,<sup>2</sup> the discriminating legal system,<sup>3</sup> sexist management of justice,<sup>4</sup> the educational system,<sup>5</sup> the influence of catholic church which turned sin into offence,<sup>6</sup> first, women's rights absence and then, their lack of effectiveness, absence of women at decision-making levels,<sup>7</sup> among other issues. But we lack a more global corpus to deal with and to join different aspects, including the organisation of the State machine so as to analyse State's essence, i.e., its nature.

In Latin America, as well as in other parts of the world, women and, particularly, feminists, have oscillated between State "bedevilling" and State "functionalization".<sup>8</sup> That means that on one hand, the State has been considered (and suffered) as a misogynist enemy, particularly in the historical analysis, in general, and, specifically, in dictatorships, as well as in texts written by feminist groups during the first half of the eighties. On the other hand, there have been attempts to be within State as it is, sometimes believing, a-critically, that the State would be able to generate equality through an active women citizenship, or through women's bureau. State's functions were revised so as to incorporate rights, enforce them, while women become as subject of public policies as men. But this revision failed to analyse the institution with a more global perspective.

This article will deal with the issue of women's relationship with the State and three main tasks are here developed. The first one is to trace and review State modes in Latin America. Then to revise what is presently understood by State and power in Latin America? and, finally, to present the current way in which Latin American feminists deal with State transformation.

## Latin American political-State process

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### Indigenous and colonial States

The Inca, Mayan, and Aztec people built up the first States of the region. No women's egalitarian participation was found in them. They were also patriarchal and socially stratified. The historical re-construction of this culturally rich people, tries to spot women's position, finding that it varied according to social position and whether they belonged to dominant or dominated peoples.

The ones to show highest levels of equality between men and women were those communities that lived on hunting and picking, followed by those who started to work on agriculture.<sup>9</sup> But although there were political power relationships and social and sexual divisions of work among them, it is difficult to talk properly about the State as a complex political institution with imperial domination on a whole society which would go beyond clans, tribes and that would gather a rather vast group of these modes of social organisation.

One of the biggest problems of knowing our original societies lies in the fact that they have been mainly studied based on what was written by Spanish, Portuguese or European chroniclers who participated in the conquests and colonisation, as well as in official documentation of colonial powers. A critical interpretation of these chronicles and documents, that undoubtedly reflect a patriarchal ideology that despises women, has been made by reading between the lines. Some important reconstruction attempts by means of anthropological and oral history methods<sup>10</sup> have recovered community political organisation modes where the complementary nature of women and men's roles prevails in indigenous cultures. The great problem posed by the "complementary approach" is the denial of power relationships between men and women.

The great diversity of American cultures and peoples was not able to evolve in its rich process due to the hecatomb produced by European invasion in America. Although it is true that for centuries some people managed to evade European domination, all of them remained in jungles or in vast territories that had not been taken over by colonists and their successors. Spain and Portugal were the first colonist powers in Latin America and allowed a papal bull<sup>11</sup> to divide the world for those two colonialist States.

Unlike English colonisation, the Spaniards who came to conquer and colonise were mostly men while Spanish women constituted a minority in the whole colony. Indigenous women were victims of colonist voraciousness, because they constituted the sexual satisfaction of conquerors and they were forced to work in feudal institutions such as the “mita” and the “yanacona” which were two kinds of colonies settled in Latin America. But for colonists, slaughter and indigenous’ exploitation was not enough, they also introduced slavery in the region. Men and women from black Africa were seized and brought to work in plantations and houses, without any kind of retribution or rights in return.

What about political participation? Only those who represented the Crown politically participated, but in any case, as a resistance. Colonial institutions were built through viceroalties, captaincies, audiences, governments, whose heads were designated in the metropolis, or, in any case, by European residents men when the right to designate local authorities was conferred to cities with a special status or agreement. No women, no indigenous, nor black man or woman could perform any duty in this institution.

Anyway, some kind of women’s participation can be found. Firstly, because there is a traditional way in which women exert power by influencing powerful men, though these women had no investiture, anyway this way of exerting power has been constantly found during the colonial period. According to the great Peruvian chronicler, María Rostworowski, during the Andean indigenous domination there was a remarkable gender difference. Men were only considered as enemies or workforce while “women had a closer and more direct contact with the conquerors because they were their lovers, wives, mistresses, prostitutes or servants”.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, some of them had power and were rich such as half-bred Mrs. Francisca Pizarro and Mrs. Juana de Zárate. The latter was daughter of the fourth governor of Rio de la Plata, who determined that his successor would be the man who married his daughter and this did happen.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, only few women played an important political role by themselves, and that, due to their women nature, did not receive the corresponding official title. This happened to Mrs. Mencia de Sanabria, wife of the third governor of Rio de la Plata, who died before leaving Seville. As governor titles were hereditary, his son Diego was designated. He never arrived in Rio de la Plata, but Mrs. Mencia did manage to arrive, bringing, in the expedition, the most important Spanish women who ever reached the sub-region and exerting great influence on colonial politics.<sup>14</sup>

Thirdly, because neither in Spain nor in Portugal the Salic Law was applied, therefore, women had inheritance rights, provided they did not have brothers. In the case of the Portuguese colony, Brazil became wealthier than the metropolis itself, to such an extent that the Portuguese court moved to its colony when Napoleon invaded Spain at the beginning of the XIX century and seized its King. One of the candidates to the Spanish throne and, particularly, to the political power of the Spanish colonies of America, was Carlota Joaquina de Borbón, sister of the seized King, who was in Brazil by virtue of her marriage to Juan VI of Portugal.

But the life led by ordinary men and women was different from that of the above-mentioned people. The Catholic Church strictly controlled their relationships by the Colonial State and, particularly. Authors such as Emma Mannarelli, who studies important issues such as extramarital relationships, women dishonour, and social hierarchies, are reconstructing this aspect.<sup>15</sup>

## Independent oligarchic and liberal States

Struggles for independence took place throughout the XIX century; some countries achieved independence earlier than others did, during the first decades of the 800, and, others, by mid-century. Critical moments allow the irruption of women such as Josefina the mayoress of Querétaro, Mrs. Javiera Carreras or Juana Azurduy, who took part in those struggles. But, as usual, their leadership in those struggles had no influence to the new institution built by men, totally male structured.

Latin America, a contradicting and heterogeneous continent, cannot be considered as a whole. In Brazil, a Republic followed the Empire. Other countries quickly declared themselves as Republics, but they had dictatorships without State powers' division. When people pejoratively say "banana republic" they refer to Latin America. Instead of popular sovereignty there was (until recently) a "Sovereignty of the arms".

Anyway, it could be generalised that there was a deep tension between liberal republican aspirations and a pre-capitalist economy characterised by large estates, agricultural and forestry, as well as mining enclaves with half-enslaving exploitation of workforce. One of the aspects relevant to this paper is the kind of government. Latin American republics have always had autocratic leaderships. Throughout two centuries of independence no examples can be found of

parliamentary governments. What can be actually found is a division between federal and Unitarian systems.

The republican and liberal constitutional order, explicitly pluralist as regards participation of political parties, did not openly exclude women from rights. Suffragettes based on this to claim the right to vote<sup>16</sup> denied by electoral laws. These suffrage struggles implied women's great political rupture, for it was the first time that they claimed something for themselves, the right to equality, the right to formal citizenship. In other words, they faced one of forms of inequality that can be found in Latin American liberal republics and they also confronted the patriarchal State, in the same way as the socialist worker's movement confronted the same State but as an oligarchic class State on some occasions, and as a bourgeois State, on others.

Clara González in Panama, Alicia Moreau de Justo and Elvira Rawson in Argentina, Berta Lutz in Brazil, Serafina Dávalos in Paraguay, Paulina Luisi in Uruguay, Carmen Lyra in Costa Rica, María Luisa Sánchez Bustamante and Adela Samudio in Bolivia, Ana Roqué in Puerto Rico, María Jesús Alvarado Rivera in Peru, were not alone. In each Latin American country, women's groups were organised, sometimes with the support of intellectual men, to conquer the right to citizenship. In this public struggle, women became citizens, before their rights as citizens were acknowledged.

In its pioneering work, Julieta Kirkwood presents the testimony of Felicitas Klimpel, on the emergence of one of these groups in a small town in Chile:

*"In 1875, a group of women from the town of San Felipe tried to register in the electoral records of the province, stating that the 1833 Constitution granted the suffrage right to 'Chileans' and that this term comprised people from both sexes".<sup>17</sup>*

This argument that constitutions did not prohibit but included women was constantly used in many cases. Most Latin American countries approved liberal constitutions between mid and the end of the past century. Some women's access to higher education allowed first, an intellectual questioning (generally from a positivist perspective) of women's exclusion from suffrage right, that was followed by a design of political equality projects.

But, despite the legal relevance of the demand, in each case, women citizenship was attained through long struggles. One by one, throughout thirty-two years, Latin American countries acknowledged the right to women suffrage.



## Women suffrage in member States of the organization of american States

Countries	Year in which women's right to vote was granted
Canada	1918 (partial)
United States	1920
Ecuador	1929
Brazil	1932
Uruguay	1932
Cuba	1934
El Salvador	1939 (partial)
Dominican Republic	1942
Jamaica	1944
Guatemala	1945 (partial)
Panama	1945
Trinidad and Tobago	1946
Argentina	1947
Venezuela	1947
Surinam	1948
Chile	1949
Costa Rica	1949
Haiti	1950
Barbados	1950
Antigua and Barbuda	1951
Dominica	1951
Grenada	1951
Saint Lucia	1951
S. Vincent y Grenadines	1951
Bolivia	1952
St. Kitts and Nevis	1952
Mexico	1953
Guyana	1953
Honduras	1955
Nicaragua	1955
Peru	1955
Colombia	1957
Paraguay	1961
Bahamas	1962
Belize	1964

Source: *Inter-American Commission of Women, 1995:7.*

In general, women struggles faced the opposition of politician men. Parliamentarian men adopted, on one hand, protectionism arguments on women's social and family roles. On the other hand, they feared that granting women the right to vote would imply unfavourable political costs for politician men, and that the struggle for women suffrage would be comprised within the socio-political processes of each country. In some cases the right to vote was granted without resorting to collective action, such as the case of Ecuador. In other cases, struggles for women suffrage coincided with revolutionary struggles against dictatorship governments. The acknowledgement of women's right to vote in such framework contributed to broaden the social basis of democracy (example: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala and Venezuela). However, in other cases, autocratic governments were the ones that granted women the right to vote (Trujillo in Dominican Republic, Somoza in Nicaragua,

Stroessner in Paraguay). Suffragist struggles coexisted in some countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) with the participation of women in the workers' movement.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the suffrage meant the acknowledgement of women citizenship. However, they demanded the right to vote not to be elected, which is feasible when political rights are acquired. Women who fought to make the vote universal were few times elected for Parliament. Brazil's experience is an example. The most important leading suffragist was Berta Lutz, but she was not able to win a seat for the 1932 Constituent Assembly, instead, Carlota Queiroz, a conservative and anti-feminist<sup>19</sup> woman, was the first Latin American woman member of parliament. This happened repeatedly in different countries, instilling the feeling that so much effort had been useless.

Another element which contributed to the disappointment of what had been conquered was the weak democratic stability of the continent, which has been dealt with throughout this chapter, but, in this case, I will resort to the case of Aníbal Quijano who has tried to explain the causes of the fragility of liberal States with pluralist and egalitarian aspirations.

For Quijano, modernisation appears as the pressure exerted by external agents and, mainly, for the benefit of their interests, and he refers to

"Changes and adaptation of a region to capital needs, in the maturing stage of its inter or Trans-nationality" (Quijano, 1988:101).

Latin American intellectuals have actively participated in the creation of the modernity thought since the XVII century and it is originally the utopia of a society without ominous hierarchies, or arbitrariness, or obscurantism, it was the ideology of a long struggle against feudal hierarchies, against the despotism of absolute monarchies, against the power of church which controls everything and hinders the development of knowledge, against the supremacy of a private interest which grew with mercantilism. In other words, it was part of the struggle for a rational society, the greatest promise of modernity" (Quijano, 1988: 103).

Women's contributions, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, follow that line, and were ignored until they were rescued by feminists of the seventies, eighties and nineties, who, from Olympe de Gouges onwards, have contributed to make modernity incorporate gender equality as one of the key issues. The famous idea of Fourier, used by Engels in "The origins of the family, the property and the State", that the extent of women's emancipation is the extent of societies' emancipation,

which shows the importance that theoretically the equality between men and women has for modernity, although it is evident that the concrete management of political and scientific power has frequently made us ignore this component.

Quijano also shows how modernity progressed in Europe within the framework of capitalist development and that in Latin America, instead, there was a gap between modernity approaches and economic stagnation, which caused the weakening of the supposedly democratic systems and gave the power to “despotism and obscurantism, sectors and elements that are linked to inequality and arbitrariness” (Quijano, 1988: 103).

### **Revolutions, populism and reformism**

Deep social and ethnic injustices in the continent, contradictions between the advocated modernity and low capitalist modernisation, gave rise to two kinds of reactions. On one hand, military coups d'état and right-wing dictatorships which will be dealt with in the following chapter. On the other hand, different kinds of search for a relatively radical transformation of society. The predominating idea was that not only political power but also economic power had to be removed from dominant classes and wealth and opportunities had to be redistributed.

The three great revolutions of the continent are the Mexican one in 1910, the Bolivian one in 1952 and the Cuban one in 1959. Women's participation in those processes has been dealt with, particularly from the point of view of their heroism.<sup>20</sup> But, despite women such as Celia Sánchez and Haydée Santamaría, despite the fact that when indigenous were granted the right to vote most of Bolivian women attained formal citizenship, despite the fact that women also benefited from deep social transformations and, particularly, as regards access to health and education, these revolutions were male-centred regarding participation at decision-making and State action levels. Authoritarianism in management, lack of respect towards human rights and poor democratic and participatory culture contributed to the appearance of new rigid ways of political and social domination.

The 1979 Nicaraguan revolution can be considered the fourth strong revolution, which took place when women had already started to organise in an autonomous way and self-vindicate. In general, there was a broader women participation and steps were taken to promote equality. But, as it is widely known, the popular vote did not support the Sandinista movement that left power, failing

to satisfy at least the basic needs of the population and to offer equal opportunities to women.

The general term “populism”<sup>21</sup> comprises a large number of governments which have the explicitly anti-imperialist but generally anticommunist nationalism in common, which focuses power on the Executive Power, resorting to authoritarian procedures and which do not carry out deep reforms such as the Agrarian ones, typical of revolutionary governments, despite the economic modernisation achieved by means of strong State intervention. These governments implemented substitute economic programmes for imports, industrialisation and social security. Populists contributed to changes in the political scene. During the above-mentioned period, conservative and liberal parties had appeared in different countries. At this stage, nationalist political parties arise, closely linked to State power, trying to organise society, sometimes in a corporate way. For example, Argentinean Peronist government created a union branch and a feminine branch.

By means of industrialisation, women are incorporated into labour market and receive social benefits granted by the State, but with no possibilities of autonomous organisation or having real impact at decision-making levels. Women with strong leaderships have appeared in some of these cases, such as, Eva Perón who was not conferred the title of Vice-president of Argentina, despite her great power and popularity, and although she managed to grant formal citizenship to women.

The characteristic of the so-called governments of reform is that they have carried out re-distribution reforms in contexts of relatively liberal democratic States. The following are the most popular cases: José Batlle y Ordóñez in Uruguay, Hipólito Yrigoyen in Argentina, Eduardo Frei Montalva in Chile and Joao Goulart in Brazil. The last two cases take place at the time of the Alliance for Progress, of economic development policies, which considered women as beneficiaries of welfare programmes and not subject to development and citizens with full rights, but at that time there was no women’s movement, least of all, a feminist movement able to criticise and open spaces in a possibly favourable system. These governments ended up in the overthrow of Goulart by a military coup d’état led by General Castelo Branco in 1964, and, in the strengthening of reforms by Salvador Allende, successor of Frei, who is also overthrown by another military leader, General Augusto Pinochet in 1973.

## Military dictatorships

For two centuries, dictatorship has been one of the most developed Latin American political traditions. Experience enables classifications and differentiation. A military leader with the support of a political party, a military leader with the support of social organisations, a militarised civilian, the military institution deciding and arranging patriotic meetings, some harsher than others, but all of them denying basic citizenship rights. I am not going to describe in detail these governments where women had no participation except at the domination court or receiving charity or at the resistance. In countries such as Paraguay, the two most representative poles of patriarchy are precisely the warrior heroes as a holder of political power and the single woman raising his children. The fathers of our mother country are not aware of responsible paternity.

Anyway, it is difficult not to refer to the last military dictatorships which, with rare exceptions, spread throughout the continent between the sixties, seventies and eighties of this century. Violations to human rights were so widespread, arbitrariness was so severe, room for participation was so limited that dictatorships constituted the perfect context for the emergence of the new Latin American feminism which gathered in small autonomous groups of other organisations originally considered more dangerous than women's groups. Besides, for women, one of the traditional ways of getting into politics was the struggle for human rights<sup>22</sup> and in an important field of resistance women's leadership was registered, at least until this issue was incorporated into the agenda of the most powerful countries in the world, and, therefore, into the agenda of political parties, the church and other male institutions. This is why only Perez Esquivel (and no other woman) won the Peace Nobel Prize during dictatorship, when this prize wanted to be granted in view of the struggles for human rights prevalence in Latin America.

During the seventies, and mostly during the eighties, women started gathering in groups that constituted a social movement in different Latin American countries. During liberalism, suffragists had debated on the equality principle, while feminists of the new generation discuss with the left wing their contradictions regarding everyday issues.

The following are some of the lines of the debate:

*"Women's subordination, described in personal terms and based on daily aspects, which appears as a structural problem directly linked to the way society functions,*

*reproducing power and hierarchy relationships in said private sphere.*

*The questioning of patriarchal and bourgeois power which makes women's struggle prevail throughout time and space, outstanding the existing gaps at theoretical, political and action level so as to understand women's subordination, pretending to contribute to the re-opening of politics and theory where women shall be leading actors of wisdom and action.*

*The autonomy of women and women's movements not regarded as isolation or disconnection with the rest of the social and political movements. Autonomy as a right which has been achieved after years of submission, underestimation and exploitation. In a word, autonomy to be and stop being subject to others.*

*Violence as an act which marks family life with a dominant- dominated dynamic which hinders the possibilities of searching for an identity of their own".<sup>23</sup>*

Groups are fed by articles in magazines such as FEM in Mexico, "La mala hora" in Venezuela, "La cacerola" in Uruguay or "Viva" in Peru. Organisations such as "Lugar de Mujer" in Argentina, "Flora Tristán" in Peru, CIDHAL in Mexico, "La Morada" in Chile, CEFEMINA in Costa Rica, are a point of reference for women of the whole region. Fempress constitutes an alternative communication network which allows the visualisation of an international movement and ISIS International documents and transmits the experience and thinking of Latin American women. Research centres such as CEM in Chile, GRECMU in Uruguay or GEMPA in Paraguay question knowledge on societies, their history and legislation.

A social person, with a personal discourse, that spots the differences and visualises and incorporates new issues and ways of thinking and acting into the political agenda.

## **New democracies**

During the eighties and the beginnings of the nineties, dictatorships, where the whole society had no possibilities of participating, started to collapse. Feminists as other social groups, intended an equal participation in democracy as it used to be in dictatorships. With a restless persistence, women of the consensus in Chile or those of a multi-sectorial institution in Uruguay and so on in each country, work for the

incorporation of the gender equity perspective into the proposals of the new democratic governments. Out of all the proposals, the mechanisms created for equality which Fempress colleagues named a “room of their own in the State”,<sup>24</sup> were first attained. In some cases, the constitutional achievement of equality between men and women implied the removal of existing barriers by the State.

The shortages of the new democracies are countless, however in a previous work we have stated that:

*“... The process of democracy construction is unstable and tensions between what is predictable and what is contingency is constantly present. Even for settling a formal democracy, the confluence of diverse efforts is required and results are uneven. Even the appraisal varies as regards whether a system is democratic or not, at public opinion level as well as at the academic debate level. For example, a decade ago the Mexican political system was considered to be democratic, afterwards, this was questioned and they started to talk about the need of a transition to a plural democracy which comprised ethnical and gender diversity, and after the municipal elections of July, 1997, government alternation which used to be considered impossible, was thought to be feasible. Venezuela is a formally stable democracy, but injustice, social violence and corruption (found in almost all Latin American countries) show the difficulties of governing in a democratic way. In Peru, President Alberto Fujimori dismantled a democratic order but great legitimacy still prevailed because he proved to be effective at the confrontation with the Sendero Luminoso guerrilla; however, two countries such as Bolivia and Paraguay, whose political evolution showed that it was almost impossible to attain a stable democratic system, have produced real and great changes with a democratising purpose, although it is still difficult to say that they are democratic countries.*

*The main criticism in Latin America is that the transition process towards democracy has remained stagnant in some kind of formality, i.e., the concern with the development of democratic institutions in their legal aspect, such as electoral mechanisms, and the way democracy affects people in their daily life, for example,*

*the low level of social and justice rights, has been rarely dealt with.*

*It is not a matter of considering, once again, formal democracy and substantive democracy (which failed to be a democracy) as a dichotomy. Forms are essential for a democratic system, but there also are key contents for the system's operation. For example, there are mediation mechanisms that lose legitimacy because the contents dealt with fail to satisfy any of the parties.*

*Reaching the substantive part of democracy implies a level of consolidation of the democratic process, where democratic institutions not only exist in documents but they also operate on regular basis, where each citizen is guaranteed the same rights before the law and the State as a whole, regarding their contents as well as their form".<sup>25</sup>*

Other works will focus on women and women's movement participation in democratic processes as well as what was attained or what could not be attained through gender public policies. Therefore, we can move into a brief description of different visions of power.

## The State and political power

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**I**n the process of Beijing, the interest shown by women of the entire region in attaining full citizenship was extremely evident. In the six sub-regions, the claim for States being equally conformed by men and women and providing for both through policies and actions was also evident.<sup>26</sup>

But it is evident that feminist questioning on patriarchal structure of power is not comprised within politics and State. They propose a deep and radical cultural transformation in society and in the group of institutions, obviously including the family.

It can be somehow stated that we are constantly oscillating between Foucault and Macchiavelo. In this way, the diverse fields in which changes in power relationships between men and women, are proposed, makes us approach Michael Foucault's thought, which questions the already existing ideas regarding power and analyses the existence of a multiplicity of powers (or micro-powers). Gilles Deleuze summarises Foucault's criticism on certain hypothesis about power:



*“Firstly, because power would not be a property but something in dispute, secondly, because State’s power is an effect of the whole group of social powers, thirdly, because power is not merely a super-structure and all economies presuppose mechanisms incorporated into them, fourthly, because power can also be positive and creates norms mainly<sup>27</sup>[...] Power which is not only present at high levels of censorship but which deeply and subtly penetrates into the whole network of society”.*<sup>28</sup>

In this sense, the women’s movement, and, particularly, the feminist movement have been working on the perspective of changing life without focusing on State power. Its criticism on gender discrimination has considered, among other things that private affairs are political, that reproductive affairs are also productive, that men and women must share domestic responsibilities and political power, and that the false dichotomy between the public and private sphere must be eliminated.

This is no longer the sole concern and proposal of the autonomous women’s movement. One way or another, this problem has been incorporated into the political debate, parties, parliament and government. In different ways, governments throughout the world have settled measures to change the power equation between men and women, and issues, which were previously and exclusively dealt by women, are, at present, key matters in political debate. In Beijing, 189 countries agreed on mechanisms as they relate to poverty, inequality in education and health, violence against women, the specific impact of armed conflicts on women, economic inequalities suffered by women, uneven exercise of power and uneven presence at decision-making levels of men and women, lack of sufficient State mechanisms to generate equality, lack of protection of women’s human rights, treatment in mass media, inequalities in natural resource management and discrimination and violation of girl child rights.<sup>29</sup>

In brief, the political agenda considers that power relationships between men and women, at the private-domestic-reproductive level, as well as in the public-political-productive level, should be democratised, regardless of the social political system. At the same time, stress on the relationship with the State, on political participation and citizenship has been registered throughout the whole Latin American process.

Judith Astelarra asked herself in Beijing:

*“Why did we stop talking about oppression and discrimination and start talking about citizenship?” And*

*answered: "because we stopped talking about inequality and the way inequality is expressed, and we started talking about the way in which we have to attain certain equality" ("Citizenship construction" panel, Huairou, 2/09/95).*

Evidently, citizenship is vaster than political participation in its strictest sense. Citizenship can be exercised in any field related to public affairs. Latin American women are worried about many issues but particularly about their little participation in decision-making regarding compulsory norms for the whole society, in public business management, in the availability of social resources and in justice administration. That is to say, citizenship expansion through representation, increased participation in State powers and social and political institutions, has become a priority in the agenda of women which have the power to express

Only during the five last years we can say that knowledge production has been accompanied by the social worry, with a rich bibliography, partially quoted in this article. The works of Julieta Kirkwood and Fanny Tabak have been pioneering works in this field and were published fifteen years ago.<sup>30</sup>

What has been described in the last paragraphs is precisely what I call the approach to Macchiavelo. It consists in the interest shown by women in the political sphere as a power that exerts influence on the lives of great social sectors (as well as economic powers and mass media). Nicolás Macchiavelo (1469-1527) whose work "The prince", published five years after his death, is still a paradigm for observation, description and analysis of State power. Working in a "hard" field such as that of political institutions is highly risky because it can be considered that what is analysed is what is being proposed as good or as the best, as it happened to the great Florentine scientist. Until now, Macchiavelo is considered to be the promoter of the ethic that "the end justifies the means" when he realised that this is the way in which political power works.

## Approaches to State transformation

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It is not only a matter of watching, knowing and criticising. In the case of the feminist movement, which has led the vast women's movement in Latin America, transformation proposals of relationships in society, between society and State and within the State, have been made. Sonia Montañó stated in a meeting held in Montevideo, in 1998,<sup>31</sup> that it is precisely the radicalism of proposals, together with a moderation in methods and strategies, a characteristic of the way in which women intend to achieve transformation.

We can say that at the same time that all power relationships are criticised, working with the State as it is, is accepted, as long as the latter assumes its own modification as an obligation. This was evident in the elaboration processes of new constitutions, where women, organised in groups, fought to be equally considered and to incorporate equality rights, including, as far as possible, actions to remove obstacles which hinder equality as a State obligation.<sup>32</sup>

If States were bedevilled (which is natural from my point of view) in dictatorships, in democracies they would be functionalized a-critically. They were considered as units of international relationships in the process towards Beijing, as producers of policies that could create equality and as machinery where participation must be equal. Not only with relation to national States, but also to sub-national ones such as provinces, federated states, departments and municipalities.

Transformation issues appear discussed in a vast bibliography. I have decided to quote, particularly, two works carried out with scientific toughness, although there are also other excellent works. The first one is the work of Virginia Guzmán, Sandra Lerda and Rebeca Salazar, *Gender dimension in State's duty*, published by the Centre of Women's Studies (CEM) in Chile. It is a research and a reflection on the way gender inequalities constitute a public problem, the way in which government discourse was articulated and the characteristics of institutions for management of gender equity public policies. This work also plays a monitoring and controlling role (which in fact is one of the tasks assumed by feminist organisations) as regards the permeability degree of these proposals in the State and the exact way in which the State mechanism proceeds to attain equality. And, as usual, repetition of women's and men's equal participation proposals and equality as the main task of democracy.<sup>33</sup>

The other work is a reader, co-ordinated by Jeanine Anderson and Ana Falú within the framework of a project on gender-power and municipalities in Latin America of IULA/CELCADEL. Published under the name State reform processes in the light of gender theories, it includes ten articles written by thirteen authors (three as co-authors), on State transformation in the context of full citizenship, based on subordinate public spheres, reviewing culture, decentralisation processes, public policies, participation fields and quality, the problem of autonomy, maternal affairs in policies addressing women, social paradigms and gender planning instruments are even critically reviewed and indicators on inequalities between men and women are proposed. Transformations are proposed in all of the fields.

The several fields that must be changed are being discussed. However, great gaps can be noticed, particularly, as regards economic and transformation proposals on the relationships between social classes. It is possible to affirm that Latin American feminism has also assumed that it is possible to defeat poverty and to give a new direction to economy without decentralising wealth.

In recent feminist political documentation, rather than in scientific, academic works or strict systematisation, some clues can be found on the new proposals that are apparently transcending the limits of the proposals addressing women, so as to give ideas for the whole group of societies.<sup>34</sup>

While national and sub-national States are being understood and influences from the inside, and some achievements are being achieved, the world and institutions are in open to transformation. There are so many tasks and they are so different that there is room for anyone who wishes to participate. Globalisation requires a new regulation that must be based on a democratic structure of international power, which is apparently far from being accomplished. But the first step is to start thinking, debating and making proposals. To what are Latin American States sovereign? Are there instruments or at least serious efforts to create them and be able to guarantee a minimum welfare for population so as to really broaden citizenship? Will women be able to have enough leadership in these processes so as not to be subordinated once again?

Three months of the year 2000 have passed and we still have more questions than answers.

## Notes

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1. See Birgit Seemann, *Feministische Staatstheorie. Der Staat in der deutschen Frauen und Patriarchatsforschung*, Leske + Budrch, Opladen, 1996, 247 pages.
2. Ximena Bunster, "Sobreviviendo más allá del miedo", in Isis Internacional, *La mujer ausente: derechos humanos en el mundo*, Santiago, Chile, 1991; Rita Arditti and M. Brinton Lykes, "Las abuelas de Plaza de Mayo", in the same book of Isis Internacional; Adrienne Aron et al., "El terror sexual en El Salvador y Guatemala", in Isis Internacional. op. cit.; Jean Pierre Bousquet, *Las locas de la Plaza de Mayo*, Fundación para la Democracia en Argentina, Buenos Aires, 1984; Elizabeth Jelin, *¿Ante, de, en, y? Mujeres, derechos humanos*. Red Entre Mujeres, Lima, 1993; Manuela Ramos, *Derechos Humanos de las mujeres*, Manuela Ramos, Lima, 1996; Ubaldi Garcete, Norma Beatriz, *Paraguay: el Estado, las organizaciones femeninas y la violencia contra la mujer, reflexiones desde la transición*, FLACSO, Mexico, 1992.
3. Ana Elena Badilla, "La discriminación de género en la legislación centroamericana", in IIDH, *Estudios básicos de Derechos Humanos IV*, IIDH, San José, Costa Rica, 1996; Elena Larrauri (comp.), *Mujeres, derecho penal y metodología para el análisis de género del fenómeno legal*, ILANUD, San José, Costa Rica, 1991; Yadira Calvo, *Las líneas torcidas del derecho*, ILANUD, San José, Costa Rica, 1996.
4. Patricia Provoste, *La demanda de justicia de las mujeres*, Instituto de la Mujer, Santiago, Chile, 1996; Esther Prieto, *Mujer y justicia penal en Paraguay*. CEDHU, Asunción, 1994.
5. Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Condición de la Mujer, Casa de la Mujer La Morada, *Reflexiones acerca de sexismo y educación*, La Morada, Santiago, Chile, 1991; Natalia Rodríguez, *Sexismo y discriminación en la educación técnica en la República Dominicana*, CIPAF, Santo Domingo, 1992; Marina Subirats, *La educación de las mujeres: de la marginalidad a la coeducación: propuestas para una metodología de cambio educativo*, CEPAL, Santiago, Chile, 1998; Violeta Sara-Lafosse, *¿Formando maestros discriminadores?*, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, 1994.
6. CLADEM, *Silencios públicos, muertes privadas: la regulación jurídica del aborto en América Latina y el Caribe*, CLADEM, Lima, 1998; Lidia Casas and Nuria Núñez, *Aborto: argumentos para una discusión necesaria*,

Instituto de la Mujer, Santiago, Chile, 1998; Frances Kissling, *Las católicas ante el aborto*, GRECMU, Montevideo, 1989.

7. Magdalena León (comp.), *Mujeres y participación política: avances y desafíos en América Latina*, TM Editores, Bogotá, 1994; Movimiento Manuela Ramos, *Mujeres e institucionalidad estatal*, Manuela Ramos, Lima, 1996; Alicia Inés Martínez (comp.) *Mujer, gobierno y sociedad civil: políticas en México y Centroamérica*, FLACSO, Mexico, 1993; Eugenia Hola and Gabriela Pischeda, *Mujeres, poder y política: nuevas tensiones para viejas estructuras*, CEM, Santiago, Chile, 1994; Jutta Marx, *Mujeres y partidos políticos*, Legasa, Buenos Aires, 1992; GRECMU, *Mujer y poder en los márgenes de la democracia uruguaya*, GRECMU, Montevideo, 1991.
8. Seeman, op. cit. explains that “the praxis of more than twenty years of the new women’s movement, vis-à-vis the State, oscillating between “bedevilling” and “functionalization”, has always hindered the distant and objective analysis and the theory construction. Only the self-esteem growth of feminist political science made the harsh outlook on patriarchal sate more attractive and productive, page 9.
9. Branislavia Susnik, *El indio colonial del Paraguay, El chaqueño: guaycurues y chanes-arawak*, Ethnographic Museum “Andrés Barbero”, Asunción, 1971, Vol. III.
10. For example, the Workshop on Oral History in Bolivia.
11. The papal bull of Alexander VI, dated May 1494.
12. María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *Doña Francisca Pizarro: una ilustre mestiza 1534-1598*, IEP, Lima, 1989, pp.14-15.
13. Julio César Chaves, *Descubrimiento del Río de la Plata y Paraguay*, Editorial Nizza, Asunción, 1968, pp.318-322.
14. Chaves, op.cit. pp.216-225.
15. María Emma Mannarelli, *Pecados públicos*, Flora Tristán, Lima, 1993.
16. Line Bareiro and Clyde Soto, *Ciudadanas: una memoria inconstante*, Nueva Sociedad / CDE, Caracas 1997.
17. Kirkwood, op. cit., p.89.
18. Instituto de la Mujer de España / FLACSO, op. cit., p.160 (synthesis of the authors).

19. See Branca Moreira Alves, *Ideologia e feminismo: a luta da mulher pelo voto no Brasil*, Vozes, Petropolis, 1980.
20. For example, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, *Las mujeres en la Revolución mexicana: biografías de mujeres revolucionarias*, Mexico, 1992, Fernando Mires, *Die Revolution ist keine Insel*.
21. Includes from Russian narodniki, agrarian people previous to the 1905 Revolution, bonapartism based on the studies of the government of Napoleón III of Karl Marx, named after Luis Napoleón, to the governments of Arbenz in Guatemala, Perón in Argentina, Vargas in Brazil, Cárdenas in Mexico, of politicians such as Gaitán in Colombia and political parties such as APRA in Peru.
22. Line Bareiro, "Las recién llegadas", in *Cuadernos Básicos de Derechos Humanos IV*, IIDH, San José, Costa Rica, 1995, published also as a small notebook by CDE, Asunción, 1999.
23. Casa de la Mujer, 'Presentación' en *nuevos espacios y otros retos: propuestas a las mujeres*, Casa de la Mujer, Bogotá, 1986, pp.7-8.
24. Fempress, *Cuarto propio en el Estado*, special edition coordinated by Sonia Montañó and Elizabeth Salguero, Santiago, Chile, 1998.
25. Line Bareiro and Jane C. Riquelme, "Nuevas voceras de la ciudadanía plena", in *Los procesos de reforma del Estado a la luz de las teorías de género*, IULA/ CELCADEL notebooks, # 26, Quito, 1997, pp.17-38, also published as a small notebook by CDE, Asunción, 1999 and the *Antología latinoamericana de mujer y género*, period 80-90, Managua, 1999, pp.275-311.
26. Natacha Molina and Line Bareiro, "Igualdad, democracia y ciudadanía", pre-report, Mar del Plata, 1994.
27. In *Ecrivain Non: Un Nouveau Cartographe*, Critique, 343, 1975, reproduced by Miguel Moray in his introduction to: Michael Foucault, A dialogue about power, Alianza, Buenos Aires, 1991, p.V.
28. Foucault, op.cit.p.9
29. Text of the Chapter III, " Spheres of concern", of the Platform for Action, approved by the Principal Commission of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 15, 1995 ( mimeo).

30. See Tabak, Fanny, *Autoritarismo e Participação da mulher*, Edições Graal, Rio de Janeiro, 1983; and Kirkwood, Julieta, *Ser politica en Chile. Las feministas y los partidos*, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1986.
31. It was a meeting called “Essential Voices of Americas”, organised by the Interamerican Development Bank and the State Department of the United States.
32. This happened in Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Argentina and others. And also in constitutional processes of provinces or federated States such as the case of the Constitution of the city of Buenos Aires.
33. Virginia Guzmán, Sandra Lerda and Rebeca Salazar, *La dimensión de género en el quehacer del Estado*, CEM, Santiago, Chile, 1994.
34. The following are some examples: *Coalición de Mujeres de Nicaragua, agenda mínima: diversas, diferentes y unidas*, Managua, no publication date; *Foro Mujer, Propuestas desde las mujeres*, Lima 1995; *Ciudadanas en movimiento por la democracia*, Mexico, 1996; *Grupo Agenda Política de Mujeres Costarricenses*.



# Democratic institutionality and feminist strategies during the nineties

*Virginia Vargas\**

**D**uring the seventies and eighties, the second feminist wave in the region, simultaneously appeared in Latin America, with a growing articulation. Feminist movements were not the only ones which defined their proposals and demands of acknowledgement. During these decades several social movements simultaneously appeared –the so-called “new social movements”– which, unlike the traditional ones, were basically based on a class axis, facing historical exclusions and subordination. These movements not only demanded restricted rights, but also created new rights, generally obtained through struggle and confrontation (Dagnino, 1998, Paoli, 1998, Dean, 1996, among others). The existence of

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dictatorships, authoritarian or democratic governments which acted as if they weren't so, was the prevailing characteristic during those decades.

In this context, the feminist movement developed not only as a social movement, but also as a political expression of women's struggle for their full citizenship and for a democracy entailing from intimate to global aspects. The leftist origins of several of the women who created these bold movements, jointly with this confrontation with dictatorships and authoritarianism, marked, during the seventies and part of the eighties, their way of understanding and their remote approach to the State. The Chilean feminist watchword: "democracy in the country and at home" used in their struggle against dictatorship was the watchword of the eighties for several feminists in all countries of the region. This movement, early coordinated with the growing and massive women's popular movement, started to develop and to benefit from the relationship and confrontation with civil societies, appearing as an irreverent and rebellious social movement. Feminist movements of the eighties basically aimed at recovering the difference and revealing the political nature of women's subordination in the private sphere and its effects on their presence, visibility and participation in the public sphere. The most acknowledged contribution was the collective unveiling of women experience to discover its political meaning. For Latin American feminist movements, in this concept, the public-State aspect was a target for remodelling, restructuring, not merely a place to be specifically occupied. Moreover, daily whirl foreshadowed deconstruction in the public domain (Tamayo, 1998).<sup>1</sup>

Latin American feminist movements developed in varied ways, through several organizations, groups, and, action, thematic and identity networks. From the start, they also promoted a transnational dynamic through their networks, meetings, seminars, joint campaigns on the dates of the increasingly busy feminist calendar, creating novel and important coordinations. The most massive and movement-like expressions at regional level were the Regional Feminist Gatherings, at first, every two years, and then every three years, since 1981. In those gatherings, feminist progress, shared strategies, perspective and vision conflicts, were dealt with, fostering strategies and discourses, developing, by these means, a varied, rich and intense coordination between national and transnational aspects.

During the nineties, feminist movements faced significant changes at the political, economic, social and cultural level in the region. Undoubtedly, the most relevant feature was that democracy widely spread as the government system of the region. Feminist movements

opened up to several interactions not only at national and regional level, but also at global level, through their incursion into the global sphere, their participation and contentious disputes at conferences and world summits promoted by the UN, at global level. These incursions meant a first-rate political learning of a new-found kind of relationship with the political-public domain, including the State.

## Democracy and citizenship

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These changes also triggered new lines of action in relevant sectors of feminist movements. These lines were Democracy and Citizenship, which expressed the growing concern of feminist movements with the coordination with other areas, prevention of the isolation risk and the assumption of a rights discourse which would place them as the conquest and ratification of citizenship, and not as a way of meeting women's needs and vulnerabilities, by recovering women's progress of past decades. This new emphasis, predicted a way of interrelating with States, from the rights' perspective, their creation, their responsibility, as a way of redefining the political domain (Alfaro, 1997). Therefore, Democracy and Citizenship appeared as arenas where disputes took place regarding meanings, trends and scopes, not only questioning existing democracies and citizenship but also opening them up to diversity and struggle for equality.<sup>2</sup> New democratic concepts, as regards strengthening and diversity, plurality and respect towards minorities, instead of government majorities (Touraine in Molina and Provoste), go beyond political institutionality, to acknowledge several public and private institutions which adopt the task of controlling and demanding State action balances (Molina and Provoste). In these new democratic contexts, citizenship acquires key importance not only in the electoral and political aspect but also as a practice to acquire the existing rights and creating new ones.

New forms of existence started to develop slowly and progressively. Feminism is no longer what it used to be, not only as regards its expansion and decentralization, but also in several spaces and fields of action. This makes feminist movements of the nineties, an area of complex alliance politics which show the diversity and complexity of feminist transformation strategies (Jacobson, 1998). However, this expansion and decentralization of the feminist field has been accompanied by, as Álvarez says, an intensification of unbalances among women acting at different levels and holding different positions within said field. The vast feminist field is full of unequal power

relationships, which reveals a growing division between two foundational dimensions of the project of feminism transformation during the seventies and eighties: its ethical and cultural dimension, and its structural and institutional dimension. Here, the ethical and cultural dimension seems to be weak (Álvarez, 1997). Paradoxically, advocating the dispute of contents and meanings in formal politics so as to promote feminist agendas, has frequently led to blur its image as a protest force in society.

This fragmentation and blur is partially related to social movement cycles, to fragmenting dynamics in the era of globalization and neoliberalism, and also with what different authors (particularly, Sonia Álvarez) have called “the NGOization” of feminism in Latin America, referring to the fact that feminist movements in the region basically manifest through work and feminist NGOs (non-governmental organizations), which have access to outside funding (actually, increasingly scarce), full-time professionals and, are in a better position to determine more conspicuous feminist dynamics and strategies (Álvarez, 1997).

## Feminist movements and State towards the end of the millennium

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I would like to analyze the complex relationships between feminist movements and the States in Latin America, within a broader context: the tense, troubled and inevitable relationship between civil society and the State, and the perspective of social movements contributing to citizenship construction.

The historical relationship between civil society and the State acquires particular dimensions during the nineties, due to the great changes suffered in socio-economic, political and cultural contexts of the region. Paradoxical changes which simultaneously extend and limit the room for manoeuvre of social movements, in general, and, particularly, of feminist ones. One of them, the most dramatic and challenging one, is the coexistence of democratic government systems in neoliberal economic models – which demand certain type of State reforms and a specific requirement of governance – and, within the ambivalent globalization processes. Economic modernization and democratization, constitute the two processes which mark the region and which correspond to differentiated logics, which run parallel, in a

way that State reform achievements tend to ignore the necessary adaptation to democratic institutions. "While modernization rests on a process of differentiation, democracy implies certain equality" (Lechner, 1997, p.47). As there is no equivalence between both dynamics, democracy appears as the legitimating mechanism of modernization, as its complement, legitimating market society, impairing citizens' interests and resulting in a restricted democracy (Lechner, 1992), where citizenship is not the focus of development and expansion. The coexistence of these two logics weakens democracy and, consequently, the room for manoeuvre of social movements insofar as all efforts to extend citizens' participation and re-qualify democracies clashed with the growing decline of living standards of all citizens in the region, as well as with the growing weakening of the "nation-State" as an entity which controls social unrest.

Under these circumstances, the consolidation of new political institutionalities in this new democratic context, in a moment where material conditions suffer a growing decline, seems to be the main problem which new democracies face (Przeworsky, 1998 p.160). In other words, the main challenge faced by movements which seek democracy is how to promote, in these terms, processes of political restructuring with social transformation.

The relationship between civil society and the State is complex, contradicting and, in many aspects, mutually determinant. From a citizens' perspective, one of the strongest tensions in this relationship is reflected in the fact that State participation appears, on one hand, as an essential aspect to ensure the citizen status by guaranteeing the rights' exercise. On the other hand, citizenship also implies the protection against arbitrariness in the exercise of State power (Held, 1995, Kymlicka, 1994).

However, both aspects are neither a dichotomy nor totally autonomous. Throughout history, the State in Latin America has been society producer, and symbolically and really, the political space where citizenship has been traditionally ratified and strengthened (Varas, 1998 p. 110). That is to say, that Latin American State, on several occasions, made deliberate efforts to organize the group of social processes, which leads some authors such as Lechner to say that there wasn't a capitalist society previous to State development, being the State in charge of the task of restoring a modern society (Lechner, 1992).

The early perception of feminist movements, regarding the State as a homogeneously patriarchal and capitalist entity has turned to be highly complex. The State, beyond the State body or the public sector,

is also a group of social relationships which enforces certain order in a determined territory, backed up by a centralized coercive guarantee, through a legal system which is neither egalitarian nor socially impartial and which supports or helps to reproduce asymmetrical power situations, legitimated by the ideological dimension of national unity (O' Donnel, 1993).

This makes us admit, jointly with many feminist theorists (Montaño, Bareiro, Álvarez, Randall, Luvensky, Pringle and Watson, among others) that the State is neither a homogeneous nor a single entity but a group of arenas, discourses, institutions, as a consequence of political struggle and specific contexts, with a coherence that appears in the discourse as well as in temporary but changing circumstances, connected with people, policies and institutions. And feminists have precisely found in this group of diverse and heterogeneous fields, the opportunity of seeking dialogue and exerting influence. But they have also faced limitations, insofar as in Latin America, this feature of the State turns to be more complex due to societies' heterogeneity, due to complexity, variety, diversity and "the existing inequality of each territory governed by the State". "This takes place within the coexistence of different and opposing historical times, with unfinished transformation processes (Calderón, 1997; León, 1997; López, 1998), as well as the coexistence of heterogeneous and contradicting social and political factors in the same social and cultural context, which break up the relative unity of society in disaggregated pieces which appear in its surface, whenever severe crises break out" (López, 1998).

This heterogeneity and incoherence has prevailed. But during the last decades, in Latin America (and world-wide, with different emphasis and speed) the State has suffered deep transformations. And although its characteristic domain and control on its territory still prevails in varied forms, it has also suffered strong erosions and a weakening, subject to the globalization process. Transnational integration that goes with globalization overwhelms the State's organization. National States seem to be too tiny to respond to great global problems and too huge to realize the vast range of diversities and the citizens' demands which derive from them. Market ideology, as Castells States, replaces the nations' ideology (Castells, 1999, p.80). Therefore, national States are also "under suspicion" within the course and priorities of the neoliberal model, which tends to privilege market as the regulator of social relationships and interactions, and, simultaneously, it reduces the integrating duties of the State. There is an urgent need of State reform, so as to better respond to a globalized economic restructuring, to promote social policies that counteract the devastating effects of

disintegration and marginalization, in view of the increasing reduction of the State's role and the growing promotion of market as a resource assignment mechanism (Viveros, 1998). This emphasis on market has also affected citizenship concepts deriving from the State, in its neoliberal version, considering them as the individual access to market within a minimalist concept of democracy (Álvarez, Barrig).

To complete this outlook, the antidemocratic vices of democracies, reflected in the clear cases of corruption, the existence of drugs traffic as an economic resource, stabilization economies at the expense of recession, lead to a growing disappointment in new democratic contexts. Political parties, which are also historical propellers of civil societies and promoters of social movements, though troublesome and grudging, have also been unable to mediate between civil society and the State, by resisting their own and evidently necessary democratic reform, and by advocating the machine instead of the re-organization, losing their inter-relationship with citizenship. This is reflected in the citizens' support to the appearance of highly informal leaderships where population does not vote for political projects but for individual persons, thus contributing to political informalization.<sup>3</sup> The increasing burden of mass media on public opinion formation turns them into new political actors, contributing to the parties' weakening.

In this context, Latin American States promote State reform processes and governance construction. However, several of these reforms, have considered the State "mainly as a hurdle which hinders the free development of market" and, therefore, they tend to eliminate, or at least restrict, State participation (Lechner, 1997, p.29). Even governance has been considered an overburden of citizens' demands and expectations regarding the State, and the orientation of these reforms is basically conservative, based on State efficiency instead of democratic citizen construction which promotes the creation of a civil society as a legal person with management and controlling capacity (Varas, 1998).

Latin American civil societies are neither homogeneous nor homogeneously democratic. They are deeply heterogeneous, with unequal development, with greater or lesser citizenship content, with greater or lesser organizational and institutional density, with political and economic dimension, with more number or less number of democratic interactions. They are usually ambivalent civil societies, with authoritarian, sexist, racist, class, homophobic contents, with a conservative and traditional common sense, and with a democratic content which is extended or restricted according to the strength, extent and consistency of social-democratic actors and to the transformation

of the contexts in which they act. Therefore, during the seventies and eighties, civil societies remained with relative strength and presence, due to the appearance of vast social movements which fought to extend the boundaries of the exclusion-inclusion dynamics. During the nineties, these movements, including the feminist one, lost their strength and rebellious presence. Neoliberal ideology as well as cyclic dynamics of social movements contributed to this decline. The growing trends to fragmentation and individualization reflect what Lechner calls “the ego culture” which make people afraid to engage in collective commitments (Lechner, 1996), creating a growing citizens’ depoliticization and hostility.

How can we explain this hostility when democracy is widespread? Probably because apart from the fragmenting trends and influence of neoliberalism – frequently based on a minimalist concept of democracy and the consideration of citizenship as an individual access to market (Álvarez, 1997) – the restoration of democratic regimes generally took place through up-bottom democratic processes (though dictatorships were defeated through the pressure of vast social movements, among which we find the diverse kind of women’s movements). Democracy restoration in Latin America was not followed by a strong “political resurrection” of civil society, that is probably the reason why one of the characteristics of these new democracies has precisely been the growing depoliticization of society (Silva, 1999).

## Strategies and search

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“**I**n the ambivalent context between civil society and political society, social movements benefits will be inevitably varied and many-sided” Radcliffe, 1999, p.210

As we have already seen, openness to strategies towards the State has been one of the most important changes of feminist movements in this decade, reflecting not only the new emphasis given by important sectors of feminist movements: citizenship and democracy, but also the growing complexity of feminist discourse and practice, trying to respond to the new political conditions of the region.

Women’s relationship with the State (or of other sectors which suffer different kinds of exclusion) is complex. According to Randall, it is not simply a one-way relationship, or up-bottom, where the State would address women as passive agents, or bottom-up, where women would mark the State agenda through their organizations. Therefore, it



is not one-way; it is a relationship of mutual approach or mutual inquiry, it is neither fixed nor immutable, it is neither linear nor circular, it does not imply two intersection points which address the way politics affect women or how women affect or impact on political processes; interaction points are several and diffuse, therefore, it is important to make an analysis which considers the temporal and spatial variations of these interactions (Randall, 1998), where opportunity structure, forces' correlation, democratic development of States, movements' negotiation means and the consistency of their proposals as well as their presence are important aspects in the kind of relationship held between the civil society and the State.

However, a more general appreciation can be made on the possibilities, tensions and risks of this relationship. Key aspects in the region are the contradictions and deficits of Latin American democracies during a neoliberal period, which constitutes an ambivalent and risky field for feminist incursions and negotiations. On one hand, the new language of rights and citizenship is shared by the State and important sectors within civil societies, included feminist movements, but with different interpretations of the contents of citizenship and democracy. That is why there is an ambivalent dispute arena regarding meanings and extent, from feminist perspectives and practices, by increasing the possibilities of moving on to formal equity mechanisms for all women, and, at the same time, by being subject to political and economic legitimization needs of States and governments.

And even more, when the State, from the gender perspective, shows the ambivalence of being, on one hand, a powerful instrument of equality through laws, policies and actors which support it; and, on the other hand, a machine which reproduces inequality, through its norms, practices or traditional gender assumptions reflected in its actions (Provoste and Silva, 1998). In the neoliberal context, other processes such as the "re-masculinization" of State and politics, have been mentioned by several feminists such as Craske. As a result of the interaction between programmes of poverty alleviation, pro-family rhetoric, harshness of neoliberal economy, military threat (clearly evidenced during the last years, in countries such as Venezuela, Paraguay, Peru), "depoliticizing social movements through the bureaucratization of service provision together with the official rhetoric which celebrates the family role", the harshness and strictness of labour markets, which leave little room for political activities and which consider that social and political justice mobilizations are destabilizing. Craske concludes that there is also a problem of "mobilization fatigue" (Craske, 1998, p.114).

For this reason, some feminists (Shild, 1998, Lynd, 1998, Tamayo, among others) warn that the State is a power locus which does not necessarily use coercion but “behaviour control and people’s subjectivity”, playing an important role in the orchestration of people’s behaviour. In this perspective, citizenship may be a powerful mechanism of social integration [...] This places in the centre of the debate, the ambiguous and contradicting potentiality of social movements, which can face domination in a specific fixed context of power relationships. In other contexts, it can contribute to the appearance of new forms of domination, for example, turning women’s participation into resources through which the State determines the appropriation of citizens’ behaviour as well as the spaces for citizenship practice (Shild, 1998).

All this happens in a moment where changes in political, economic and cultural practices of the region and worldwide, have also impacted and changed the existence conditions of feminist movements. The fragmenting and individualist dynamics of the present moment, typical of the “ego culture” which predominates in the political and cultural horizon and which has tended to weaken collective actions and articulation, were echoed. Thus, fragmentation and institutionalization have been the most outstanding features of the feminist dynamics during the nineties.<sup>4</sup>

This has had impact on the ways feminist movements exist, the way of approaching democracy, public power, and the State. Not only institutionalization or “NGOization”, have marked internal dynamics, by appearing as the hegemonic expression of feminist proposals and presence, because feminist institutionality has also appeared in other fields such as the academy. These dynamics are ambivalent and complex because although they have won visibility and negotiation capacity, professional level and mediation with the political and public sphere, incorporation of feminist issues in public and State agendas, there is a growing perception that in doing so, the boldness which questioned the existing gender arrangements in present democracies has weakened, blurring the contents of their most autonomous agendas as the expression of a long-term political and cultural fight.

Therefore, for feminist movements, the relationship with the political-public sphere, particularly the State, has been one of the most complex and stressing issues. At a certain level, it has generated great polarization, producing the first great internal “rupture”. However, at another level, it has managed to place several feminist proposals in the political-public sphere. That is why opinions are varied, opposing, and sometimes ambivalent, regarding the importance of what is attained and the fear of what is lost.

## Contents of dispute

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**I**nstitutionalization versus autonomy are the two polarized and excluding ways in which feminist dynamics have been considered during the nineties. However, reality is more complex. Social movement dynamics are concerned with the transformation dynamics of the environment. They both have rhythms, latent aspects, visible aspects, cyclic temporalities, which go with and influence on their actions, through their achievements and losses, through the changes registered in the existence conditions. The emphasis on some of these dynamics outlines the different feminist discourses, evidencing that feminism is not a “closed and integrated discourse, a globalized and systematized unit” but a contradicting crossing of several discourses and approaches (Birgin, 1999, p.19).

Feminist movements during the nineties have also contributed to two cycles: one which belongs to its own movement, producing more institutionalization than mobilization, and one which belongs to citizen participation, less inclined to participation, and facing greater citizen hostility.

Within this complex discourse and these new contexts, the historic tension between equality and difference,<sup>5</sup> between universal (generally partiality hegemony) and specific contents of citizenship, acquire a particular importance. Tension within feminist movements has a double connotation: inwardly, the way feminist movements are realigned and re-defined, and, outwardly, the way in which strategies are developed for one dimension or the other, or for both of them.

Regarding the most internal dynamic of feminist movements, equality and difference were two complementary visions in Latin America during the eighties, until there were objective and subjective possibilities of expressing equality proposals in specific strategies, precisely based on the new form of relationship between important modes of feminism and the political-public sphere, and, particularly, with the State. They start to be opposing categories and views considering the possibility of achievement. On opposing them, its transformation capacity undoubtedly weakens. Difference turns to be essential and equality, without the inquiring look of difference, acquires the limits of the already existing democracies. Difference starts to have its own value and not through a transforming inter-relationship.<sup>6</sup>

Kuechler and Dalton clearly describe this tension by stating that social movements’ desires of deep changes are not compatible with the achievement of mass mobilization in pursuit of specific objectives [...]

the more involved social movements are in conventional political life and the more serious their attempts of creating formal or informal coalitions are, the more likely it will be for basic social antagonism represented by the movement to disappear. Regarding women's movements, they State that when they focus on activities which are necessary for the approval of certain laws, the objective of raising social awareness is inevitably and negatively affected because it faces an insoluble problem: to choose between the achievement of pragmatic results, which enable the extension of its social basis and some modest political goals, and loyalty to its main beliefs (Kuechler and Dalton, 1992, p. 338).

But movements do not exclusively aim at power or identity, both things are present although they may have different weight at different periods of time and in the framework of different trends. However, success in incorporating issues into the political agenda may imply loosing control on them. Because although there is agreement on the importance of equal rights, this equality, as Raquel Olea mentions, "is the equality established by male dominance, it is heterosexual equality for homosexuals and lesbians, it is adults' equality for children, it is men's equality for women" (Olea, 1999, p.21).

This is more troublesome at present when, according to Valenzuela, "... Democracy return coincides with the movement's loss of power and the difficulty to remain in the public agenda as an independent actor but with the capacity to negotiate and be present. Within this framework, the new ways of getting in politics which had been vindicated as contributions to democracy have tended to lose sense, and within the context of crisis in representation systems, women have no say to exert pressure for their agenda" (Valenzuela, 1997, p.21).

These complexities, weaknesses, risks and ambivalence, sustain present feminist concepts of the State. An a priori approach could lead us to two great trends regarding its position in the new logics and the new conditions of existence, particularly with relation to State institutionality and political system. The first trend is determined on the grounds of primitive feminist practices, fostering a strong identity politics, rejecting the possibility of negotiating with the political-public sphere. The second one, full of doubts about complacency and resistance, seems to assume the importance of negotiating with society and the State, and its differences would owe to the emphasis placed on the creation of evident feminist spaces in civil societies, to alliance politics, to the extent in which negotiations with the State are given priority, thus weakening other strategies of transformation.

Critical points of view derive from the interior of these trends which are more institutionalized and not homogeneous at all, as well as from stances organized as clearly dissident trends. However, it is interesting to notice that there is agreement on warning about risks but not on strategies:

The most radical stances, which reject any possibility of planning strategies with relation to the political-public sphere, assume that "... a trend which repeats [...] other unsuccessful struggles, has appeared and grown, to settle in a system so that by means of citizenship, decision tasks in patriarchal power (its institutions) can be chosen [...] They are political tasks which demand the State, a group of emancipating vindications [...] there is social struggle against discrimination, but its aim to achieve what is feasible, fills this struggle with conformism and smoothens its rebelliousness, losing the capacity to propose changes [...] in that way, a substantial part of the movement will be devoured by domination logic, eroding and wasting energy for a cause which is not ours, weakening the whole movement" (Álvarez E., 1996). Orientating strategies towards the State, searching for some kind of legitimacy, of respect within the established order, useful for patriarchal power strategies, means that "... our fight to change the world, must now prove to be acceptable and legitimate within the established order" (Bedregal, 1996, p.51).

Other critical stances, admitting the possibility of interaction with the political-public sphere, still warn the risks which this implies without considering ambivalence and the adverse effects implied in disciplining and self-censoring women and their movements regarding issues which were particularly important for their demand to determine their own use of their bodies, as in the case of abortion, based on a "realistic" negotiation with the State, where feasibility is subject to the monologue of government elite. "Captivated by the possibility of getting the State's response but without practices which ensured our essential rights and freedom, and with no citizenship mechanisms to control and effectively influence on State activity, we have contributed to generate agents who get involved in disciplinary orientations of women's life". The citizenship issue and the parity experience (Tamayo, 1997/1).

Although negotiations, specific alliances, appeals before the State, are admitted to be favourable to democracy, it may be risky "... if there are no clear responses or proposals to questions such as how, under which conditions, with what kind of tactics, aiming at which results (Pringle and Watson, 1992) are strategies towards the State planned, particularly, under such unequal power conditions" (Vargas,

Olea, 1998). Or, according to Birgin, if we suppose that it is not a matter of access to equality per se, under those hegemonic conditions, where the outcome might be simple, but a matter of confirming equality before the law, at constitutional level or subscribing international treaties, but where situation changes “when it is a matter of equal right to liberty and the right to equal liberty” (Birgin, 1999).

During the nineties, the relationships with the State have taken place in this ambivalent, stressing and controversial context. Several and complex lessons and conclusions have been drawn from this relationship. Without having the intention of exhausting them, I will analyze them based on some key issues:

- new institutionality addressing women
- positive action mechanisms
- autonomous agendas and alliances

### **New institutionality**

The new institutionality which addresses women has been a widespread creation of the nineties, owing to internal (feminist movements) and external (world conference advice, pressure from bilateral and multilateral organizations) pressure and within the framework of State modernization duties. What used to be a pioneering demonstration of boldness in Brazil by the mid-eighties, turned into reality in most of the countries of the region, during the nineties.<sup>7</sup> During the nineties, the creation of State institutionality for women is incorporated into feminist agendas and government agendas. However, they do not constitute the only institutional modes. In some cases, we can talk about an “institutional system” addressing women, pointing at normative action (ministries are basically normative) as well as empowering action, to enable women’s access to opportunities or to face certain situations (poverty, reproduction).

According to Cortázar, the organizational forms of the State body regarding women, try to respond to two concerns: the incorporation of gender perspective into social policies from the equity perspective (at least theoretically), and according to strategic thoughts which acknowledge women’s role as main actors at local level, and with the capacity to act as intermediary agents; and women’s assistance as a target group of certain social policies that try to solve the problems which they particularly suffer (violence, reproductive health, etc.). Both constitute complementary concerns, so if you promote one of them, the other one weakens, either by reducing the integral aspect of

women's problem as subject matter of public intervention, or isolating it in philanthropic emergency programmes (Cortázar, 1997).

In most cases, these two different modes coexist with varied orientations and differentiated power. Guzmán has detected (in the case of Chile but it may be found elsewhere) the existence of at least three kinds of discourse: one which mobilizes a group of stereotypes where women are considered in sheer dependence with the family; another one which identifies the specific problems of women and their families, linked to the corresponding sector of their ministry and which values their contributions to the implementation of social programmes and the prevention of social pathologies; and another one which spots the most urgent problems of women in the sector and proposes solutions taking into account that inequalities between men and women must be overcome, being the only discourse which deals with the issue from a gender perspective (Guzmán, 1997).

This competence of discourses inside the State obviously makes more difficult and impairs the possibility of promoting changes which aim at the State's undermining of the inequality foundations. The trend has consisted in focusing on women's role at social or economic levels instead of promoting the development of an inclusive citizenship or the political participation of women" (Craske, 1998).

Moreover, there are some constant elements, except for: these State machines do not have their own budget, they dispute funds with civil society, they lack engendering possibilities and vocation in their impact-coordination with the State; they do not create definite negotiation channels and lack a democratic spokesman before civil society and feminist movements. Even in those organizations where a position and acknowledgement from the State was attained (such as the case of SERNAM in Chile), democratic deficits contribute to the tense relationship between civil society and the State. Participation can be presented as a concept in government discourses, but as Valenzuela says, "... there isn't a systematic, coherent and explicit politics enabling the population to be part of the design and evaluation of policies, to control public management, the use of State resources and the adaptation of programmes to the beneficiaries' needs and demands" (Valenzuela, 1997, p.19). And, above all, achievements are not irreversible, because as they have a low level of institutionality, they not only depend on the people in charge, but also on the changes in government dynamics and orientations.

Feminist movements' relationship with the creation of these organizations have been varied and with diverse outcome. In some countries, the creation of these machines was an evident thrust,

pressure and proposal of feminist movements and of the political will of the new democratic governments. In other cases, maybe in most of them, moderate pressure was exerted from feminist movements and governments' political will was noticed. The kind of proposal and the manoeuvre room to gather opinions and proposals from civil society, has highly depended on the different situations and democratic processes. In each situation, there have been different strategies, not always coordinated in the most institutionalized feminist movements.

Experience has demonstrated that there are more possibilities of attaining the incorporation of gender perspective into State entities not only in democratic contexts but also when interventions take place in a broader context of participatory and citizenship reform (Bolivia's case). Citizen's participation mechanisms are extended and for feminist movements they constitute the challenge to "overcome old kinds of social pressure so as to explore new strategies of negotiation and of women's acknowledgement in the new State institutionality" (Montaño, 1999, p.11). There are also greater possibilities when there is a higher level of institutionality in the same State body.

The possibilities of generating equality plans and public policies aimed at tackling women's subordination and exclusion, beyond formal equality, under weak institutionality conditions and authoritarian contexts, are much more restricted, or when State machines were created in isolation, without resources, without power and with no coordination with the macro processes of the country.

Tensions between feminist movements and State machines also appear due to the process of public policies' generation. The process which takes the demand from its formulation to its inclusion in State agendas and expressed as a public policy, is complex. On one hand, movement proposals turn into public policies not due to their urgency but due to the extent that the demand has had in broader sectors of civil society (Guzmán, 1998). On the other hand, they do not reach the State as a "fully constituted representation", instead, they are determined and re-determined and articulated when different State arenas are at stake (Lovedusky and Randall, 1993). Therefore, the key problem does not consist in which issues are likely to be incorporated, which will be considered by authorities, but "how they will be determined" because they generally entail and confirm different and specific concepts about reality (Guzmán). These different concepts foster the typical "dispute arena" between civil society and the State, and promote the alliance game so as to get a result similar to the original proposal.

The risks of making proposals bureaucratic, lead some feminists who penetrated into the State, to say that "... any gender vindication



assumed by the State also runs the risk of turning into a co-optation mechanism and a way of spoiling the content of their demands" (Valenzuela, 1997). Or, as Shumager and Vargas state, politics frequently devour social demands and may turn a nice proposal into a bureaucratic service (Shumager and Vargas p.12). At the same time, some feminist analysts have warned against the risks of only aiming at what is possible, forgetting what is desirable (Álvarez, among others). The case of domestic violence, with a law against domestic violence, which extends the violence target from women to the family, is an example of the transformations suffered by the original proposal. However, the important thing is that the fact that feminist language tends to assume domestic violence, abandoning "interpretation fights" (Slater, 1994), which foster the sense of dispute in civil society.

### Feminists inside the State

In some circumstances, the tendency consists in talking about the importance of the existence of a "power triangle" to explain the alliance between feminists of civil society, feminists in State bureaucracy, or "femocrats", and feminist politicians (Lycklama, Vargas, Wieringa, 1997). However, in Latin America, there are no femocrats as an expression of a critical mass inside State bureaucracy; there are women politicians in governments and parliaments with sensitivity (and many others without sensitivity), with whom feminists establish diverse and several relationships of support, of input, for new proposals and legislations. There even exist feminist institutions basically with this purpose (the case of CFEMEA in Brazil); during the nineties, relationships with women of political parties have been intensified and qualified (in many countries, they were the key promoters of the law of quotas); therefore, there are processes which are leading to the appearance of power triangles, without yet consolidating them.

The difficulties of establishing alliances between women do not only appear in such extremely male spheres, but also inside feminism, with those who decide to act from the State. Latin American experiences show that although the relationship among organizations orientated towards women seems to be easy when feminists are involved, it has not always been like this. Lack of confidence in the State, rivalry, political disagreement, petty and gross mean actions, make this inter-relationship more difficult. Another difficulty is the fact that feminist movements have weak or fragmented levels of articulation which "... leave feminist sectors without social counterpart in political institutions

of government and parties" (Valenzuela, 1997, p.3). Additional uncertainty due to lack of experience as regards what and how to incorporate issues into the State, lead to apparently ambivalent stances, which anyway reveal the same partial view on feminist agendas. Some of them consider that the agendas assumed by the State through negotiations with feminist movements or due to feminist participation in State institutions, are enough. Others consider that the State "takes away the agenda" when it is, at least partially, promoted by feminists who are in power.

For feminists, there are additional strains in the State. We have already seen that State entities addressing women are generally weak, without enough resources; women reach them without "being completely prepared" (Varcancel), as a "guest who may be welcomed or not but who always feels the embarrassment experienced in places where you do not fit" (Bochetti, 34). The greatest challenge probably faced by feminists in the State is mobilization within those two logics.

Therefore, the difficulties found by feminist movements in understanding the new logics and dynamics imply the risk of introducing the civil society logic into the State. Therefore, it seems to be more likely to exert influence, be acknowledged and reach a level of effectiveness (in a relative way) when feminists who get involved in State institutions manage to position in the State logic so as to direct their interactions and openness towards civil societies, and, on the contrary, there are less possibilities when social movements' or NGOs' logic is transferred to the State, highly reducing the possibilities of impact on State logic. The difficulty found in understanding the different logics and dynamics of both spheres is still one of the "knotty points" of feminist movements in the region. Therefore, it is important to admit that "... although the new institutionality is the result of a demand of the women's movement, it has its own characteristics and responds to a logic of State operation different to the one propelled by the movement which originated it "... those who participated and debated are not part of said institutionality and do not create its institutional agendas [...] the first ones have more freedom, the other ones must adapt their proposals to general government principles and must consider the logic of other sectors of the State before elaborating specific proposals [...] new institutionality [...] its identity has to be acknowledged by the women's movement which created it and also by the rest of a State which lacks experience and knowledge, as well as sensitivity regarding the issue" (Guzmán, 1998).

## Quotas, with variable results and enthusiasm

Quotas are the reflection of the so-called affirmative action which is a general way of referring to programmes which take some kind of initiative, either voluntary or forced by law, in order to increase, maintain or re-arrange the number or status of persons belonging to certain groups, generally determined by race or gender, in a broader context (Ann Johnson, in Bacchi). There are “mild” affirmative action programmes (promotion, acknowledgement, hiring of members of under-represented groups) and “harsh” programmes (political measures which State that being part of an under-represented group is acknowledged when it comes to hiring or promotions). Quotas are placed in this last category.

Quotas have been the widespread mechanism of positive action in the region. They are sustained by the fact that although the growing individual and collective female prominence, women are still a minority in State powers. “Long years of debate, criticism and political action from women and, particularly, from feminist movements, have been necessary to understand that a significant political participation from a democratic point of view needs specific actions to increase their participation in democratic institutions, specifically, in legislative powers” (Montaño, 1998). In order to break through the monopolizing male dynamic in political institutions, which does not seem to open to other diversities, or, according to Bohetti, as a way of responding to political impermeability (which is not always successful), quotas have been considered a transitory mechanism which will enable the implementation of a common starting point.

Quotas’ success in Nordic countries was undoubtedly an incentive to make feminist movements incorporate them into their agendas for the State. However, as Montaño says, the struggle for quotas in the region takes place within a context of neoliberalism which, as we have already seen, tends to limit the State’s role, subordinating public policies to market logic.

Anyway, in some countries such as Argentina (from 4% to 21% and then 28%), they have been an unquestionable success, and the same happened in Brazil and in some countries of Central America such as El Salvador and Nicaragua. Recent experiences in Peru, with 25% quotas, have substantially increased not only women’s candidacy but also their election. However, in other countries, such as Bolivia, no significant change has been registered, because quotas are linked to electoral systems, sometimes organized in a way that not only women, but also those who are outside parties, are excluded. In others, it has not

been possible to incorporate them due to the authoritarian composition of parliaments as a consequence of democracy's agreed nature, such as in Chile, where the bill presented has remained for two years and a half in the Senate.

However, the discussion on quotas transcends the increasing participation of women in formal politics and is related to key aspects of politics and of feminist politics. The least enthusiastic arguments warn against the risk of a corporate and essential nature, with effects that transcend women insofar as they refer to "... an increasingly dominant vision on the politics proposed by the radical rigidity of particular perspectives, confining people to homogeneous, static, essential identities, rejecting the possibility of satisfying a common interest [...] there are no chances of real transformation if it is not designed with a global and equitable vision of common life" (Varikas, 1996, p.75). Because it also forces people to show an identity and reject others, insofar as only women dimension seems to be attended to and the elected ones belong to a specific group of women, without giving a chance to other excluded categories (for example, race) of women and also of men (Phillips, Montaño). Bobbio states that the organic or sectional representation is not appropriate and desirable in more specific context (factories, universities). But when it is a matter of citizens' interests and not interest groups, citizens must be represented by citizens who stand out not for the interests of the group which they represent but for the general visions developed from their specific position.

On the other hand, the most convinced people mention the importance of a politics of presence which affects the modification of referential horizons of societies with relation to women. Varikas says that once an important number of women start participating in assemblies or at decision-making levels, the sexist illusion which highly supports the absence of women's legitimacy in the political field, can be possibly changed (Varikas, 1996, p.88). At the same time, Phillips states that this politics of presence allows to confront the dominant idea that politics is a matter of abstract and sexless persons (Phillips, 1992, p.25). In other contexts, though complex because not all women reach them, we are neither better nor worse than men, women's interests are not necessarily defended, however it is also part of gender justice which states the possibility of a 50% presence and visibility, breaking through the antidemocratic monopoly of men.

For women feminists of political parties, quotas have also represented a way of struggling not only for greater incorporation but also as the first step towards the democratization of political parties. Moreover, it is

important to point out that women have frequently been the makers of alliances and have exerted pressure on parties, generally in vast fronts of women from political parties and civil society (such as the case of Bolivia) so as to obtain the approval of the law of quotas inside their parties as well as in parliament. But quotas also place the representation problem in the centre of the debate.

Who do women, who reach by means of quotas, represent?; to whom do they have to account?; which are the demands which women may pose?; who feels represented and who does not feel represented? which are the obligations implied? is it a representation of groups, ideas, persons? But, above all, what is representation at present? Undoubtedly, the traditional ways of acting and thinking as well as representation, have changed. The political representation crisis "... has penetrated into all social movements and has been reinforced by the implementation of policies which regulate economic life" "... by weakening collective identities, increasing social fragmentation and the resulting fragmentation of interests liable to representation" (Varas, 1998, p.123).

Furthermore, the political parties' legitimacy crisis as well as the ambivalent shrinkage and expansion of potential places of representation make the scene more complex because State nations less and less represent the varied range of national identities, and citizenship globalization, with the consequent development of global civil societies, has not developed yet an adequate institutionality to ensure rights and global representations.

Molina says that the political system, as a system of representation of social diversity, is suffering critical changes, linked to the growing social diversity and fragmentation. Political parties, representatives and historical mediators between civil society and State are in crisis, not only due to citizens' indifference, but also and mainly due to their increasing remoteness from dynamics and the proposals-demands of civil societies and their movements. These stronger processes of change which relate to world changes affecting the organization of people's life and which foster contents more related to citizenship in democracies, "... would imply a drift of traditional mechanisms of mediation between civil society and State [...] [which] therefore opens a horizon of new forms of collective expression of citizenship [...] a horizon of new forms of social representation, more strongly linked to social watch action than the planning of collective action projects through parties" (Molina, Provoste, 1997, p.158).

According to Lynch, in a complex society the main characteristic of representation is the capacity to enable many people (men and

women) to express themselves through few ones. Quotas would be a way of making participation equal in representative democracies instead of being a way of representing in the traditional sense of the term (Lynch, 1998). This possibility of democratic “equalization” and the impact of presence politics on collective illusion are not the least contemptible. However, some feminist analyses state that we run the risk of replacing the “ideas politics” which in the case of feminist movements it would be an emancipation politics, by the presence politics. That would change the way representation is understood. The ideas politics is supported by programmes of political parties, but also of movements. A programme can be answerable but women aren’t because they are there for the sole fact of being women. The feminist question would be if the quantitative struggle for presence is enough, or if presence is a means for an objective: changes in politics’ modes, language and priorities (Phillips, 1992).

For women and for feminists, additional tension is caused not only by the difficulty of representing women’s several interests and living standards, but also by the demands of women who reach power and, particularly, feminists. Which of the women’s interests are interesting? (Shapiro). This is the basic question. Who makes decisions for them? Which is the share of feminists who are defining their identity regarding women’s rights in the political-public sphere? It is difficult to answer them, but many Latinamerican feminist theorists (Barrig, Montanto, Lamas, Varikas, Vargas, Olea, Bareiro, among others) have found clues which reveal an important shift in the way representation is assumed and which once again refer to the recurrent tension between universality and particularity. On one hand, the idea of assuming mandate and request “rendering of accounts” before assuming the reproduction of a shared identity (Montaño, 1998) is possibly a clue which not only moves us away from essentialism but also grants the necessary autonomy dose for the representative who must respond to other logics, beyond the own logics of women’s movements. On the other hand, trying to respond if women, considered as representatives, must be in charge of “women’s affairs” or assume other democratic issues, evading a reductionist political vision which “leads to the consideration of women as an interest group which is not interested in more general democratic demands and vindications” (Montaño, 1998). Some theorists such as Saavedra, give a convincing response: “... assuming that quotas would have the ethical obligation of governing with gender conscience but not only for women but for the whole community, transcending the limits of ‘femenine’ the exercise of feminism” (Ramírez Saavedra).

## Autonomous agendas and alliances

The difficulty in differentiating not only feminist and government agendas but also the own sense of feminist agendas during the nineties, has been one of the persistent knotty points of the decade. Many of the risks and strains in this relationship may be summed up in a great strain, which outlines or blurs the kind of relationships between civil society and State: how to keep the transforming radical nature of feminist thought and action as we simultaneously penetrate into political spaces and as politicians negotiate and reach agreements with the existing powers, with real democracies, with agendas that movements present.

This constitutes a problem in contexts such as the present one where dramatic and accelerated changes in the State and in politics "... create clashes or adjustments between government macro-policies and citizenship micro-demands" (Tomassini, 1998, p.55). However these citizens' demands, though partial and incomplete, are precisely the daily components of the public agenda "... known as the spectre of worries and rights that the State should reflect [...] turning it into a government agenda".

Insofar as dialogue with States is a new experience, feminist movements have the double challenge of learning and creating their own outlooks in this new scene, in complex and unequal power relationships. Which are the priorities that movements have promoted in their relationship with the State? Which notions have they developed regarding State and civil society responsibilities? And, above all, what determines an autonomous feminist agenda?

We may be able to have a clearer scene if we assume that there is not only one feminist agenda but several, varied, overlapped and accumulative, in search for a position at the several levels and spaces where they try to exert influence and make transformations. An important part of feminist agendas, is orientated to consolidate democratic spaces and contents, in alliance with other movements and social and political forces with the same orientation, at local, national and global level, on the understanding that authoritarianism and traditional common senses make the expansion of feminist proposals more difficult yet. The progress on the creation of a level of democratic equality for all women where the expression of differences and the modification of exclusions and inequalities seem to be a feminist politics' responsibility. In this point we can agree with some interests of States and governments, but it is not the only thing. Feminist agendas also have a "hard core" which comprises long-term transformations and dimensions which are not easily negotiable neither with the State nor

with civil societies and which give feminist movements the nature of a radically emancipating political and cultural project.

We have seen that some feminist trends have assumed that as long as those aspects, related to the expansion of women's political citizenship (laws, quotas, State institutionality), were managed to be incorporated into the State, it was no longer necessary to raise a differentiated agenda to attend to the rest of the dimensions of women's citizenship and their most transgressing aspirations regarding the actually existent democracy. Others assumed that the State's progress leave feminist movements without proposals or profiles, considering it almost as the "theft" of the agenda. Finally, others assumed that the State should consider all contents of feminist agendas, including those aspects which have been historically the main and transgressing part of feminist proposals (sexual rights, particularly related to abortion, economic justice, instead of programmes to meet women's needs).

Each of these perceptions also derive from assumptions that distort not only the sense of feminist agendas but also the typical dynamics of the relationship between civil society and the State from the citizen's perspective. On one hand, non-negotiable agendas are an imposition on politics, they are static proposals which make everything remain unchangeable because nothing is negotiated, nothing is obtained. Anyway, to pretend that the State assumes the integral nature of feminist agendas means to ignore the fact that what enters into the public domain is what has started to be visualized in broader spaces of civil society. This last statement shows an important dimension of feminist agendas: strategies orientated to civil society so as to confront and modify their traditional common senses. They are strategies that not only aim at the political aspect but also at the political-cultural one, not necessarily referred to the State, and which precisely point at the modification of minds and illusions of societies. On the other hand, and for the same reason, an undifferentiated agenda links feminist movements to feasible things, without referring to what is desirable (Álvarez and others), what defines feminist movements (and democratic civil societies) as promoters of long-term and radical transformations.

However, the most acute strains are suffered regarding undifferentiated agendas, which reveals a risky trend for feminist movements. According to Barrig, "... if it is a matter of identifying a line (between civil society and State) it would be drawn higher up than feminists' position regarding national States, because we would be dealing with a deeper and maybe more dangerous shift of a renovated feminism and, on certain occasions, almost hegemonic, towards technocratic and aseptic visions and actions which lack the political



mark which the persistent feminist memory insists on recovering" (Barrig, 1999, p.17).

That is to say, it is essential, in many ways, that the State assumes the proposals of the feminist agenda and that feminists exert pressure for the sake of their integral nature and their emancipating capacity. This process of negotiation, coordination, pressure, feminist control, outlines the more democratic contents of the relationship between civil society and State. The presence of women leading, negotiating, exerting pressure in political spaces, is undoubtedly important, because the democratic contents of society are extended by granting visibility to women in those spaces which were previously and exclusively male. If we assume that political participation is not only a representation of interests but basically the domain where interests are built up (Pringle and Watson, 1993), several forms of political presence and participation give more possibilities of politically defining several women's interests and of incorporating them into the public agenda.

However, we have seen that the incorporation of women's demands into public agendas is not automatic and results are not identical to those initially proposed; only those proposals which have already managed to affect broader sectors of society have more possibilities of getting closer to what they desired in State agendas. Not resorting to this broader mediation, not only makes feminist presence and intervention more technical and depoliticized but also legitimates the most bureaucratic and authoritarian tendencies of States, slightly contributing to the process of democratic extension. Therefore, feminist movements' agendas can not only resort to the possibilities of negotiation with States but to the negotiation with civil societies regarding those issues and problems which have started to appear in the referential horizon of societies or those issues and problems which States will not assume if civil societies do not exert a qualified, organized and extended pressure for their incorporation. If the fact that the State assumes the proposals of feminist agendas is essential in many ways, it is also much more important, in a long-term perspective, that feminist movements exert pressure for their integral nature, emancipating capacity and democratic forms.

That is to say, the impulse of differentiated agendas, given by civil societies, offers the possibility of generating favourable opinion trends and relevant or strategic alliances with other movements to reinforce and locate those rights or meanings which are not included neither in the political horizon of States, nor in the strategies which only stress the relationship with States. It evades what Melucci calls "the short-sightedness of visible things" which basically focuses on measurable

aspects of collective action (their relationships with political systems and their effects on public policies) ignoring or minimizing all aspects of action which consist in cultural codes and subversion of senses (Melucci, 1999, p.66).

This is possibly the most political sense of agendas, beyond the specific issues comprised. Feminist agendas are therefore more than a “navigation chart” which, based on the specific political, economic, social, cultural and sexual conditions of democracy, orientates feminist movements on how and when to negotiate, how and with whom make alliances, how to resist the conservative attacks of States regarding feminist proposals, how to evade the short-sightedness of visible things, and finally how to keep the difficult balance between ethics and negotiation (Tarres, 1993).

This leads us to the issue of movements’ autonomy, or, the autonomy of civil society regarding the State: which is its sense, extent and limits. Many feminist analyses on the relationship with the State, stress the importance of the existence of autonomous trends which are able of being “counter-public” (Fraser, 1996), of generating opinion trends, capacity of exerting pressure, critical mass, etc. Referring to the English context, Randall, for example, states that “for the effectiveness of women’s political participation, there needs to be an important presence of women in State institutions”. Referring to Latin America context, Guzmán goes further stating that “... in stratified societies, demands deriving from gender relationships have more possibilities of transcending the private discourse if women’s presence in broader social domains is greater” (Guzmán, 1996).

Montaño, one of the pioneering feminists regarding State incursions of the decade, states that negotiations with the State, the struggle for law consolidation and the democratization of new official institutions are also a basic part of this feminist agenda, however, it is an essential way, but not enough, to change women’s life. Therefore, for this author there is a clear demand which can be summed up in this way: as long as the movement does not assume the leadership of changes, does not take the initiative, does not propose, does not demand democratic means of interaction, does not lie on a broad democratic social base, we run the risk of regressions and bureaucracy, of reducing efficiency in their appeals or proposal capacity before the State. The risk of distorting proposals and making them apolitically technical may infinitely delay the changes in rights’ awareness and the capacity of an autonomous proposal from institutions of democratic civil societies (Montaño, 1999).

In this new context the question which arises is how to adopt this new stance and an autonomous agenda when the limits of feminist movements are diffused, when economic, social, political and cultural dynamics seem to remark individualization and fragmentation before remarking articulation; when multiplicity of women's identities question the validity of a gender identity in singular.

Maybe the first clue is to consider that autonomy is neither a static political principle nor a fixed reality data, but a concept and a flexible and dynamic practice, related to the context and the democratic challenges posed. The context of the nineties offers a globalized world, with the predominance of neoliberal policies in the economic field, and democratic systems in the political field. The already analyzed strain among democratic dynamics and market dynamics weaken democracy. Feminist proposals have much more possibilities of expansion and consolidation in democratic scenes.

Feminist movements' autonomy, so as not to be isolating, so as not to be only sustained by a "resistance" identity (Castells, 1998) poses the urgent need of assuming feminist identities and proposals as part of broader democratic projects, within flexible gender identities, in dialogue, open to the several modes which gender has in its articulations and with a radically different proposal of society. This is what Varas refers to when she talks about the importance of developing new identities, which are able to start collective actions that express new social demands, and which, at the same time, contributes to democratic governance (Varas, 1998).

Therefore, feminist movements' autonomy aims at strengthening the democratic project, which radically questions existing inequalities and exclusions. And, in this perspective, the main assumption which would orientate feminist movements' collective action would be the idea that "democracy, citizenship, and social movements are indivisible" (Varas, 1998, p.105).

This means that we must be mindful of analyzing how the progress of negotiations and the incorporation of women's agendas into the political-public sphere is not assumed by itself, but permanently with reference to the expansion of the really existing democracies, in the confrontation with any kind of authoritarianism which may create laws and mechanisms for women in contexts of, for example, democratic devaluation and growing authoritarianism. The incorporation of aspects of the agenda does not consolidate only one kind of women but several women identities; equality is not an isolated principle of the acknowledgement of huge, complex, unequal and rich women's diversities. Besides, these diversities are the ones that precisely offer

the possibility of other several democratic alliances, with the same women, with other movements and actors struggling for their modification.

This process of construction of autonomous profiles does not only stress feminist spaces, or feminist proposals, but several spaces and proposals, for the construction of a democratic civil society, in alliance with different democratic sectors and in a civil society which has “rebellious” or alternative spaces for thoughts and actions. This extends the possibilities of promoting the most long-term transformations proposed by feminist movements, and of actively recovering their ethical, political and cultural dimensions. This implies not only giving priority to strategies towards the State, but also those which enable the democratic strengthening of civil societies’ means of expression, organization and transformation. Besides, this will undoubtedly enrich and give a democratic and sustainable horizon for negotiations and/or feminist presence in the political-public sphere. And it will also enable a more clear delimitation and a relative autonomy of the contributions and responsibilities in this relationship: the State is responsible of society and social movements: to acknowledge rights and grant guaranties for their exercise. Civil society and its movements have another responsibility: as regards rights and responsibilities, to exert the right of publicly debating antidemocratic arrangements, expanding the sense of the rights, struggling for them in society and before the State, exerting pressure for the implementation of public policies or guaranteeing new citizens’ rights. And, finally, confirm the acknowledgement of the fact that autonomy of civil society regarding the State is precisely what guarantees the value of its contribution and what creates solid political, social and economic institutions, which are able of offering and demanding clear means through which civil society, by means of their women and organizations, can participate and contribute to the design of strategies and formulation of policies.

## Notes

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1. These processes were initially accompanied by the development of a strong identity politics, which was the propeller of feminist strategies in this first stage. An early and significant vindication of the political autonomy of the movement, stressed on the defence of their own space and discourse. This emphasis is characteristic and necessary in a developing movement, with weak negotiations with the State, strong tension with political parties, which defended itself from the attempts of being ignored and intended to exert influence on the social domain with their own discourse.
2. Growing but insufficient women presence in politics raises not only the question as to how their participation can be promoted but, according to Molyneux, as to what kind of citizenship and public life can be led while public and private spheres keep at distance. It is not only a matter of how to participate in politics, but what happens with politics that do not consider the main hurdle faced by women, i.e., their individual responsibility in the private sphere. Although Garretón states that it is an ambiguous term because it assumes the existence of formal politics which never existed in Latin America (Garretón, 1998, p.552).
3. But fragmentation does not necessarily mean immobility ... or ... It is also a characteristic which shows the new modes of feminist movements, which are plural, in several spaces, with varied and numerous strategies. Institutionalization itself is not negative. It is also a contribution to democracy, it implies a higher professional level, ability to make proposals, feminist effectiveness. According to Hipsher, institutionalization is a process which entails a change towards more standardized, less threatening forms of collective action, which imply less mobilization and disruption. It includes more negotiating emphasis on the electoral process, on working through institutions and government agencies. In sum, it is the “dissension institutionalization” (Hisper, 1998).
4. This is related to other historic tensions suffered by movements and by feminist movements, on different occasions and under different circumstances throughout past and present history, firstly stated by Mary Wollonscraft, stressed by Evers and several analysts of social movements, which point at two basic models of participation: if we have to keep a

separate sphere for women, acknowledging their differences as regards values, abilities, training, or if we have to fight to be full members of society, or, in other words, if feminist struggles aim at the conquest of power positions within dominant structures, running the risk of remaining subordinated, or if they aim at autonomously sustaining an identity without negotiating, also running the risk of going on being weak and marginal. This tension has marked the feminist movements of the nineties in a more concrete and complex way, considering that precisely during this decade, the interactions with the political-public sphere developed with much more strength.

5. This is why the questions posed by Nancy Fraser regarding differences, are important: which differences deserve public acknowledgement or political representation?; which differences are irrelevant to political life, and must be dealt with as private affairs?; which identity demands are linked to the defence of social relationships of domination and inequality, and which are sustained in a confrontation?; therefore, which of them should be abolished, and which of them should be promoted?. Finally, which of them are important for democracy in terms of greater freedom and justice? (Fraser, 1996).
6. This pioneering creation of the Brazilian State machine, which took place by the mid-eighties, undoubtedly constituted an essential influence for their incorporation in feminist agendas. Jacqueline Pitanguy, the first President of the National Women's Council, of the Brazilian State, has defined this incursion into the State as "an astronaut jump", implying all the possibilities which this meant for women. But conditions were different in Brazil. The return to democracy also registered the presence of a strong, vast and coordinated feminist movement which, during the first years, had the best capacity to negotiate, promote and position their agendas. The other key feature of this experience was the capacity shown by feminists to abandon the State when the room for manoeuvre shrank, within the context of growing political conservatism and dramatic function and budget cutbacks.
7. Peru is probably the most paradigmatic case, where things have been particularly difficult, due to the level of government authoritarianism and because even though the Women's Ministry has neither raised great enthusiasm nor managed to promote important contributions to equality, least of all women's equity, much more organizations have been developed at different levels (Women's Defence at the People's Defending Council is one of the most important democratic institutional achievements and is led by a professional feminist), much more women than before have political seats. This situation may set an ethical limit to democratic feminism: in this

case ethics contradicts equality (women's equality without the context which will ensure their permanence: democracy).

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# General scene of the region towards the end of the century

*Marcia Rivera* \*

**B**efore dealing with the detailed analysis of the State transformation processes in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, it is worth outlining the trends registered during the last decade, which seem to influence the performance of economies and of social and political processes in the region during the first decade of the coming century. Although each country presents its own special features, we can identify some common processes throughout the region during the last half of the decade. The following are some of the most important features which will be analysed in the first part of the paper :

1. Decline of the moderate economic growth registered at the beginning of the 90s.
2. General growth of unemployment, of the informal sector and of partially qualified employment, with a greater

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- openness towards women's participation in the labour market.
3. Strong impact of international financial instability on the economies of the region, particularly Mexico, Argentina and Brazil.
  4. Growing social polarization with a continuous high level of poverty and a greater concentration of wealth.
  5. Loss of ground in international trade but strengthening of trade within the region, especially among sub-regional groups such as Mercosur, Central America Common Market and Andean Community.
  6. Growing internationalization of economies, with the constant inflow of transnational enterprises through privatization processes of State companies as well as the acquisition of flourishing national trade and production enterprises.
  7. Significant shrinkage in national productive capacity, particularly, in small and medium size enterprises, which are the greatest job generators.
  8. Untenable use of natural resources which has aggravated the impact of some natural disasters such as "El Niño" or "La Niña" which lashed the coasts of Ecuador, Colombia and Peru, and tropical hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean.
  9. Rise of powers parallel to those of the State, in particular, drugs traffic mafia, clandestine sale of weapons, money laundering and paramilitary forces such as those in Colombia and Guatemala.
  10. Increase of citizens' doubtfulness regarding the legitimacy and representativeness of political power, including the traditional parties, and growing visibility of the actions taken by an organized civil society. Ongoing process of reshape of the political scene in Venezuela, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay where progressive political forces have reached or are about to reach power.
  11. A sense of widespread uncertainty and unsteadiness has been instilled in the populations of the region.



Let us thoroughly study these processes, particularly focusing on the impact on poor women of the region.

### The nineties: A take-off unable to speed up

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Data stemming from national economic organizations and expert bodies of the United Nations as well as the international banking, agree that the countries of the region have faced difficulties in regaining economic growth. Until the end of the seventies, closed economies prevailed in most of the countries of the region, which turned into more inefficient, less productive and competitive economies. Besides, they faced strong pressure due to the payment of the high interests of an accrued foreign debt. The eighties constituted a clear decade of regional stagnation and the group of policies known as structural adjustment programmes, created by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and implemented in all countries during the nineties, pretended to reactivate and invigorate economies for their “competitive” insertion in the global market of goods and services. In another essay (Rivera, 1999) it was mentioned that these policies were based on a group of ideas and points of view which can be summed up in the following items:

1. Macroeconomic stability, market and economic activity deregulation, were considered essential to ensure a sustainable economic growth and for self-regulation of market forces.
2. Likewise, countries were asked to cut back public expenditure so as to cover the deficits which suffered the governments of the region, so as to achieve growth sustainability. This strategy prevailed despite the high social cost which was immediately registered and which strongly and particularly affected the poorest women due to State support restrictions in health, nutrition, housing and education.
3. Neoliberal strategy promoted a shrinkage of State activity to make the State abandon its executive and tutelary tasks, adducing that they were not carried out with the necessary “efficiency and productivity”. According to the neoliberal

scheme promoted, the provision of services should be transferred to the private sphere and commercially and competitively offered in order to ensure greater coverage, lower prices and efficiency. Within the framework of these principles, each country undertook a strong programme of privatization of State companies, with varied results but with a significant reduction of the action scope of the States.

4. A tax reform was promoted in order to enhance domestic savings and private investment, which in most countries turned into a reduction of tax rates for those who generate more income. It was a way of levelling up tax rates on incomes and move into a tax system addressing general consumption which undoubtedly is socially regressive. During the nineties, most of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, approved a legislation in such direction which may be intensifying economic and social inequality among strata. Some countries also made efforts to improve tax collection systems, but they only obtained modest results because those efforts addressed small and medium evaders instead of addressing the great ones.
5. Neoliberal stance also stressed the need to strengthen the principle of private property as a guarantee of entrepreneurial freedom and spirit, and for that purpose, it promoted amendments to legal provisions and legislation. Heated debates took place during the decade, regarding social property of land in indigenous communities and communal lands, and on the possible ways of organizing a social economy of market, with different rules.
6. The implementation of systems of labour flexibility was another line of the neoliberal policies, under which many countries proceeded to repeal legislation which protected labour and provisions which determined employers' responsibilities regarding recruitment processes, working conditions, dismissals, transfers, etc. These actions implicitly wish to destroy the power of unions and labour organizations.
7. Governments of the region and world-wide were demanded to approve laws acknowledging patent rights and copyrights so as to protect the production of huge transnational enterprises.

8. Strict requirements were established to rehabilitate economies in the international financial market, such as acknowledging and honouring the payment of the foreign debt previously accrued, as a condition to obtain new credits. In some countries, the request of new loans was promoted, without an adequate assessment of the impact of the projects, of creditworthiness and potential economic growth.
9. Economy openness should be attractive to international private capitals and this did happen during the decade but with a negative impact on employment.
10. Neoliberal paradigm also demanded the countries to build up formal electoral democracies which allowed the legitimacy of governments.

The impact which this group of policies had on the region has been studied in depth and, at present, several analysts agree that it has a contradictory and negative (in many aspects) effect (CEPAL, 1999; UNDP, 1998; SELA, 1999; Iglesias, 1999; Rivera, 1999). Its inability to enhance the productive system, the generation of income and the reduction of poverty in the countries of the region, is particularly stressed. On the whole, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean registered a very moderate growth during the nineties and in some countries and sub-regions, a decline in growth, as shown in the following charts and tables. According to CEPAL, the average growth rate substantially fell, from 5.2% in 1997 to 2.3% in 1998, this trend prevailed during the first semester of 1999 (CEPAL, 1998).

Although the international financial crisis caused by great market instability, was quite successfully overcome, CEPAL and SELA analysts agree that the severity of the problems suffered in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be ignored. Foreign vulnerability of the region, which, during the last years, has been of growing concern to CEPAL, is still reflected in the financial and commercial area. Exports prices are still low and the possibility of failing to recover the level of reserves cannot be left aside (SELA, 1999).

According to the following chart, between 1997 and 1998 the GDP suffered a significant fall, which is related, among other factors, to the “dragging” impact of the crisis on the international financial market. The fall of GDP per inhabitant is very important even though population growth rates in the region have been slowly increasing during the last years (UNFPA, 1999). The fall of consumer prices was caused by two simultaneous processes: price reduction of goods due to imports

deregulation with a strong inflow of cheap products from China and the south-east of Asia, and a decline in the purchasing power of the population, which made prices drop.

**Chart I - GDP Trend, 1996-1999**

	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>
Gross domestic product	3.6	5.2	2.3
Gross domestic product per in habitant	1.9	3.5	0.7
Consumer prices	18.1	10.3	10.2
Exchange ratio	-0.9	3.8	-4.1

*Source: CEPAL, Preliminary balance of economies in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1998*

It is interesting to notice that in each region, there are some countries which managed to achieve certain dynamism and growth. Mexico, within the framework of NAFTA (North-american Free Trade Association), and some countries of Central America (with assembly plants) took advantage of the expansion of the US economy in order to increase the exports volume to that country. According to the data gathered by CEPAL, Central Americans benefited from the improvement of exchange conditions compared to 1997, unlike the rest of the region, where deterioration was registered (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador and Venezuela). (CEPAL, Panorama, 1998).

In the South Cone, Chile stands out as the country with the best performance regarding growth rates, although the Asian financial crisis also affected its markets. In the Andean sub-region, Colombia holds the top position, even though data dynamism may correspond to other contexts such as the existence of a parallel economy backed up by drugs traffic and weapons dealing. In Central America, Costa Rica is still the main point of reference of the economies of the region, although Belize has started to play the role of a stable economic actor thanks to its strong promotion of tourism, which has also favoured the economy of several small islands of the anglophone Caribbean and of the Dominican Republic.

However, despite this moderate success (after an annual growth of 1.2% during the eighties, only a moderate increase of 3.5% was

Chart II - Annual growth rate of GDP per capita  
1965-1980 and 1980-1995

	1965-1980 (%)	1980-1995 (%)
<b>Caribbean countries</b>		
Barbados	3.5	1.2
Cuba	0.6	n/a
Dominica	-0.8	4.3
Grenada	0.1	3.0
Guyana	0.7	-1.7
Haiti	0.9	-4.0
Jamaica	-0.1	1.4
Dominican Republic	3.8	1.1
S. Vincent	0.2	4.5
St. Kitts and Nevis	4.0	4.9
Surinam	5.5	3.4
Trinidad and Tobago	3.1	-1.5
Average	1.8	1.5
<b>Central America</b>		
Belize	3.4	1.7
Costa Rica	3.3	0.7
El Salvador	1.5	0.5
Honduras	1.1	-0.5
Guatemala	3.0	-1.3
Mexico	3.6	-0.9
Nicaragua	-0.7	-3.7
Panama	2.8	0.1
Average	2.2	-0.4
<b>Andean countries</b>		
Bolivia	1.7	-0.5
Colombia	3.7	1.6
Ecuador	5.4	-0.1
Peru	0.8	-0.8
Venezuela	2.3	-1.1
Average	2.8	-0.2
<b>Southern Cone</b>		
Argentina	1.7	-0.4
Brazil	6.3	-0.4
Chile	n/a	3.2
Paraguay	4.1	n/a
Uruguay	2.5	-0.6
Average	3.7	0.4

Source: Work based on data of the Report on Human Development, 1998,  
UNDP, N.Y.

registered during the period 1991-98) and even in those countries where positive GDP growth rates were registered in some years of the decade, the lost course could not be recovered, on the contrary, many problems became more acute which will be analyzed throughout this paper. Why did adjustment policies fail to enhance economic growth? Which has been the real impact of market openness on the region? What does it mean to generate low level employment with low wages within the framework of widespread flexibility?

As we have already mentioned, neoliberal policies considered that the achievement of macroeconomic stability, tax balance and inflation control, would ensure growth. According to this theory, sustained growth would result in benefits for all sectors, alleviating poverty. The countries of the region followed this theory word for word, but, undoubtedly, the nineties showed quite the contrary. Firstly, although macroeconomic restructuring is essential, it does not, automatically and by itself, ensure growth and this has been clearly demonstrated throughout the region. Growth arises out of the interaction of many factors, among which the following can be found:

- Existence of well-coordinated markets, with clear and agreed rules and verification mechanisms.
- An internal and external perception of stability and confidence in the country and the existence of reliable public and private institutionalization.
- Existence of a workforce able to efficiently use the existing know-how and the motivation of those human resources.
- A prospective capacity and an ability to elaborate strategies so as to create a group of economic policies able to find suitable niches according to the capacity of the country.
- Availability of investment capitals, either domestic or foreign, and credits at sound rates addressing production instead of speculation. Capitals flow into an economy subject to monetary soundness, not merely to stability.

Undoubtedly, in most of the countries of the region, several of these conditions were neither fulfilled during the nineties nor at present. Institutional weakness, political instability and democracy precariousness still tinge the whole region with distrust and has slowed down the process of foreign capital attraction. This adds to the fact that financial market speculators are not as learned as we may expect and they find

it hard to differentiate between one country and another in Latin America. Therefore, when one country poses a problem deriving from its specific context, the whole region tends to be dragged with it. On the other hand, the levels of technological capacity are not high enough to attract industries and education decline, either basic or advanced, makes it difficult to achieve the qualitative jump needed to attain sustained economic growth.

International financial markets' inconstancy is another important element which must be considered to ensure growth sustainability. Even those countries with old-established sound and open economies felt the impact of the international financial crisis which struck the developing world between mid-1997 and the beginnings of 1999, from Asia to Brazil, as well as the "tequila" effect which hit Mexico and Argentina some years before. "As long as those deregulation and liberalization policies which caused the asian crisis, prevail, it will be not be possible to attain stability in said economies or to continue with a sustained economic growth". (Huerta, 1998).

According to CEPAL, financial crises have been the most evident reflection of the great unevenness which exists between a globalized and growing sophisticated but unstable world and the institutions which regulate it. Therefore, there is a growing demand to establish the rules of the game and the adequate institutions for the ongoing financial globalization. CEPAL's director stated that "it is the right moment to think over the problems of financial governance and to start a balanced process of negotiation which ensures an adequate representation of the diverse interests of different members of international community". (Ocampo, 1999).

The promotion of a process of growth and of integral, balanced and sustainable economic development requires much more than the mere arrangement of macroeconomic adjustment policies. Apparently, there is a growing consensus among analysts of the region, regarding the fact that as long as market (particularly, the financial market) liberalization and deregulation prevail, insecurity will not disappear in the region, and the process towards sustained development will never get started. In the region, the yearned openness of markets does not imply better chances of promoting growth, least of all development.

## Loss of ground in international trade and strengthening of inter-regional spaces

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In Latin America and the Caribbean, trade policies have been changing but it still has the nature of a region which mainly exports few products to few markets. That is why economies are so vulnerable to sudden fluctuations of the international prices of basic products. Although almost every country has made considerable efforts to diversify exports, in terms of products as well as target markets, progress is slow. According to a CEPAL report on the commercial insertion of the region (1998), only Argentina and Brazil managed to change their exports structure in both terms (products and markets), while Mexico and Uruguay have diversified exports in terms of products but focused on few markets: Mexico in the United States and Uruguay in Argentina and Brazil. Only Mexico has managed to diversify its exports with goods manufactured on a greater technological basis. On the other hand, Chile, Colombia and Peru focus their exports on a small number of products, but with a great range of target markets, enabling a better management of the situation when purchase power is limited in receptive markets. The countries with less capacity for exports in terms of product diversity and target markets are Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Venezuela. We must consider that the space they have to manoeuvre their policies for the promotion of exports has been limited due to the engagements with the WTO (World Trade Organization) which has made them accept the rules of the game, producing strong imbalances at the international market.

However, the data of the economic transactions among the countries of the region is encouraging and could be the key to new ways towards development in the region. The processes of economic integration in the region show strength and the four sub-regional opportunities of integration are positive signals.

On one hand, we find that the investments of Latin American countries in their own region substantially increased during 1997, according to the 1998 report on "Foreign Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean", prepared by CEPAL. These investments were channelled through the privatization processes of State companies and the acquisition of local companies in different countries of the region. Chile holds a leading position in this process, followed by Mexico and Argentina. The three of them concentrate around 8% of the resources of the sale transactions carried out during the last years. CEPAL report



States that investments within Latin America have been favoured by: reduction or elimination of foreign capital restrictions, privatization plans, regional integration processes, particularly, Mercosur, strategic local agreements among enterprises from different countries, and the renewed strategies of market penetration, including the creation of productive activities or the purchase of local competitors.

### Foreign capital penetration in the region

**A**lthough a strengthening process of trade within Latin America has been registered, it is worth mentioning that it has to face a growing and powerful penetration of foreign (not Latin American) capital in the region, particularly by transnational enterprises. In 1997, joint sales of the twenty main transnational companies of the region exceeded the amount of 144.000 million dollars, according to the 1998 report of CEPAL on "Foreign Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean". The process is leaving an indelible mark, particularly in small and medium size national enterprises which are quickly losing ground. For example, they say that newcomers on the non-financial services area have started to displace national manufacturing companies which had remained active for years. However, in Latin America, the operations of these companies still focus on the car industry, but an external sector is quickly consolidating on the production of food, beverages, and tobacco. They emerge in services such as telecommunications, generation and distribution of electricity, and, most recently, through the acquisition of financial entities.

A recent study of INDEC in Argentina (Clarín newspaper, 1999) shows that 40% of the sales carried out between 1993 and 1997 are concentrated in 500 enterprises which only constitute 1% of the total number of enterprises registered. They also concentrate 65% of the total exports. In a period of five years, their revenues climbed up to 70%, from 6.685 millions to 11.262 millions of Argentinian pesos (which is equivalent to dollars). 60% of those huge companies are foreign. The most profitable activities were mining, transport and constructions. These revenues were mostly achieved with significant personnel cutbacks for during that period, 63.000 workers were dismissed, reducing the burden of their wages and salaries in the total income from 11.7% in 1993 to 9.3% in 1997. According to the report, labour economic cost was reduced even more, because these enterprises,

which paid 3.540 millions in terms of employers' contributions in 1993, ended up paying 2.575 millions in 1997, reflecting a reduction in social security contributions authorized by the Argentinian government. This case clearly illustrates an ongoing trend in the region, which undoubtedly affects the progressive shrinkage of national productive capacity.

Foreign investment modes have also been substantially modified. The usual settlement of subsidiary enterprises has been increasingly complemented by the creation of partnerships based on complex strategic alliances subscribed by enterprises of different nationalities, as well as local entrepreneurial groups and diverse financial entities, especially within the new structure of property of the privatized enterprises (CEPAL, *ibid*). In Argentina and Mexico, several entrepreneurial holdings have emerged, managed from the financial area, within the context of the globalization of capital markets. In practice, this leads to the eventual disappearance of the traditional division between national and foreign enterprise. The political consequences of these processes remain to be seen.

It is worth stressing the growing interest of transnational enterprises outside the region, towards the activities related to access and exploitation of natural resources (agriculture, mining, oil and natural gas). Foreign investors have also had access to natural resources with significant comparative advantages. As a result of the process of market liberalization and privatizations, they have managed to gain access to formerly restricted activities, particularly mining and hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas) and still exert pressure to enter key countries such as Venezuela and Mexico which formerly had nationalist policies which protected these resources. These countries are also pressured by international financial organizations and the World Trade Organization, to open the doors to foreign investment in these areas. Therefore, we can say that the access to national resources is much easier than before because formerly restricted sectors have been opened to direct foreign investment through concessions or privatization of State assets. Concessions have been particularly important regarding gas and oil in Colombia and Venezuela, while YPF privatization played a key role in those processes in Argentina.

Considering what has been mentioned in this paper, we can conclude that structural adjustment policies, including the privatization of State enterprises, market liberalization and deregulation, have failed to create a process of growth and accumulation leading to sustainable development. On the contrary, an extremely slow growth of the GDP, a growing "foreign-conversion" of economies, reduction of national

productive capacity and loss of ground in international trade, is registered. These policies have also had highly negative effects in the social field which will be thoroughly analyzed further on, for they mistakenly believe that growth ambitions solve social problems.

### **Neither growth nor compensatory policies guarantee poverty eradication**

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**T**he increase in GDP growth rates does not guarantee an automatic reduction of poverty levels. This has been clearly demonstrated in the region during the last decade. Latin America still has the most unequal distribution of income throughout the world. According to IDB data (1999), the wealthiest decile of its population has a 17-times higher income than the poorest decile, compared to developed countries where this ratio is seven to one. "Inequality is not a matter of poverty or wealth. It is a broader and more complex problem, related to education, savings and women's access to work", Enrique Iglesias recently stated (IDB, March, 1999).

The macroeconomic achievements registered in Latin America during this decade have not brought about similar progress in terms of equity, with the resulting cost for economic growth, capital accumulation and social development (Bonvin, 1999). However, those countries which have improved their equity, such as those in the Southeast of Asia, have registered a better growth, while those which have worsened their equity, such as Latin America, the most unequal region of the world, face great difficulties. Besides, those who have systematically invested in the universalization of high quality education and health, have achieved better macroeconomic results (Kliksberg, 1997).

Evidently, there is not a quick or easy solution to the problem of social inequality. Any strategy with prospects of success will require a complex and progressive integration of economic, social and institutional policies so as to attain a really balanced development. At present, it is essential to consider economic and social policies in an integrated way, in order to attack poverty and create democratic societies. It is also necessary to deal with the different modes of inequality, regarding personal property, credit access, gender differences and education opportunities, which highly influence competitiveness and growth.

In order to cushion the negative effects which structural adjustment policies have proved to cause, during the nineties, the countries of the region implemented compensatory social policies, through special State programmes such as the so-called social investment funds. They tried to reduce adjustment impact through programmes which would be executed together with local organizations. The transfer of income which poor homes received from the public sector through these programmes has considerably helped to alleviate poverty, especially in the countries of the region which have oriented programmes in this direction, such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Panama and Uruguay. Brazil has also systematically applied a policy to reinforce transfers, which contributed to substantial poverty alleviation from 1990 to 1993, especially in the rural area (CEPAL, Panorama, 1998).

The general trends of poverty and indigence evolution show different results, mainly due to the different approach which each one applied to its programmes. In some countries, significant reductions were attained, such as in Chile, with a reduction of 13 percentage points in poverty and 6 in indigence. The main characteristic of "El Fosis", an organization which coordinated the programmes, is the professional and thorough approach applied in the implementation of its programmes (Raczinski, 1997). Brazil also obtained good results with poverty reduction of 12% and indigence reduction of 7%. In other countries, such as Costa Rica, Peru and Colombia reduction levels were lower, although several resources were allocated. Finally, in a few countries, poverty indicators increased, such as Venezuela where the increase was around 8 and 5 percentage points, and Mexico with 4 and 2 points.

However, comparative studies on the implementation of these programmes, wonder whether the limited impact on poverty eradication and closing the inequality gap, do justify the resources allocated for this purpose, which generally come from loans which add to the already heavy burden of the foreign debt of the region, or whether we should face social policy from other points of view. (Rivera and Levy, 1998; Ziccardi, 1998, Ballón, 1998). Rivera and Levy state that this specific approach is necessary but not enough and that it had the following deficiencies:

- It has promoted the population's unequal access to resources and has reproduced the existing inequality structure, without reaching the poorest sectors and without institutionally strengthening the weakest organizations, with scarce resources and opportunities to participate in social interactions.

- In general, these programmes have not considered gender perspective. In many cases, they have adopted a neutral attitude which leads to inequality persistence. Even though many programmes address women, they reproduce a discriminating scheme.
- Combined investment in health, education and women has proved to have the greatest impact on the creation of social capital, according to several researches. However, in many cases, social programmes concentrate in basic infrastructure and employment areas, and, to a lesser extent, in education and health. Although investments in the latter area are important, they are not usually combined with education and women-oriented programmes.
- Compensatory programmes are said to be protected under the concept of full participation of affected populations. However, some studies have recurrently found practices and approaches of a patronage system, and an exclusively instrumental view of participation, limited to execution and not to the design and evaluation stages of projects.
- Not always has it been possible to involve and/or train employees in order to deal with processes of participatory management of projects and social programmes. The cause is not only administrative or managerial but also organizational and institutional.
- The responses given by many NGOs which cooperate with governmental entities in the implementation of compensatory policies are subject to their adaptation to said policies. The cases under study suggest that social organizations end up establishing pragmatic transaction relationships with the State, orientating the presentation of projects towards infrastructure and employment areas, and displacing the education and social investment ones.
- Decentralization processes, promoted from this approach of social policies, have taken place within the framework of State decline as a service provider. In a context of government deficit, unemployment and lack of provision of basic services such as education, health and nutrition, civil society has become a necessary condition for the prevalence of democracy. But decentralization policies have not always led to the strengthening of local capacities. In some cases more autonomy was given to local governments and the coordination with civil society organizations was fostered, but, in general, responsibilities do not seem to concentrate in central levels of government, while resources and power do, that is why decision and financial State structure was not modified. In other

cases, governments, with a leader and a political patronage system, were locally reinforced or reproduced. In all of these cases, participation and decentralization were regulated and a vertical, concentrated and, based on a patronage system, structure of power remained untouched.

We can therefore see that although compensatory social policies orientated to remedy the negative effects of adjustment have had a limited effect on poverty reduction, they have not helped enough to eradicate the causes of poverty and close the inequality gap. Despite the great efforts made by the governments of the region during this decade, these policies have only enabled the recovery of the poverty levels which existed in 1980, but it has not been possible to reduce the number of poor and indigent people existing in 1990, around 200 and 90 million people, respectively (CEPAL, Panorama, 1998).

Considering that economic growth forecast for the next years states that it will be lower than the one achieved in 1990 and 1999 (IDB, 1999), we can conclude that it will be difficult to attain great changes in the struggle against poverty. A possible increase of poverty can be even expected in many countries. That is why it is necessary to correctly understand the processes which underlie this dynamic of poverty on one side and concentration of high levels of wealth on the other side, so as to elaborate totally different strategies to prevent a scourge which affects very important sectors of the population of the region.

Social inequality is reflected in the great differences of income registered among the members of a society. Between 1990 and 1998 a high level of wealth concentration prevailed. According to CEPAL, this fact owes to "estate, occupational, educational and demographic factors, which have not been particularly modified despite the acceleration of economic growth" (CEPAL, Panorama, 1998). Although national gross real income per inhabitant raised in almost every country, except for Nicaragua and Venezuela, the slight increase only allowed a slight reduction of poverty and indigence levels, but not income concentration.

12 countries were studied in the Social Panorama report of CEPAL, concluding that distribution of income in urban areas improved in 4 countries (Bolivia, Honduras, Mexico and Uruguay), remained unchanged in one (Chile) and suffered a decline in seven (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay and Venezuela). "Despite the important growth of the income per capita registered between 1990 and 1996-97 in Chile and Argentina, in the former country, income distribution remained stable and in the latter it

worsened considerably [...] In Argentina, the significant increase of 37% of the income per inhabitant from 1990 to 1997, only brought along a reduction of 3 percentage points of the proportion of poor homes (Gran Buenos Aires) and, on the contrary, in Brazil a moderate growth of 12.5% of the income per capita appeared along with a decrease of 12 points in poverty" (CEPAL, Panorama, 1998).

This data is very important because it shows that quality or the kind of growth particularly influence poverty evolution. It is not the same to grow based on an endogenous process with the strengthening of enterprises which offer middle and high income jobs than to grow based on assembly plants that exploit workforce with extremely low salaries. It is not the same to grow based on some oil or mining industries (for example) with low capacity to generate jobs if there is not a State capable of redistributing the profits of this growth. This is exactly what happened in Argentina. For this reason we must reject outright the simplistic vision which believes that it is necessary to achieve high growth rates to attain economic upswing, although we admit that they play an important role in poverty alleviation goals.

### **Growth with an increase of partially qualified employment, slightly contributes to development**

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**A**s regards employment, data provided by recent reports shows that although the growth pace of labour-aged population has reduced, it has not resulted in the decrease of labour offer. Considering that job creation did not increase either, the gross result is unemployment growth in almost every country, passing from an average of 7.3% in 1997 to 7% in 1998 (Urban unemployment, CEPAL, 1999). During the last year, unemployment increase was high in Brazil (mainly due to the impact of the financial crisis) and in Colombia, due to violence worsening and production disruption. In almost every country, general unemployment rate is over the two digits. Evidently, this affects the low levels of income in the inferior deciles of the population, dragging down the distribution curve.

Probably, the most remarkable change of the nineties regarding employment was the broad participation of women in the workforce, a process which has changed its nature throughout the years because at present women's participation in labour has increased not only in the

highest occupational levels but, particularly, in homes with the lowest incomes, where reports euphemistically state that “occupational density has risen” (CEPAL, 1999). In fact, what happened is that as standards of living declined, poor women flowed in great numbers towards labour market to complement or increase family income or to become the only breadwinner of the house.

However, this entry in the labour market has been tinged by low quality opportunities. The labour options which have proliferated during the last decade among the whole population, included women, are low productivity jobs – independent works, assembly plant work, microenterprises, domestic work and even unpaid work, such as in Honduras, where people’s work is exchanged for food or they constitute unpaid units of a family work chain (UNDP, HDI, Honduras, 1998). This kind of job, of low quality and pay, poses the additional problem of lack of social protection. These jobs are very common among women and young people, particularly in low income sectors, although according to CEPAL, in many countries the pattern is already and notoriously affecting population with middle and high income. Unemployment among young people (15-24 years old) is particularly serious and in 1998 it represented more than half of the total unemployment in urban areas of Latin America.

### Education: the key to start up development

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**L**ow income levels and less chances of high productivity jobs for huge majorities in the region seem to be based and to derive from great unequal educational opportunities. Although schooling has increased in Latin America during recent decades, relatively few people have managed to finish university studies, while the vast majority drops out before reaching secondary level. The region is chained to a vicious circle, for students drop out because they need to generate income for their families and as they do not manage to reach higher levels of education, they can only apply for low-qualified and badly paid jobs. Those elite groups which manage to reach a higher level of education in the areas where transnational capital operates, are quite easily incorporated into the highest levels of income. This does not happen with professionals in the traditional areas of health (medicine, nursing), law, teachers’ training, etc. Lack of equal opportunities not only produces less social cohesion



but also constitutes a factor which restricts the countries' development ability because it hinders an efficient use of resources.

It is interesting and promising to see the increase which is being registered in women's participation in the educational system, in all

Chart III - Educational access indicators by sex

Countries	Illiteracy rate		Gross rate of enrolment in secondary studies	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Dutch West Indies	8.2	12.6	n/a	n/a
Argentina	3.8	3.8	73	81
Barbados	2.0	3.2	n/a	n/a
Bolivia	9.5	24	42*	36*
Brazil	16.7	16.8	n/a	n/a
Chile	4.6	5	66	73
Colombia	8.8	8.6	62	72
Costa Rica	5.3	5.0	48	52
Cuba	3.8	4.7	78	82
Ecuador	8.0	11.8	50	50
El Salvador	26.5	30.2	30	34
Guatemala	37.5	51.4	26	24
Guyana	1.4	2.5	68	85
Haiti	52.0	57.8	19*	17*
Honduras	27.4	27.3	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	19.2	10.9	62	70
Mexico	8.2	12.6	58	59
Nicaragua	35.4	33.4	43	50
Panama	8.6	9.8	57*	63*
Paraguay	6.5	9.4	38	39
Peru	5.5	17	72	67
Dominican Republic	18.0	17.8	34	47
Surinam	4.9	9.0	n/a	n/a
Trinidad and Tobago	1.2	3.0	66	79
Uruguay	3.1	2.3	74	89
Venezuela	8.2	9.7	29	41

\* 1985 data; no recent data is available.

Source: data taken from the World Report on Education, 1998, UNESCO, Paris.

levels, and the increase of women's schooling rates in most of the countries of the region, according to the following data.

Some important conclusions can be drawn from this data. Firstly, in every case, except for Haiti and those countries with high concentration of indigenous population (Bolivia, Peru and Guatemala), women are having more access to secondary education than men, in relation to their age group. This is highly beneficial to the future development of the region and to face poverty and inequality problems. But this manifests a deep inequality of opportunities for mainly indigenous populations, particularly in Bolivia and Guatemala where slightly more than a fourth and a third part, respectively, of women aged for secondary education, really attend school.

Secondly, only Uruguay, Argentina and Cuba are close to the achievement of a sound coverage of secondary education for the whole population. In industrialized countries, coverage is around 100% while the average for the whole region was scarcely 57% in 1995.

When we analyze a higher level of education we also find very interesting trends such as:

1. a considerable quantitative expansion;
2. a significant increase of private offer;
3. a remarkable institutional diversification;
4. a strong restriction on public expenditure in education; and
5. internationalization sets in unevenly (Yarzabal, 1999).

According to Yarzabal, all higher education components in Latin America and the Caribbean have been exposed to a growing pressure of demand and have replied according to their possibilities. "During the last three decades, the number of students, teachers and clerks, as well as higher education institutions, have considerably increased". Despite this expansion, higher education has only managed to cover 17.4% of men's age group and 14.2% of women's in the region, figures which are far from those attained in developed countries, around 60% (UNESCO, 1998).

In his study, Yarzabal states: "As regards students, the most recent data available shows that between 1950 and 1994, the number of enrolees in higher education institutions was multiplied by seventy-seven, from 270.000 pupils to almost 8 millions (CRESALC, 1996 b). Some studies suggest that it was due to population explosion and the

**Chart IV - Gross rates of enrolment in higher education, 1995**

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
North America	56.9	65.7
Asia/Oceania	34.5	21.4
Europe	28.2	25.6
Latin America and the Caribbean	17.4	14.2
Arab Countries	14.0	7.2
Africa Sub-Saharan	3.4	1.1

*Source: Yarzabal, L. Consensus for the change, 1999; calculated with data from the World Report on Education, UNESCO, Paris, 1998*

increase of coverage at other levels of the educational system. Schiefelbein (1994) studies reveal that, for example, gross schooling rate climbed from 58% to 87% in the 6-11 age group, and from 36% to 68% in the 12-17 age group, between 1971 and 1992, which at the same time increases the number of students who wish and could receive a higher education level. Schwartzman (1999) states that the causes of students' enrolment are concentration of population in big cities, women's irruption in labour market, gradual expansion of basic and secondary education, the demand of new qualifications, certificates and labour opportunities from adults, the requirement of new skills for modern industry and services; and the extension of the welfare State".

However, despite the expansion of basic schooling rates, Yarzabal and others (Schiefelbein and Tedesco, 1995, for example) express their concern on quality and relevance of the education provided, considering it inadequate in the vast majority of the countries of the region.

The data collected from different researches shows that the enrolment expansion in the region, measured through the number of students every 100.000 inhabitants, is not even. This is Yarzabal's explanation: "Remarkable differences in coverage persist among countries and sub-regions, and even within countries. For example, Puerto Rico, Peru, Argentina and Costa Rica reach similar rates to those

recorded in European countries such as France, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, while Haiti, Jamaica, Guatemala and Honduras, still need to make great efforts to extend coverage to minimum reasonable levels”.

Great inequalities in the access to higher education, are found within countries. For example, in Brazil and Mexico great numbers of students of higher education level concentrate in their main cities, while few inhabitants of the rural areas have managed to accede to such educational level.

The analysis of enrolment in higher education by sex, reveals interesting trends, even though many countries do not collect the necessary information to make a concluding assessment. According to the chart below, in half of the countries where information is n/a (not available), women already surpass men as regards tertiary enrolment rate. This trend is highly remarkable in Panama, Barbados and Cuba, and although the exact comparative data is not available for Puerto Rico, it has the same trend. These countries, which still have great quantitative differences compared with more advanced countries, follow the trend registered in North America, where men’s rate is 57% and women’s is 66%. In general, in English-speaking Caribbean islands, a male demobilization process from secondary level, is speeding up, worrying different sectors (Rivera, 1998) and with possible important consequences in the future on economic and social processes.

Evidently, countries from Latin America and the Caribbean must make a massive effort to increase access to higher education. But the truth is that the present policies, promoted by international financial organizations, are spreading that States should privilege primary levels and allow private market to develop higher education. We believe that this must be one of the strategic lines of struggle of the feminist movement because therein lies the possibility of orientating development through other channels. It would be essential to incorporate this issue in the agenda in order to increase enrolment rates at tertiary level. With the present level of public expenditure, as evidenced in the following chart, it is completely impossible to attain the essential levels to start up development.

The countries of the region show a serious lack of science and technology. Financial and management difficulties suffered by State universities, which traditionally had the best research capacity, have resulted in a reduction of scientific research activity or its transfer to other areas, particularly private labs. In this field, prejudices and discriminatory practices against women, who still remain absent from scientific activity, are common. This issue is too broad to analyze it in

depth in this essay but it is worth mentioning that important progress attained in the scientific-technological field of the last decades urgently require an analysis with gender perspective. The consequences of biotechnology, genetics as well as robotics, artificial intelligence and the conservation and sustainable use of biologic diversity, lead to the conclusion that if no action is immediately taken, gender differences will be more remarkable in future generations. Therefore, as an essential strategy to promote new ways of reaching

**Chart V - Gross rate of tertiary enrolment, 1995**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Men (%)</b>	<b>Women (%)</b>
Argentina	33.6 *	37.8*
Barbados	22.4	33.9
Bolivia	n/a	n/a
Brazil	10.4	12.2
Chile	30.2	26.0
Colombia	16.8	17.6
Costa Rica	n/a	n/a
Cuba	10.1	15.5
Ecuador	n/a	n/a
El Salvador	17.5	17.9
Guatemala	n/a	n/a
Guyana	8.9	8.2
Haiti	1.6 *	0.6*
Honduras	11.0	8.8
Jamaica	6.8	5.2
Mexico	15.3	13.3
Nicaragua	9.4	9.3
Panama	21.9	32.6
Paraguay	9.8	10.8
Peru	n/a	n/a
Dominican Republic	n/a	n/a
Surinam	n/a	n/a
Trinidad and Tobago	8.4	6.8
Uruguay	n/a	n/a
Venezuela	2.3 *	21.1*

*\* 1985 data; no recent data is available.*

*Source: Data taken from World Report on Education, 1998,  
UNESCO, Paris.*

**Chart VI - Public expenditure per capita in higher education, 1995**

	US\$	GDP per capita %
Europe	6.585	32.9
North America	5.596	23.9
Asia/Oceania	5.488	17.5
Arab countries	1.588	73.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.241	433.9
Latin America/Caribbean	937	27.2

*Source: World Report on Education, UNESCO, Paris, 1998.*

development, the countries of the region could take advantage of the line drawn by women in tertiary education so as to launch a training plan in the scientific-technological area.

### **Some conclusions on the dynamics of the economies in the region**

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**T**he conclusion which can be drawn from the above analysis is that although the economies of the region needed to start a process of macroeconomic restructuring, the consequences of the orchestrated policies proved to be worse than the problem which originated them. Some conclusions are very clear:

Tax over-adjustment may be inadequate in adjustment processes because it can lead to the suffocation of an economy.

Market liberalization processes, particularly of financial markets in the developing world, must be gradual and cautious so as not to annihilate productive endogenous capacity.

Social costs of economic reforms can no longer be mainly paid by the poorest sectors, especially by women; we need to plan policies in an integral way and develop adequate protection networks to support social sectors which are vulnerable to crises.

Financial governance problems which have been posed will require a balanced process of negotiation to ensure an adequate representation of the diverse interests of different members of the international community, so as to settle clear rules of the game, non-punitive for the weakest people and adequate regulation mechanisms.

The rules of access to international financial resources cannot go on being subject to the conditions imposed by the IMF, which already entail issues related to strategies and institutions of national concern. Particularly, those conditions related to the payment of the foreign debt should be eliminated. If we go on eroding the State's scope for action we will contribute to the growing destabilization of societies.

The pressing problems of environment, mainly caused by the North consumption unbalance, need to be compensated. Adequate funding systems need to be developed for contingencies of countries which suffer natural disasters for that cause.

Undoubtedly, a growth strategy which promotes a quick expansion of high productivity employment will be more effective as regards poverty alleviation.

Societies with high inequality have few possibilities of overcoming poverty. Inequality reduction is essential to create the proper conditions to increase investment in human capital training, which is an essential factor to overcome poverty and promote national savings.

## What kind of State, for what kind of development?

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**I**n this second part of the essay, we will study some of the most outstanding processes of State evolution in Latin America and the Caribbean during the last decade, based on the following questions: which State do we want? For what kind of development? Which are the trends of the region regarding State reforms? In this way, we will be able to identify the possible alternative ways. As we have already seen in the first part, the analysis of the main economic and social processes in Latin America and the Caribbean show an end of century full of problems which are difficult to solve and an exhausted neoliberal model, which has failed to ensure a decent life for everybody in the region. All this has been useful to re-open the discussion on strategies, models or ways towards other kind of development. It is worth mentioning that in this debate it is necessary to be very

meticulous, because many organizations and people are boasting of proposals called “alternatives” with the purpose of merely recycling old unsuccessful recipes. The concepts which have given sense to other currents of thinking opposed to neoliberalism are being quickly co-opted and appear in present declarations and documents elaborated by those who support a view which considers that market, instead of people, is the axis of economic activity. This is the case of the concepts of “human development”, “sustainable development”, “social capital”, among others. This is why it is very easy to get mixed up.

Development is a very complex issue which requires synergy at different levels and the systematic action of very different sectors and organizations. Although lots of things have been written about how economic activity should be organized, with broad variants, the truth is that the view that development should find a balance between the State, the market and the civil society, has an increasing number of supporters. The stages and experiences of State and centralized management of economic and social activity have been left behind. The extremely high cost of a model where a free will market has started to govern all human relationships, is evidenced as well. Those who believe in a development really focused on people, consider that the problem lies in how to build a virtuous equation between these three actors, State, market and civil society. This means, how can we restructure State so that it can assume a new role to ensure different regulations, how can we strengthen civil society so that it can actively participate in the determination and construction of its own future and exercise the ability to control the other two components of the equation and how can we make markets work effectively within a framework of clear, equitable and verifiable norms and rules.

A development of this kind requires the effective integration of economic, social and institutional policies. This integration requires strong State reforms, some of which are very difficult to undertake. It will require the replacement of mechanical, simplistic and patronage approaches by conceptual, multidimensional and dynamic frameworks which show the complex nature of the design and orchestration processes of public policies. Mental effort is needed to create new ways of shaping the State, which may leave space for the imagination and creativity that civil society has been demonstrating during the last years through the wide range of activities assumed.

A new concept of State also needs to acknowledge that State performance is not only related with the governmental body, in the strictest sense, i.e. its organizational structure, but also with the institutional scheme of the State, in its broadest sense. State policies



should allow the increase of public goods production, and orchestrate its execution in a way which can lead to institutional strengthening and the progressive construction of total democracy. Apart from the technical and organizational tools required for the reform of State structures, it is necessary to improve the democratic regime, otherwise, it will be very difficult to grant new capacities to the State. The political construction of the State is determinant, even to ensure good processes of administrative or organizational reform. In this sense, new needs of State capacities appear, of varied nature: technical, management, political and institutional needs.

A vital democracy, which is able to self-consolidate, needs a system of social counterweights, including new and varied modes of citizenship organization which are evident at present in the region. Modes adopted by State policies in order to connect with the complex scheme of civil society, the established institutionalization and the guidelines, criteria and mechanisms to select negotiators, will determine a profile with consequences for civil society as well as for the State body.

These issues inevitably bring along a discussion on the ongoing political and administrative decentralization processes of the region, which still have not found the best institutional solutions and which do not seem to ensure new forms of citizens' participation. Old questions –to what extent and how does decentralization take place, how are local power structures organized, how are resources and responsibilities distributed?– and new challenges –are community organizations able to perform some of the tasks which were formerly carried out by States or local governments?– determine a valid field for debate. In the following section we will deal with some of these issues.

### Recent experience on State reform in Latin America and the Caribbean

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**D**uring the last fifteen years, Latin American governments started to direct towards State's structure reform. In a first stage, the reform focused on macroeconomic adjustment policies, including a high number of privatizations of State enterprises, and cutbacks in the governmental sector.

These measures, promoted by international financial organizations tried to respond to the crisis which had broken out during the

previous decade. The outcome was partially studied in the above section: reduction of the State's scope for action regarding economic negotiation, growing presence of transnational foreign capital in the region, slow growth of economies and stagnation or worsening of unemployment and poverty problems. With the purpose of adapting to this first stage of reforms, many countries (Brazil, Panama, El Salvador, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Honduras) amended their constitutions so as to legitimate adjustment policies, even if it wasn't strictly necessary. "... It would be a re-adaptation, as a means of formally ensuring its prevalence and social value at the highest level of the legal system, and not as a necessary condition for adjustment [...] Constitutional reforms' concentration since the mid-eighties revealed the quick formalization of the neoliberal model in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Vázquez, 1999).

The State reform in Argentina was the one which most strongly promoted the neoliberal model and produced the greatest – and most painful – changes in the country. This reform had two clearly different stages, although both of them took place within the presidency of Carlos Saúl Menem. The first one started at the beginnings of 1990, in a context of hyperinflation which led President Alfonsín to abandon his term of office beforehand. This stage is also associated with the Convertibility Plan and the figure of Minister Cavallo who pretended to attain exchange rate stability placing the national currency and the dollar at the same level and promoting the paradigm of the "minimum" State. This resulted in the privatization of the main public enterprises, economy deregulation and openness to international trade. Economy immediately started to grow but unemployment rate rose and the social effects of adjustment started to be felt. Rosalía Cortés (1999) explains that "manufacture went on being the real ejector of workforce and employment in the construction area suffered strong fluctuations [...] plus dismissals in the private enterprises' sector and State employment shrinkage. These processes aggravated the participation of women coming from middle and low income families – with the consequent expansion of labour offer, caused by family income decline ..."

The second stage of State reform, promoted by the Argentinian government by mid-1996, supported the Convertibility Plan and tried to reinforce adjustment, expanding it to the provinces. (García Delgado, 1997) I recall a conversation with the Vice-President of the World Bank for Latin America at that time, who stated that the Argentinian proposal was much more harsh than the one recommended by the World Bank. This second stage of the reform pretended to tackle the unemployment problem with a so-called labour reform which turned a market which

was considered rigid into a more flexible one. The main argument was that with the existing labour legislation, which ratified the rights acquired through a long union's struggle, and which established clear norms for recruitment, workdays and dismissals, employers lacked incentives to generate new jobs. Making market more flexible, i.e., repealing those laws and principles, would enhance investment. In this way, the neoliberal model was reinforced, aggravating contradictions and creating a growing process of social exclusion. But the political cost was soon felt and the Peronist government is about to lose next elections which will take place on 24th. October. To a larger or lesser extent, Argentinian history is similar to that of the whole region during the nineties.

State reforms performed through constitutions during these years share some common characteristics. For example, many of them reveal a trend to strengthen the figure of the president, giving him greater prominence and placing him in a higher protagonist position than the rest of the powers. Therefore, during the past decade, most acting presidents searched for or pretended to seek re-election, under the protection of amendments. As regards women's rights, there appear contradicting trends: they tend to be restricted in some aspects, to support discriminatory norms or eliminate already acquired rights, particularly in the labour area. But in other cases, progress is registered in aspects on which there is international consensus and which generally do not incur in charges for the States.

Roxana Vázquez (1999), in her analysis about the impact of the legal framework of adjustment policies on women, quotes how different interests in conflict have blended in the redaction of new constitutions as regards women:

"The Peruvian Constitution has eliminated from its text the principle of equal treatment and equal pay for men and women. The Panamanian and the Salvadorian ones prohibit women's and minors' work in dangerous or insalubrious jobs, which implies a double discrimination: segregation of women in specific jobs and consideration of women as fragile and helpless, childish beings. In the Peruvian case, this view is reinforced by declaring that "mother" is protected together with minors, teenagers and old people. Honduran political letter only establishes the labour and social security rights which have been usually granted to women/mothers: maternity leave before and after childbirth, lactation, prohibition on unjustified dismissal of a pregnant worker, maternity protection through a system of social security".

She goes on saying : "... Panama's Constitution does not incorporate the State duties established in the Convention for the Elimination of all Types of Discrimination against Women, although it is subsequent to its ratification. In the substantive sense, no political letter includes norms which tend to prevent adverse effects on women within the framework of adjustment programmes. Neither women's access to employment nor its professional qualification is promoted, the activities carried out within the informal sector of the economy are not the least regulated, and basic guidelines are not settled either, to make gender roles more flexible".

Finally, the author states that as regards achievements, the Argentinian case stands out, because it has granted constitutional rank to the Convention for the Elimination of all Types of Discrimination against Women and has expressly acknowledged positive action measures, particularly, through the establishment of women political participation quotas which have had an important effect throughout the country.

At present, the governments of the region, are mainly focused on creating a State reform addressing two main aspects: creation, fusion or elimination of governmental institutions so as to meet tax balance demands and carry out an administrative decentralization in order to comply with the requirements for the achievement of a greater "efficiency in expenditure". But, in general, in most countries, the State reform issue is still tackled under a strictly technical approach, overlooking the political content which affects any process of public institutionality transformation, by virtue of its own nature (Garnier, 1997). For example, these reforms occasionally include key issues such as citizens' participation, national priority rationalization, environment conservation, innovative management of human resources, institutional modernization, creation of equal opportunities in health, education and employment, protection for vulnerable population, justice in Treasury income collection or a balance for authorities as well as for citizens. All of them should be the central issues of a democratic State reform. It is necessary to insist on the fact that State reform cannot be regarded as a specific effort, always originated by problems in tax accounts. On the contrary, it must be regarded as a continuous and permanent process of adaptation of collective aspirations so as to achieve a progressive democratic governance through a growing process of citizenship development and people's participation.

The case of State reform in Chile is interesting because it demonstrates their aim to use technocracy with valuable social purposes. The State reform engaged by President Frei's government aims at results.

Therefore, it seeks a clear determination of missions and objectives, a clear nature of its products and results, the assignment of specific responsibilities, the promotion of flexibility and autonomy in administrative, financial and personal matters, and the establishment of a system of incentives according to goal achievement and excelling. This must be focused on investment in human resources, i.e., training, education and health. According to Riveros (1995) this approach enables to present the State reform as a process of consistent, gradual and complementary progress, which may be subject to reformulation. In this process, public sector management will be increasingly decentralized and regulating, instead of centralized and direct provider of goods and services. These reform proposals reveal a concept of a State which operates with the logic of efficiency and effectiveness of a well-coordinated market where population is the client and the State is the enterprise.

Undoubtedly, the exception to the trend of technocratic State reforms or reforms created subject to the neoliberal model, is taking place in Venezuela with the debates and works of the Constituent Assembly summoned by President Hugo Chávez to promote a “democratic revolution” through a deep transformation of State institutionality in the country. I consider that, at present, this is the most novel process which is taking place in Latin America and that may lead to a very different regional context where alternative ways to development can be planned and proposed. The Constituent Assembly has been working for some months and will submit to popular referendum a new Magna Carta which pretends to “reconstruct the Republic on the basis of democratic popular participation”. Although it is true that gender aspects have not had visible debates, the context and the general vision of the new document would enable to take another way towards development on the basis of greater equity in every sense, including gender. The ongoing State reform in Venezuela does not merely represent a change of administrative mechanisms but an essential, deep, change in the rules of the game, which completely redefines the political context.

## In search for decentralization and efficiency: decentralization initiatives and local governments

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**D**ecentralization has been an essential element in the process of adaptation of public management to new development approaches and to democratization processes which have distinguished the region from the eighties onwards. But too much has been probably expected and too soon. If we revise the bibliography on this issue, we can find that it is featured as the magic wand which must make public expenditure management more efficient, give more opportunities to citizen's participation, make a significant contribution to democratization, etc. etc. In fact, starting a process of decentralization of civil service and public powers is a very complex affair which, up to now, has had contradictory results in the region.

According to Finot (1997), thanks to their federal constitutions (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela); to previous processes of administrative decentralization (Chile and Colombia); to the existence of a valuable cultural heritage of self-government outside the State (Bolivia) or to the fact that decentralization has contributed to some of the pacification processes (like in many countries of Central America), most of the countries of the region, have been able to progress rather quickly as regards decentralization, although results are limited regarding global efficiency or improvement of citizens' possibility of participation.

On one hand, decentralization has not meant that democratic procedures would be totally incorporated into decision-taking processes. In some cases, the revival of the political dominance of a local boss and the traditional system of patronage taken to the public sphere, can be noticed (Rivera and Levy, 1997). Limited qualified human resources for the orderly and transparent performance of financial resource administration, are also noticed. With some exceptions, institutionalized citizens' participation has not been put into practice. The same can be said regarding the hope that women could find, at this level, a better means of participation. It is true that there are more opportunities of citizen interaction at local level, but it has not been institutionalized yet and it does not constitute a real difference in power structure.

On the other hand, in view of the lack of key and effective mechanisms of resource redistribution, decentralization may result in a penalization of the poorest local groups. This happened in Brazil in the decentralization processes of education and health, showing that with decentralization, the poorest municipalities became more precarious. A contradiction among political decentralization attempts is evident in view of the conspicuous ongoing reinforcement of presidential powers, which has given place to new practices of hierarchical power relationships. Therefore, it is essential to go on studying in depth decentralization experiences in order to draw important conclusions to re-orientate development.

### Civil society strengthening from the State

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**F**inally, one of the most important elements of the debates on State reforms in Latin America and the Caribbean during the last years has been the citizens' participation issue. Despite the favourable discourse of participation, conditions were not really adequate enough for participation in the governmental sphere considering that it pretends to contribute to its own democratization. (Cunill, 1995). Participation is still considered instrumental and is feasible as long as it can contribute greater coverage, efficiency, effectiveness and less expenditure to the orchestration of public policies, specially, those of social nature.

Participation is a key concept in the sustainable human development paradigm which the UNDP has been promoting during the last decade. According to UNDP, development has to place human beings as the centre of its concerns, so as to ensure more opportunities and the full development of people's capacity in a society. In this way, people will be axis and propellers of the development of society as a whole.

An increasing number of people and institutions which support this idea, and, therefore, bibliography on development experiences during the nineties, makes lots of references to the participation issue. It is evident that in order to reverse social exclusion, which is growing and threatens stability and governance of many countries, a new coordination between the public and private sphere is needed; citizenship construction processes need to be fully assumed by all sectors of

society, not only by the State. But resistance is still very strong, although people say that they agree.

Throughout the nineties, the United Nations system held several world conferences where the heads of the States of all the world, agreed on national and world strategies to face urgent development problems related with environment (Río, 1992), human rights (Viena, 1993), population (Cairo, 1994), social development (Copenhagen, 1995) and women's condition (Beijing, 1995). In each summit meeting, the important concept of sustainable human development proposed in the human development reports was ensured through Declarations and Action Plans. This means that there is a growing general consensus in favour of this development vision among world-wide governments. But, in practice, contradictory policies are applied.

The greatest resistance to human and sustainable development comes from international financial organizations although now they wish to appear as the main promoters of participation's role in this kind of development. During the nineties, the IDB as well as the World Bank have carried out some researches and created new programmes designed to defend the idea of the necessary participation of people in development processes. "Participatory development, strengthening of civil society, people's empowerment", are usual terms used at present in the bank's slang. But as Venezuelan people say: "ojo pelao" which means "watch out".

The IDB as well as the World Bank have an approach which could be featured as operative for they consider participation as "the process through which people and entities that have a real interest (stakeholders) exert influence and participate in the control of development initiatives and in the decisions and resources that affect them" (World Bank, 1998). The term "real interest" seems to assume that not all human beings are interested in taking part in affairs which affect their lives, which is rather doubtful in view of human nature. Besides, from both institutions' point of view, participation is good, to a great extent, due to its contribution to efficiency, effectiveness and because it manages to incur in low costs in programmes and projects, not necessarily because it is good for people, for standards of living or development. "Participation improves the design of a project by reducing the cost of gathering data on environment, social and cultural factors, as well as on needs and priorities of the key actors of the project [...] A well-designed participatory process, may help to solve or deal with conflicts through the creation of a common basis for negotiation among the interested groups. Detecting and solving those conflicts at the first stages of the project, further helps to reduce supervising costs"



(IDB, 1999). The World Bank has been promoting the participation of the poorest sectors in its projects. "According to our experience, their participation in projects and programmes results in a better outcome as regards design and execution as well as more efficiency, including a greater identification with said projects and programmes". (World Bank, 1999).

The World Bank has also promoted changes in policy orientation so that women could have more participation in economic and social processes. But their argument is that it has been empirically proved that women are more productive economic agents for development, due to the fact that an investment, such as, for example, providing education for them, has a bigger multiplying effect than a comparable investment on men. (World Bank, 1995). But to achieve gender equity is not merely a matter of economic profit, but the settlement of a historic debt which societies have with women who are still being subordinated and discriminated.

The analysis of both financial institutions is decisive in terms of the contribution that participation may offer to development processes. According to IDB, "participation is essential for a sustainable development [...] Participation can strengthen local institutions as regards their administrative capacity, self-management, loyalty, transparency, responsibility and resource access. This greater capacity of institutions is what provides greater stability to a project [...] Through a participatory assessment, people can realize if the benefits and the extent of the project are equally accomplished and if they allow corrective measures whenever it is necessary. The ideas of justice and commitment regarding a project are mutually reinforced. Participation increases assessment credibility because people trust the information that they generate by themselves". (ibid)

In the recent proposal presented by the World Bank President to determine an integral framework for development, James D. Wolfensohn (1999) stated that "civil society, in all forms, is probably the most important factor for development due to its human contribution, experience and history but it may not be so important regarding monetary contribution [...] Undoubtedly, a greater cooperation with governments, multilateral and bilateral organizations and the private sector would benefit everybody".

The democratic project required to meet the demands of societies and to find new ways to other kind of development, implies a strong participation of civil society. But this project cannot come true if the dilemma suffered by a civil society which despises the traditional political organization (the already discredited parties) and which has

not created its own means of expression and political action, is not solved. Therefore, as Nogueira (1999) states, it is a matter of restructuring politics as a practice and as a project, recovering political dimension so as to transcend the traditional politics of politicians, reaching people's own lives. In this aspect, women's role is of vital importance; they are the ones who can channel political processes and determine social-economic projects with totally different parameters from the already exhausted ones. Nogueira mentions a triple exhaustion, which I agree. "Firstly, the depredating capitalist model which prevailed during the last two centuries, is exhausted. Secondly, the neoliberal model which was used to face the State crisis of the seventies, was also exhausted. And, thirdly, the left crisis was also exhausted after reaching a full assertion within the context of structural changes suffered by contemporary societies". That is why it is essential to recover collective force to overcome this exhaustion. The debate on how to do it has been re-opened and it is our duty to actively participate in it.

## Notes

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This issue is carefully analyzed in another paper. See Marcia Rivera, Gender Perspectives on Globalization and Technological Change, paper presented at the Seminar on International Solidarity and Globalization: In Search of New Strategies, summoned by the Swedish government, and the non-aligned movement, Stockholm, 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1997.

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Panel

Institutionalization  
of women's  
participation in politics



# Women and resources' distribution

*Rosalba Carrasco* \*

**I**f it was necessary, at present, that women assumed an increasingly active and relevant role in the creation of public policies and in the orientation of development itself, it would be necessary to ask ourselves whether there are possibilities of creating institutions or exerting influence on the already existing ones, so as to eliminate inequalities between men and women from the point of view of resource distribution.

Which are the mechanisms or instruments which would enable an egalitarian access to public budgets and how far have we gone regarding their creation? The answer is not simple, but it would undoubtedly be of great help to review the different experiences in countries of the region, which will certainly reveal a contrasting scene.

We must first admit that despite the progress registered in certain areas as regards political participation, it has not produced changes of

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the same magnitude as regards budget. Experience shows that regarding budget decisions, and its orientation, women have not found equal conditions to attain government support, as well as to exert enough influence on institutional mechanisms where national priorities are determined. In this sense, it is worth asking ourselves whether parliamentary representativeness, women leadership or the creation of government entities such as programmes, ministries or women's bureaus, are or could constitute the only possibilities of progressing in this field.

I would say that those institutions are necessary, but not enough, we have to explore new mechanisms to achieve more resources for women and to exert influence on the orientation of programmes (not only the social ones), and these mechanisms could operate as qualified entities (with public and private participation), operate at local level, or by institution, and with the capacity to influence on planning with a gender approach. But all this, requires, on one hand, political decision, and, on the other hand (on women's side), capacity to innovate and learn.

## The importance of expenditure

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**A**lthough budget is still a privileged fiscal instrument to deal with inequality and promote societies' welfare, at least in my country, it is a public field almost unexplored by women, although we contribute to its funding.

It is common to state that public expenditure is one of the main instruments of economic policy and I would add that it is also the main instrument of any strategy of any government. Public expenditure not only reflects quantitative priorities of a country, but the process of design, execution and evaluation of the national budget considerably reveals the degree of institutional progress of countries. It also reflects the level of development and interaction between the main social and political actors, and their capacity to determine minimum consensus. Moreover, the way in which public expenditure is analyzed, approved and supervised is one of the clearest expressions of the kind of relationship between executive and legislative powers. If our influence on budget is not enough, it therefore reflects what still needs to be done in other key processes.

Budget is intended to meet all the areas of public administration and to cover practically all fields of national life, however, this task has



not been developed with a perspective which balances social and gender inequalities.

Briefly, which could be the main problems arising from the still insufficient capacity of women to influence on the distribution of public resources? Based on the experience of my country, and on the organization of several workshops on public budget with different Mexican leaders, the following can be pointed out:

- The first problem is visibility. According to the way in which budgets are structured, it is not possible to make a clear identification of the programmes specifically addressing women and, therefore, it is difficult to quantify in an accurate and reliable way, the total amount of national resources assigned by sex. This happens at national as well as States' level, which enables to hide inequalities. Budget is generally distributed among few programmes (most of them scattered) and in several actions of different magnitude and slightly articulated between them.
- The second problem is the orientation of programmes and the concept which underlies. Certain budget assignments are established, which, apart from being small, are out of proportion to needs, and are frequently based on the idea that all women have the same needs, that they restrict to their reproductive role or, at best, reinforce the association between women and family. Another example: actions on health and, particularly, those relative to reproductive health and family planning stand out as programmes naturally addressing women, while actions focused on ensuring reproductive rights (on a voluntary election principle) to sexual health, information, access to decent, secure and high quality medical services, to preventive and nutritional assistance, or those addressing women in different periods of their vital cycle, have relatively little weight. With a few exceptions, most programmes consider that women's assistance is the means to improve the educational level of their children or to influence on health conditions and on access to basic services of districts, based on traditional roles and without acknowledging the specific nature of women's needs, demands and interests.
- The third aspect is the limited vision and also partial of budget when resources are assessed for women because they, at best, are only associated to social programmes and within them, to the assistance ones. But it is evident that it is not only a matter of social

expenditure. In order to attain gender equity, influence on many other aspects of budget is required: on educational policy, on employment programmes, on labour training, on science and technology research, on support mechanisms for micro-enterprises created for and addressing women, on commercialization programmes and access to credits, on justice diffusion programmes and on cultural ones, among others.

Additionally, insufficiencies as regards evaluation and balances are found through socially discussed and agreed standards and the construction of gender indicators. Information systems on expenditure lack enough tools to measure the impact on women's living conditions and the extent to which programmes may meet women's interests and needs.

- Another aspect is that discussion focuses on amounts, while it also requires the orientation towards processes and the appraisal of quality, opportunity and transparency of budget. The best lock against centralism reproduction is to set clear, national and objective rules and explicit criteria to distribute expenditure. At present, we face the need to test other mechanisms so as to improve quality, opportunity and transparency of public expenditure, among which we find the adoption of operational and specific criteria to incorporate gender approach into public programmes and into all fields of government activity.
- Finally, we find the problem of women's scarce capacity to exert influence, in decision-making spheres, on expenditure orientation and programme design, at political as well as technical levels. Likewise, particularly in the case of social programmes and those against poverty, no participation, in a systematical and non-marginal way, has been registered at all levels and in different opportunities of programmes' social participation. Therefore, it is very important to promote actions where women are active participants, and where they do not only act as beneficiaries and support targets.

A budget with gender approach must be at least based on three main lines: equity in resource and benefit access; acquire decision power in the design, operation and evaluation of programmes, and promote programmes which give rise to autonomy, considered as women's possibility not only of having more access and control on resources, but also of making decisions on their lives by granting them the necessary tools,

Assuming the engendering nature of the gender approach which intends to compensate unbalances and dismantle institutionalized inequalities, constitutes an important step in this process. For this purpose, it is important to consider, once again, the value of affirmative action in all sectors, bureaus, or ministries and in every development and growth plan. Actions must be coordinated in each government order, i.e, trying to permeate national, State and local levels. Apart from working to establish more equitable norms in all programmes, a consistent sensitization labour of employees and operators in this matter, is required. The above can only be consolidated as long as the space for social participation and surveillance and legislative participation, is institutionalized.

It is a priority to incorporate our demands into budget, in a consistent way, trying to spot women's differentiated needs and specific ones, and changing attitude, from considering them as mere beneficiaries of programmes to participants of a broader process, linked to the determination of national priorities and the creation of political agreements.

A budget orientated towards gender equality could have the following characteristics:

- a. to distinguish between family and women,
- b. to balance productive and reproductive emphasis,
- c. to make available new mechanisms of access,
- d. to stop regarding women as a socially disadvantaged group, ignoring the origins of this disadvantage,
- e. to incorporate non-traditional projects and assign resources for key programmes such as prevention and assistance for domestic violence,
- f. to establish and extend participation mechanisms in the determination of priorities and to institutionalize the spaces for legislative and citizens' participation so as to have an effective decision power on the assignment and orientation of resources.

## Mexico experience

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One of the mechanisms which have proved to work are qualified entities which should exist in most public institutions. In Mexico, we have recently started an interesting process where, based on a political decision promoted by the pressure exerted by several feminist groups (Diverse is among them), a set of norms was established for programmes against poverty including two key aspects: first, the explicit assumption that all programmes incorporate a gender approach; and second, to try to make that 50% of the resources and actions be assigned to women's specific needs.

In order to contribute to these two measures, Working Table on Gender Approach of the Citizen's Consultative Council, was created. It is a plural institution which tries to facilitate processes, identify difficulties and give some advice which is what has been done until now. The task is huge but this institution has been some kind of social "controller" to eliminate persistent gender inequalities and to exert pressure on programme operators.

At present, this institution faces many challenges. The first one is to attain institutionalization as a permanent mechanism of mixed participation of women citizens and civil servants where feedback can be obtained. The second one, and maybe the most difficult to achieve, is its partial professional nature because all of us participate in an individual way and with no remuneration. The third one is to develop the capacity to provide appropriate tools so that government programmes can plan and evaluate gender perspective (such as, for example, operation manuals, and training methodologies).

One of the consensus attained in the Table is that it is not only a matter of making more women beneficiaries of programmes; this would undoubtedly imply progress. But it is also a matter of women participating in terms of justice and equal opportunities. And, that we have access (in equal conditions) to decision-making mechanisms as regards assignment and orientation of resources.

Finally, it is necessary to develop the capacity to translate cultural changes in public policies' principles such as equity, diversity acknowledgment, non-discrimination, pluralism, tolerance, participation and respect for human dignity and to link all these principles with basic objectives of redistribution, equality and full citizenship. The task is not easy, but in this process, modern feminism may play a relevant role.

# Quotas: calling power relationships into question

*Sônia Miguel\**

I am trying to make a brief reflection on the meaning of the policies of quotas and their impact on Brazilian society. However, as a backcloth, I think it is important to remark three issues :

1. Which is the purpose of the changes that the feminist movement wishes for society?
2. Which are the steps to be taken and in which way?
3. Which are the abilities and limits of the feminist and the women's movement to create and contribute to these changes?

From this starting point, and urged by the rich debates of this Seminar, discussing issues such as the importance of the women's movement autonomy; the challenges of the relationship with the State; the knotty

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points of the process of globalization; the process of growing institutionalization of the movement – others prefer to talk about the process of “ngoization” - I thought about the need to play down forever the concepts of autonomy, State, globalization. Behind the elaboration of these concepts there are people with needs and wishes. And this is the orientation I would like to give to the construction of another society: respect towards people, towards each one of them. This means, includes and implies what is nowadays called “social citizenship”.

But, going back to the issue of playing down concepts, when we talk about autonomy, for example, it is necessary to place it within the context. As everybody knows, autonomy is always relative. We are dependent beings since we are born. Rita Lee, a Brazilian singer and composer, wittily described this in one of her songs: “I depend on love”. Being dependent, is somehow one of the characteristics of human beings, and we must value this dependency.

We must value dependency that makes us live and have relationships within society, creating and changing the world. But it is essential to build up these relationships based on autonomy, respect, solidarity, dignity, for a better living - TO BE AND TO HAVE – for all men and women. And this must also be a commitment.

On the other hand, when we think about autonomy, it is important to resort to our experience as NGO participants. We are aware of the difficulties faced to be autonomous, we are aware of the great dependency on funding, mostly, international funding. Much of our energy is used to work out how and where we will get funds to develop our work. And we are aware of the richness and ambiguity of this relationship. There are quite a lot of examples, and, as regards ambiguity, recently, in Brazil, as well as in other Latin American countries, some non-governmental organizations have undergone difficult moments when they were told about the (fortunately temporary) suspension of funds for some already developing projects.

The constant financial instability and the difficulties to obtain support for long-term projects, make us more vulnerable to interest shifts – either thematic or regional - of national or international cooperation agencies. The consequences of these shifts are the need to manage resources or funds, redistributing them. This is a level of dependency and of lack of autonomy which we permanently face and which is rarely mentioned.

However, if we are going to talk about richness, it is worth mentioning that this meeting gives us the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with women from different places, with the support of international cooperation. This is the challenge we face: how can we

build up a feminist and women's movement which may be able to establish cooperation agreements, and, at the same time, achieve a higher degree of autonomy, and also financial autonomy. This must be our own concern, as members of feminist movements.

When I think about the course of the necessary transformations in the world we live, I believe that the feminist movement must place more emphasis on the debate in the field of ideas, cultural changes, sensitizing people to new values. In the discussion of a controversial issue such as abortion, for example, maybe we should invest more efforts in advocacy actions to obtain more legal authorizations or to legalize it. We must take this concern into account when we work, for example, in governmental organizations or when public policies in different areas are discussed in any institution.

How can we take over our domains or the domain of the ideas we advocate – because the number of men who are sensitive to the issue of gender relationships is growing and in view of the need to modify these relationships in people's everyday life and the so-called private life in order to change the unbalanced social situations and relationships? How can we carry out this?

It is essential to constantly ask ourselves which is the kind of power we wish and to question the way in which the latter is exercised, while women gain access to new spaces of citizenship and in view of the growing opportunities to hold power positions. It is essential to recover the feminist movement as a cultural movement which enables the exchange of ideas, the transformation of imaginary beliefs, attitudes towards life and life expectations.

I am worried about today's lecture where science was praised and other visions of the world were dismissed. I do not want a world where the power of science undermines other knowledge. Respect and space are essential for those who believe and live in a different way. People who come to this world (and their stay is truly short, by the way) trying to understand the meaning of life through other visions such as religion, tarot, spirituality and other interpretations, whether magical or not. All of them are ways of understanding and explaining life. Why should we believe that science, which is also a creation, is the only or the best truth? This alarms me because when this kind of concept reaches power levels (believing that there is only one single truth) the consequences registered throughout history have always been tragic.

We must take up again the main values of plurality, diversity, solidarity, sensitivity, because I am also alarmed when we start to talk exclusively about State, economy, market as the core of everything, as the final objective of our strategies. I do not want to live in a market-

world where everything is sold and everything is bought. I want human beings and nature to be the heart of the world.

It is important to understand the logics of the world we live, mainly with a capitalist façade which stills enslaves peoples, in a somehow moderate but nonetheless violent way, even to be able to participate in it. But I find it unacceptable when we start to act under the belief that it is the only possible way of living in this world, and we get involved in this logic with no criticisms. I do remark the capacity to act differently. The capacity and courage of other discourses and of other proposals.

### State-of-the-art: quotas

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**I**f we look back on women's history and their conquests, we will notice that significant progress has been attained in different fields to improve living standards. The openness to labor market, civil and social rights conquest, reveal the transformations registered throughout the world and in women's and men's lives.

However, when we think about women's empowerment, the scenery is not encouraging. The percentage of women holding office and power positions is still low in most of the countries. Several studies have already reported that hierarchical position and women's presence are inversely proportional.

The same happens in Brazil; all legislative houses, even with the system of quotas for the election of town councilors, members of legislative assemblies and district and federal houses, women representation does not exceed 11%.

During 1996 elections for the Chambers of Town Councilors, which was our first electoral experience with quotas for women candidacies, a growth in the number of elected women was registered, compared to the previous term, around 111%. From 3085 women town councilors to 6536.

In 1998 elections for Legislative and District Houses, a growth of 30% was registered in women benches. As regards the Federal House, the results were surprising: even with the system of quotas in force, the number of elected women reduced from 33 to 29, which constitutes a 12% reduction.

The policies of quotas appear as a proposal to change more quickly the inequality scenery, redistributing and balancing the number of men and women in the exercise of power. The process to



### Representation in Brazilian legislative power

	women	%	men	%	total
Chamber of Town Councilors	6536	11,23	51643	88,77	58179
Legislative Assemblies and District Houses*	107	10,09	953	89,91	1060
Federal House*	30	5,85	483	94,15	513
Federal Senate	6	7,41	75	92,59	81
TOTAL	6679	11,16	53154	88,84	59833

*Source: Higher Electoral Court – 1996 and 1998 elections*  
*\*Data corresponds to December 1999 and already includes some deputies in office.*

reach a Congress which may initially ensure a minimum quota for women’s candidacy and then a minimum proportion between the candidacies of each sex, was subject to several negotiations in the Brazilian federal parliament.

The first attempt to include an article in the Brazilian electoral legislation, ensuring a quota for women candidacies, took place in 1993. At that time, the proposal was rejected without being discussed. At that moment, even the organizations of the Brazilian women’s movement had been absent in the debate.

In 1995, when the electoral law that regulated the elections of Municipal Governments and Legislative Houses, was discussed, the scenery had already changed. Women members of parliament in the Federal House and Senate have taken action to approve an article in electoral legislation to ensure a minimum quota for women’s candidacies. Different sectors of the movement organized by women were in favor of the approval of quotas for women’s candidacies to municipal legislative houses.

After an intense debate, a minimum quota of 20% for women’s candidacies was approved – article 1, paragraph 3 of the Law # 9100/95. It is worth mentioning that at that time the agreement for the approval of the article included the increase of the total number of candidates that the parties or coalitions could present, undermining the impact of the approved article. The same happened with the approval

of the 1997 electoral legislation – article 10, paragraph 3 of the Law # 9504/97.

The discussion and approval in the Federal House and Senate of the quotas' legislation, the interval between the discussion of the first law of quotas and its actual implementation, with the registration of women's candidacies, was really short. Less than two months passed from the date of submission of the project, on August 19, 1995, until its incorporation as an amendment of the legislation, on September 29 of the same year. And the period of time planned between the approval of the legislation and the deadline for the registration of parties, with a right to 20% of the seats of each party or coalition, for women's candidacies, was only of 45 days.

In order to attain this approval, by means of an expeditious legislative procedure, the participation of the women's movement was essential, providing support and reinforcing the initiatives of the Women Bench, submitting articles dealing with women's political participation and assessing their representation in power positions, to mass media.

The initiatives for quotas which already exist in some Brazilian unions and in some of the governing bodies of the parties, as well as the experience of several countries in Europe, and of Argentina, in our close Latin America, encouraged the Brazilian parliament. For the approval of the amendment, the process of the World Conference on Women has had a favorable impact, together with the women's movement in Brazil, making the most of the Conference atmosphere to take up again the articulation among their different organizations; and a Women Bench which obtained the support of leaders and male members of parliament from different benches.

For the approval of the law of electoral quotas in Brazil, as well as for other laws related to women's rights, the presence of women in organizations outside parliament, has always been essential for they seek and give rise to a constant dialogue with society in general, exerting pressure for the creation of public policies which take into account and incorporate new perspectives such as the effective establishment of more equal relationships between men and women.

However, the discussion of quotas in Brazil, as well as in other countries of the world was not settled with the approval of electoral quotas. At present, 12 proposals which deal with women's political participation, and, particularly, with women's empowerment, i.e., proposals which try to ensure a greater participation of women at different levels of power, are under study in the National Congress. Ten

of them are related to affirmative actions, and out of those ten, eight suggest the adoption of quotas by sex in different circumstances.

The public-opinion poll carried out by CFEMEA on women's rights which were dealt with in the Platform for Action of the IV World Conference on Women with the participation of 313 (52,7%) out of 594 Federal Members of Parliament, registered a stronger resistance of those members of parliament, for the acceptance of the policy of quotas, in other powers than in the legislative one.

In the Legislative Power (for candidacies in proportional elections) the policy of quotas was well-accepted: of the total number of members of parliament who participated in the poll, 198 (63,3%) expressed their approval to the maintenance of quotas by sex; 94 (30,1%) expressed the contrary; and 18 (5,7%) answered that they had not taken a position.

In the Executive Power, the results were as follows: 142 (45,4%) members of parliament were against the adoption of quotas by sex; 101 (32,3%) were in favor; 64 (20,4%) stated that they had not taken a position.

In the Judicial Power, 139 (44,4%) members of parliament were against the adoption of quotas by sex; 110 (35,1%) were in favor; and 60 (19,2%) answered that they had not taken a position.

### Proposals under study in the federal legislative power

<b>Issue: power</b>	<b>amount power</b>
Affirmative actions – quotas by sex in the judicial power	05
Affirmative actions – quotas by sex in the executive power	01
Affirmative actions – quotas by sex in parties	01
Affirmative actions – parity by sex in the legislative power	01
Affirmative actions – other issues	02
Other issues	02
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

*Information System of the Congress – SIC/CFEMEA – February, 2000.*

Apart from the adoption of quotas in other levels of power, such as the executive and the judicial powers, the submission to the Brazilian legislative power of a proposal, neither of minimum nor of maximum quotas for each sex, but of parity among sexes, raises again the issue of quotas in the legislative power. The Bill # 2355 of the year 2000, which rewords the 3rd. paragraph of article 10 of the Law # 9.504 of September 30, 1997, proposes that as from the 2002 elections, “the number of seats resulting from the provisions in this article, each party or coalition must keep 50% for candidacies of each sex. The project also suggests penalty measures for those parties which do not comply with the law – a penalty and the loss of 50% of the candidacies which they have the right to submit.

### Conclusion: power in other fields

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**T**he results of both Brazilian electoral experiences –1996 elections for Town Councilors Chambers and 1998 elections for Legislative Assemblies and District and Federal Houses– confirmed their importance and, at the same time, reaffirmed the need to associate other measures to enable, extend and diversify women’s spaces of empowerment.

We cannot analyze in a simplistic way the results attained by the adoption of a policy of quotas in electoral candidacies. Electoral results, in the strict sense, are important but not the only factors to be analyzed.

Firstly, because it is imaginary to believe that a law which ensures a greater participation of women as candidates in electoral disputes will automatically increase the number of women in parties and in the dispute of candidacies within parties. Of course not. The creation of this possibility and even of this wish in women, is a much slower process. During centuries we have been socialized to prevent us from participating in these fields, listening and learning that politics is not for women. It is difficult to change this deep-rooted concept in men and women.

Together with the adoption of affirmative action measures, such as quotas for electoral candidacies, other measures are needed to train women for their performance in the political arena. In the case of electoral quotas, political parties and the women’s movement, play a key role. Political parties, for they determine candidacies and the support they provide to their affiliates is essential, also encouraging

their training in managing posts, through the adoption of policies of quotas in the structures of parties. And the women's movement, for they are the main interested party in the efficient and effective implementation of these policies.

Apart from the provisions of legislation, we must try to use more the diffusion channels of new ideas and standpoints and of women's training, and we must also work with the purpose of sensitizing male candidacies which incorporate the gender issue into their electoral programs and platforms. But we must not forget that this empowerment must go beyond the political arena, extending to the personal, labor field, among others. This broader vision of empowerment is important for us. Women's organizations, networks, women's negotiations within political parties, within unions, in neighbors' committees, must be strengthened and encouraged. We must go deeply into the understanding of the so-called "harsh politics", but without losing the main dimension of the rest of the spaces.

Another important issue which we face at this moment is the challenge of balancing a politics of presence with a politics of ideas. How can we make affirmative actions strengthen and increase the presence of women at levels of power and, at the same time, extend the scope of impact of our ideas? We are running out of time to discuss and to create consensus among ourselves, to talk about the changes we want, about our own utopia. We base on the premise that because we are women, all of us think in the same way, and we know that, fortunately, we have different ways of thinking. However, we frequently face difficulties to establish relationships with our own differences. Recovering the enjoyable and pleasant position of the feminist movement, a difficult task, is also essential. We can go in for politics but not necessarily in such way. Then, which is the other way? How can we recreate?

We can also work out the way of using more effectively all these institutional instruments of empowerment we are creating, so as to start generating a new vision of the world, a new way of going in for politics. Using the spaces, whether institutional or not, to work out the relationships between men and women. In the case of Brazil, the role of National and State Councils on women's rights or Women's Administrative Offices cannot be denied. There are similar cases in Latin America. Some are more successful than others, but all of them have extended the spaces of influence for the creation of public policies which aim at the establishment of equity.

Meanwhile, we must take into account that all of these policies need funds in order to be implemented. And, therefore, another

important issue appears and the feminist movement needs to devote more time to this: budgets. It is useless to create beautiful public policies and programs if a credit line is not determined for the implementation of any policy or program, when the assignment of funds is decided or determined in a country. And this is what usually happens in our countries.

Finally, another important fact is to know how to work with limits, and we have limits as regards the contributions we may offer for the transformation of this world. However much we dream, we will have to accept that other people think and dream other things and that this is the dynamic of transformation – we are temporarily here and we are part of the dream.

## Notes

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1. For the elaboration of this article I decided to keep the same tenor of my lecture at the Seminar, which was enriched by a more detailed analysis of the experience with the policy of electoral quotas in Brazil, based on the study which is being carried out in CFEMEA.
2. CFEMEA is a non-governmental organization in Brazil, whose work mainly focuses on the federal legislative power – the Federal House and the Federal Senate, with advocacy action as regards women’s rights, and contributing to the creation of public policies with a gender perspective. As part of the feminist and women’s movement, CFEMEA negotiates with the federal legislative power and, by counseling members of parliament, particularly women members, it bridges the gap between men and women members of parliament and the Brazilian women’s movement.
3. The transformation of “autonomous groups” in “non-governmental organizations” and the resulting professionalization of the movement.
4. A detailed analysis of the results of the poll is in its final stage and will be published by CFEMEA.

# Institutional mechanisms for the incorporation of the gender approach: limitations and challenges

*Alejandra Valdés Barrientos\**

**T**he reflection on institutional mechanisms for a gender approach in the State, implemented by women, their possibilities and limitations are extremely relevant. It enables to deepen the analysis of the impact on women of the context where this institutionality develops, the structures and dimensions where mechanisms and gender policies are created in the State and the parties, and the analysis of the relationship between discourses and political practices. Considering that although the State is a privileged space to promote the redistribution of resources between men and women, the coexistence of resistance to share power and to incorporate the gender approach, shows the risk which runs this perspective of being assimilated by power spaces which transform discourses and the contents of women's demands. Thus, it is very relevant to debate on the State mechanisms which incorporate gender approach into the State, because it questions our repositioning as regards the historical persistence of subordination and, therefore, the historical persistence of women's will to be active producers of culture and society. It is also necessary, meanwhile what seems to be in dispute is the cultural construction of

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a femininity model of the present globalized neoliberalism which somehow reshapes new models of women, re-updating the traditional pattern of femininity and recreating new commercialized versions of women and of feminism. In the context of feminist practice I will talk about the Women's National Service, from my political point of view of this institution. In this sense, I will not make reflections neither on its structure nor on its creation, but on the significance of maintaining an institutional structure of women in the State. In this sense, I present a critical analysis of its development, so as to be able to debate on some knotty points which let us move forward in the evolution of the institutional mechanisms proposed by women in our countries. The latter are developed in Chile within a governmental context of alliances between a Christian party and other social democrat parties, where the dispute for the hegemony of their ideological projects crosses the new institutionality and is not free of the pressure exerted by conservative sectors and the Church. On analyzing this State structure, created in Chile, for gender equity, during the last 8 years, the progress in terms of achieved visibility is unquestionable. This progress is mainly supported by social programs which have enabled to involve gender worries (still in a weak way) at different levels of State structure. It is needless to say that the greatest achievements of visibility have been attained when the issue manages to be incorporated into the public agenda and public debate arises, which in Chile does not happen by chance, because these sectors own mass media.

### Transition: limitations and possibilities

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**A**lmost at the end of two government periods which have marked the transition to a democratic system in Chile, women's situation has somehow improved, even though there are certain limitations for the achievement of gender equity. From the beginning, the priority issues for both governments of the Consensus of Parties for Democracy, have been of a political - institutional and macro-economic nature. In this context, the demands and vindications which need to be dealt with so as to effectively deepen and consolidate the democratic process, have suffered delays which, as a result, have broadened the gap between political actors and citizenship. At the political level, citizens (men and women) have daily faced a debate mainly focused on economic management for the accelerated economic growth bears direct relation to the increase of inequality in



income distribution, little capacity to generate employment and a poor and vulnerable labor insertion, particularly for women. All of these situations hinder progress in poverty alleviation, in social equity and particularly in gender equity within the context of labor market. This framework is marked by the destruction of the capital-work relationships as a consequence of labor reforms and the subsequent weakening of the union movement, linked to the new relationships of instability which arise in the employment field. These difficulties faced a change in consumption standards which, as they become massive and among other factors, contribute to important changes in the characteristics of sociability given the increase of working hours and the acceleration of daily life of great part of men and women workers.

Political-cultural changes face cultural conservatism supported by most of the dominant political sectors, which paradoxically watches with satisfaction the progress of modernity in the country, without questioning the coexistence of institutional political conditions with authoritarian seats of government and without considering the strong political-cultural unrest caused by the transition limits in different sectors of citizenship. Agreements with military forces and with the conservative right wing, and the constant frustration regarding prospects of change, particularly those related to human rights and justice demands, contributed to this unrest. It is very important to mention the presence of appointed senators and life senators in Parliament, which have hindered the quorum needed to carry out reforms to the 1980 Political Constitution inherited from the military dictatorship, and have blocked the legal proposals of more democratic sectors; a National Security Council which safeguards military power beyond political power and a Constitutional Court where all State powers are not equally represented. In this context of restrictions, politics does not have the same relevance it used to have in the past and this results in the depoliticization of citizenship spaces and practices.

Credibility and distrust of men and women citizens arise in view of the possibility of creating solid social spaces able to face the historical past of the country, not only within the context of constructing international legal frameworks. For many people, Pinochet's case has been re-strengthening, in view of the possibility of making justice in Chile, but the need of a shared memory and the expectation of common future prospects is revealed.

## Background of the creation of an institutionality for women

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**D**uring the eighties, the women's movement set up as an anti-dictatorship point of reference, of great social and cultural diversity, which played an important role in the democratic restoration which added to their demands the concepts of equal rights for women, together with the concepts of re-democratization of society, which was evidenced in the watchword: "democracy in the country and at home", a reflection of that view.

Previous to the democratic government, the negotiation of some key aspects for the accomplishment of this objective makes the first government of the consensus of parties for democracy, register and express in the governmental agenda, from the beginning, the need to create institutional mechanisms and instruments which enable the attainment of equal opportunities for men and women. In this context, SERNAM (Women's National Service) is created. From the start, this State institutionality undergoes the tensions implied by the legitimization of its action in an institutionality with an excluding gender nature, in structural and legal conditions which restrict the possibilities of carrying out its mission and increasing the scope of the initiatives which undermine that old nature.

The cause of this difficulty lies in a majority right wing in the Upper House, which owns mass media in our country (this is simply a real fact), directly restricting SERNAM's structural possibilities, when issues are discussed in Parliament. But this also marks the future of negotiations in and from Government in gender equity issues for they evidence the differences between points of view and the resistance to change in gender relationships in different sectors of government which generates, from the start, a difficult and ambiguous implementation because although there was consensus in the creation of a governmental office, disagreements arose as regards its functions, whether they addressed women or family.

Ideological differences which SERNAM has suffered since its creation, have not been reconciled yet and appear at present in the task performed by SERNAM and even inside the government coalition with a dispute for power between sectors which present a proposal to modernize gender relationships and a proposal to subvert gender domination relationships (Valenzuela, 1998). Added to the feminist sectors' loss of negotiation capacity there appears SERNAM's agenda;

it is linked to State modernization trends which do not question the unequal distribution of powers, the poor allocation of resources and the lack of real mechanisms to incorporate all aspects of gender equity into the State.

The equal opportunities Plan presented until the year 2000, comprises great part of the demands presented by the women's movement in 1990, but there are some ideological and structural barriers which hinder their incorporation at government level, such as divorce or those related to reproductive rights which are more critical given the characteristics of the governing coalition. In this way, on one hand, SERNAM intends to make legal reforms to position women in a level of equality, to focus their programs on women from extremely poor sectors and to influence on other parts of the State system. This is the way in which SERNAM has carried out its task, mainly through instrumental social programs which do not empower women. This shows the contradicting visions of social change, which are complemented with social policies which try to focus their action on the poorest and "vulnerable" sectors.

SERNAM has played an important role as regards some changes introduced into norms which discriminate women and the protection of women's rights. And, although it has succeeded in rising public opinion on those problems which had been historically relegated to the private sphere, such as the case of norms about family violence or teenage pregnancy, among others, it is not able to maintain a discourse regarding women's rights in the different spaces created, where a moralizing discourse is finally developed, without gender content, which, in the case of family violence, may eventually result in its incorporation into the citizens' security agenda, with no safeguards to face one of the key effects of women's discrimination which must be overcome with integral and not partial policies.

Work among sectors and the coordination of public policies constitute a priority line of SERNAM's activities, however, the difficulties faced externally are related to the lack of political will of some State sectors, the problems of resource allocation (within SERNAM as well as in the different public spaces related to SERNAM), lack of sensitivity and strong prejudice towards this issue from civil servants and in the logic of entities' operation. And coordination difficulties between SERNAM and Ministries and Services, which forces SERNAM to promote and implement by itself joint agendas in most of the programs.

## The program “Family Head Women”: a democratizing innovation

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**I**n this sense, the PMJH (Labor Entitlement Program for Family Head Women) is an innovative program which manages to coordinate inter-institutional actions from SERNAM, decentralized in 84 municipalities of the country, with resources from diverse sectors of the State. Its success lies in the development of inter-sector policies, with an ordering criteria expressed in the integrality of its working lines: labor training, childcare, housing access and improvement, health assistance and legal counseling and service; efforts are focused on two aspects: the poorest geographic areas of a community, one of the most vulnerable social groups, family head women in poor conditions; decentralization which appears in the context of the modernizing process of the State, reinforcing the role of municipalities for the management of social policies. For that purpose, the Municipality is given the role of organizer and promoter of the program in its territory.

Added to the ordering criteria of the Labor Entitlement Program for Family Head Women, is the participating component which aims at creating the conditions to change the traditional assistance relationship established between the State and its “beneficiaries”. Now, on analyzing the sense of social participation promoted by this social program, one of the most interesting elements is the attempt to break through the logic of women’s instrumental or functional participation and move on to the development of the promotion of deliberate citizenship actions. The purpose of this is to break through the promotion of participation referred to the historical model of welfare State. This implies on one hand, that women (program beneficiaries) are able to participate at decision-making levels, may be acknowledged, so as to manage to make social watch on the actions of the program and to attain autonomy from the program, to determine its own initiatives in the community space. On the other hand, the effort to establish trust relationships with the teams of the Labor Entitlement Program for Family Head Women, because, anyway, women will face a complex and feeble labor market where, despite their new capacities, they will face resistance to their incorporation.

This innovative experience settled in different municipalities of the country, which manages to negotiate agreements with different ministries, and, therefore, manages to make each ministry decentralize resources for communities, finds the following hurdles: cultural barriers

to innovation in public services; cultural clash among new teams “trained in gender issues” and the rest of the teams of municipal programs which are focused on poverty alleviation; and with the strong ideological and structural resistance to incorporate all aspects of gender in municipal politics.

These resistance phenomena can be observed in a broader way in women’s actions in different fields of State institutionality and are expressed in two ways: the first one refers to the incorporation into the State sphere, of a new institutionality, with a new actress who tries to give a new perspective to the general scenery of women’s gender condition and which is gradually resisted. After the initial political resistance, conservatism internalizes it as subversion. After some years the changes in women’s power relationships and positioning, start to be registered, producing a response. And this is not the acceptance but, directly or subtly, a response of rejection towards change. The second one: shows that inside women’s new institutionality the learned roles are reproduced and generic behaviors are reproduced which favor the development of an inward action and the search of a safe space, and of limitations to face the power conflicts.

### Relationship with organized women

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**D**uring these years of civil society weakening, where problems related to social participation from the State found a weak local democratic structure which go with municipalities, SERNAM has played a role in the promotion of networks and connections among women, particularly in different regions of the country. The extension of regional, provincial and community spaces such as parliaments, town councils, and proposal construction initiatives promoted by SERNAM, have had great summoning and have relied on the active participation of women re-creating new characteristics in women’s participation as citizens which oscillates between a functional participation for program compliance and for the development of autonomy and empowerment spaces. The lack of continuity of actions which promote participation and the fact that they are subject to the accomplishment of institutional and governmental goals, frequently linked to measurement by coverage and not by analysis of the processes, limit the impact of these activities.

As regards the relationship between this institutionality and civil society, it is necessary to mention the distortion of the capacity to

negotiate with the public State sphere from feminist trends which, articulated as organizations of civil society (NGOs, social organizations and organizations which are active members of political parties), privileged a relationship with the State, particularly with SERNAM and influenced on the constitution of a public agenda. I daresay that SERNAM's process of institutionalization is comprised within the limits of transition and is hierarchically developed with closed interest and elite groups, managing to make this logic part of its dynamic as well. Thus, the relationship with NGOs and with SERNAM and other State organizations is as experts who give counseling or execute projects in contractual dependency relationships which limit their capacity and political action.

The challenge posed is for the women's movement and the development of their different expressions: to be able to mediate, without losing their profile and to autonomously relate to this institutionality.

### Lessons and questions arising from the experience

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**S**ERNAM's practice, questions the complementation of a logic of cultural change and a logic of social programs implementation and the way of exerting real influence on the core of current public policies, such as the macro-economy field which is one of the weak flanks of women's political-institutional action in the country. Therefore, and agreeing with Sonia Montagno, I think that "these policies do not succeed in reaching neither the main development current nor the hard core of policies" and that the challenge is that gender equity public policies must cover all institutions either social, political or cultural, taking into account the economic ones.

In this sense, limitations, of greater impact in the cultural or economic field will be determined by the deepening of institutional changes and significant modifications in parliamentary representation. Deepening cultural transformations requires strengthening capacities in gender institutionality, its structure, resources and those of its staff, so as to cope with the resistance to change typical of the Chilean society. This also implies becoming a political mediator for women, acknowledged by the State, with the capacity to sustain an agenda of its own. It is only in the field of alliances and respect to the autonomy of the social movement that it will be really possible to overstep the male power circle.

SERNAM's experience; it is a field for learning; for it leaves duties and enables the analysis of different ideological visions which have been present in the institutional action of women who have held powers in this new field: how is public agenda created, who creates it and who controls it? Which is the resistance within this new institutionality addressing women, which is the resistance arising in the State and which is the resistance created by the Catholic Church as the leader of the old gender nature? Which have been the strategies, which has been the progress attained and which are the weaknesses that are absolutely necessary to face so as to move forward in the incorporation of gender equity into the State? And, finally, we must demonstrate the political capacities which need to be developed so as to face the challenges left by the learning throughout these years and have not been dealt with.

## Notes

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1. Coalition of governing parties.
2. Modernization in Chile, in a process which took less than two decades and implied changes in the traditional forms of sociability, added to the unrest caused by the tensions between expectations and frustrations of change.
3. The tendency to increase the concentration of income in the richest sectors of the population is demonstrated on analyzing the Home Survey CASEN 1996 and 1998. In 1996, the difference of income among the richest 20% of the population was 14 times higher than the poorest 20%, unlike the year 1998 where difference climbs to 15 times. The analysis of monetary income of the year 1996 shows a 29-time increase of the gap between the highest and the lowest incomes.
4. Created by Law in 1991, "it is the organization in charge of collaborating with the Executive Power in the study and proposal of general plans and measures leading to women's equality of rights and of opportunities in comparison with men, in the process of political, social, economic and cultural development of the country, respecting the nature and specificity of women which derives from the diversity of sexes, included its adequate planning for family relationships". Its main functions are: to design public policies addressing women, to coordinate national policies and actions with the different ministries, to carry out and promote studies designed to make a diagnosis of women's and families' situation. Its director has ministerial rank, however, SERNAM is not a ministry but a functionally

decentralized public service, legally incorporated and with its own capital resources, dependent on the Planning Ministry.

5. These actions are possible within the framework of the coordination of inter-sector policies which, in agreement with the Ministry of Health, of Education, the National Service for Labor Training, the National Board of Nursery Schools, enable the development of the program through the decentralization of resources.
6. The reform of the Municipal Law, determines as a shared municipal task, as from October 1999, the promotion of equality of opportunities for men and women, which will imply a drive for policies at this level.



# Agenda for the future

**T**he following agenda for the future was designed based on the different debates and issues raised during the Seminar.

## The State, Gender, Society and Movements

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- To develop a regional research programme to get a more deep analysis on gender policies and their mechanisms in the light of the reform of the State.
- This implies: Mapping the State of the reforms in the different countries and analysing the impacts on women and on gender equity. The analysis should take into consideration the different dimensions of the reforms: The State of the Reforms: Educational Reform, Health Reform, Constitutional Reforms, Tributary-Economic Reforms, Judicial Reform Apparatus and Management Mechanisms and Gender Policies.

## Apparatus and Management. Mechanisms and Gender Policies

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- Nature of the State  
To carry out national studies following Line Barreiro`s model, in order to enrich our understanding of the relationships between State, Women and Gender, while focusing on how

women reached their positions and what these positions are. It is important to establish differences and analogies with the other regions.

## **Movement, State and Mechanisms**

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- To have a more explicit and deep analysis on the relationships between women's movements and the State and also to analyse the linkages and alliances between women's movements and other social sectors.
- It is very important to also define the frontiers and identities between women's movements and feminist movements.

\* Debates addressed a need for a more fluent and updated reflection on:

- a. The project of the Feminist Movement.
- b. Leadership (nature, training, intergenerational transmission).

The seminar concluded that these actions are not only DAWN / REPEM responsibility but women's responsibilities at all levels. There is a unanimous agreement on the fact that there is a need to start working urgently on the above dimensions with more depth towards Beijing+5.

## **Development, Macroeconomics and Budgets**

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Participants concluded that the first guideline could only be accomplished if we move forwards in these issues. It was also stated that the knowledge in this area is still very weak. Outlined tasks:

- Identify women working on these issues in the region.
- Work on the UNIFEM's proposal on a Regional Seminar on Budgets, Macroeconomics, Investment and Expenditures. Also work on the proposal of the "Vice-Governess" of Rio de Janeiro.
- Contact DAWN researchers Gita Sen (Political Economy and Globalisation) and Peggy Antrobus (Gender and Trade).

## Methodology

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- Organise Round Tables South-South.  
The first meeting was held in Cape Town on February 21-23, 2000. It was an Interregional Seminar on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation in which DAWN's Regional and Programme coordinators participated together with one researcher per region.

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