



FEMINIST FORUM TOWARDS G20

First webinar “Feminists towards G20” on July 27th, with more than 40 participants across the Latin American & Caribbean region. This activity is part of a series of seminars in promoted by DAWN and members of the Feminist Forum against G20. These discussions delve into the challenges presented in G20 and analyzed sexual dissidence and how women’s and feminist organizations are involved.

Alejandra Scampini, from DAWN’s (Uruguay), was the moderator for the first webinar in which activists-experts from within the region participated. She challenged the speakers by raising some fundamental questions and issues that led to the organization of this first webinar. Questions such as: What is the G20? What is the history of the G20 and how is the G20 currently positioned in the global and multilateral agenda? How relevant is the G20 for the region and how legitimate is it for the countries and groups that are not represented? How is it structured and what are the spaces for civil society advocacy? How do sexual dissidents, women’s and feminist organizations prepare and how can social demands be taken into consideration?

The first speaker, **Graciela Rodríguez from Fundación Equit, Recrib and Gender and Trade Network (Brazil),** focused on the beginnings of the G20 in the context of the global crisis that marked the first years of the 21st century, where bailouts were sought from multilateral organizations. Thus, since the end of the 90s, the G20 has consolidated as a global governance mechanism seeking to better coordinate large economies with those others that were economically healthier -particularly China, Russia, Argentina and Brazil- and a more active involvement in crisis resolution. She remarked that during its first years of operation, the G20 was almost an effective means to overcome the financial crisis and to shape a financial system that was highly deregulated, causing economic instability at global level. When the 2008 crisis was over, the G20 agenda became more varied. It included issues such as sustainable development, employment and infrastructure to name just a few. There was a strong debate on extending investments, models

of energy and employment, and increasing the presence of transnational companies and corporate power, enabling their access to this process of extended capitalist accumulation. Graciela explained how this new agenda resonates in the region through a large capital inflow, new regulations and the search for legal protection of companies that pursue natural resources and land expropriation, to the detriment of indigenous populations that have been resisting, safeguarding and protecting territories from the capitalist accumulation model. *“The agenda has broadened and the presence of G20 in Latin America and the Caribbean reveals this need to gain ground in the continent where social movements have shown a strong role in the fight against this phase of the neoliberal, model called land expropriation and dispossession.”*

She wrapped up by saying that *“the G20 is an attempt to subdue social movements and, at the same time, to control national economies that are increasingly losing autonomy, sovereignty and are*

more engaged in global production chains and unproductive speculative financial processes. The great challenge for social movements will be to understand and resist this new phase of capitalist accumulation”.

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The G20 does not represent us!

Luciana Ghiotto, ATTAC Argentina, TNI and Argentina better off without FTAs (Argentina), continued on from Graciela, talking about the history of the G20 and how this resonates in the G20 structure. She analyzed the implications of the G20 in terms of consensus and criticism towards G20. Although the G20 is introduced as a forum to debate on global policy, in fact, it is a forum that can be criticized for its smallness because it barely represents 10 percent of the countries in the world where, for example, only Brazil, Argentina and Mexico represent Latin America and the Caribbean. The second issue she raised was that there is a direct relationship between the G20 and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In fact, the G20 can only be understood by comprehending its emergence in the context of the crisis of the international financial system. This is *“the reason why civil society’s criticism of this forum is a criticism of the international financial model and how it has attempted to regulate the financial system- showing that states and governments play a minor role in this mechanism”*. The third issue to bear in mind is the lack of democracy within the G20. Luciana explained that, since 2008, the G20 has been working as a summit of presidents rather than a summit of ministers of economy and directors of central banks from the countries of this group. Then, the Sherpas’ Track (appointed by the president of a member state) was created, where Heads of State came into play with a broader agenda and issues such as anticorruption, development, health, energy and climate change, just to name a few. Finally, there is the engagement of non-governmental bodies such as the B20 (Business 20), the T20 (Think Tanks 20), the W20 (Women 20), the C20 (Civil 20), the L20 (Labor 20), and, this year, the S20 (Science 20). To wrap up, Luciana highlighted the illegitimacy of the G20, stating that *“it is a flexible, unsteady structure with little transparency concerning internal coordination and that the head of the engagement groups is appointed by the president of the host country”*. Participation in these groups is not open, and, at the same time, they are not binding for presidents. They only submit recommendations that the presidential summit might consider or not. These are the reasons why civil society claim: **“we are NOT represented by the G20!”**

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Fernanda Hopenhaym from PODER, (México/Uruguay) shared the official channels for civil society participation, as another means of engaging and influencing the G20 processes, the declarations, the decision-making and the issues addressed. She underscored the Civil 20, which is the channel of interaction between the G20 and civil society organizations. She described the thematic groups of the C20, namely; fight against corruption; architecture of the international financial system; education, employment and inclusion; environment, climate and energy; gender; investment and infrastructure, from local to global; and, finally, global health.

She also highlighted the opportunities to participate in these C20 spaces. Firstly, *“it is a channel of direct interaction through which you can sit around the table with these players who make us feel uncomfortable at times. Our natural position as feminists is to be in the resistance; we are not represented by the G20 and we don’t want to legitimize this*

body. However, the possibility of interacting directly with these decision-makers, in some cases, might pay off, in terms of the commitments made by the G20”.

The C20 also enables CSOs to follow up with these commitments and to demand their fulfillment- to present recommendations through written documents on priority issues and to promote, as feminists, issues linked to gender equality, sexual diversity and other themes considered a priority which the C20 gender group has tried to promote. She mentioned the experience of PODER in the thematic group on investments and infrastructure, and how issues such as the res-

pect of human rights, due diligence and accountability, are starting to be considered. These challenge the main discourse of deregulation opening to private investment for the development of infrastructure in the countries of the group. To wrap up she said that *“participation in these groups allows us to push the feminist agenda linked to economic themes, to business and human rights themes, where, many times, women are absent or there is no feminist perspective, and, in the end, it remains solely linked to the gender group”.*





Verónica Ferreira from SOS Corpo - Articulação Feminista Marcosur (Brazil) underscored 4 reasons why feminists engage in these processes of struggle. Firstly, she noted that feminists have been in the resistance against neoliberal globalization for a long time and she reminded us about the history of all the work throughout these years—from **Seattle to the World Social Forums, from Peoples’ Summits to Feminist Forums**, from struggles against megaprojects to the resistance of indigenous women for natural resources—so as to confront the new processes of financial extractivism and oppose the restoration of the new racial and patriarchal model of capitalist accumulation. Secondly, she highlighted the importance of conducting training activities, incorporating the issue of economy and the impact in women’s everyday life, as a form of building knowledge and collective resistance against the blow to democracy. The third point she identified is the need to provide visibility to the fact that *“women are hit hardest by the decisions taken in these forums”*. The issues she underscored were *“increased labor exploitation, the approval of labor reforms, more labor flexibilization and precariousness, women’s time which is at stake in this financial architectu-*

re of adjustments and budget cuts”. Verónica reports on the plural and collective mobilization and training processes that will be carried out by AMB, SOS Corpo and AFM, as an effort to strengthen international coordination and to recover methodo-

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logies such as the women’s tribunals that constitute a space that gives voice to women and their demands. Finally, Verónica said that *“it is time to strengthen as an international and plural movement to help trigger a process of local struggles, of stronger, more conscientious, as part of the democratic resistances and as part of the struggle against neoliberal restoration”*.





Flora Partenio from the global South feminist network **DAWN**, **Cátedra Libre Virginia Bolten**, (Argentina), took up the experience of the **First Feminist Forum against Free Trade** held in December 2017, in Buenos Aires, at the Peoples' Summit, in the face of the 11th Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and shared proposals on how feminists position themselves and engage in these struggles, including the G20. In this sense, she considered that *“the Feminist Forum against Free Trade was fundamental because it was possible to move forward training proposals regarding economic justice and to debate on how the current agendas of debt, development and trade policies in the region are directly affected by WTO and G20 agendas”*. Another issue included as a theme of this first Feminist Forum was the need to reveal different forms in which state collusion is connected to the impunity of corporate power, particularly regarding the mega extractivist projects.

Among the different tools, she focused on the need to analyze, as feminists, what is happening in the chapters of the Trade and Investment Agreements, how do the concepts of “gender equality” and “women’s empowerment” appear in the IMF proposals. From this perspective, she raised *“the issue of how these financial institutions take over language and present economic empowerment through women’s financial and labor inclusion based on entrepreneurship, at the G20 and the Women 20 (W20). This concept of entrepreneurship is not even close to any kind of social economy or self-management experience, which has a long-standing track record in Latin America, particularly by virtue of different experiences in cooperativism, business recovery*

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and self-management led by female workers”. Based on these debates, the 2018 agenda proposes different stages in the development of this (second) Feminist Forum against G20. Women, sexual dissidents and feminist organizations will mobilize in two key moments and internationally. One, around the Summit of Women 20 or Women 20 in October and, another one, around the G20 Leaders’ Summit, at the end of November.

To wrap up, she said that the Second Feminist Forum is a process that is open to the participation of different groups and organizations; it is diverse and under construction, and also seeks to converge with other social organizations and movements that are organizing a joint mobilization and similar actions to the ones at the Peoples’ Summit.

As a wrap-up **Alejandra Scampini DAWN**, invited to join the Feminist Forum against G20 *“as a process that proposes mobilizations, local, regional and international coordination, resistance and debates on alternatives to challenge the neoliberal discourse created around the summit of the most powerful countries across the world”*. In the face of the instrumentalization of women’s empowerment, the corporatization in the economies and the lack of visibility of structural issues that underlie crises, and the lack of participation of those who are hit hardest by these decisions, *the proposal of the Forum is to challenge this agenda from popular feminism, to expose the practices that represent other logics, and from there, present alternatives.*

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