THE TRIANGLE OF EMPOWERMENR; AN INTRODUCTION

Introducción al libro :❧Triángulo del Poder
-en español-
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THE TRIANGLE OF EMPOWERMENT; AN INTRODUCTION

All over the world women are excluded to greater or lesser degrees from the arenas where decisions regarding the future of their societies and the wellbeing of themselves and their loved ones are made. Women's voices are not listened to when armies invade countries, industries are being replaced, laws are drawn up, states fall apart, development policies are drafted and social security measures withdrawn. Historically women have been waging persistent struggles to make inroads into the male bastions of power. This has been an uneven, halting, at times ambivalent and contradictory process. The history of women's political struggles should in no way be conceived as a linear movement from submission to political power. On the contrary, in some cases 'modernization' or 'development' actually involved the deterioration of whatever political power women exercised. In other cases hard-won victories did not bring about the desired effects.

When women's movements gained influence around the turn of the century in most parts of the world, the vote was among the major demands voiced and after a long and bitter struggle women entered the hitherto male-dominated political scene. Yet women soon realized that the franchise did not mean an end to their subordination. The present wave of the women's movement fed to a major extent on the resentment of women that the mere acquisition of legal rights has not effectively put women's issues on the agenda of parliaments, political parties, trade unions and other political bodies.

Before we proceed with the theme of the present volume, which is centering around women's collective struggles in the political arena in selected cases from Latin America and Europe, two provisos have to be made.

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The first is that we do not support the contention that any woman automatically speaks from a gender perspective. More female political leaders such as the British conservative former prime minister Mrs Thatcher will not promote in any substantive way the conditions for the processes of transformation feminists envisage. Secondly we do not deny the enormous impetus the personal anger and frustration of so many women has given to the women's movement, nor do we downplay the pride and satisfaction women feel about the triumphs they have won in their private lives, and the fact that these emotions nourish their commitment to women's collective struggles.

We concentrate instead on women's collective struggles in what we perceive to be the 'triangle of empowerment', that is the interplay between three sets of actors, in our case the women's movement, feminist politicians and feminist bureaucrats (femocrats). The metaphor of the triangle we use does not mean that we see these actors as being located in fixed and stable positions. To start with, the women's movement should be seen as informing all 'corners' of the triangle. In our analysis we will focus on the ways these actors interact, and whether they perceive their interests as parallel or conflicting; how their dialogues are constructed, how they make use of a specific political context or are defeated by political circumstances and have to withdraw for a while. So our triangle is not a construction with three sharply defined corners connected by straight lines. First of all, it does not exist in abstract space but is located in specific historical and socio-political situations. Then, its dynamics are not linear or straight, but often will take contradictory, partial, or ambivalent forms. Also, the relations between the three points distinguished are mediated by at times intersecting and converging, at other times conflicting interests.

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So what do women want in the present-day women's movement? Women's demands, as for instance voiced by women belonging to the DAWN network, center around a transformation of society in such a way that poverty is eliminated, gender and racial subordination ended, and where inequalities based on class, race, gender and sexual preference are absent. Where "each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships" (DAWN 1985; 72). Admittedly, this may sound utopian, but the core of the issue is that women want to be where the decisions regarding the future are made. In order to effect these transformations women need to be empowered. They are seeking to acquire the power to participate in the decision-making processes underlying these transformations. And above all they wish to be empowered to shape their thoughts, to have the courage to think, to come up with alternatives, to formulate wishes and to take their own concerns seriously. Both solidarity (with each other) and autonomy (from the male-dominated structures of society) are important strategies for women to become empowered to push for the transformations they desire.

This collection deals with various attempts of women in Latin America and Europe to make inroads into the male-dominated power domains. That is, it focuses on the relation between the women's movement and society,

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[1]. DAWN means Development Alternatives for Women in a new Era. The network was set up by a group of women from the South, or working with the South, who wanted to develop an alternative statement on women and development for the Nairobi 1985 Congress which marked the end of the Women's Decade. Since then the network has expanded enormously and now includes thousands of researchers and activists from the South.

including the state. The case studies presented analyse the political struggles women are waging to make their voices heard, to introduce women's issues into political agendas, to transform the political arena.

This is not a homogeneous nor unilinear process, nor do women speak unisono. Recent post-modernist literature stresses women's different and sometimes conflicting interests, their fragmented identities, their divided loyalties (Braidotti 1991, Haraway 1991, Harding 1991, Flax 1990, De Lauretis 1987, Mouffe 1988, Trinh 1989). Therefore this reader does not pretend to deal with the issues of women, the state and civil society in a universal manner. Rather, as indicated above, we have selected three groups of political actors who, with leaps and bounds, in concord or in vehement opposition, in solidarity or in distrust, all in their own ways are engaged in different corners of the political arena to promote their ideas of transformation from a gendered perspective.

The actors we are confronted with here are the women's movements, female politicians working on gender issues and civil servants engaged in policies related to gender issues. Relationships between these three groups of actors have not always been easy. Their different locations have given rise to different discourses and different intensities of commitment. Yet there are also enlightening examples of cooperation. In this reader we will explore some of the dynamics of the relations between these three groups of actors. The various case studies presented here will, each in their specific context, deal with the following issues:

- What is the character of the actors identified? What ideology do they espouse, and what is their position in the political spectrum of their national context?

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- In what way have they been able to ally with any of the other actors identified? And what were the consequences of these links?

- How effective have their interventions with the state and other relevant sectors of society been? And under what socio-political conditions have they been able to be most effective?

In some articles the emphasis is more on one particular actor than on the others. The Mexican case study for instance focuses on the Mexican women's movement rather than on the state. Taken together, all cases presented here contain an impressive range of negotiations between the three actors of the 'triangle'.

The purpose of this collection of articles is not only to analyse the relations of cooperation or dissent in the case studies selected. But also to indicate some trends concerning the interventions of women in the political arena. And to explore more effective ways of intervening in ongoing political processes, analysing the successes and constraints of the efforts women have made in the countries presented here.

Before we explore in some more detail the historical background of the processes outlined here and introduce the case studies, it is neccesary to examine the central concepts used in this volume. These are women's movement, transformation and women's interests, empowerment and power, autonomy, sisterhood and society and the state.

As the editors of this volume, we prefer a broad definition of women's movements. We understand a women's movement as the whole spectrum of consciously and unconsciously acting individuals, groups or organizations which are concerned with diminishing various aspects of gender subordination.

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Parts of this movement may disagree with each other, some parts may set different priorities, and certain streams, groups or individuals may lie dormant for certain periods of time. Individuals may identify themselves as belonging to the women's movement; others may not use that qualification yet in their activities promote the cause of women.

Different demands will crop up at different times, challenging the prevalent system in specific ways. Not the demands or interests voiced are in themselves subversive; the subversive character of specific demands or interests is determined by the socio-political context in which they are voiced (Vargas 1992, Wieringa 1992 and forthcoming a). Nowadays the demand for women's education is routinely made by wide sectors of society. Less than a century ago this same demand triggered violent reactions. For the purpose of this introduction the most relevant distinction between groups within the women's movement is that between those women who are actively opposed to any dealings with the state, as a large part of the Mexican movement is, and those who voice their demands in a language state officials can understand, focusing on issues the bureaucracy can deal with; Brazil, Jamaica, Holland and Norway are good examples in this respect. The first stream, mainly consisting of autonomous women's groups, wants to start 'from the bottom up', to raise the consciousness of individual women. In their analysis social change must inevitably follow in the wake of all these enlightened women. The second group does not deny the importance of consciousness raising, but does not see that as a sufficient condition to bring about the wished-for

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transformation of civil society[2]. Although to differing degrees they are aware of the dangers which such cooperation with the state may involve, they nonetheless opt for working directly in the belly of the beast.

Transforming society is the ultimate goal of the women's movement. There is no consensus on what this transformed world should look like and it is unlikely, even impossible to conceive of such a consensus. Transformation should not be seen as a product, but rather as a process. Women are striving to have their interests included in this process, to have their concerns taken seriously, and to have a major voice (if not the major voice) in the way these processes are being shaped.

Women's interests cannot be defined or categorized in a homogeneous way. They are determined by the socio-historical context in which they arise. Likewise there is no automatic process by which women's needs, pain and frustration gets translated in stated interests (Wieringa forthcoming b). Women's interests should be seen as processes which are being constructed in specific historical contexts and in processes of confrontation, negotiation, and alliances with men, society, the state and each other (Vargas 1992). That means that interests are by definition flexible and dynamic, although they can be frozen in political slogans.

Women's interests as they are carefully being formulated in certain women's movements are thus elements in a dynamic process of negotiation. As women themselves are determined by class, race, ethnic and age relations,

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[2]. Dahlerup (1986) has brought together various articles where the dynamics between these two streams in the women's movement are analysed. Her examples come from Europe and the USA.

and are located within the ideological discourse of their
time, women's gender interests are situated in the
intersections of these relations. External political
factors and the internal strength of the women's movement,
its capacity to express gender concerns, influence this
negotiating process. Thus, women's interests cannot be
defined in an essentialist way, nor can they be neatly
categorized as Molyneux (1985) tried to do[3]. Rather, as
Vargas (1992) demonstrates, it is more fruitful to analyse
how various interests have been constructed historically,
in various contexts.

In spite of this diversity there are some points of
convergence. Many women argue that values which are now
being relegated to the 'weak' sector of society, such as
solidarity, caring for each other and nature, support of
each other instead of competition and agression,
playfulness, creativity and the seeking of pleasure, should
occupy the center stage in the whole of society. Again
others point out that this may sound too far-fetched for
the moment and that feminists should rather concentrate on
fighting for demands which they can hope to achieve in the
near future. A minimum package most women's movements seem
to agree on is that an end should be put to the
subordination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity and
class.

The central focus of this reader is not so much on the
content of the vision the various parties have. Rather the
authors concentrate on the analysis of the strategies the
various actors discerned have used to achieve their goals,
and what were their successes and failures in this process.

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[3]. Maxine Molyneux (1985) made a distinction between women's
strategic and practical gender interests. Anderson (1992) and
Wieringa (1992) criticized this attempt.

The major strategy used to bring about this process of transformation is the empowerment of women. Women must be able to exercise the power and authority to help shape the transformative processes they strive towards. This does not mean that women should reverse exisnting power hierarchies but that women should be empowered to make their own choises, to speak out on their own behalf and to control their own lives [*]. The empowerment approaches stimulate women to become actively invollved on political action. In this regard it is vital to discuss here some aspects of what this 'essentially contested' (Lukes 1986) concept of power entails.

One of the most creative authors on the nature of the concept of power is Foucault. In his view power is operating at all levels of society, from interpersonal relations to state level. Institutions and state structures are elements located within certain constellations of power, their beginnings lost in the complex web of power relations. Individuals too are caught in this web, being both actors who execute power and subjects of power games, constituted by the power constellation in which they are caught while shaping them at the same time[5]. The intentionality of power structures is not tied to individuals, as the power games acquire their own logic. Power as conceptualized in this way should thus be seen as permeating all social relations, and

[*] There are so many activities, politicians and researchers advocating women's empowerment and they do so from such diverse positions, that it is better to use the plural and speak of empowerment apporaches. See Wieringa (1993) for a further discussion of this.

[5]. See De Lauretis (1987) for women's agency in constructing gender relations. She analyses lucidly how women are not only constituted by the dominant gender ideology, but are also themselves actively constructing that ideology.

as an inherent aspect of all economic, political, social and personal relations. The power relations operating at different levels are in eternal conflict. Confrontation and opposition are inherent, they are the inevitable effects of the power games (Barret 1991; Gremmen and Westerbeen van Eerten 1988; 102-113).

Some authors have voiced concerns over what they see as the consequences Foucault draws from this insight. By locating individuals within webs of power relations by which they are shaped, the conscious agency of subjects tends to be downplayed. A consequence of this line of thinking may be a certain relativism (see for instance Hartsock 1987). Haraway (1991) and Harding (1991) on the other hand insist on the political relevance of this view on power. Their actors are situated in specific socio-cultural positions and take the political consequences of their positioning.

Lukes's theory on the three dimensions of power is another important tool of action and analysis. The first dimension he distinguishes refers to those processes which are manifest in open confrontations. The second dimension refers to those processes by which one group manages to suppress certain conflicts, to prevent their being discussed. They are not even put on the agenda. This is a power conflict in which many women's groups are engaged, for instance in getting childcare recognized as a general social issue. Usually this kind of power operates within certain biases and assumptions which effectively serve to deny the validity of specific concerns or interests.

With the third dimension of power Lukes refers to those processes of latent conflicts which arise when the 'real interests' of certain groups of people are being denied. These 'real interests' don't have to be recognized as such by the persons concerned, they also arise when certain issues are seen as 'natural and changeable or

because they are valued as divinily ordained and beneficial' (Gremmen and Westerbeek van Eerten 1988; 56). This concept of power is closely related to Gramsci's notion of ideological hegemony. Apart from the empirical problem as to how to define the 'real interests' (which we have indicated above) Lukes's third dimension of power is interesting, as it points to those processes which are not discernible on the surface but which nevertheless constitute a major element in the latent dissatisfaction out of which the present phase of the women's movement sprang forth. Using Lukes's terminology one could say that a major aspect of the efforts of the women's consciousness raising groups is directed at unearthing these latent power conflicts.

Several case studies in this volume deal explicitly with the theme of power. Molina in her 'Chile' contribution observes that women have been 'denied power' for so long that they have acquired a 'culture of no power'. This rebellious, confrontational attitude towards overt political power makes their relation with the state as the major powerholder in society ambivalent. In Molina's view Chilean women are both attracted to power, and reject it. Lamas's discussion of the Mexican women's movement illustrates this phenomenon. Anderson discusses the way Peruvian women have been denied access to political power, while Halsaa stresses the ambivalent consequences of political power Norwegian women have acquired. In the Dutch case Outsboorn and Swiebel discern the barriers which women face when they are fighting for 'redistributive' measures, re-measure which would effectively mean a redistribution of the existing power relationsd between the sexes.

Women's movements make use of two important strategies to acquire the empowerment needed to be meaningfully involved

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in the process of transformation: autonomy and solidarity or sisterhood.

Although in many parts of the world for centuries women have been segregated from men, living in their own quarters, working their own fields and engaging with other women in all-women's groups, only recently the concept of women's autonomy has gained political significance. This arose in the early seventies when autonomous women's groups emerged which concentrated on discovering the similarities of women's gender oppression. The personal is political became their slogan, when they set about transforming their political surroundings according to their newly-discovered social realities. Likewise women in left parties realized that they had to form autonomous groups if they wanted to be able to wrestle free from the homogenizing marxist discourse which prioritized the class struggle over women's stuggles.

Thus autonomy in these instances is essentially a strategic concept. Women need to sit together to discover what unites them and to devise ways of subverting the male-dominated order around them. The goal of these autonomous women's groups is to gather enough strength to enter the political, economic and cultural domain on a more equal footing with men (empowerment) in order to transform these economic, cultural and political realms so that they will be better adapted to incorporate women's needs and interests. So, women need their autonomous spaces to gain the self-respect, confidence and skills to tackle what they do not like in the world around them and to get what they want.

In this sense the concept of autonomy is used by Vargas (1992) who stresses the importance of autonomy as a process to make women better able to express and prioritize their interests. Autonomy should not be equated with individualization and separatism. Instead, Vargas argues,

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autonomy should be seen as a process of negotiating with the autonomous spaces of others, of learning how and when to consider other interests. For the autonomy of one group may easily impinge upon that of another. Autonomy thus is always a relative concept, never a fixed end of a linear progress from subordination to freedom[6].

In the euphoria of the first years of the present phase of the movement women's solidarity was a catchword. Slogans of those days include 'sisterhood is powerful' and 'sisterhood is global'. The discovery that women as a gender shared important aspects of their subordination overshadowed all differences between women. Soon black and poor women started to complain that this 'sisterhood' had a decidedly white, western and bourgeois character and, with the post-modernist insistence on fragmentation and flux, the debate on differences started. Nowadays feminists realize that solidarity between women is not a given, but has to be constructed on the basis of a careful realization of differences among women, and the various political consequences these may have. hooks sees this as a vital process: " unless we can show that barriers separating women can be eliminated, that solidarity can exist, we cannot hope to transform society as a whole" (hooks 1991: 29). Besides, as she suggests, we should bond not on the basis of shared victimization, but rather on the basis of

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[6]. We thus hesitate to use the word autonomy as a goal to strive towards, as the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation does, although we recognize the strategic importance of this conceptualization. A recent seminar (June 1991) in which they explained their policy related to issues of women and developemnt was called 'Women in Development: advancing towards Autonomy'. Autonomy was defined as 'control over one's own life and body' in which the following elements were distinguished: physical autonomy, economic autonomy, political autonomy and sociocultural autonomy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1991; 5).

"our political commitment to a feminist movement that aims to end sexist oppression" (ibid:31).

This is what this reader hopes to stimulate. In all the studies presented here women have become active on the basis of their anger and frustration about the situation they are confronted with. While constructing their resistance they are also constructing their alliances - with women in other groups, in other positions within society, in other countries. In short they are strengthening the triangle which should bring their empowerment. Analysing these experiences can hopefully stimulate women elsewhere to construct their own ties of solidarity.

Women's movements, as special interest groups in societies, have been engaged in confrontations with the state in several ways. As this is the major theme of this collection we feel it is important to explore the relation between state and society. Without going into the major theories surrounding the nature of the state (see Held 1985) for the purpose of this book we arrive at the following working definitions. Within societies a distinction can be made between the state and civil society. The major characteristics of the state are permanence and sovereignty, and the legitimate use of coercion and force. The state has bureaucratic apparatuses to carry out these tasks. Its political executive is the government, which in democracies is elected. Through the government the state acquires a certain level of legitimacy. State policies in general have to be compatible with the interests of major powers in society. States have critically different natures. The characters of the Norwegian and Peruvian states, two of the case studies in this collection, are almost opposite. Anderson sees the Peruvian state as essentially weak, unstable and

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hierarchical, with a strong military presence. The Norwegian state on the other hand is permeated by an ideology based on equality and justice.

Various interest groups in society compete for influence in the government and the state. These groups have unequal access to resources to promote their specific interests. The major economic powers in society are generally in a better position in society to compete successfully for influence in the state structures. But others too exert power, in fact there is a constant battle going on of certain interest groups fighting for inclusion in the state and its structures, while others attempt to exclude them. We do no see the state as just an instrument of the dominant classes, as the general Marxist-Leninist position was. Rather we see the structure and workings of the state as the outcome of a complex web of power relations.

Civil society governs the relations in the personal, family and economic sphere. In that it is on the one hand circumscribed by certain state regulations, on the other hand it is shaping state structures.

A third factor complicating this picture, and one which acquires a growing importance, is the international surroundings. The emergence of a world market increasingly impinges upon the sovereign rights of nation-states. Multinational corporations are managing to operate relatively free from constraints which national bureaucracies impose upon them. Likewise multinational agencies belonging to the United Nations family are increasingly influencing national policies. Roughly two ways can be observed in which women are impacted by international agencies. Jamaica and Peru in this volume are examples of the extent to which IMF-imposed structural adjustment measures affect the social fabric of society, leading to heavy burdens on women. On the other hand the

Women's Decade which the United Nations called for had a major positive effect on national policies related to women's issues.

We can distinguish roughly four locations within this complex web of relations where women's interests are being defended. First of all within society, as women's movement gain momentum and increase their power as special interest groups. Their sheer size and political weigth move governments to take women's issues into account. Even the Mexican women's movement, which has been strongly opposed to dealing with the state, has been able to make an impact when a democratic opening took place.

Secondly, women active within the political structure of their societies can lobby for specific women's interests. These proposals may be accepted or not, depending on the political momentum. Brazil and Norway offer examples of successful intervention of feminist politicians.

Likewise femocrats (feminist bureaucrats) located on strategic positions within state structures will be able to intervene strategically to support women's issues. The Dutch 'subsidized revolution'is a good example of strong support of femocrats to the women's movement.

Lastly, women in international organizations can see to it that a. women's issues are defended in international fora, and b. that individual governments are stimulated to endorse and implement international agreements, such as the Forward Looking Strategies which were adopted in the Nairobi Conference on Women in 1985.

Women's confrontations with state structures may take three forms. In the first place women make demands on the state. Certain laws and regulations have to be adapted so as to ensure that women have the vote, equal access to

rights as full citizens. In the second place women want the state to protect them from domestic and sexual violence. Thirdly women want equal access to resources the state metes out in its efforts at development: credit, extension services, training. And, in developed countries, equal access to the social services the state provides. The success of women's efforts to make the state move on their behalf has been very uneven. As Outshoorn and Swiebel demonstrate for the Dutch case, women's interventions have been more effective when they demanded distributive measures than when they asked for redistributive issues.

The processes summarily outlined above are extremely complicated. They are uneven, and take place at various levels. Women's groups do not always agree on which strategies to adopt vis à vis the state. Likewise it is important to realize that the state is not an undifferentiated moloch. Certain state sectors may compete with others, certain bureaucratic institutions are more open to defend women's interests than others. The fact that the state is not monolithic gives women's groups scope to search for certain leverage points. In how far women have been successful in these attempts will be assessed in several case studies.

These political struggles of women constitute a courageous multi-level project. It is clear that it is not enough to just put more women in positions of power. As Halsaa writes, this may simply mean a palace revolution, not a change of regime. Femocrats and feminist politicians will also have to introduce new models of acting in this world and of relating with each other and the women's movement. Not the sex of the actors, but the gender of the system has to change.

Before we continue with an introduction of the various case studies in this book we will first give an overview of some elements of the first phase of the women's movement which are important to understand the history of international developments related to women's policies.

The 'modern' women's movement arose in the wake of the struggles for equality and emancipation which followed the American (1776) and French (1789) revolutions. While the white male leaders of these revolutions fought hard (and mostly successfully) to limit the new-won rights to their own group, Parisian working women with Olympe de Gouges as one of their leaders fought on the barricades for their rights. In her famous pamphlet 'The Rights of the Woman and the female Citizen'[7] she demanded women's access to social and political rights.

The first women's collective political manifestation was also triggered by attempts of men to exclude women from their revolutionary activities. While women were the majority of those fighting for the abolition of slavery in the United States, women were denied a seat in the World Anti-Slavery Convention which was held in London in 1840. Elisabeth Cady Stanton was so infuriated by this refusal that she was among those writing the Declaration of Sentiments at the first women's rights Convention which was held in Seneca Falls, in 1848.

From the start women's fight for political rights grew out of the struggles of the emancipation of workers and slaves (see also Banks 1981). In France (Picq 1986), England (Oakley 1981) and the United States (Deckard 1979 and Banks, 1981) it has been documented over and over again

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[7]. Les Droits de la Femme et de la Cotoyenne, published in 1791.

that women workers were among the first ones to demand political rights, and that women from the middle classes struggled courageously to support women workers. The roots of the women's movement are to be found where the denial of women's rights, their exploitation as workers and their enforced emotional dependence on men are situated.

With different emphases and coming from different backgrounds women activists from the late seventeenth to the beginning of the twentieth centuries put forward the following demands:
- slavery should be abolished
- the conditions for women workers should be improved
- and in order for women to play a full social role and improve the world, they should have access to education and to political rights.

From the beginning the suffrage was always linked to other issues. Only by the end of the nineteenth century the suffrage issue came to be a major rallying point. It served as a primary mobilizing factor, comparable to the abortion issue at the beginning of the present phase of the movement in the west, such as in Holland. Yet it was generally seen as a means for women to improve their condition and their societies, not as the ultimate goal.

Yet despite all this militancy, the sobering truth is that women were 'granted' the vote not so much as a direct consequence of a particularly successful campaign but in most cases because of other political considerations. Norway, which as Halsaa in this volume points out, has a long tradition of equality, was the first country where women won the vote, in 1913. As in other European countries, Dutch women gained the vote in the aftermath of the First World War (and the Russian Revoluation), in 1919. Ecuador was the first Latin American country which granted women full political rights in 1929. Peruvian women gained the vote rather recently, in 1954, granted them by a

conservative president who hoped to gain their electoral support.

The early feminist movement was not only concerned with equal rights issues. Two important issues the present 'post-modern' phase of feminism is concerned with, the conviction that women's subordination is a construction, and the debate on 'equality versus difference' were introduced in the earlier phase of the movement. As Oakley (following Walters) writes about Wollstonecraft's Vindication: "the most radical aspect of the Vindication is its central idea that femininity is an artificial construct, an imposition of patriarchal culture, yet is regarded as an immutably natural state" (Oakley 1981: 4). Feminist women would echo this conviction in different wordings and with different emphases well into the twentieth century.

There were also certain streams and writers in the women's movement who harboured a view which emphasized women's difference from men. This idea was most pronounced in the discussions on prostitution and traffic in women and children. Women were seen as morally superior, who in that capacity had a special responsibility to ward off human (read male) vices and to guard the level of morality of humanity.

Thus, with leaps and bounds, in sisterhood and amidst violent debates, the early phase of the women's movement encompassed many themes and issues present-day women's movements are also confronting. In the wake of the more radical women's organizations more conservative organizations were also set up, such as protestant and catholic women's organizations, or associations of housewives and/or country women. Likewise international organizations, often composed of associations of the above mentioned national organizations, came into existence. It is these organizations, and the structures focusing on

women's issues which were set up in the international organizations such as the League of Nations and the ILO which would survive the long period, between the 1930's when the more radical parts of the movement wilted away and the end of the 1960's, when a new radical stream came into existence.

A period characterized by a world-wide economic crisis in the 1930s, a World War in the 1940s and processes of rebuilding Europe and liberation struggles in the colonized countries in the 1950s. Out of the desillusions of World War II emerged a strong move for creating a peaceful world in which the relations between nations were to be arranged in mutual agreement and the rights of individual citizens were to be guaranteed. This resulted in the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 which accepted the UN Charter as its foundation. In its very first meeting in London, the General Assembly of the United Nations appointed a commission chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990:114; Reinalda and Verhaaren, 1989:127 en 142). The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights together formed the basis of an international process of norm setting for equal rights of men and women. Based on these rather general norms, many women through the United Nations and their own organizations, both nationally and internationally, took up the challenge to further elaborate and specify the provisions on the equality of the sexes. Within the UN the Commission on the Status of Women plays a central role in guiding this process. Established as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council in 1946, it received the mandate to look into those areas where women face the most serious discrimination. Subsequently the areas of women's political rights, legal rights, women's access to education and training and

women's rights in working life were identified (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990:114).

In the 1950s and early 1960s the emphasis of the Commission's work was on individual rights. It led to the adoption by the General Assembly of for example the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (1957) and the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage, and Registration of Marriage (1962). It is clear that after succesful lobbying in the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization in the early part of the 19th century (Reinalda and Verhaaren, 1989), women after World War II demonstrated that they were determined to achieve equal rights for women and were able to operate internationally, using the structures that existed. Three types of actors, the women of the women's movement, the femocrats (avant la lettre) and women politicians came together and strategized effectively.

At the same time important changes in the content, orientation and complexities of the states in Latin America began to be noted. In effect, during the last decades -in some countries earlier than in others, and in different ways Latin American states were partly overcome the oligarchic and ouclatorion character, through the influence of the populist governments which dominated a great part of

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⁸ The process of the weakening of the oligarchic state likewise took place in different rhytms and in some countries much later than in other countries. Populist and reformist forces gained momentum in the 30s, when in some countries they reached the acuired state power. They spread their influence in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

the region⁹   Populism has impelled catalysts and regulators of the development process, and undertaken attempts -although weak- to promote welfare-oriented and redistributive policies, broadening the content of citizenship, opening new channels for citizen participation, enlarging the forms of representation, modifying rigid social structures and promoting democratic conquests such as free education, and labour stability. (López, 1991).

Women have recently gained victories which, although they are not specifically directed at gender issues, have meant greater access to the labour market for them, higher levels of education, and a decline in mortality and fertility rates, with the resulting decrease in family size. Such changes have weakened the basis of the gender arrangements prevalent in Latin American societies, although they have not yet gone deep enough.

In many cases dictatorships have replaced populist governments. The dictatorships ruling the region during the 70s contributed to erasing and weakening a series of "certainties" that had dominated the continent in former decades: trust in the benefits of progress for all citizens and nations, trust in charismatic leaders to confront national problems, and trust in the capacity of states and political parties to be motors of social change. This ended the myth surrounding progress and socialism's inevitability (López, 199?).

⁹ Populism in Latin America was among other things a social, ideological and political movement which, even if it promoted a new form of modernisation as opposed to the traditional modernisation of the oligarchy, did not fully break with it, retaining some of the traits of oligarchic States, such as 'clientelism' and 'prebendismo'. Populism however has also had a democratising character, paving the road to the recognition that social reality is an order determined and defined by social subjects, and is not pre-determined beforehand by uncontrollable laws.

The changes in Latin America's political horizon marked the end of a whole development discourse and caused the growing loss of legitimacy on behalf of the state and political parties to represent the pluralistic interests of social subjects. In most of the region's countries, the women's movement became active under this climate of authoritarianism and defiance, whether under strong military dictatorships (Brasil and Chile), "reformist" dictatorships (Peru), or restricted democracies (Mexico).

The decade of the 80s brings great changes in the economic, social and political context, both regionally and internationally. Adjustment policies take place, with their social consequences, and a systematic fall in the production of goods and services, steady declines in real salaries and incomes, and the foreclosure of jobs in both the public and private sectors. This contributed to widening social gaps and accelerating the impoverishment of large sectors of the population. The role of Latin American states also began to change in consequence, and they abandoned reforms, services and attempts to generate social policies in favour of poor sectors. Governments designed policies which applied cuts in public expenditure, and greatly decreased the budgets destined for education, health and social security services. This has strongly affected women (De Barbieri, 1991).

Starting with the 1950s development became an important issue in international relations during the 1960s. It included for women a welfare approach, which assumes that women are passive recipients of development, whereby motherhood is seen as their most important role in society and child rearing as their most effective contribution to economic development (Moser, 1989:1807) The first assumption needs some elaboration, women are not only seen

as passive recipients, but often also merely perceived as the helpers of men, the assistants.

Against this background, where women are so clearly perceived as a passive and together with their children as a vulnerable category, it was an important achievement when through their combined efforts feminist researchers and activists in collaboration with feminist politicians and women working in national and international government and agency bureaucracies managed to include into the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade (1970-80) the sentence: "The full integration of women in the total development effort should be encouraged." It was not much as Pietilä and Vicker (1990:130) rightly observe. Yet it was important in that it provided the UN-system as a whole with a mandate to work towards an active role for women in development processes. In various sections of the UN bureaucracy women seized the opportunity and took the lead in steering resources to activities which strengthen that active role of women.

A beautiful example of how through combined action of the three types of actors central to our study, change can be achieved is the UN oral tradition about how International Women's Year (IWY) came about.

> A non-governmental organization, the Women's International Democratic Federation, first proposed the declaration of a women's year. The WIDF's president then was a prominent Finnish parliamentarian, Hertta Kuusinen. Representing her organization as an observer at the 1972 session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Ms. Kuusinen, together with a number of other NGO observers, drafted a proposal which she convinced the Romanian

representative on the Commission to present. The Finnish government representative at that time, Helvi Sipilä, seconded the proposal and, on Leap Year Day in 1972, the Commission decided to recommend to the General Assembly the declaration of 1975 as Internationa Women's Year. (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990:73)

That historic decision has had enormous consequences. The climax of International Women's Year was the UN World Conference for Women held in June-July, 1975, in Mexico City. Of the UN member states, 133 participated, together with 23 specialized agencies of the UN, 10 other intergovernmental organizations, such as the European Community, eight Liberation Movements and 114 NGO's (Reinalda and Verhaaren, 1989:226-7). For the first time governments on a world-wide scale needed to reflect on the position of women in their respective societies. Also for the first time women from South and North, from East and West were meeting in such large numbers, reflecting upon themselves and their position in society. Debates were lively and not seldom painful. Stimulated by the women's movement in the United States and Europe, delegates from those countries emphasized the central importance of equality between women and men, both at the official conference of governments as well as at the Women's Tribune, the alternative conference of nongovernmental organizations. At the same time women from the so-called Third World countries pleaded for an emphasis on development, accusing the North of thwarting their development efforts. Political problems were to some extent solved by formulating the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace, separate from the World Plan of Action for the Implementatiom of the Objectives of the International

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Women's Year, a Plan which was to be the base for policy preparation and implementation for all member states for the next decade. In both documents the views of Third World women are clearly heard and reflected. It was a shock for American feminists to discover that they could not speak for all women of the world, but in fact were accused of imperialism in general and of dominating the conference in particular.

Concentrating on the three types of actors distinguished here in this volume, it can be observed that between the official delegates to the UN conference (mainly government bureaucrats and some politicians) and the participants in the- Women's Tribune (mainly NGO women, women from the women's movement and some politicians) little exchange of views and ideas took place. This despite the fact, that daily reporting to the Women's Tribune on the progress made at the official governmental conference took place. These were basically two separate gatherings (Reinalda and Verhaaren, 1989:230).

The same happened at the mid Decade Conference in Copenhagen in 1980, with two in itself contradictory exceptions. In Copenhagen many women of the official delegations attended the activities organized at the Forum (the non-governmental parallel conference), thus showing their connectedness with the women's movements. At the same time it was at this conference that police stopped a demonstration of the Forum from entering the building where the official UN Conference was being held.

This second conference, at the mid-point of the Decade was organized to "...review and evaluate progress made in implementing the recommendations of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in 1975, and to

readjust programmes for the second half of the Decade in the light of new data and research..."[10]. This time the women's movement was better prepared for the event, in a number of countries, encouraged by femocrats who understand the problems of (mis)communication at official conferences, women's groups and organizations had extensively discussed their points of view and demands with the relevant government officials and had collaborated in the drafting of official statements before the conference started. In a number of government delegations representatives of the women's movement were included. Thus showing that the women's movement had made some inroads in the official policy making bodies in their countries. In particular at the Forum the presence of the organized feminist movement, both from the South and the North, was clearly felt. This showed in the issues discussed, such as violence against women and girls within the family, unpaid household work, the exploitation of women workers by multinational corporations and female circumcision. In particular the last issue led to fierce debates between women from the South and the North. The former demanding with right that equality for women should not be isolated from equality in terms of race, class and the international economic and political order.

A serious matter was the disappointing outcome of the review and evaluation of progress made in actual changes in the socio-economic, political and cultural position of women at particular national and international levels. Most

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[10] See UN General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) of December 15 1975, as formulated in: United Nations, World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, A/Conf. 94/34, 13 August 1980, para. 1a.

of the minimum objectives as formulated in the World Plan of Action (para. 46) had not been achieved. In fact the review and appraisal showed that even in the areas of employment and education, the situation of the poorest women had deteriorated instead of improved[1]. Lots of words, ideas and promises, but very little concrete change, except in the area of awareness and consciousness raising to which we shall return later.

Renewed commitments were made by governments accepting the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women. Due to political problems (related to the condemnation of zionism and the support for Palistinian women) only 94 governments voted for the document, four voted against and 22 abstained (Reinalda and Verhaaren. 1989:258). It was decided that for the second half of the Decade, governments should focus on policies leading to improvements for women in health, employment and education. After the conference different voices were heard about the (lack of) usefulness of such conferences[2].

Copenhagen was followed by Nairobi. In the summer of 1985 an estimated number of 14.000 women participated in the third official UN conference, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women and the Forum, the parallel conference of non-governmental organizations, comprising a great variety of workshops and panels, in Nairobi. Before the official conference to assess were the results of the efforts made

[11]. See United Nations, Division for Social and Economic Information: "Worsening situation of women will be main issue confronting Commission on the Status of Women" DPI/DESI note IWD/22, 13 february 1980.

[12]. See for example Signs volume 6, nr. 3, Spring 1981.

by governments during the Decade period. Efforts, meant to lead to the advancement of women in the various aspects of their life and work. Again, as was the case in Copenhagen, governments had little to show. Sure, at the end of the Decade, there is much more information available on the position of women in their respective countries. Governments in several countries, in order to be able to answer the questionnaires which were sent by the UN to member states, had commissioned research to gather the socio-economic, political and cultural facts about women. However, lack of baseline data, both quantitative as well as qualitative made it quite often not possible to assess whether progress had been achieved.

What has been achieved, however, is that a large majority of the United Nations member states have established some form of national machinery for the advancement of women[13]. Such machineries are seen as working in close cooperation with women's organizations in implementing policies for the advancement of women, however, at that time only a limited study had been carried out about the actual contribution of such machinery towards the advancement of women (Gordon, 1985). Major problems identified are poorly defined objectives and lack of adequate staffing and resources, problems which are intensified by overwhelming demands on staff time (ibid.). Nevertheless these national councils, women's bureaux, desks, divisions, or ministries are generally seen as an important achievement of the Women's Decade, indeed one of the minimum objectives indicated in the World Plan of action (para. 46). However, in most instances these have not led to concrete improvements in

[13]. United Nations, 1984, Overview, A/Conf. 116/5, para. 19.

the socio-economic and the political dimensions of women's
life and work.

At another level, the level of creating awareness, the
Decade has no doubt had a great impact. For example, due to
the preparations for and the publicity around the three
World Conferences, much attention has been given to the
situation of women world-wide. A growing stream of research
findings highlighted the adverse impact of development on
women and resulted in a deeper understanding of the
conflicts of power and interest between women and men, the
changing sexual division of labour and in general the
changing socio-economic relations between them in processes
of development and change. Another important result was
that at the international level a set of norms and
standards was being developed with respect to women's
position in society. Furthermore, at the concrete level of
resources, due to the Decade and its three conferences,
financial resources became available for a great variety of
women's activities[14].

The experiences of the Decade and the challenges of the
future have crystalized in a powerful document which was
unanimously accepted by all member states participating in
the third UN World Conference: The Nairobi Forward Looking
Strategies for the Advancement of Women. Will governments
this time follow up on their promises?

Another powerful document presented at the Forum in Nairobi
is entitled Development, Crisis,and Alternative Visions:
Third World Women's Perspectives. It is written by the DAWN

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[14]. For a more detailed overview of the achievements of the
decade see: Lycklama à Nijeholt 1987.

group. DAWN standing for "Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era". Taking feminism as their political point of departure, this group of mainly Third World feminists analyses gender and class in the development experience. Discussing women's potential in solving the systemic crises and presenting alternative visions, strategies and methods. Self-empowerment of women through organizations is seen as crucial in transforming societies into a world they want (Sen and Grown, 1987). Women should not depend on governments but develop autonomous strength through self-organization. These and many other issues were discussed at the Forum in Nairobi. But also in the official conference questions of empowerment and autonomy were on the agenda.

Two powerful documents. The one stipulating what governments should do, but also recognizing the importance of the women's movement in realizing the strategies as designed. The other reasoning from empowerment of women through self-organization and documenting the shortcomings of governments and development agencies in achieving a better world, both for women and men. Do the two meet? Do they need to meet? Is it collaboration with the danger of co-optation, or consequent opposition? Large parts of the women's movement have always taken a strong anti-government approach in their strategies. Do we need to reconsider, does the empowerment strategy not require a careful assessment of power relations in society, including those of government and the state, so that these may work for women instead of against them? That new roads need to be taken is demonstrated by a recent presentation of statistics and indicators over the period 1970-1990 which shows that governments's promises are not coming true (United Nations, 1991).

By the end of the 60's and the first years of the 70's another wave of feminism hit the press in many countries of the world. A radical, aggressive movement of young women shook society with brazen actions, daring analyses and bold tactics. These women, grown up in a political environment of hierarchical conservative tendencies which were challenged by a not less hierarchical leftist movement, to which many of these women were linked, decided to do away with hierarchy. Women's consciousness should be changed, awareness of the deplorable omnipresence of what was called patriarchy should grow. A diverse and flexible movement was built in Europe, the US and in Latin America which attempted to change society through extra-parliamentarian means.

If in Europe the welfare state made women realize their marginal position, in Latin America economic and political crises had contradictory effects on women's lifes and women's movements. These crises, in particular the economic one - which expresses the depletion of a state model of development organization based on capitalist parameters - has led many analysts and politicians to define the 80's as a "lost decade" for peripheral countries, at the level of economic development.

However, this lost decade is characterized by a great number of paradoxes, since it was not for example a lost decade for democracy and for women as a movement. That is, in this context of endless economic and paradigmatic crises, processes of political opening and democratization developed in the different countries on the continent, providing a new more flexible terrain for the women's movement to grow and become stronger. If the state, due to its fiscal and democratic crisis, showed its incapacity to

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reproduce the social order, civil society, which had acquired a greater sense of its identity during the previous decade, made room for a multiplicity of social demands which, if not met or processed by the state, yielded fertile ground for the emergence of new social subjects and actors.

By the mid-seventies abortion became the central issue in many West European countries. It proved to have a similar rallying and symbolic power as the suffrage issue around the beginning of this century. The abortion issue could use a political charge as personal control over female sexuality with an attack on the state.

In the 80's the movement got more fragmented. Analytically a division arose between two streams of thought which still have a great relevance to the 90's. Some women stressed women's 'otherness' from men, the special and beneficial characteristics of womanhood which needed to be revalorized. Others stressed the way human beings are molded in society and formed into two genders, of which the male gender in a long historical process has managed to subordinate the other, female gender. Another developent of the 80's was the recognition that women of different races, ethnic groups and classes have different interests and identities. Recently fruitful attempts are made to combine these approaches (Harding 1991, Haraway 1991, Mohanty 1991, Trinh 1989.

The European women's movements in the two case studies presented in this collection, Norway and The Netherlands, grew in democratic soil. Both countries are characterized by the absence of a strong feudal agrarian-based aristocracy. In Norway of old there is a strong adherence to norms of equality and justice. Thus, women's demands for 'Equal Status' found willing ears. Already in 1978 an

Equal Status Act was passed. Women's demands to be included in the political arena were rather easily incorporated into the structure of the socialist and liberal parties. The result is that the number of Norwegian women in high political positions is the highest of the world. Since 1987 there have been almost 50% women at ministerial level. This remarkable feat was brought about by the persistent and systematic efforts of many women in the women's movement, the political parties and the public administration to make use of the tools they could dispose of, direct campaigns and the quota system.

Yet, despite this success, Norwegian feminists find that many of their more radical demands get diluted in the process. As Halsaa remarks: the rather dramatic changes in numbers don't seem to be followed by penetrating political, economic and social changes. She quotes Heidar: 'political parties seem to mold women more than women mold the parties'. That is, women have entered the political arena, but not on their own terms. Yet, the mere presence of women does mean that gender issues have acquired a high political legitimacy. The sudden rise of a new ultra-conservative party (it is now the third largest) may threaten women's political success. They want to abolish the Equal Status Act and the whole national machinery.

The Dutch movement grew in an apparent contradiction: the number of women working was among the lowest in Europe. This is still the case, and, as in Norway, the majority of women who are working do so on a part-time basis. The major successes of the Dutch women's movement do not lie in the political field, as in Norway, but in their single-issue campaigns around abortion, incest, rape and health, in consciousness raising and in their penetration into public administration. To a major extent the infrastucture of the movement, its cultural activities, its crisis centers, are state-financed. There has also been a marked

change in public awareness around issues of gender discrimination. Yet Outshoorn and Swiebel conclude that the overall results have been meagre. Despite its visibility the movement has not succeeded in getting the state to come up with sufficient childcare facilities, a general Equal Treatment Bill still has not passed and the top positions in politics, administration and industry are still firmly in male hands.

Despite its initial extra-parliamentarian character the women's movements in Western and Northern Europe have integrated themselves gradually into politics. International pressures to set up state machineries for women's issues have been one factor. Another element to be taken into consideration is the fact that the line between civil society and the state, between the women's movement and national politics, has become diffused as women manage to strengthen their own triangle of empowerment. Both Halsaa and Outshoorn/Swiebel have observed the rise of corporate mechanisms in their societies. In the Dutch case certain interest groups have formed 'iron triangles' between industry, government and administration, to which women have had relatively little access, one reason for the meagre practical results of the movement. The major political feat of the Dutch movement seems to have been the footing it has acquired in the administration. In the Norwegian case women seem to have been more successful in penetrating the corporate channel, and to fight for their quota system from there, one of the causes of the impressive electoral results of the Norwegian women's movement.

Now, at the beginning of the 90's the women's movement has a decidedly different character from 20 years ago, when the present wave acquired momentum. Its media image has changed, there are no more mass mobilizations. The movements are fragmented on the one hand, which causes a

lack of coordination and coherence, on the other hand the individual groups are much more professional and they have acquired access to the administration. In the Norwegian case it was observed that many women from the core of the movement had moved into the civil service or into politics. There is thus a considerable personal and professional overlap between the movement and civil servants and politicians. The gap between the movement and politics and administration seems to have narrowed.

However, this also means that women's demands have been translated into bureaucratic issues, losing much of their radical flavour in the process. Halsaa points to the danger that the use of the term 'equal status', which has now become quite common in Norway, may mean that women's issues as such may be neglected. Outshoorn and Swiebel observe that the gains the Dutch movement have won are primarily distributive in character (leaving the structure of male domination intact) rather than redistributive, in which case power differences between the genders would be diminished. Some changes in the legal field have taken place, after bitter struggles (abortion, pornography). But here too, as they remark, it has proven easier to help rape victims than to draft an anti-rape law.

Some important lessons can be learned from these examples. In the first place that the mere presence of women in a major political arena is not enough to bring about effective change. This situation may give rise to symbolic policies and rhetoric, but real progress, a genuine redistribution of power, is a much more difficult process.

Secondly, time seems to be an important factor. In both the Norwegian and the Dutch case it is observed that gender issues have acquired political legitimacy. This may mean that concrete results may be harvested in the near future. Certain factors may prevent this, however. Major

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women's issues (such as childcare) are related to welfare
and are thus closely linked to state intervention. Also in
issues related to affirmative action and shorter working
days the state is involved. In both Norway and the
Netherlands however, there is a movement away from state
intervention, and budget cuts are more likely in the future
than an expansion of the state budget. Secondly, many
newer civil servants who are entering the administration
nowadays are not sufficiently trained in gender issues, nor
do they have a background of active feminist commitment.
They may thus be less qualified and committed than the
civil servants who came in directly from the movement.

Lastly, the location of a national machinery for
women's issues is a crucial factor. In the Dutch case it
shifted from the Ministry of Welfare to the Ministry of
Social Affairs and Employment, in relation to a shift in
the definition of what were seen as crucial women's issues.
The Dutch have agreed that women's issues are all-
encompassing and that all ministries should have
commissions dealing with gender issues. Although a
coordinating structure is set up there is still the danger
of fragmentation and a lack of coordination.

The effect of the women's movement in Latin America has
been described as 'engendering democracy' [15]. The Latin
America women's movement has developed significantly in the
past fifteen years; it is based on hundreds of initiatives,
and innovative forms of organisation, and has organized
itself into intensive networks scattered throughout the
continent. Without doubt, the movement has served to
broaden the social scenario, enriching civil society and

[15]. Sonia Alvarez (19..), in an article referring the the
experiences of the Brazilian Council of Women, which was chaired
by Jacqueline Pitangui.

opening new horizons in women's lives. In this process generally three mainstreams are recognized. The feminist mainstream is composed basically of women who had been militants of the political left and who questioned their position as women, creating autonomous feminist organizations. The popular women's tream consists of women who entered the public sphere from their traditional roles. Women who belong to the formal political sphere, trade unions, political parties and who questions male legitimacy in thise sprhere belong to the thrid stream of the women's movement[16].

The movement mostly has had to flourish under authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships, and thus it has proven to be a key force in the ongoing process of democratic recovery. Perhaps due to this, the relationship between women and the state in Latin America is complex, crammed with paradoxes and ambivalences. It is an expression not only of differences at the core of the movement itself, but of the difficulties inherent to the prevailing gender patterns in Latin America. It also portrays above all the profound changes that the state in Latin America is undergoing at this historical moment.

Women, in a process which coincided with that of many other marginalized sectors, such as homosexuals, indigenous people, blacks, the landless - those who remain invisible in their quest for identity, struggling to ... their social scene and change the dominant ... massive movement of women in every country in the region.

[16]. See Villavicencio (forthcoming) for one of the first analyses of the three maintreams of Latin American feminism, focusing on the early Peruvian women's movement.

Within this movement, a distinctively feminist mainstream attempted to draft political proposals.

Their activism, however, did not initially reach the formal political structures, as some case studies in this volume bear witness to. The characteristics of Latin American states obviously contribute to this, but it also has to do with the influence in the women's movement and its feminist stream, of a polarized and dichotomous political culture that, in relation to the public sphere and in relation to the state, was marred by the polarity contained in two streams of thought. One was the Marxist one with all its variations, which basically saw the state as the enemy that had to be conquered and the other a rigid socialist feminist one which marked the movement's development in the first years (and the ghost of which returns sometimes). This last one saw the state as the expression of a pure patriarchal order, which would only change when it could remain in control. This is an extreme vision which disregards the complexities of a state that, far from being monolithic, also presents a series of cracks and contradictions and which in consequence offers the possibilities of being influenced.

Completing this vision, a central divide had appeared between 'autonomous' feminists and those wanting to work within state structures. Feminists with a restricted conception and practice of autonomy and a limited view about the spaces from which the movement can be constructed and/or about who and where are the bearers of demands for women were claiming a "different" and self-sufficient way of making politics, which was not always effective in achieving desired changes. On the other hand women working within the "policies" of the parties and the state, were tied to a traditional form of making politics without regard to gender. It is true that the previous advances of the feminist movement had managed to make evident that

political action was not exclusively located within formal politics; that in the new spaces and in the new themes that were posed, there was also a political action and proposal; that women's social practices had broadened women's horizon, incorporating a new vision about their rights as women and new demands as citizens; that, finally, as Pitangui said, the presence of women as social subjects allowed a process of "requalification" of democracy, referring it now not only to the full exercise of citizenship, but also to the practices of daily life, work, such as the family, health and education.

However important this step forward was, it left aside the more effective utilization of citizenship for women, in the sense that while women acquired a stronger social presence and questioned the division between the public and private, the public sphere, at decision-taking levels and in the design of proposals and politics, remained in masculine hands, so that the huge gap between participatory democracy and reprentative democracy on the continent became clear.

The need to be effective; the need to modify some of the more visible aspects of women's subordination in the here and now, the need to broaden the echo of women's proposals to the whole of society, and, above all, the enormous need to broaden and strengthen the continent's democratic processes, led important sectors of the feminist movement to broaden their scope of action and interlocution, approximating public spaces from a new perspective. The restricted and defensive vision began to change, seeking to broaden the relationship between civil society and the state, from the proposals formulated by women, and initiating the difficult road towards representation.

This process - to seek out channels of interlocution with the state and to increase women's representation in

public spaces - is reflected in the articles regarding the Latin American experience in the present volume. Each of them presents us with the possible articulation, or the absence of it, between the different actors of the triangle of empowerment. In contrast to Europe, where it appears that a clear feminist stream has managed to insert itself into the bureaucracy, this has not been the case in latin America. There the feminist stream within formal politics is mainly composed of the leaders of urban and rural unions, feminists of the political parties and of only a limted number of feminists. Except for Brazil where the Council managed to sensitize the women in the bureaucracy (and possibly also to a limited extent in the cases of Peru and Jamaica) the other Latin American case studies discuss the relation between the women's movement and the state without referring to the mediation of feminist bureaucrats or politicians. Neverthelesss those articles reflect innovative and subversive experiences that didn't always meet with adequate answers from the state, as in the case of Peru, or didn't always commit the whole of the movement, as in Mexico, or that were not able to counteract the pressure of conservative forces, like in Brasil, but that without any doubt left their seal on the movement and on civil society as a whole. It remains to be seen if this greater female concern, presence and participation at the level of the structures of formal politics has meant not only greater visibility and awareness about women's conditions in these societies and an improvement in their negotiation and representation capacity, but also a greater flexibility in the formal political structures. The latter seems more unsure: for example, some data regarding the last elections in some of the cases presented in this book show us that during the last parliamentary elections, at the national level, there have been fewer women candidates

than during previous elections and that much less women have actually been elected to posts.

This shows us an alarming fact: although democracy is without hesitation the most fertile ground for the development and consolidation of new social and political practices, for the consolidation of the women's movement itself, it does not necessarily imply a substantial change in the gender arrangements prevalent in our societies. Thus it is necessary to remember, as Jaquette points out, that women are not "naturally" democratic, but "naturally" conservative. Their support to democracy will depend on the quality of political life promoted by democracies themselves, and on the space they engender and the support the give to the modification of women's subordination (Jaquette, 1989). The case of Peru is illustrative: in spite of the disdain shown for women's political demands, the present authoritarian Peruvian government enjoys the support of more than half the population, including women[17].

And here we come to another paradox confronted by women: modifying the perception about their relations with the state and acknowledging the importance of opening channels of interlocution takes place during a period in which the state in Latin America in its turn has deeply modified its populist or welfare character, a moment in which the state has lost legitimacy, due to its ineffectiveness to respond to the most pressing needs of the population. The population's distrust becomes generalized, towards a political system less and less capable of representing society's multiple and plural interests. Weak, empoverished states that are in crisis

[17]. In 1992 president Fujimori staged what has been called a 'self-coup', dissolving parliament.

and do not overcome their authoritarian, patrimonial, patriarchal features, and don't have, in most cases, the capacity, the interest nor the resources to take charge of the demands and/or proposals made by women and oppressed sectors in general, only contribute to augmenting the historical divorce between society and the sate. Women's bid for a public presence finds very clear constraints in this, and this forces us to recognize and confront, as Pitangui points out, the perverse challenge facing Latin American countries today, reconciling the processes of political democratization with a profound crisis in their economic structures and the exhaustion of a form of state organization.

These are not the only difficulties. Perhaps the greatest paradox is embodied in the development of democratic processes in situations of extreme poverty in huge sectors of the population, affecting women more profoundly, which is expressed in the simultaneous existence of democratic processes seeking to consolidate political citizenship - through voting and other albeit restricted forms of political participation, and a process of growing deterioration of social citizenship. This is a long-standing paradox in Latin America, which reveals the lack of correspondence and articulation between social and political democracy.

This is the ambiguous and paradoxical ground in which the women's movement in Latin America struggles for a different relation with the state and for the drafting of political proposals which taking women's concerns into account. Thus the importance of laying out bridges and channels of linkage and solidarity, not only among women in the different streams of the movement, but also with women who are in the public political and official spaces, who operate in a hierachical and hostile medium. The cases of Jamaica and Brasil - in its time - are illustrative of the

feasibility of articulating networks of support not only among the different streams of the movement but also with the women who are inserted in the spaces opened at official channels.

Many challenges are faced in this area, and a multitude of strategies is being employed: confronting the "self-complacency of the victims' discourse" Lamas examines so well in the case of Mexico and Molina in the case of Chile; reverting the "no power" culture and strengthening the capacity of interlocution and proposal making towards the public sphere, from the different spaces and streams of the movement; gaining the efforts made by women within, from the heart of the coalitions of power, political parties and governments still the most potent channels for policies regarding women; generating conditions for a "pact" among women which, based on the respect for differences, finds a minimum democratic common denominator to increase the capacity to negotiate and exert pressure; entering the institutional game, benefitting from the more flexible junctures to accept democratizing proposals with a gender content; negotiating with other sectors and movements which from their specificity also attempt to broaden the democratic spectrum, etc. We know that the fundamental problem we face in this process is the continent's weak democratic culture, but we also know that incorporating new themes and new social actors – in this case women, from their different action spaces – implies broadening and changing that democratic culture.

Modifying the multiple oppressive situations women encounter cannot be achieved only through laws or recognition of civil rights. Women's struggle subverts too many places of power and too many political, social and personal interests. It is not enough to do politics differently. Our autonomous spaces are not enough either;

it is not sufficient either to only take part in the
political game, where the risk of remaining subordinate is
concrete and real, to struggle for entitlement at the same
time as for enfranchisement of our rights. To struggle to
have a presence and yet continue questioning that presence
(the ambivalence and wariness towards the political that
Lamas refers to) are part of feminist strategies. Both
spaces - autonomous and formal ones - and many more, all
those in which women's experience of resistance and
rebellion occur, are necessary and feed upon each other.
Only a response anchored upon respect and tolerance, which
sums up wills and doesn't exclude them, will allow us to
gain more democratic spaces for the next generation of
women. The experiences of Latin American and European
women included in this volume may shed light upon the
difficulties and potentials of this complex process of
modifying relationships between the state and civil society
from the perspective of women's vision and interests.

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