

Political Integration and Fragmentation

From its initial extra-parliamentary character, women's movements in Western and Northern Europe have gradually integrated themselves into politics. International pressures to set up state machineries for women's issues have been one factor in this process. Another consideration is the fact that boundaries between civil society and the state, between the women's movement and national politics, have become blurred as women have managed to strengthen their own triangle of empowerment. Both Halsaa and Outshoorn and Swiebel note the rise of corporate mechanisms in their respective societies. In the Dutch case, the major political feat of the Dutch movement is the foothold it has acquired in the public administration. Women have had less success in gaining access to or forming "iron triangles", such as that which links industry, government and administration. By contrast, the major success of Norwegian women lies in their national political presence as a result of the introduction of quotas.

The women's movement of the 1990s has a decidedly different profile from its inception twenty-five years ago. Its media image has changed, mass mobilization is absent and the movement is fragmented. In addition, individual groups have become more professional and have acquired access to the administration. New issues, such as care for the environment, have demanded attention. The fast growth of mass communications technology has fostered the spread and effectiveness of national and international networks. The end of the Cold War has meant that the highly charged ideological battles between socialist women and radical groups have faded away. Women are currently building alliances on the basis of issues rather than on fixed ideological positions. Feminists in other social movements, such as human rights and ecology groups, have been able to articulate their concerns at the highest level. Indeed, women's issues have gained legitimacy on many different levels of social and political life.

In the Norwegian case, many women from the core of the movement have moved into civil service or into politics. There is thus considerable personal and professional overlap between the movement and civil servants and politicians. This narrowing of the gap between the movement, political parties and administration means that women's demands are translated into bureaucratic issues. The danger of this process is that radicalism may be watered down; the gain is that new possibilities for action may present themselves. Outshoorn and Swiebel observe that the gains for the Dutch movement have been primarily distributive (thereby leaving the structure of male domination intact) rather than regulatory or redistributive.

Lessons from the Case Studies

Some important lessons can be learned from these examples. In the first place, the mere presence of women in a major political arena is not sufficient to bring about effective change. Women's presence can simply result in symbolic policies and rhetoric rather than a genuine redistribution of power. Second, time may be an important factor. Gender issues have acquired political legiti-

macy in both the Norwegian and the Dutch case and further concrete results may yet await harvesting. However, certain factors may prevent this. Issues such as childcare, affirmative action and shorter working days all involve state intervention. Yet, in both Norway and The Netherlands, there is a movement away from state intervention and cutbacks in public expenditure are more likely than any prospect of expansion. Third, newly appointed civil servants are often insufficiently trained in gender issues or lack a background of active feminist commitment. They may thus be less qualified and committed than the civil servants who stemmed directly from the movement.

Finally, the location of a national machinery for women's issues is a crucial factor. In The Netherlands, responsibility shifted from the Ministry of Welfare to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, in accordance with changing definitions of what were crucial women's issues. The Dutch have agreed that, as women's issues are all-encompassing, all ministries should have commissions dealing with gender issues. Although a coordinating structure was set up, recent reorganization and changes of personnel have resulted in a loss of influence and credibility. Whilst the women's movement has entrenched itself firmly in the bureaucracy, a crucial factor will be the extent to which the national machinery for women's policy-making remains intact.

CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Whilst in Europe the decline of the welfare state made women realize their marginal position, in Latin America and the Caribbean economic and political crises have had contradictory effects on women's lives and women's movements. In particular, the economic crisis—which expresses the depletion of a state model of development organization based on capitalist parameters—has led many analysts and politicians to define the 1980s as a "lost decade" for economic development in peripheral countries.

However, this "lost decade" was not lost for democracy and for women as a movement. Processes of political opening and democratization developed which offered a new and more flexible terrain in which the women's movement could grow and become stronger. Whilst the state was weakened by fiscal and democratic crises, an invigorated civil society made room for a multiplicity of social demands and the emergence of new social subjects and actors.

At the same time important changes in the content and orientation of Latin American states began to be noted. The oligarchic and exclusive character of Latin American states has been partly transformed by the incursions of populist governments which dominated a great part of the region.⁸ Populism encouraged, if weakly, the promotion of welfare-oriented and redistributive policies. It broadened the content of citizenship, participation, and representation, modified rigid social structures and promoted democratic conquests such as free education and labor stability [López, 1991].

Women gained victories which, although not specifically addressing gender issues, permitted greater access to the labor market, higher levels of education, and a decline in mortality and fertility rates. Such changes have weakened the

basis of prevailing gender arrangements in Latin American societies, even if they have not yet gone far enough.

Dictatorships in the 1970s

In many Latin American countries, dictatorships replaced populist governments in the 1970s. This reversal weakened a number of "certainties" that had dominated the continent: trust in the benefits of progress for all citizens and nations, trust in the ability of charismatic leaders to tackle national problems, and trust in the capacity of states and political parties to be the motor of social change. Together it meant an end to the myth surrounding progress and the inevitability of socialism [López, 1991].

The changed political horizon marked the end of a certain development discourse and a loss of legitimacy on the part of the state and political parties to represent the pluralistic interests of social subjects. In most of the region, the women's movement became active in this authoritarian climate, whether under strong military dictatorships (Brazil and Chile), "reformist" dictatorships (Peru), or restricted democracies (Mexico).

Modern Jamaican political history has been dominated by political rivalry between a few parties led by strongly charismatic men. Women have been active politically since the black emancipation movements of the first half of the 20th century but mainly as women's "auxiliaries", rather than as independent political actors. Where the "women's arm" of the party addressed women's issues they did so along party lines.

Adjustment Policies in the 1980s

The adjustment policies of the 1980s brought great changes in the economic, social and political context of the region. The systematic fall in the production of goods and services, a steady drop in real salaries and incomes, and the reduction of jobs in both the public and private sectors contributed to widening social divisions and accelerating the impoverishment of large sectors of the population. Latin American and Caribbean states abandoned reforms and redirected policies towards cutting public expenditure on such areas as education, health and social security services. This has strongly affected women [De Barbieri, 1992].

Streams within Feminism

The effect of the women's movement in Latin America has been described as "engendering democracy" [Alvarez, 1990]. The Latin America and Caribbean women's movement has developed significantly in the past fifteen years; it is based on hundreds of initiatives, innovative forms of organization, and intensive networks throughout the region. Without doubt, the movement has served to broaden the social scene, enriching civil society and opening new horizons in women's lives. Three main streams can be distinguished. The feminist mainstream is composed basically of women who had been militants of the political left and who went on to create autonomous feminist organizations. The popular women's stream consists of women who entered the public sphere

from their traditional roles in the private domain. The third stream is composed of women who belong to the formal political sphere, of trade unions and political parties, but who question male legitimacy in this sphere.⁹ In Jamaica the Women's Bureau formed a strong mobilizing force.

As the movement often developed under authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships, it has been a key force in the ongoing process of democratic recovery. Owing to this, the relationship between women and the state in Latin America is highly ambivalent. This reflects both differences at the heart of the movement itself and difficulties inherent to the prevailing pattern of gender relations in Latin America. In particular, the movement expresses the profound changes which the state Latin America is undergoing at this historical moment.

Women emerged as social subjects alongside many other marginalized sectors, such as homosexuals, indigenous people, blacks, the landless. In the quest for identity, wider horizons and a transformed political culture, women throughout the region have built a broad and heterogenous women's movement. Within this movement, a distinctively feminist mainstream attempted to draft political proposals. As shown by some of the case studies presented here, their activism did not initially reach formal political structures. The characteristics of Latin American states partly explain this, but it is also explained by the prevalence of dichotomous thinking about the state within the feminist stream of the women's movement. One pole was Marxist, which basically saw the state as the enemy that had to be conquered. The other, a socialist feminist pole, regarded the state as the expression of a pure patriarchal order, which would only allow change on its own terms. This extreme vision disregards the complexities of a state which is far from monolithic, and whose cracks and contradictions can be exploited. The Jamaican case bears witness to this as does the experience of the Brazilian National Council of Women who were able to exert considerable influence on policies in certain political circumstances.

Consequently a central divide has opened up between "autonomous" feminists and those wanting to work within state structures. The former advocated a "different" and self-sufficient way of doing 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 traditional forms of doing politics which had no regard for gender. It is true that the feminist movement had earlier made it clear that political action was not confined to formal politics. The new spaces created and the new topics discussed were also instances of political action. Women's social practices had broadened their horizons and involved a new vision of their rights as women and new demands as citizens. The presence of women as social subjects had given rise to a process of redefining democracy in which this refers not only to the full exercise of citizenship, but also to the practices of everyday life, work, the family, health and education [Pitanguy, this volume].

However important a step forward this was, it neglected the question of how to make citizenship more effective for women. Women certainly ac-

quired a stronger social presence and questioned the division between public and private spheres, but decision-taking and policy design in the public sphere remained in masculine hands, exposing the huge gap between participatory democracy and representative democracy on the continent [Phillips, 1993].

The need to be effective, to modify the more visible aspects of women's subordination in the here and now, and above all the need to extend and strengthen the region's democratic processes, led important sectors of the feminist movement to broaden their scope of action and interlocution by approaching public spaces from a new perspective. Their previously restricted and defensive vision was revised as they sought to broaden the relationship between civil society and the state and initiate the difficult road towards representation.

Channels of Interlocution

The process of seeking out channels of interlocution with the state and increasing women's representation in public spaces is reflected in the articles on Latin America and the Caribbean in this volume. Each discusses the presence or absence of articulation between the different actors of the triangle of empowerment. In contrast to Europe, a feminist stream has not managed to insert itself into the bureaucracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Rather the feminist stream within formal politics in this region is mainly composed of leaders of urban and rural unions and of feminist women within political parties, with only a limited number of women from the women's movement. An exception to this is Brazil where the Council of Women's Rights managed to sensitize women in the bureaucracy, and to a much lesser extent Peru and Jamaica.

The other Latin American case studies discuss relations between the women's movement and the state without referring to the mediation of feminist bureaucrats or politicians. Nevertheless these chapters discuss innovative and subversive experiences which, whilst they did not receive an adequate response from the state (as in Peru), or commit the whole of the movement (as in Mexico), or counteract the pressure of conservative forces (as in Brazil), still left an impact on the movement and on civil society as a whole.

It remains to be seen whether this increased female presence and participation at the formal political level has resulted in the greater flexibility of these structures. Recent electoral data in some of case studies presented in this book show a disturbing fall in the number of women candidates at national level and that far fewer women have been elected. Although democracy is undoubtedly the most fertile ground for developing and consolidating new social and political practices, including the women's movement, it does not necessarily imply a substantial change in dominant gender arrangements. It is important to bear in mind that women are not "naturally" democratic, nor "naturally" conservative [Jaquette, 1989]. Women's support for democracy will depend on the quality of political life promoted by democracies, on the space they engender and on the support given to redressing women's subordination. The case of Peru is illustrative here. Despite the disdain shown for women's

political demands, the present authoritarian Peruvian government enjoys the support of more than half the population, including women.¹⁰

Deteriorating Social Citizenship

This brings us to another paradox. The acknowledgement of the importance of opening up channels of interlocution with the state is taking place at a time when the state in Latin America and the Caribbean has lost legitimacy and in which there is widespread distrust of a political system which fails to represent society's multiple and plural interests. Lacking the will, capacity and resources to meet the demands of women and other oppressed sectors, the state in such circumstances can only contribute to widening the historical division between society and the state. Women's bid for a public presence is thereby constrained by the challenge of reconciling processes of political democratization with a profound economic crisis and the exhaustion of a form of state intervention. The simultaneous existence of democratic processes seeking to strengthen political citizenship (through voting and other albeit restricted forms of political participation), and a process of deteriorating social citizenship is a long-standing paradox in Latin America.

This constitutes the difficult terrain in which the women's movement in Latin America and the Caribbean is struggling to redefine its relations with the state. Hence, the importance of constructing bridges and ties of solidarity with women in public office. The cases of Jamaica and Brazil—in its time—illustrate the feasibility of building networks of support not only between the different streams of the movement but also with women in official public spaces. The fundamental problem we face in this process is the region's weak democratic culture. By incorporating new issues and new social actors—in this case women—we aim to broaden and change that culture.

CONCLUSION

Redressing the multiple sites of oppression encountered by women cannot be achieved through legislation or the recognition of civil rights alone. Women's struggles subvert too many sites of power and upset too many political, social and personal interests. It is not enough to do politics differently in our autonomous spaces. Nor is it sufficient to focus exclusively on the formal political arena, where there is a real risk of remaining subordinate. To struggle to have a presence and yet to continue questioning that presence are part and parcel of feminist strategies. An engagement with both autonomous and formal space is necessary and mutually strengthening. Only a response anchored in respect and tolerance will allow us to win more democratic space for the next generation of women. The experiences of Latin American and European women included in this volume will hopefully shed some 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.

The processes analyzed above gained new momentum in the trajectory towards Beijing. The following chapter discusses the international dimension of these processes of organization and institutionalization and the dynamics be-

tween the international actors within the triangle of women's empowerment. The subsequent chapters present the case studies which address these dynamics on the national level.

ENDNOTES

1. The word "femocrat" was coined by Australian feminists. In this collection it is used for any feminist in the public administration. It is also used more narrowly to refer to women who work in national machineries dealing with women's issues. See also Eisenstein [1990], Franzway and Connell [1989], Sawyer [1995] and the introduction of Stetson and Mazur [1995].
2. Dahlerup [1986] analyzes the dynamics between these two streams of the women's movement in examples drawn from Europe and the USA.
3. Maxine Molyneux [1985] distinguishes women's strategic and practical gender interests; a distinction popularized by Moser [1989]. For a critique, see Anderson [1992] and Wieringa [1992; 1994].
4. See de Lauretis [1987] for the role of agency in constructing gender relations. She analyzes how women are both constructed by the dominant gender ideology and actively construct that ideology.
5. See McNay [1992] for a discussion of ambiguities in Foucault's work and its tensions with feminist theory.
6. See Pateman [1990]. Phillips [1993: 108], in answer to the question of whether gender inequality is built into the very foundations of liberal democracy, concludes that the "risks of non-democratic alternatives to liberal democracy" are greater than the "complacency of those who feel they have reclaimed the political agenda".
7. *Les Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne*, published in 1791.
8. The timing and pace of this decline of the oligarchic state in Latin America varied. Populist and reformist forces gained momentum in the 1930s, when they formed government in some countries. Their influence spread in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Although populism in Latin America retained some of the traits of oligarchic states, such as "clientelism" and "prebendismo", it also had a democratizing streak.
9. Villavicencio's [1995] account of the early Peruvian women's movement is one of the first analyses of the three main streams of Latin American feminism.
10. In 1992 President Fujimori staged what has been called an "auto-coup", which dissolved Parliament.

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