Geneva 2000 Occasional Paper No. 4

February 2000

Women in Contemporary Democratization

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United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

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In preparation for Geneva 2000, UNRISD is undertaking a wide-ranging inquiry into five areas of policy and institutional reform that are central to creating an enabling environment for social progress. These include initiatives related to financing social development; democratization and public sector reform; mainstreaming gender in public policy; strengthening the role of civil society; and promoting "people-centred" sustainable development. Selected papers from each thematic area are published in this series of Occasional Papers, and all papers are being synthesized in a special UNRISD report for Geneva 2000.

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Acronyms

ALOP	Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción (Latin American Association of Organization for Advancement)
ANC	African National Congress
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CUT	Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (Union Federation)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)
FMC	Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPU	Inter-Parliamantary Union
MP	member of parliament
n.d.	no date
NGO	non-governmental organization
NRM	National Resistance Movement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONG	organisation non gouvernementale / organización no gubernamental
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAP	poverty alleviation programme
PDS	Partido Democrático Social (Democratic Social Party)
PH	Partido Humanista (Humanist Party)
PMDB	Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement)
PPD	Partido por la Democracia (Party for Democracy)
PR	proportional representation
PS	Partido Socialista (Socialist Party)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker's Party)
SERNAM	Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (National Service for Women)
SUS	Sistema Universal de Saúde (Universal Public Health Programme)
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
US	United States
WID	Women in Development

Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

Over the past two decades authoritarian regimes in many parts of the developing world, as well as in East/Central Europe, have been replaced by democracies. This paper looks at the issue of democratization from a gender perspective. While many of the problems afflicting the "new democracies" (such as the elitist character of political parties, and the failure of the state to guarantee civil and political rights or make a significant dent in poverty) affect all citizens, they are manifested and experienced in gender-specific ways. Women's persistent exclusion from formal politics, in particular, raises a number of specific questions about how to reform democratic institutions, since these institutions are not automatically gender-equitable.

In a democratic polity citizens are presumed to have equal rights, opportunities and voice in the governance of the public domain. All versions of liberal democracy link the right to vote with the right to stand for office. Yet women are hugely under-represented in national assemblies and governments. Women's political invisibility is particularly striking in those countries where their political mobilization contributed to the demise of authoritarianism and the transition to democracy.

The suppression of the conventional political arena under authoritarian rule very often shifts the political centre of gravity to "movement-type activities" and gives prominence to women's political mobilization. What very often unites the disparate groups constituting the women's movement in these contexts is their commitment to bringing about a change in government. Nevertheless, social, political and ideological heterogeneity of women's groups, tensions between the *feminist* and the *feminine* streams, and divisions over strategy foreshadow future difficulties in forging political coalitions and aggregating interests to effect change in more "normal" times.

The new wave of democratization has not had a feminizing affect on the parliaments and the governments of the new democracies. Deeply entrenched barriers exclude women from meaningful participation in political parties. In the post-transition period, the more established political parties in countries like Brazil and Chile have remained remarkably resistant to women's participation. Newly formed parties of the left have been more accessible to women, though participation in these smaller parties may arguably produce more symbolic than real benefits. The masculine construction of political authority makes it extremely difficult for women to be elected into office without some form of electoral engineering, such as quotas or reserved seats. The adoption of quotas and reserved seats for women by the South African ANC and the Ugandan NRM, which dominate politics in their respective countries, has produced a significant increase in women's political profile. But given the lack of any realistic political options for women outside these two parties, women's political leverage vis-à-vis the party hierarchy remains strictly limited.

Besides the issue of political equality and democratic justice, the argument for increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies also hinges very often on an implicit assumption that women can, more effectively than men, contribute to the formulation of woman-friendly policies because they are somehow better able to *represent* women's interests. But this is a controversial assumption. Questions continue to be raised about how such a diverse group as "women" can find meaningful representation in the polity in the absence of procedures for establishing what the group wants or thinks, and in the absence of mechanisms for keeping the "representatives" accountable to their constituents. Questions have also been raised as to why the growing presence of women in politics (in some contexts) is not translating into substantive change toward policies capable of making a positive impact on the lives of ordinary women.

Given the limited success to date in feminizing political parties and getting women elected, it is not surprising that other strategies are also needed for bringing women's interests into the policy-making process. One such strategy is to enter and work directly through the public administration. Democratic transitions, however restricted, represent propitious moments for making interventions because the state is potentially more fluid than at other times. But this space is often limited because of the top-down, elitist nature of the transition. Moreover, the ability of those working on the "inside" to push for change on a sustained basis depends less on having an institutional space *per se*, and much more on the relationships with autonomous women's organizations on the "outside" that they are able to establish and exploit. But it is very often difficult to establish effective inside-outside relationships—popular women's movements and groups, in particular, may feel alienated from the "women's machineries" in the public administration and from the women who staff these units. They may also deliberately distance themselves from public authorities because of recent experiences of corruption and co-optation. Moreover, the creation and staffing of women's spaces within the state may in itself weaken the women's movements outside the state.

Although in some contexts the state has incorporated the participants and the banners of the women's movements, it has been extremely difficult for those on the "inside" to translate even the watered-down goals of the movement into concrete policies capable of making a positive impact on the lives of female citizens. The efforts to induce change have been patchy and, in the realm of public expenditure decisions, extremely difficult. This is in part due to the lack of effective pressure from an organized women's constituency (noted above) that can articulate a coherent set of issues and priorities for policy attention, and monitor its adoption and implementation by state agencies. It is also due to the *dis*abling environment in which women bureaucrats find themselves. The deliberate attempt to create insulated technocracies, as is currently occurring in some countries and some areas of policy, has serious implications for democratic consolidation. While gender bureaucrats well-versed in economic analytical skills may be able to contribute to what goes on inside insulated technocracies (in ministries of finance, for example), this can hardly substitute for open public debate enabling women's groups and networks, along with other social groups, to scrutinize economic decisions and policies that affect the well-being of their constituents.

But women's machineries and women parliamentarians have had more significant impact in some critical areas—raising the legitimacy of violence against women as a political issue; enhancing women's awareness of their existing rights through civic education; and facilitating social legislation on highly significant issues such as divorce, child custody, domestic violence, and reproductive health and rights, which address very fundamental aspects of women's oppression. But here again, success in raising these controversial issues—and maybe even legislating for them—has gone hand in hand with a failure of the state (the judiciary and the police, in particular) to guarantee such important individual civil rights across national territories and for all social strata.

One cross-cutting concern in the post-transition period is that the national women's movements have been stripped of their most competent cadres, as leaders and key organizers have been drawn into the new state institutions representing gender issues, into political parties and into parliament. Another common concern is the "NGO-ization" of women's movements, especially through donor-driven, poverty alleviation programmes. Together, it seems, they have contributed to the weakening of both national women's movements and the cross-class alliances that some had managed to forge. The formalization provoked by the proliferation of NGOs and the competition for funds has several problematic implications. Self-reliance and self-help, which characterize this model of social provisioning, can be euphemisms for reliance on the unpaid work of women (who are recruited by NGOs in voluntary and secondary positions). Moreover, politically these projects seem to have taken away the advocacy and campaigning element of local participation.

The perennial issue of feminist autonomy continues to preoccupy members of women's movements—whether "in" or "out" of the mainstream institutions. Given the dangers of co-optation by the state or party in power, there is a distinct need for maintaining some autonomous space for interest articulation and aggregation. But at the same time, by taking an autonomous path, women's groups and movements also run the risk of becoming politically isolated— hence the need for a politics of engagement with the mainstream. Ultimately, the long-term viability and effectiveness of the women's movement depends on its ability to work at different levels and in different arenas—*both* "inside" and "outside" the mainstream—forging strategic insider-outsider alliances. This message is sometimes lost on advocates of "mainstreaming" who see the process of institutional change as a purely technocratic exercise of tinkering with institutions in a political vacuum. To be effective and sustainable, the two sets of strategies need to go hand in hand.

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Résumé

Dans de nombreuses régions du monde en développement comme en Europe orientale et centrale, les régimes autoritaires ont cédé la place à des démocraties. Cette démocratisation des 20 dernières années est étudiée ici sous l'angle de la parité entre hommes et femmes. Si bien des problèmes affectant les "nouvelles

démocraties" (tels que le caractère elitiste des partis politiques et l'incapacité de l'Etat de garantir les droits civils et politiques ou de faire sensiblement reculer la pauvreté) touchent tous les citoyens, ils se traduisent pour les femmes par des expériences différentes de celles des hommes. L'exclusion persistante des femmes de la politique établie, en particulier, soulève nombre de questions spécifiques sur la façon de réformer des institutions démocratiques qui ne sont pas forcément équitables pour les femmes.

Dans une démocratie, les citoyens sont censés avoir les mêmes droits, les mêmes chances et le même poids dans la gestion des affaires publiques. Toutes les variantes de la démocratie libérale lient le droit de vote au droit de se porter candidat à des fonctions publiques. Pourtant, les femmes sont terriblement sous-représentées dans les assemblées et les gouvernements nationaux. L'absence des femmes de la scène politique est particulièrement frappante dans les pays où elles ont contribué, par leur mobilisation, à la déconfiture de l'autoritarisme et au passage à la démocratie.

La suppression du débat politique dans les régimes autoritaires déplace très souvent le centre de gravité politique vers des "activités du type mouvement" et donne de l'importance à la mobilisation politique des femmes. Ce qui unit les groupes disparates qui composent le mouvement féminin sous ces régimes, c'est très souvent leur volonté d'amener un changement de gouvernement. Néanmoins, l'hétérogénéité sociale, politique et idéologique des groupes de femmes, les tensions entre les courants *féministes* et les courants *féminins* et leurs désaccords en matière de stratégie laissent présager les difficultés qu'ils auront ensuite à former des coalitions politiques et à se rassembler autour d'intérêts communs pour obtenir des changements en des temps plus "normaux".

La vague récente de démocratisation n'a pas eu pour effet de féminiser les parlements et les gouvernements des nouvelles démocraties. De solides barrières font obstacle à un apport constructif des femmes aux partis politiques. Après la période de transition, les partis politiques relativement bien établis de pays comme le Brésil et le Chili sont restés étonnamment réfractaires à la participation des femmes. Les partis de gauche créés récemment leur sont plus accessibles mais les avantages que présente la participation à ces petits partis sont peut-être plus symboliques que réels. Le pouvoir politique est si foncièrement masculin que les femmes ont énormément de peine à se faire élire si un mécanisme électoral quelconque, tel que celui des quotas et des sièges réservés, ne les y aide pas. L'adoption du système des quotas et des sièges réservés aux femmes par l'ANC sud-africaine et la NRM ougandaise, qui dominent la politique dans leurs pays respectifs, a singulièrement renforcé la place des femmes en politique. Mais les femmes n'ayant pas d'options politiques réalistes hors de ces partis, leur influence politique sur la hiérarchie du parti reste très réduite.

Outre la question de l'égalité politique et de la justice démocratique, l'argument invoqué en faveur d'une meilleure représentation des femmes dans les organes de prise de décision tourne aussi très souvent autour de l'hypothèse implicite que les femmes peuvent, mieux que les hommes, contribuer à l'élaboration de politiques favorables à leurs concitoyennes parce qu'elles sont mieux à même de *représenter* leurs intérêts. Mais c'est une idée qui prête à controverse. On continue en effet à se demander comment un groupe aussi hétérogène que celui

"des femmes" peut sérieusement se faire représenter en politique lorsqu'il n'existe pas de procédure permettant d'établir ce qu'il veut ou ce qu'il pense, ni de mécanisme de responsabilisation des "représentantes" envers leur électorat. On s'est également demandé pourquoi la présence de plus en plus forte des femmes en politique (dans certains contextes) ne se traduit pas par un changement de fond et l'adoption de politiques capables d'améliorer les conditions de vie des femmes ordinaires.

Les femmes n'ayant réussi jusqu'à présent à entrer dans les partis politiques et à se faire élire que de façon limitée, il n'est pas surprenant que d'autres stratégies soient nécessaires pour amener les intérêts des femmes à peser dans le processus d'élaboration des politiques. L'une de ces stratégies consiste à entrer directement dans l'administration publique et y travailler. Les périodes de transition démocratique, si limitées soient-elles, sont des moments favorables aux interventions parce que l'Etat a des chances d'être alors plus fluide qu'à d'autres moments. Mais cet espace est souvent restreint à cause du caractère imposé et élitiste de la transition. De plus, la capacité de celles qui oeuvrent de l'intérieur de pousser jour après jour au changement dépend beaucoup moins de l'espace institutionnel dont elles disposent que des relations qu'elles peuvent établir et exploiter avec des organisations féminines autonomes. Mais il est souvent difficile d'établir de solides relations intérieur-extérieur: les mouvements et groupes féminins populaires, en particulier, peuvent se sentir étrangers à "l'appareil" de promotion de la femme dans l'administration publique et aux femmes qui y travaillent. Ils peuvent aussi vouloir se distancer délibérément des pouvoirs publics à cause d'expériences récentes de corruption et de récupération. De plus, la création d'espaces féminins dans l'Etat et l'engagement de femmes pour ces services peuvent en soi affaiblir les mouvements féminins hors de l'Etat.

Bien que, dans certains pays, l'Etat ait accueilli en son sein des adhérentes de mouvements féminins et épousé leurs causes, celles qui sont "à l'intérieur" ont eu les plus grandes difficultés à traduire les objectifs du mouvement, même édulcorés, en politiques concrètes, capables de changer pour le meilleur la vie de leurs concitoyennes. Les efforts de changement ont été parcellaires et se sont heurtés aux plus grandes difficultés dans le domaine des dépenses publiques. Cela est dû en partie au fait que l'Etat n'est pas mis sous pression comme il pourrait l'être par un électorat féminin organisé (comme on le relevait plus haut), capable de présenter aux décideurs un ensemble cohérent de questions et de priorités et d'en surveiller l'adoption, puis l'exécution par les agents de l'Etat. Cela est dû également au milieu *in*validant dans lequel se meuvent les femmes bureaucrates. Lorsqu'on essaie délibérément, comme on le fait actuellement dans certains pays et dans certains domaines politiques, de créer des technocraties coupées du reste de la population, cela a de graves conséquences sur l'affermissement de la démocratie. Alors que des bureaucrates spécialistes des questions de parité entre hommes et femmes et rompu(e)s à l'analyse économique peuvent être à même de contribuer au fonctionnement de technocraties isolées (celles des ministères des finances, par exemple), cet apport peut difficilement remplacer le débat public, qui permet à des groupes et à des réseaux de femmes, comme à d'autres groupes sociaux, de passer au crible les décisions et politiques économiques ayant une incidence sur le bien-être de leurs membres.

L'appareil de promotion de la femme et les femmes parlementaires ont eu plus d'influence dans certains domaines critiques, par exemple lorsqu'elles ont soulevé la question de la légitimité de la violence envers les femmes et en ont fait une question politique. De même lorsqu'elles ont sensibilisé les femmes à leurs droits par l'éducation civique et favorisé l'adoption de lois sociales sur des questions très importantes telles que le divorce, la garde des enfants, les violences au foyer, la santé génésique et les droits liés à la reproduction, qui touchent à des aspects fondamentaux de l'oppression subie par les femmes. Mais là aussi, si elles ont réussi à soulever ces questions litigieuses et peut-être même à légiférer à leur sujet, l'Etat, en revanche (la justice et la police en particulier), n'a pas réussi à garantir sur tout le territoire national, ni pour toutes les couches sociales, le respect de ces droits civils si importants pour l'individu.

Il est une préoccupation que l'on retrouve partout en cette période de post-transition: les mouvements féminins nationaux ont été décapités, leurs dirigeantes et leurs principales organisatrices les ayant quittés pour entrer dans les nouvelles institutions mises en place par l'Etat pour défendre la parité, dans les partis politiques et au parlement. Un autre point d'inquiétude est de voir la transformation des mouvements féminins en ONG, en particulier par des programmes d'atténuation de la pauvreté créés à l'instigation des donateurs. Ces deux phénomènes ont contribué, semble-t-il, à l'affaiblissement à la fois des mouvements féminins nationaux et des alliances par-delà les classes, que certains avaient réussi à conclure. L'institutionnalisation provoquée par la prolifération des ONG et la course aux financements a plusieurs conséquences problématiques. Les notions d'auto-assistance et de solidarité, qui caractérisent ce modèle d'aide sociale, peuvent cacher des réalités bien différentes et désigner en fait l'habitude de compter sur le travail non rémunéré des femmes (recrutées par les ONG comme volontaires et pour des postes subalternes). De plus, d'un point de vue politique, la participation locale à ces projets semble avoir perdu sa dimension de sensibilisation et de militantisme.

La question éternelle de l'autonomie féministe semble toujours préoccuper des membres de mouvements féminins, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur des institutions établies. Etant donné le risque de récupération par l'Etat ou le parti au pouvoir, il est effectivement nécessaire de garder un espace d'autonomie pour pouvoir déterminer quels sont les intérêts en jeu et se rassembler autour d'eux. Mais en même temps, en choisissant la voie de l'autonomie, les groupes et mouvements de femmes risquent aussi de s'isoler sur la scène politique, d'où la nécessité d'une politique d'engagement aux côtés des forces établies. En dernière analyse, le mouvement féminin ne sera utile et viable à long terme que dans la mesure où il saura travailler à différents niveaux et sur différents terrains, *à la fois* à l'"intérieur" et à l'"extérieur" des institutions établies, en concluant des alliances stratégiques entre celles de l'intérieur et celles de l'extérieur. Ce message échappe parfois aux championnes de "l'intégration" qui considèrent le changement institutionnel comme un exercice purement technocratique consistant à retoucher les institutions dans une espèce de vide politique. Pour être utiles et viables, les deux types de stratégies doivent aller de pair.

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Resumen

En el transcurso de las dos últimas décadas, los regímenes autoritarios en muchos lugares del mundo en desarrollo, así como en la Europa Centro-Oriental, han sido reemplazados por democracias. En este documento se analiza el problema de la democratización desde la perspectiva de la distinción por género. En tanto que muchos de los problemas que afligen a las "nuevas democracias" afectan a todos los ciudadanos (como el carácter elitista de los partidos políticos y el fracaso del estado para garantizar el ejercicio de los derechos civiles y políticos o para lograr una reducción significativa de la pobreza), en lo que se refiere a la distinción por género esos mismos problemas se manifiestan e inciden en él de manera específica. En particular, el hecho de que se excluya persistentemente a las mujeres de la política formal, suscita varias dudas sobre la reforma a las instituciones democráticas, puesto que estas últimas no son automáticamente equitativas en cuanto al género.

En un sistema político democrático, se supone que los ciudadanos gozan de igualdad de derechos, oportunidades y expresión en la gestión de buen gobierno. En todas las versiones de democracia liberal se vincula el derecho a votar con el derecho a ser candidato a algún puesto oficial. Empero, las mujeres están mínimamente representadas en asambleas y gobiernos nacionales. La falta de presencia política de las mujeres es especialmente notable en aquellos países donde su movilización contribuyó a la caída del autoritarismo y a la transición hacia la democracia.

La supresión de la arena política convencional bajo un gobierno autoritario, muy a menudo se traduce en un giro de la acción política fundamental hacia "actividades que favorecen la movilización", con énfasis especial en la movilización política de las mujeres. Lo que con suma frecuencia unifica a los grupos dispares que constituyen un movimiento feminista en esos contextos, es su dedicación a tratar de lograr un cambio en el gobierno. Sin embargo, la heterogeneidad social, política e ideológica de los grupos de mujeres, las tiranteces entre las corrientes *feminista* y *femenil*, y las divisiones en cuestiones de estrategia, permiten pronosticar dificultades futuras en la forja de coaliciones políticas y en la agregación de intereses para realizar el cambio en tiempos más "normales".

La nueva ola de democratización no ha tenido un efecto feminizador en los parlamentos y en los gobiernos de las nuevas democracias. Obstáculos profundamente arraigados impiden a las mujeres participar significativamente en los partidos políticos. En el período posterior al de una transición, los partidos políticos ya consolidados, en países como Brasil y Chile, se han resistido notablemente a que participen en ellos las mujeres. Los partidos de izquierda que se han formado recientemente han aceptado más a las mujeres, aunque probablemente la participación de estas últimas en dichos partidos más pequeños puede generar beneficios más bien simbólicos que reales. Siendo la formación de autoridad política una actividad masculina, es sumamente difícil que las mujeres sean elegidas en cargos oficiales sin alguna forma de maniobra electoral, tal como el sistema de cuotas o curules reservadas para ellas. La adopción de cuotas y curules reservadas a las mujeres por parte del partido ANC sudafricano y por el NRM ugandés, los cuales dominan la política en sus respectivos países, ha generado un aumento significativo en el perfil político de

las mujeres. Pero dada la falta de opciones políticas verdaderas para las mujeres, fuera de esos dos países, la participación política equitativa de las mujeres *vis-à-vis* la jerarquía de un partido sigue estando estrictamente acotada.

Además del tema de la igualdad política y la justicia democrática, el argumento para incrementar la representación de las mujeres en los organismos de toma de decisiones, muy a menudo se sustenta también en el hecho de que, más efectivamente que los hombres, las mujeres pueden contribuir a la formulación de políticas que les sean favorables a ellas mismas. Desde luego, ellas son más capaces de *defender* sus propios intereses; pero se trata de un supuesto controvertido. Continúan suscitándose interrogantes sobre cómo puede un grupo de población tan diverso como lo es el de "las mujeres" tener una representación significativa en el sistema político, ante la falta de procedimientos para plantear lo que ese grupo quiera o piense, y ante la falta de mecanismos para hacer que quienes las "representan" les rindan cuentas a sus electorados. Se han suscitado también preguntas como la siguiente, ¿por qué, en algunos contextos, la presencia creciente de las mujeres en política no se traduce en un cambio sustantivo de las políticas, a fin de que tenga repercusiones positivas en la vida de las mujeres en general?

Dado lo reducido del éxito actual en la feminización de los partidos políticos y en lograr que se elija a mujeres en los cargos públicos y de otra índole, no es de sorprender que se requieran también otras estrategias para incorporar los intereses de las mujeres en los procesos de elaboración de políticas. Una de esas estrategias consiste en tener acceso a la administración pública y operar directamente a través de ella. Los períodos de transición democrática, no obstante lo restringidos que sean, son propicios para intervenir en pro de las mujeres debido a que el estado es entonces potencialmente más fluido que en otros períodos. Pero este espacio está a menudo limitado debido a la naturaleza elitista de la transición, la cual va de arriba hacia abajo. Más aún, la habilidad de aquellas personas que operan desde el "interior" para promover persistentemente el cambio, depende menos del hecho de contar con un espacio institucional *per se*, y mucho más de las relaciones que se tenga con las organizaciones femeniles autónomas que sea factible establecer y aprovechar en el "exterior". Pero, muy a menudo es difícil establecer relaciones efectivas entre el ámbito interior y el exterior: las mujeres que se organizan en grupos y movimientos populares en particular, pueden sentirse enajenadas en relación con las "instituciones oficiales para defensa de la mujer" que haya en la administración pública y con el personal femenino de esas instituciones. Las mujeres pueden distanciarse también deliberadamente de las autoridades públicas debido a que hayan tenido experiencias recientes de corrupción y cooptación. Más aún, la apertura de espacios para que sean ocupados por mujeres dentro del estado puede en sí misma debilitar a los movimientos feministas en su actuación fuera del estado.

Aunque en algunos contextos el estado ha incorporado a las mujeres participantes junto con aquellos que impiden la movilización femenina, para aquellas que se hallan en situación "intermedia" ha sido sumamente difícil traducir aún las metas más inocuas del movimiento feminista en políticas concretas que tengan repercusiones positivas en la vida de las mujeres ciudadanas. Los esfuerzos para inducir el cambio han sido escasos y en el campo de las decisiones sobre gasto público, extremadamente difíciles. Ello se

debe en parte a la falta de una presión efectiva por parte del electorado femenino organizado (como ya se señaló), capaz de articular un conjunto coherente de temas y prioridades para que se les tome en cuenta en la elaboración de políticas, además de vigilar que se les incorpore en ellas y que las agencias estatales los pongan en práctica. Se debe también al ambiente *desfavorable* en que se hallan las propias mujeres burócratas. El intento deliberado de crear tecnocracias aisladas, como sucede actualmente en algunos países y en algunas áreas de la elaboración de políticas, tiene implicaciones serias para la consolidación de la democracia. Las burócratas ligadas a la distinción por género, que están bien preparadas para el análisis económico son capaces de contribuir al funcionamiento de las tecnocracias aisladas (en los ministerios de finanzas, por ejemplo). Sin embargo, eso no es suficiente para sustituir el debate abierto al público, que permite a grupos y redes de trabajo de las mujeres, junto con otros grupos sociales, hacer un escrutinio de las decisiones y las políticas económicas que afectan el bienestar de sus electorados.

Pero las instituciones públicas de apoyo a la mujer así como la actividad de las mujeres parlamentarias han tenido repercusiones más significativas en algunas áreas críticas, tales como: combatir la legitimidad de la violencia a las mujeres promoviendo este asunto como problema político; ampliar la conciencia de las mujeres sobre sus derechos actuales mediante la educación cívica; y facilitar la legislación social sobre temas muy significativos tales como el divorcio, la custodia de los hijos, violencia doméstica, salud y derechos de reproducción, todos los cuales se refieren a aspectos fundamentales de la opresión que se ejerce sobre las mujeres. Pero, de nueva cuenta, el éxito logrado en la atención a estos temas controvertidos—y tal vez en su legislación—ha sido simultáneo al fracaso del estado (el judicial y el de la policía en particular), para garantizar ese tipo de derechos civiles individuales tan importantes, al interior de los territorios nacionales y para todos los estratos sociales.

Una preocupación que abarca a todas las mujeres en el período de transición posterior, es que los movimientos nacionales de mujeres han sido despojados de sus cuadros más competentes, al ser incorporadas sus líderes y sus organizadoras claves en las nuevas instituciones estatales que se dedican a los problemas de la distinción por género, así como en los partidos políticos y en el parlamento. Otra preocupación común es la *"onegeización"* de los movimientos feministas, especialmente a través de los programas de disminución de pobreza promovidos por los donadores. Ambos, aparentemente, han contribuido al debilitamiento de los movimientos feministas nacionales así como de las alianzas entre clases sociales que algunos de ellos han logrado forjar. La formalización suscitada por la proliferación de ONGs y por la competencia para obtener financiamiento tiene varias implicaciones problemáticas. El apoyo en sí mismo y la autoayuda que caracterizaron a este modelo de suministro social, pueden ser eufemismos que ocultan el hecho de apoyarse en el trabajo no remunerado de las mujeres (que son reclutadas por las ONGs para puestos voluntarios y de segundo orden). Más aún, políticamente, estos proyectos parecen haber insidiado en la participación de las mujeres a nivel local al quitarles el elemento de reivindicación y de hacer campaña a su favor.

El problema perenne de la autonomía feminista sigue preocupando a miembros de los movimientos femeniles, ya sea que estén "adentro" o "afuera" de las

instituciones principales. Dados los peligros de la cooptación por parte del estado o del partido en el poder, hay una necesidad especial de conservar algún espacio autónomo para la articulación y suma de intereses. Pero al mismo tiempo, al adoptar una vía autónoma, los grupos y movimientos feministas también corren el riesgo de llegar a quedar aislados políticamente –de ahí la necesidad de que haya una política de compromiso con la corriente principal de la movilización femenina. En última instancia, la viabilidad y efectividad a largo plazo de los movimientos feministas depende de su habilidad para trabajar a diferentes niveles y en diferentes escenarios—"adentro" *al igual que* "afuera" de la corriente principal—forjando alianzas estratégicas entre personas que pertenecen al movimiento y las que le son ajenas. Algunas veces este mensaje se pierde con los partidarios de la "corriente principal" que ven el proceso de cambio institucional como un ejercicio puramente tecnocrático jugando con las instituciones en un vacío político. Para que los dos conjuntos de estrategias sean efectivos y sustentables, se requiere que estén integrados.

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Introduction

The late twentieth century has witnessed the breakdown of authoritarianism in much of Africa, Asia, East/Central Europe and Latin America. This has led to the emergence of a number of "new democracies", their most visible characteristic being the organization of elections for representative government. For some, the progress made in transforming authoritarian regimes into democratic ones corroborates the superiority of liberal democracy over other forms of government, as well as being a harbinger of social development. According to the Declaration and Programme of Action that emerged from the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, democratization offers prospects for better citizen participation in the formulation of public policies that can effectively enhance social development.

Others, however, argue that the faith in democracy as a framework for solving the world's social problems needs to be placed alongside the uneven trends in the actual evolution of democratization across different regions. Electoral democracy has yet to be institutionalized in a number of countries that have held elections; and even in those countries where free and fair elections have been held, democratization is still very much an electoral issue—political parties are elitist and fragmented, institutions for popular participation are weakly embedded in society, political corruption is rife, civic rights are not protected, and parties lack strongly articulated social programmes (Bangura and Nakamura, 1999). Moreover, given the elitist character of democratic transitions in developing countries and in Eastern Europe, a good proportion of the emerging democracies have failed to make any meaningful impact in the area of social development (Sørensen, 1999).

This paper looks at democratization from a gender perspective—an angle that has been given little attention in the mainstream literature on democratization. While many of the problems highlighted above—such as the elitist character of political parties or the failure of "new democracies" to guarantee civil rights or make a significant dent in poverty—affect all citizens, they are manifested and experienced in gender-specific ways. Women's persistent exclusion from formal politics, in particular, raises a number of specific questions about how to reform democratic institutions, since these institutions are not automatically gender-equitable any more than they are automatically plural in ethnically segmented societies. Yet, in contrast to the lively debate in recent years on the reform of governments in ethnically segmented societies, there has been remarkable silence (in the mainstream debates) on women's absence from the world of institutional politics—perhaps because gender cleavages do not erupt into social conflict and war in the way that ethnic cleavages do.

Democracy is about "people's rule", and in a democratic polity citizens are presumed to have equal rights, opportunities and voice in the governance of the public domain. Since in modern nation states citizens cannot directly make decisions (*per se*), they need to go through representatives, which requires interest aggregation through political parties and pressure groups. The

organization of regular, free and fair elections to determine people's representatives in government is therefore the first requirement of democracy in its modern form (Bangura and Nakamura, 1999). *The most obvious point of entry here for a gender analysis is the astonishing under-representation of women in national assemblies and governments.* Women are simply not being elected. This is astonishing because all versions of liberal democracy link the right to vote with the right to stand for office, and the fact that the gender composition of national assemblies is so at odds with the gender composition of the population already signifies that something is wrong (Phillips, 1991). Echoing this sentiment, the Platform for Action agreed upon at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing identifies women's representation in decision-making bodies as one of its key "areas of concern".

Women's invisibility in the world of institutional politics is particularly striking in contexts where women's political mobilization contributed to the demise of authoritarianism. Yet the new wave of democratization has not, by any means, had a feminizing effect on the parliaments, cabinets and public administrations of the new democracies. In fact, if anything the converse seems to hold, especially if the countries of East and Central Europe are included in the picture. Deeply entrenched barriers exclude women from meaningful participation in political parties, where they are habitually relegated to "women's wings" performing "cheer-leading" roles. Globally, the figures for female representation in national and local polities have been remarkably consistent and, with the exception of the Scandinavian countries, low. The masculine construction of political authority makes it extremely difficult for women to be elected into office without some form of electoral engineering— such as through quota systems or reserved seats (Goetz, 1998). A number of remedies have been suggested for this anomaly—the greater equalization of paid and unpaid work between men and women; modifications in the working conditions of politicians to accommodate parenting and family life; and affirmative action (e.g. quotas or reserved seats) to boost the election of women in the face of the "boys' club" prejudices of parties and electorates (Phillips, 1992:71). The importance that is currently attached to the third remedy, some have argued, may in fact reflect a sad but realistic assessment of how long it will take to alter the first two. It may also be a case of dealing with the symptoms rather than tackling the underlying causes (Phillips, 1992).

Besides the issues of political equality and democratic justice, very often the argument for increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies also hinges on an implicit assumption that women can, more effectively than men, contribute to the formulation of "woman-friendly" policies because they are somehow better able to represent women's interests. But, as we will see below, this is a controversial assumption. Questions continue to be raised about whom these women in positions of authority represent, and how such a diverse group as "women" can find meaningful representation in the polity in the absence of procedures for establishing what the group wants or thinks (Phillips, 1993; Molyneux, 1998a). Questions have also been raised as to why the growing presence of women in politics is not translating into substantive change in the content of policies that can impact positively on the lives of ordinary women.

Table 1: Percentage of women in national parliaments in 1995 and 1997 (lower or single House)

	1 July 1995	1 January 1997
World average	11.6	12.0
Regional averages		
Americas	12.7	12.9
Arab States	4.3	3.3
Asia	13.2	13.4
Europe*	13.2	13.8
Nordic countries	36.4	36.4
Pacific	6.3	9.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	9.8	10.1

* OSCE countries, including Nordic countries.
Source: IPU, 1997.

Table 2: Percentage of women in national parliaments of top 15 ranking countries in the world, 1997 and 1999 (lower or single House)

	1 January 1997	October 1999
Sweden	40.4	42.7
Denmark	33.0	37.4
Finland	33.5	37.0
Norway	39.4	36.4
Netherlands	31.3	36.0
Iceland	25.4	34.9
Germany	26.2	30.9
South Africa	25.0	30.0
New Zealand	29.2	29.2
Argentina	25.3	27.6
Cuba	22.8	27.6
Austria	26.8	26.2
Viet Nam	18.5	26.0
Mozambique	25.2	25.2
Seychelles	27.3	23.5

Source: IPU, 1997 and 1999.

Highlighting this incongruity, it has been argued that "a *feminine* presence in politics is not the same as a *feminist* one: getting more women into politics is a worthy project from the point of view of democratic justice", but it will not necessarily translate into gender equity in government policy and social outcomes (Goetz, 1998:5).

The second requirement of democracy in its modern form is the guarantee of basic civil and political rights—such as those of expression, organization and assembly—to enable citizens to hold their representatives accountable to the public good (Bangura and Nakamura, 1999). The classic feminist argument here has been that the liberal notion of rights excludes significant areas of social life—what goes on within the "private" sphere of marriage and family life—from democratic scrutiny. This has effectively allowed the state, for instance, to distance itself from the injustices that exist within the family—the issue of domestic violence being a case in point. *Full citizenship for women thus depends upon equality and justice within the home as well as outside it* (Molyneux, 1998a). Partly as a result of pressure from women's movements, some of the new democracies are beginning to legitimize state regulation of sexual violence (though perhaps not the recognition of rape within marriage) and broach taboo subjects such as reproductive rights (though not legalizing abortion). But even where these rights have been legislated, like other civil rights, they are not universally protected across the national territory. Individual and civil rights have remained vastly underdeveloped in many of the "new democracies", together with the justice system that is, in principle, in charge of assuring them.

This paper is divided into three main sections. The first looks at women's movements and their contributions to the demise of authoritarian rule. The suppression of the conventional political arena in authoritarian settings very often shifts the centre of political gravity to "movement-type activities". This gives particular prominence to women's political mobilization, which takes place outside the conventional arena of party politics. What very often unites the disparate strands of the women's movement in these contexts is their commitment to bringing about a change in government. But the heterogeneity of the women's movement, and the tendency of some groups to deliberately distance themselves from public authorities because of fear of co-optation, foreshadow future difficulties of these groups in forging effective political coalitions and aggregating interests to effect change in the policy domain, in more "normal" times.

The alienation from party politics, as section II shows, has been confounded by developments in the transition period that have presented openings for participants in women's movements to enter the political mainstream. This section considers three discrete areas in which movement participants have tried to induce change—political parties and national legislatures; public administration; and interest group politics outside the conventional political arena. Yet, the extent to which the polity has opened up to women has been uneven across countries, and even in the best of cases has provided only a toehold for women in institutional politics. Movement participants who do not see their interests represented by those women who have moved into the mainstream point to the absence of concrete mechanisms for keeping the "representatives" accountable to their "constituents". The much-celebrated

heterogeneity of the women's movement, and the fact that women rarely act as a bloc, pose daunting pitfalls for the representation of women's interests as a group.

While it has been possible, in some contexts, to legislate on important issues such as violence against women, reproductive rights and property rights (although there has been a simultaneous regression in other important respects, such as paid maternity leave), the gap between legislation and practice remains wide. Moreover, it has been far more difficult for the women "inside" the parliament and public administration to make any meaningful impact on public expenditure decisions and other economic policy initiatives that shape women's work burdens and quality of life.

Section III returns to the question of "feminist autonomy", which continues to preoccupy members of women's movements—whether "within" or "outside" the mainstream institutions. It highlights both the dangers of co-optation by the state or party in power (and hence the need for maintaining some autonomous space for interest articulation and aggregation), and the risks of political isolation (and hence the need for a politics of engagement with the mainstream). Ultimately, the long-term viability and effectiveness of a women's movement depends on its ability to work at different levels and in different arenas—*both* "inside" and "outside" the mainstream—forging strategic insider-outsider alliances. This message is sometimes lost on advocates of "mainstreaming" who see the process of institutional change as a purely technocratic exercise of tinkering with institutions in a political vacuum (setting up gender focal points, issuing gender guidelines and checklists, gender training for staff). To be effective and sustainable the two sets of strategies need to go hand in hand.

I: Women's Movements and the Demise of Authoritarianism

The women's movement is made up of diverse groups and networks—multiple "movements" that pursue different goals and are socially, politically and ideologically heterogeneous. There is little consensus in the literature on how to define a woman's movement (see box 1). What the existing evidence does seem to suggest is that women's political activism and high profile during periods of authoritarian rule stem from the suppression of the conventional political arena—an arena that is dominated by political parties and trade unions, and has generally been seen as men's sphere.

A key question is whether women's movements are able to transform themselves from short-term, protest actions into an institutionalized presence in formal politics. It has frequently been argued, with reference to both Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, that despite their prominent oppositional role under authoritarian military regimes, women's movements have difficulty in converting political mobilization into institutional representation once competitive party politics has resumed (Safa, 1990; Tamale, 1997; Waylen, 1993). Needless to say, this is a question that concerns all social movements,

not just women's movements. These issues are taken up directly in section II. The point that bears re-emphasizing at this stage is the heterogeneity of the women's movement.

The components of the women's movement

The women's movements in countries like Brazil, Chile and Peru have been made up of diverse groups with different patterns of organization and pursuing different goals. They are frequently divided into three "streams" (Vargas, 1995) with distinct characteristics that influence how they fare in periods of democratic consolidation—human rights groups, popular women's movements and feminist groups. Given the heterogeneity and diversity of these movements, their ability to forge linkages and alliances among themselves—even if these are loosely co-ordinated—is of significant strategic importance for advancing their common goals. Such strategic alliances often elude women's movements, although during processes of democratic transition, as we will see below, significant instances have occurred.

Human rights groups

The stream of the women's movement, which acquired considerable international attention, has been made up of human rights groups. Composed of women from different social strata, often the relatives of the disappeared, members of these groups tend to have little previous political experience, and describe their activities as "above politics".[1] While much has been written about these groups, especially the Madres in Argentina, three claims in particular stand out (Feijoo, 1989; Jaquette, 1989; Schirmer, 1988).

First, although subsequent events belied the notion that women as mothers would be safe from repression, it is very often argued that the legitimacy of the maternal appeal and women's seemingly apolitical nature allowed at least a temporary refuge for opposition in authoritarian settings. It also turned against the state the symbols that it claimed to uphold and protect—motherhood and the family. A second claim is that the discourse on motherhood and the defence of life brings an ethical dimension to the "rational" world of masculine politics—if only temporarily. Linked to the above, a third area of claims is that by politicizing motherhood and the private sphere, these groups pose a challenge to some strands of Western feminist thinking ("equal rights" feminism), which attribute women's political marginalization to their confinement to traditional values and private roles.

While all of these arguments have some validity, there are limits to how far they can be taken. The fact that groups like the Madres in Argentina and the Agrupación in Chile have found the transition from pressuring a military regime to attempting to influence a civilian government difficult, reveals a degree of paralysis on their part regarding how to effect political change (Feijoo, 1998; Waylen, 1993). As we will see later, with the political arena opening up it becomes imperative for these groups to define their place in the new political setting, which in contrast to the authoritarian regime allows their

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[1] It has been argued that the Agrupación of Chile had a more "political" background than the Madres of Argentina because they grew out of a more politicized society, even though they do resemble the Madres in terms of their language and practice (Schirmer, 1988).

existence. Some of these groups, like the famous Madres, have now split, and some of the emerging groups are engaged in more explicitly "political work".

Box 1: What is a women's movement?

There are contrasting views as to what a woman's movement is. "On the one hand, there are clearly identifiable women's movements that, like those which mobilized to demand female suffrage, have a leadership, a membership, a broader following and a political programme. On the other hand, there are more diffuse forms of political activity which can also qualify as a movement, as distinct from other forms of solidarity such as those based on networks, clubs or groups. The definitional boundaries are complicated by the fact that networks or clubs sometimes develop into or form part of social movements. However, it seems preferable to reserve the term 'movement' for something that involves more in size and effectivity than small-scale associations, if these are few in number and have little overall impact ... To speak of a movement then implies a social or political phenomenon of some significance, that significance being given both by its numerical strength and by its capacity to effect change in some way or another whether this is expressed in legal, cultural, social or political terms. A woman's movement does not have to have a single organizational expression and may be characterized by a diversity of interests, forms of expression, and spatial location. Logically, it comprises a substantial majority of women, where it is not exclusively made up of women." (Molyneux, 1998b:68-69)

The explicit or implicit criteria often used to define a woman's movement can lead to the exclusion of some forms of female solidarity that may not correspond to the selected definition, but that have nevertheless mobilized substantial numbers of women at particular historical junctures, and occasionally enhanced women's rights.

One criterion often employed in defining a woman's movement is that of commitment to diminishing gender subordination (Wieringa, 1995). This definition effectively excludes many conservative groups—such as REAL Women, in North America, or Women Who Want to be Women, in Australia— that emphasize traditional gender roles and family values, and are self-declared anti-feminists. More significantly though, it also excludes those feminine human rights groups—such as the well-known Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina—that have used discourses of motherhood to highlight human rights violations in authoritarian settings, while insisting that they do not follow a feminist ideology or political agenda (Schirmer, 1988). Also excluded are Islamist mobilizations of women as happened on a significant scale during the Iranian Revolution (1979-1980) when the veil became a symbol of protest against a state-imposed project of modernization. As Molyneux rhetorically asks, "[A]re fascist mobilizations of women, or Islamist women's movement, not women's movements in any sense?" (1998b:69).

Another criterion that several authors have used is that of autonomy from control by other social groups. "From the earliest moments of women's political mobilization, women activists in political parties, trade unions and social movements have argued that they needed a place within which to elaborate their own programmes of action, debate their own goals, tactics and strategy free from outside influence ... Underlying feminist concern with organizational structure, and expressed in the demand for autonomy, is the question of authority: more specifically, the question that is engaged is - from where does the authority to define women's goals, priorities and actions come?" (Molyneux, 1998b:70). But the issue of autonomy and organizational structure is more complex that it appears at first sight, and is not necessarily linked to organizational goals. "It is often assumed that if collective actions by women issue from within an autonomous organization, then they must be expressive of women's real gender interests. Yet this is a problematic assumption, since autonomous organizations of women have been associated with a very diverse range of goals, demonstrating apparently conflicting definitions of interests. They have ranged from self-help activities of various kinds, to protest movements, to those associated with a self-conscious feminism, to ones entailing the abrogation of women's existing rights and envisioning the greater dependence of women on men and commitment to family life. There have also been apparently spontaneous movements of women in favour of practices such as suttee and female circumcision." (Molyneux 1998b:71) More to the point, the criterion of autonomy excludes many important forms of political engagement that women have experienced in this century, such as their involvement in "mass organizations" under state socialism or in women's branches of political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations which are not primarily concerned with gender subordination.

An expanded definition of a women's movement would thus approach what Sheila Rowbotham (1992) has referred to as "women in movement"—that is, women acting together in pursuit of common ends, be they "feminist" or not. "In order to recognize these diverse forms of female political action, we might rehabilitate a concept deployed in the literature on political movements, that of collective action. To paraphrase Charles Tilly, this connotes solidarity in pursuit of common goals (Tilly, 1978). This term can more easily encompass the variety of forms of female mobilization that have accompanied the process of modernity." (Molyneux, 1998b:70)

Popular women's groups

A second stream—much cited in the development literature of the 1980s on adjustment and coping strategies—has been the popular mobilization of women in social movements and community activities around basic needs provision. These organizations of the popular movement, as they are often called, are largely made up of poorer and working class women—especially in urban contexts. Some of the most celebrated examples have been the communal kitchens organized by women in Lima and Santiago; some have represented significant social phenomena with important political repercussions (Barrig, 1989; Chuchryk, 1989; Schild, 1995).

Some of these popular women's groups owe their origins to the Christian Base Communities active in the late 1960s and early 1970s—especially in Brazil (Alvarez, 1990). The relations between local women's groups and the Catholic Church have been tense in some settings—especially where the women's groups have resisted the political and ideological hegemony of the Church.[2] Nevertheless the role of the Catholic Church in urban Latin America has been indispensable to many popular women's groups.

Arguably, the mosque has played a similar role in countries such as Egypt, Iran and Morocco. In the Iranian context in particular, the spread of political Islam through mosque-linked grassroots organizations in the 1970s proved too elusive to be suppressed by the authoritarian state. Large numbers of women were mobilized through these mosque-linked networks—often playing a supportive role in the neighbourhood associations that mushroomed in and around the major cities, and a visible oppositional role in the mass demonstrations that overthrew the Shah's government in 1979 (Paidar, 1995). Contrary to the moderate political parties, Islamist ideologues had taken up the question of women's oppression, offering a powerful critique of the way dependent capitalist regimes were turning Muslim women into "Western dolls" immersed in the consumerist culture. Such messages found an audience—especially among poor urban women. But the extent to which mosque-linked popular women's groups have been able to resist the organizational and political hegemony of the religious establishment appears to have been far more limited here than in the Latin American context. In the case of Brazil, for example, the capacity of the popular women's groups to resist the hegemony of the Catholic Church was strengthened through their links with middle class feminist groups (as discussed below). Such linkages have eluded women's groups in many other contexts.

Again, as with the human rights organizations, there has been extensive discussion of the meaning of women's participation in these community survival strategies. Attention has been drawn to the ways in which women have been able to leave the isolation of the house, interact with other women and "recover the ability to speak", thereby gaining a sense of power, if not outright empowerment. It has also been suggested that such community level activities

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[2] For an excellent discussion of this issue in the urban periphery of São Paulo see Alvarez (1990: chapter 5). It must also be remembered that this was a period when the Catholic Church in Latin America was in its most progressive phase; since the mid-1980s it has steered to the right and many believe that this shift is linked to transformations taking place in the Vatican.

can provide an apprenticeship, allowing women to project their demands toward the institutions of power.

While some of these expectations may have been met in some contexts, the results have been varied. Despite their contribution to the survival of poor families in shantytowns, the approach of these popular movement organizations to urban services and basic needs (emphasizing responsibilities rather than rights vis-à-vis the state) has in some cases accentuated the sexual division of labour, prolonging women's working days. Moreover, the demand for urban services has not always matured into the ability to question, much less confront, the state's role as economic and political regulator. And finally, the NGO development professionals or the nuns of the parish who have played a key role in creating these organizations often treat the women's groups as their private fiefdoms (Barrig, 1989). Moreover, what has not been sufficiently questioned is the tenuous link between participation in these communal strategies, on the one hand, and democratic politics, on the other. As we will see later, despite their unquestionable dynamism and political clout, in the Latin American context the popular women's movements have found it very difficult to maintain political influence with the return of civilian governments.

Ironically, even though the mainstream literature does not see women's mobilization in Islamist movements as liberating, some observers have argued that it has been an empowering experience for the women involved. Naciri (1998) argues that women from the urban popular classes in Morocco, especially university students, find liberation in Islam; Islamist women affirm that obedience to God frees them from the domination of men (husbands, fathers, etc.). In the Iranian context, the religious leadership openly encouraged women to disobey husbands and fathers on political grounds and found precedence for such conduct in the life of *Shi'a* female role models. Women thus found a new secure position in the revolutionary culture and were determined to fill it (Paidar, 1995:218). What became of this new "Muslim woman" and the Islamist women's movements once the Islamic state was in power is a story that need not concern us here, since this was a transition *not* to democracy, but to an authoritarian theocracy. But it does nevertheless underline the fact that "participation and activism are *contingent* processes, ones that may or may not lead to a more democratic state and society" (emphasis added) (Molyneux, 1998a:9).

Feminist groups

The third stream of the women's movement is composed of feminist groups made up of predominantly middle class and professional women. It is widely argued that periods of authoritarian rule helped spawn the re-emergence of feminist movements. This is an argument that emerges most clearly from the works of several Chilean writers who have drawn attention to the links between state authoritarianism and authoritarianism in Chilean society generally (Kirkwood, 1983, cited in Chuchryk, 1989).

Many of these women were active in militant left-wing organizations and student groups that had been driven underground in climates of harsh political repression. Just as the Catholic Church provided the context in which some of

the popular women's organizations would crystallize, so too did the militant left serve as the breeding ground for feminist groups and movements. And in many instances it was precisely their experiences *as women* in these organizations that planted the seeds of feminist consciousness (Alvarez, 1990). An equally important factor, in both Brazil and Chile, was the exposure of these middle class leftist women to feminist ideas and movements while in exile in Europe and the United States (Schild, 1995).

In places as diverse as Brazil, Iran, Morocco and Peru, former female activists in left-wing organizations voiced the same complaints about discrimination and double standards. In the words of Maruja Barrig, "these conditions of women's political labour were ripe for rebellion" (1989:122). Many of these women resented their relegation to such subordinate positions, but, as one woman interviewed by Alvarez put it, they lacked "a language, an analysis which would enable them to understand their resentment in political terms" (1990:72). They also resented the way in which a "hierarchy of oppressions" and priorities was maintained, whereby gender inequalities and struggles were constantly relegated to a secondary position while the class struggle took precedence.

While the historical linkages and tensions between feminist groups and the "male left" have taken different forms in different countries, there are nevertheless some overarching concerns that preoccupy the feminists. One is feminist autonomy (i.e. ideological and organizational political independence) and the other is the issue of "double militancy" (i.e. participation in, and commitment to, both a traditional political party and feminism). Some of the most heated debates at the first Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros[3] in Bogota (1981) revolved around these two issues. A similar tension emerges from Naciri's (1998) and Al-Ali's (1999) descriptions of feminist debates in Egypt and Morocco, and Turkey, respectively, in the 1980s and 1990s. Two recognizable positions have tended to emerge. The first holds that neither capitalism nor socialism can eradicate women's oppression—and thus women's movements need to take shape in an autonomous space, outside political parties. Within this context, it is argued that, given the sexist structures of political parties, it is extremely difficult in practice to engage in double militancy. Those advancing the second position hold that feminism cannot be a revolutionary project in and of itself. Proponents' primary commitment is to socialism, and they do not wish to separate feminist struggles from the general struggle—arguing that feminism should have an organic autonomous presence within the party structure. In this context, double militancy is seen as a false problem (Sternbach et al., 1992). The two positions—the first labelled *feministas* and the second *políticas* in the Latin American context—in effect suggest two different strategies to women's mobilization. However, as we will see later, rather than being fixed positions, members of the women's movement have tended to oscillate between the two in response to the changes in the broader political context.

While some of these feminists broke with the left organizationally, they did not fully do so ideologically, and alliance with progressive sectors of the opposition was essential to the viability of the feminist project in many parts of Latin

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[3] The *Encuentros* are continent-wide meetings of Latin American feminists, convened biannually since 1981.

America (Sternbach et al., 1992). In some instances, such as in Brazil and Peru in the 1970s, feminist groups retained strong links with women activists in the popular women's movements, helping them organize survival strategies.

It is probably true to say that, unlike their North American counterparts, Latin American feminist movements have on the whole retained a commitment to radical change in social relations of production—as well as reproduction—while continuing to struggle against sexism within the left (Sternbach et al., 1992), thereby avoiding the kind of identity politics in which particularistic interests become paramount. This has perhaps been the strength of Latin American women's movements, underpinned by the (albeit tenuous) linkages the feminist groups were able to forge with popular women's groups.

But even within Latin America there have been significant differences. Barrig's (1989) analysis of women's movements in Peru indicates a marked tension between the independent feminists and popular women's movements; the former have not been able to establish strong and permanent relationships with the latter. She argues that, while in the early years feminists did forge such alliances and gave specificity to gender through an analysis that grew out of the material conditions of women's lives, they failed when they made feminist autonomy their point of departure. From then onwards they distanced themselves from the socio-political processes that affect the lives of the majority of men and women, and have subsequently been unable to become a powerful force among the social movements in Peru. It is quite ironic that in breaking with the "macho-Leninist left" some feminists were in fact replicating some of the least pleasant characteristics of the Peruvian left—especially its sectarianism and intellectual superiority—to construct "better" and "lesser" feminists (Lievesley, 1996).

More generally, one of the major concerns of feminist activists in the 1990s, especially in Latin America, has been the increasing "NGO-ization" of the women's movement (Alvarez, 1998a). As we will see later (in section II), in some contexts this has meant a shift away from feminist-inspired activities such as mobilization, popular education and consciousness-raising, and towards more technical and advisory functions, such as the delivery of social services, advising government agencies on how to design gender-sensitive programmes, or training their staff in "gender planning". Some argue that, as feminist groups and NGOs have become more professionalized and specialized, their links with the grassroots and community-based organizations have been severed or weakened. As Alvarez (1998a) observes, implementing state- or donor-funded projects for "female-headed households" or evaluating the gender impacts of projects and programmes still brings these feminist NGOs into contact with many poor and working class women's organizations; but the nature of NGO-grassroots linkages seems to have changed. Moreover, the NGOs that are selected for "partnerships" and funded are not necessarily those with the strongest links to the grassroots. Indeed, "the criteria adopted in determining which NGOs will be consulted or funded seldom prioritize the extent to which such organizations actually function as intermediaries or conduits for the larger civil society constituencies officials presume them to represent. Rather, which NGOs can best 'maximize impact' with the monies allotted or which have the technical/professional capabilities deemed necessary for project execution or gender planning appear to be determinant" (Alvarez, 1998a:13).

Forging alliances and linkages with the popular women's groups has been even more daunting elsewhere, especially where class differences have been reinforced through secular/religious divides. In Egypt and Morocco, for example, with the spectre of another Algeria looming, and the spread of their own home-spun Islamist movements into universities and poor urban neighbourhoods, there is a sense of urgency among political actors in closing ranks and presenting a united front. In such contexts the likelihood of middle class, professional feminist groups being able to build bridges with popular women's groups becomes even more remote. Naciri (1998), for example, rightly argues that the fundamental challenge for Moroccan feminist groups is to be freed from the tutelage of traditional political parties without becoming isolated, which assumes an ability on their part to extend their social base to poor women by presenting credible political alternatives. This is a formidable challenge indeed, and there is not much in her analysis to suggest that positive steps are being taken in this direction.

These contrasting positions hint at several deep-seated dilemmas confronting Southern feminists whose societies are marked by rising levels of social inequality and impoverishment. In their legitimate attempts to avoid co-optation and the hegemonic and sectarian politics of political parties, how can feminists avoid isolation from potential political allies? How can a feminist stream that emphasizes the specificity of gender hope to address other social inequalities and broader social transformation? How can it avoid alienation from the very women who constitute its natural constituency, when "women's gender interests are not always transparent, or even primary for women, any more than their gender identity is their sole identity" (Molyneux, 1998b:74)? We will return to these questions in section III.

To sum up, the suppression of the conventional political arena under authoritarian rule very often shifts the centre of gravity to "movement-type activities" and gives prominence to women's political mobilization. What very often unites these disparate groups and movements is their commitment to bringing about a change in government. Nevertheless the social, political and ideological heterogeneity of women's movements, the tensions between the *feminist* and the *feminine* streams, and the divisions over strategy warn of the difficulties that women's movements are going to encounter with the success of the pro-democracy movement, the return to party politics and the reduced sense of crisis (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998).

II: Engendering, or Fiddling with, Democracy?[4]

Have women's movements become increasingly marginalized from the processes of democratic transition and consolidation? This section shows that the process of democratic consolidation—or the emergence of "normal" processes of liberal democracy—carries two interrelated sets of issues for a feminist analysis of democracy. One, to which we alluded above, has to do with women's *movements*, as a social movement and political force, and what happens

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[4] This subtitle is taken from a paper by Anne Marie Goetz (1998).

to them as the polity begins to normalize. Are they sidelined and marginalized? Is their exclusion somehow intrinsic to the "normal" processes of liberal democracy, which are dominated by competition between political parties and representation according to territorial constituencies, and which relegate movement-type activity to secondary, if not marginal, importance (Schmitter, 1998; Waylen, 1993)? Or is the exclusion of women's movements and their demands somehow linked to the kinds of democracies that have emerged in recent years, i.e. elitist democracies? The other important set of issues has to do with questions of representation and proportionality between the sexes in arenas where political decisions are made—especially political parties, parliament and public administration.

These issues are addressed below by looking at three interrelated spaces. The first is the area of the newly reconstituted democratic politics, and the impact that different women have had within political parties, including their success in pursuing electoral strategies. The second area is the state apparatus itself, where a well-known strategy has been to capture a discrete space within the state bureaucracy. This is the contested area of "state feminism", also loosely referred to as "gender mainstreaming". And the third is the area of interest group politics outside the conventional political arena, where women's movements seek to sustain their activities and to contribute to interest articulation and aggregation among their constituents.

Clearly, there can be no general conclusion for different countries, given the already-mentioned diversity of the women's movements. What we can do is highlight some of the emerging trends in countries that have been more thoroughly studied. The following discussion thus draws on the experiences of women's movements in Brazil, Chile, South Africa and Uganda.

Party politics and electoral strategies

Brazil and Chile

It is widely argued that feminism had an undeniable impact on the political agenda of transition in Latin America thanks to the visible role that the national women's movements played in the opposition to authoritarian rule (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998). Women's issues appeared in a variety of party platforms. Women—albeit only a handful—were chosen as candidates by political parties in the "founding" elections. And policies were occasionally adopted that it was felt would appeal to women voters. Brazil and Chile, the former known for its strong social movements (including women's movements) and the latter for the strength of its party system, share protracted, elite-controlled negotiated transitions.

With the emergence of new partisan options in Brazil from the mid-1970s onwards, and with the run-up to the 1982 elections in particular, two parallel developments took place (Alvarez, 1990). On the one hand, many long-standing ideological and political differences within and among divergent sectors of the women's movement were re-opened, weakening and dispersing the movement. On the other hand, as the legal parties scrambled to secure votes, there was renewed partisan struggle over the organized constituencies and "vote banks" that the feminist and popular movements represented, and

thus a readiness to take on board some of their less controversial demands. Below we examine these two trends in turn.

One outcome of the ascent of party politics in Brazil was that instead of the social movements strengthening political parties, as many had hoped, party politics demobilized the movements. This was particularly the case as far as the feminist stream of the women's movement was concerned—several feminist groups were split over party rivalries, while others were dissolved. Alvarez argues that, on the whole, *popular* women's movements were better able to weather the party rivalries. They remained marginal to party politics—in part attributable to the participants' own feeling of inadequacy vis-à-vis formal institutional politics of any sort, as well as their rejection of "politics as usual" in favour of community-based forms of direct action (Alvarez, 1990:159). It was thus mainly middle class, professional women who engaged in the new polity.

Feminists who came from professional or academic networks were among the principal supporters of the Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB), while others with political experience in the militant left and student movements joined the new Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)—seen by many as the potential expression of social movements at the level of institutional politics. Still other feminists deeply mistrusted both partisan options, fearing the subordination of women's issues to party political platforms, and thus fiercely defended the organizational and ideological autonomy of the woman's movements. By the end of 1981, however, many women activists, including many independent feminists, had left movement militancy to engage solely in party militancy—"political society had temporarily swallowed up sectors of civil society" (Alvarez, 1990:160).

Yet one salutary outcome of the competition among political parties was that the opposition parties paid unprecedented attention both to the female electorate and to organized female constituencies. Selected items of the women's agenda were included in their programmes and platforms. Even the reconstituted government party, the Partido Democrático Social (PDS), jumped on the "pro-woman" bandwagon and in the state of São Paulo their candidate made working women's struggle for daycare the rallying call of his campaign (Alvarez, 1990). But it was the opposition parties as a whole that paid the greatest attention to women's issues and demands—after all, many feminists and women's activists had joined these parties and were pushing male party leadership to include women's issues in official party platforms. Both the PMDB and the PT included many of the specific demands that women's movements had raised—women's work and wage discrimination, women's health and reproductive rights (though not abortion), creches and the protection of women against violence. Despite the efforts of feminist party activists, neither party endorsed the more radical demands of the women's movements, such as the decriminalization of abortion—which they feared would alienate important sectors of their larger constituencies, in particular the Catholic Church (Alvarez, 1990:177). Despite religious lobbying, and as a result of the mobilization of women's groups during the drafting of the Constitution (1986-1988), the 1988 Constitution excludes any foetal "right to life" provision (although abortion is only legal in cases of rape and life endangerment). Rather, it guarantees individual rights of reproductive freedom and access to family

planning, and affirms governmental responsibility to offer the necessary information and services to substantiate these rights (Corrêa, 1999, cited in Petchesky, 1999).

The PT also launched the largest number of women candidates with organic links to the women's movements. Some of these candidates were successful, as were three feminist candidates of the PMDB. But, on the whole, the electoral strategy in Brazil (and Chile, as we shall see) has proved to be "slow and frustrating", and women's presence in the world of institutionalized politics (political parties, elections) remains disproportionately low (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998). Political parties continue to be male spaces where women face serious obstacles, and many women still believe that political parties are not for them. As Alvarez (1990:269) rightly concludes, the political parties remain relatively unreceptive to more radical gender claims, in no small measure because such claims still lack widespread electoral appeal.

To conclude with some crude indicators, between 1982 and 1994 the proportion of women in the Senate and the House did not exceed 7 per cent, nor was their representation at the state and city levels any more impressive. A recent federal law, however, which established a quota of 20 per cent for women in party lists of candidates in municipal elections, is beginning to have some impact (Caldeira, 1998). This is an important development to be watched closely in coming years.

By the mid-1980s in Chile, it was becoming clear to the parties of the centre and "renovated" left that the Pinochet regime would not be removed through popular mobilization but through reaching agreements with the military. Political parties thus began to re-form as part of a process that was tightly controlled by the authoritarian government (and the military), restricting which parties could begin to operate and in what ways. In this context all social movements, including women's movements, were put under pressure to define themselves in terms of the strategy they supported ("*negociación o ruptura*"), and those supporting a more violent overthrow of the government found themselves increasingly outside the process of negotiation. Many human rights groups and popular organizations not adhering to a strategy of negotiation were increasingly marginalized (Waylen, 1993).

But at the same time, other sections of the Chilean women's movement found it necessary to use the new possibilities presented by the democratization process to enter party politics with their demands—not surprising in a country where parties have almost always been the major mechanisms to channel and shape emerging interests (Valenzuela, 1998:65). A large number of independent Chilean feminists, mostly middle class and professional women, moved into the political parties of the left while others took up official positions in the government.[5] Distinctions between the *políticas* and the *feministas* became blurred.

As a result of this migration, overtly feminist women's sections were set up in some parties (such as the Socialist Party) to give greater space to women's

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[5] But Valenzuela (1998) makes it clear that the question of autonomy versus integration was fiercely debated during the transition and remains very controversial to this day.

issues. The Partido por la Democracia (PPD), the umbrella party of the renovated left, and the Partido Socialista (PS) both adopted quota systems for women in leadership positions (but not selection of candidates), which was, in practice, to be ignored at key times (Waylen, 1993). The visibility of women's organizations was not enough to open up the "male-controlled party structure" and, as in Brazil, some of the more controversial items on the women's agenda (such as divorce and reproductive rights) were strongly resisted as a result of fears that they would alienate the Catholic Church (Valenzuela, 1998).[6] Somewhat parallel to the experience of feminists in Brazil, women activists in Chile found it easier to make headway in newly formed political parties, in this case the Partido Humanista (PH), which adopted a feminist as its presidential candidate and took bold steps to open up the party to women (who now constitute more than half its members). But unlike the PT in Brazil, the Chilean PH does not as yet attract a mass following.

Not surprisingly, the electoral strategy in Chile has produced poor results: the proportion of women in Congress is low—even lower than before the military coup of 1973 (Valenzuela, 1998)! Only six women were elected to the 120-member House in 1990 (5.8 per cent) and nine in 1994 (7.5 per cent), while three out of 47 seats in the Senate were held by women (6.4 per cent). By 1999 the proportion of women in the Lower House stood at 10 per cent (IPU, 1999). And for the handful of women who do participate in institutionalized politics, family connections have tended to play an important role. Valenzuela (1998) provides evidence (based on exit polls) for the congressional elections after the return to democracy to show that right-wing women candidates who did not raise women's issues received higher support from women than men, while left-wing female candidates who did raise women's issues received more male than female votes. This, she argues, "reinforces the historical view that Chilean women are more politically conservative than men in the voting booth" (1998:68). Feminism in Chile is still perceived by large sections of the political spectrum and by much of society as an anti-male movement that does not represent the majority of women.

To conclude, in both Brazil and Chile party politics remains primarily the turf of middle class women, with their greater class-based access to male-dominated, elitist, party forums, while women in the urban periphery have remained relatively marginal to partisan in-fighting. It is also quite clear from the above figures that, despite the efforts of middle class, elite women to infiltrate the male spaces of party politics, women's participation in the premier democratic institutions has remained limited, reflecting among other things women's lack of electoral appeal. Nevertheless some items of the women's agenda have entered party political platforms, and are being pursued by feminists inside the party hierarchies and in parliaments, producing progressive constitutions (especially in Brazil) and social legislation on such issues as divorce, childcare and health services. But in many instances the gap between legal rights and concrete, "on-the-round" achievements remains wide, raising serious questions about the kinds of democracies that are emerging in these contexts—a subject to which we shall return later.

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[6] Chile is, of course, one of the most conservative countries in the region as far as issues of reproductive rights are concerned; it should not be seen as exemplary.

Uganda and South Africa

In some contrast to the Latin American democracies stand Uganda and South Africa, two countries that have weathered turbulent transitions, and "stand out as trail-blazers in efforts to achieve gender equity in formal politics" (Goetz, 1998:7).[7] These two countries rank alongside Scandinavian countries in terms of women's numerical representation in legislatures: women constitute nearly 19 per cent of the National Assembly (previously the National Resistance Council) in Uganda, and 27 per cent in South Africa. As in the case of the Scandinavian countries, women's high level of representation in national legislatures in Uganda and South Africa owes a great deal to the affirmative action policies and quota systems adopted by the leading political parties (or "movements" in the case of Uganda's "no party" political system).

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took over power in 1986, after more than a decade of dictatorship under Idi Amin and Milton Obote, Yoweri Museveni promised to pay more than just lip service to the core issues of unequal gender relations in Uganda. The NRM administration became the first post-colonial government in Uganda to take proactive steps to include women in formal politics, using affirmative action as the basic mechanism.[8] Elections for the National Resistance Council, Constituent Assembly and National Assembly in 1989, 1994 and 1996, respectively, were all run on a non-partisan basis with candidates supposedly standing on their individual merit under the aegis of the "movement" political system. Since 1989 women have occupied 18.8 per cent of the National Assembly seats—the great majority of them being the affirmative action seats. Since 1998 there has also been a new system of reservation for women at the District Level Local Councils whereby 30 per cent *more* seats have been added for women (rather than allocating 30 per cent of the existing seats to women). In addition to women's representation in the civil service, Museveni has made a point of putting women in politically sensitive, high-profile positions, such as the 1988 appointment of Betty Bigombe as Minister for Pacification of the North, where she was the chief negotiator in Uganda's persistent civil war (Goetz, 1998).[9]

The mechanism for institutionalizing a presence for women in formal politics in South Africa has been the party list version of the proportional representation (PR) system. The numerical strength of women in the South African National Assembly seems to confirm the widely held view that this system can act as a countervailing force where conservative electorates are reluctant to vote for candidates due to their gender, ethnic or "racial" identity. This is because the party list version of the PR system focuses the vote on the party rather than the individual candidate, thereby de-personalizing the vote. But the PR system cannot promote women candidates in male-dominated

[7] The discussion on Uganda draws heavily on Sylvia Tamale's (1997) Ph.D. dissertation, which is based on in-depth interviews with 40 female MPs, 15 male MPs, representatives of women's NGOs and associations, and direct observation of debates in the National Assembly.
[8] The five-tier system of government in Uganda starts from the Local Councils (until 1996 known as Local Resistance Councils) at the village level, then the parish, sub-county and so on up to the National Assembly.
[9] By 1995 women were well represented in the civil service by virtue of both direct appointments and regular promotion: 21 per cent of Permanent Secretaries, 26 per cent of Under-Secretaries and 16 per cent of District Administrators were women (Goetz, 1998).

parties without an explicit commitment, usually underlined by clear quotas, to placing women candidates on party lists (Goetz, 1998).[10]

The question that immediately comes to mind is why have the NRM and the African National Congress (ANC) taken such bold steps to increase women's political profile? The adoption of quotas in South Africa, in contrast to NRM's adoption of reserved seats for women (below), has been the outcome of pressure from within the ANC by its female members. In October 1993, the ANC decided to adopt a self-administered quota of 30 per cent women. Other parties did the same for the 1994 elections. This followed the successful lobbying by the women's groups for the appointment of women delegates to the multiparty negotiations in 1993 (Finnemore, 1994).[11] But the ANC's list of 300 candidates, which included 66 women, clustered many of them on the bottom 15 per cent of the list (Goetz, 1998).

Tamale provides an interesting discussion of this issue for Uganda that touches on both foreign policy and domestic considerations. "What better way for a regime that had ascended to power through the barrel of the gun to gain legitimacy and to place the hitherto 'sick man of Africa' back on the world map?" (Tamale, 1997:48). Making women more visible in decision making would show to the international community the NRM's commitment to democracy. And at home, it would help cultivate a constituency that made up more than half the population—a strategy that many believe worked to Museveni's advantage in the 1996 presidential elections. But Tamale makes two additional points that are crucial to the present discussion. First, she argues that, despite women's participation in the bush war, caution must be taken not to overstate the significance of women's pressure for the introduction of affirmative action policies in Uganda (which contrasts with both South Africa and the Nordic experience where quotas for women were adopted by social democratic and communist parties in the 1970s in response to pressure from women's sections of these parties). In fact the *absence* of such concerted pressure has, in her view, been the weak point of the affirmative action policy in Uganda. The fact that no significant pressure group crystallized to pursue women's rights within the arena of formal politics meant that "it [affirmative action] was imposed from above for reasons more to do with political manoeuvring" (Tamale, 1997:118).

Her interviews with women MPs show that most of them were approached, cajoled or nudged to join politics in 1989 by male "elders" who took it upon themselves to recruit "suitable" (read quiescent) female candidates. And as a consequence, she argues, mediation by the NRM has meant that most women MPs not only view affirmative action policy as a favour or gift that NRM *gave* women (as opposed to a right that they struggled for and *earned*), but also feel

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[10] In Namibia, for example, there were no official quotas for women on party lists, and only SWAPO placed women on lists to ensure that at least one woman would be elected out of every 10 candidates. Each party submitted a list of 72 candidates for the National Assembly, seven parties participated in the elections and only six women were elected (Goetz, 1998:footnote 14).

[11] The Multi-Party Negotiating Process, which replaced the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in March 1993, refers to the formal transitional negotiations between the ANC and the National Party that ushered in democracy (and marked the end of apartheid) in South Africa.

that they owe their allegiance to the government—the NRM government. They are thus reluctant to voice any criticism or dissent.

A related issue is that of representation—whom do these women MPs represent? A key question any woman who occupies an affirmative action seat is confronted with is whether she represents "women" or the district. In other words, should she be *acting for* women as a social group, or should she be representing a much wider constituency? This question is complicated and poses daunting dilemmas. On the one hand, these women are present in the legislature *because* they are women, and thus gender issues cannot be easily ignored. On the other hand, and more importantly, they are elected to office not by universal suffrage like regular members, but by an electoral college[12] predominantly composed of elite men—which raises serious questions of allegiance and accountability.

There are significant pressures against women MPs representing women. The "official position", which was explained to a group of women MPs by the NRM secretariat, is that women representatives represent the entire district and not women alone. Moreover, some women representatives fear that by being "women's representatives" they will seem narrow-minded and not measure up to their male colleagues. Still others feel that the women's cause cannot be isolated from the wider perspectives of the district. And the linkages between women MPs and the women's networks and associations outside parliament are tenuous at best (few women are active members of these associations), which means that accountability to the women's movement is a serious problem. But what is most interesting is that almost everyone outside parliament seemed to think that female parliamentarians had a special role in representing women. "The media, professionals, and most important, the grassroots women in rural areas, generally perceive women MPs (regardless of their mode of entering the House) as representatives of women as a special group" (Tamale, 1997:111). In fact, a significant proportion of the women MPs interviewed recognized that they had a special mandate to represent women and "expended a good deal of energy and time both on the House floor and in specialized Committees making a case for women" (Tamale, 1997:190).

These observations provide interesting insights into some of the questions raised earlier about the issue of representation. Clearly, women legislators in Uganda do not "mirror" the majority of women in the population, the former being middle class, educated, professional, etc. But what Tamale's evidence seems to suggest is that they nevertheless can, and do, *sometimes* act on behalf of the majority of women. Even though this does not point to genuine representation—since there are no procedures or mechanisms for establishing accountability to a women's movement—what it does indicate is that there may be some "unarticulated unity of purpose" stemming from common experiences of discrimination that cut across ethnic and class divisions. On several occasions women parliamentarians have come together to create a united front—less successfully on the issue of domestic violence, and more effectively

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[12] The electoral college for women holding these reserved seats is composed of people (mostly men) elected at the first three levels of the Local Council system.

in 1997-1998 over the Land Law.[13] Similar efforts were evident during the Constituent Assembly by the Women's Caucus that was responsible for the progressive provisions on gender written into the 1995 Constitution.

More controversially though, Goetz (1998) maintains that it is the *absence* of party politics and party divisions that has allowed the more active women MPs to galvanize others into acting as representatives of women. In other words, women's movements and women MPs can forge a united front and score strategic points more easily and readily when other political divisions have receded or disappeared. But Goetz also points out that the fact that women politicians in Uganda have no realistic political options outside the NRM is also a problem because it reduces their political leverage vis-à-vis the NRM as well as their capacity to explore issues that may not be on the NRM agenda. This lack of political options is a serious drawback that leaves the women MPs beholden to the NRM.[14]

Finally, an unfavourable outcome of affirmative action is that it risks creating an enclave for women's political participation, with electorates assuming that the reserved seats are the only legitimate seats for women (Goetz, 1998). While the affirmative action seats are generally viewed as training ground preparing women for participation in mainstream politics, pending their graduation to "proper" county seats, only a handful (six) have actually crossed from affirmative action status to county representatives—those with high-profile cabinet positions taking the lead.

The quota system, on the other hand, confers greater legitimacy on women candidates to participate in political life, since their seats have been won through popular election. But it is often argued that, under the quota system as well, candidates are at the mercy of the central or provincial party that compiles electoral lists—making women candidates beholden to the party hierarchy rather than to a particular constituency (Goetz, 1998).

To sum up, in the post-transition period the more established political parties in Brazil and Chile have remained remarkably resistant to women's participation. The newly formed parties, like the Brazilian PT and the Chilean PH, have been more accessible to women; though it may be argued that participation in these smaller parties may produce more symbolic than real benefits (Schmitter, 1998). The adoption of quotas and reserved seats by the South African ANC and the Ugandan NRM—both "movement-type" parties that dominate politics in their respective countries—has been driven by complex internal and external pressures. The moves have produced a significant increase in women's political profile. But, given the lack of any

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[13] In the context of debates about a new Land Law in 1997-1998, women parliamentarians and women's groups came together to write an amendment, which was passed in parliament on 25 June 1998, giving women co-ownership rights in the marital home and in land used for daily family subsistence needs. However when the Land Statute came out a week later (2 July 1998), there was no trace of this amendment (see Goetz and Jenkins, 1999). The author is grateful to Anne Marie Goetz for this information.

[14] There are well-known historical reasons for the preference given to "movement" politics in Uganda (having to do with the violence, civil strife and dictatorship associated with divisive party politics in the past). But increasingly the *de facto* opposition parties are criticizing Museveni's NRM and voicing their impatience with his reluctance to hold multiparty elections.

realistic political options for women outside these two parties, women's political leverage vis-à-vis party hierarchy remains strictly limited.

State feminism: Democratic transitions and the state

Given the limited success to date in feminizing political parties and getting women elected, it is not surprising that other strategies are also needed to bring women's interests into the policy-making process. One such strategy, which has attracted significant (often critical) attention from women's movements, is to enter and work directly through the state.

Since the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), the demand for policy to address women's issues has been framed in terms of a project of access, or "integration", into the mainstream policy-making institutions—hence the term "gender mainstreaming". The most important of these institutions has been the state (Goetz, 1995). Notwithstanding the serious questioning of the role of the state since the early 1980s, it still remains the main forum of national decision making. It continues to play a central role in laying down the institutional and market frameworks that govern citizens' social, political and economic options. It is not surprising, therefore, that women's movements over the past century have targeted the state and continue to do so. But what is important to underline is the diversity of state forms—both over time and across contexts. Being a citizen of an institutionalized democracy is significantly different from being a citizen of an authoritarian state or of an emerging democracy. Issues of context are therefore important, because they govern the receptivity or otherwise of women's demands.

Feminist theorizing about the state developed in the United Kingdom and the United States—both countries where feminist interventions in the state were relatively underdeveloped. The state and the bureaucracy in these two countries have very often been portrayed as immutably masculine, and the state as the ultimate mechanism of social control in women's lives. Marian Sawer (1996) contrasts this approach with the experience in Australia, Canada and New Zealand—countries with a strong tradition of social liberalism, where women's movements have tended to see the state as a vehicle for social justice. There are also parallels with Scandinavia, where a strong tradition of welfare state policies has placed a positive value on state interventions. In Australia in particular, the "femocrat"—or feminist bureaucrat—influences the state in the interests of women by infiltrating it.

Third World feminists, too, have been writing about the state. In these writings the state—especially the post-colonial state—is regarded as of critical importance in women's lives, both public and private. In her recent comparison of Western and Third World states, Shirin Rai (1996) highlights three main differences vis-à-vis women's issues. First, there is a significant difference in the extent to which women are "touched" by the provisioning role of the state. In many developing countries the state has not given women the kind of welfare provisioning that the Western liberal states have, and women in the former contexts have tended to rely much more on the non-state sectors for healthcare, education and childcare. Second, due to the weakness of the state, women remain untouched by and uninformed about many areas of state legislation and action. Both the dissemination of information about new

legislation and its enforcement are extremely patchy and varied due to lack of power and political expediency. A third feature of Third World states is a weak system of internal regulation, which often results in high levels of state violence and violation of civil rights. The women's movement in India, in particular, is rooted in women's opposition to police brutality.

Democratic transitions have provided opportunities for some women to influence policy formulation and implementation by entering and transforming the state from within. A comparative study of "women's machineries" undertaken by UNRISD in the early 1990s, which included seven case studies, confirmed the importance of changes in political regimes for institutionalizing gender concerns within the state (Goetz, 1995).[15] Likewise, Sonia Alvarez argues that the Brazilian state, though still bourgeois and male-dominated, has been far "friendlier" to women under civilian rule than under the military dictatorship. "The difference for Brazilian feminists is hardly a trivial one" (1990:272). Below, we look at this issue in greater detail.

Brazil and Chile

The first Brazilian Council on the Feminine Condition was created in the state of São Paulo in 1983, in response to demands by the Paulista feminist groups, which were among the most organized in the country (Alvarez, 1990). Members of these groups also staffed the first São Paulo Council—like the Australian "femocrats" who infiltrated the state in the early 1970s. This factor undoubtedly influenced the nature and content of its radical policy initiatives on women's health, reproductive rights and daycare. The Council was also associated with another radical institutional innovation in Brazil—the setting-up of women's police stations, staffed with policewomen and specializing in cases of violence against women.[16] The political successes of both led to the creation of similar institutions in other Brazilian states and cities, as well as the National Council that was created by the first civilian president, José Sarney, in 1985.

The National Council was staffed by a strong group of feminists in the late 1980s. It was instrumental in involving autonomous women's organizations in a national campaign, during the constitutional assembly meeting, which lobbied to introduce a series of women's demands in the new constitution.

Although the first São Paulo Council and the first National Council were largely made up of movement activists, many of the subsequent councils were created by governors and mayors without consulting the women's movements. Most accounts contend that in these circumstances the councils have tended to become party enclaves within the state bureaucracy, and their capacity has been severely curtailed (Alvarez, 1990; Caldeira, 1998). In the case of the National Council, for example, the same government that had given the first and second presidents of the Council the power to act, also provoked the resignation of its feminist members in 1989 after severe budget and administrative cuts were

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[15] The seven countries were Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Mali, Morocco, Uganda and Viet Nam.

[16] Although there are no studies assessing the impact of women's police stations (which have mushroomed across the country), it is known that in 1986, the year after the creation of the first women's police station in São Paulo, reported rape cases increased by 25 per cent (Caldeira, 1998).

introduced. A new Council was then designated, but made up of women (mainly lawyers) who had no connections with the national women's movements (Caldeira, 1998).

What is clear from most accounts is that the fortune of State and National Councils has depended both on the organization of autonomous women's movements capable of exerting concerted pressure and demanding feminist action inside the state, as well as political support from the governor or president. By the early 1990s, Caldeira (1998) argues, the absence of both connections meant that the Councils had become ineffective, although the situation was somewhat reversed after the election of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1994, when the Councils were again staffed by feminist teams. But the relationship that the Council currently has with the women's movements, she concludes, "is quite different from and much less organic than that of the first councils" (Caldeira, 1998:79). This is probably in no small measure also due to the post-transition exhaustion and dispersion of the Brazilian women's movements (discussed further below).

It is nevertheless interesting that international assessments of progress in women's reproductive and health rights find that relations between Brazil's women's health movement—itself organized since 1991 into a national network of some 200 organizations and centres—and Brazilian government agencies are among the best developed in the world (Petchesky, 1999).[17] The result is unparalleled institutionalization of the women's health movement, through representation on a wide range of commissions to oversee health policy at various governmental levels. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, feminist health activists in Brazil have occupied key roles in some national, state and municipal agencies concerned with health (most notably in the city of São Paulo) and the work of those agencies has been informed by Health Councils representing local citizens.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. These are particularly in the financial domain, for while investments in public health provision increased significantly during the mid-1990s and remain relatively large (almost 15.5 per cent of the entire government budget in 1995) compared to many other developing countries, they lag behind increases in other sectors. Budgetary constraints (intensified recently through "advice" from the Bretton Woods institutions) and the lack of systematic policies to correct inequalities (social, racial and regional) in access to services and the quality of care still plague Brazil's otherwise impressive universal public health programme (SUS). Nevertheless, the strong commitment of the health system to policies of redistribution has led to innovative strategies to ensure universal access to life-prolonging services, and nowhere is this truer than with regard to treatment of HIV/AIDS (providing free antiretroviral drugs through the Ministry of Health to all infected people). According to Sonia Corrêa (1999), health reform in Brazil has succeeded and substantially improved "women's quality of life" primarily for two reasons—first, the inherent characteristics of the SUS, which are public investment, universality and thorough planning and prioritization of basic health care; and, second, the indispensable role that women's

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[17] Petchesky's (1999) comparative study draws on a wide range of country case studies. The case study on Brazil (1999) was prepared by Sonia Corrêa.

organizations have played in exerting pressure on the health system, mobilizing public support, stimulating public debate and systematically monitoring policies.

In Chile the creation of the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM) within the public administration was the direct outcome of the pressure that the Concertación Nacional de Mujeres por la Democracia (Women's Concertation, for short) was able to exert on the centre-left coalition that won in the 1989 elections. The Women's Concertation grew out of a tradition of attempts by women to create a united front to influence the political agenda, and was to a great extent successful in pressing its demands onto the democratic coalition.[18] But the Concertation and the women who first staffed SERNAM were not prepared for the obstacles they were to confront. Many of these women assumed that with the return to democracy women would eventually be recognized as full citizens, and that for this purpose the state was a gender-neutral tool for carrying out political commitments (Valenzuela, 1998). Not surprisingly, engagement with the state has turned out to be far more contentious than some individuals had originally assumed.

The involvement in SERNAM of women who were both feminists and leftists gave the right-wing parties ground for opposition. They saw SERNAM as a threat to the social order and the family. Under pressure from these parties, the government cut back SERNAM's budget, size and functions. The situation also led to a curious statutory status whereby the director was a state minister, but SERNAM itself was subsumed under the Ministry of Planning (Valenzuela, 1998). The role and functions of SERNAM were unclear at its establishment, and while its location within the Ministry of Planning does mean that it is potentially well placed to influence planning and policy making, it has no concrete mechanisms to do so (Goetz, 1995). While its formal mandate explicitly excludes project implementation, its inability to act in a policy advisory role has obliged it to retreat to a focus on public awareness building, and on implementing pilot projects of various kinds, prompting the comment that SERNAM behaved more like an NGO than like a part of public administration (Goetz, 1995).

Somewhat parallel to the National Council's attempts to influence the Brazilian Constitution, SERNAM has more recently launched an ambitious plan to reach out to women across the social spectrum and to take the lead in developing new legislation in areas such as family law and violence against women. Divorce, for example, remains deeply controversial in Chile; it is still illegal and, despite popular support for legalization, opposition from the Catholic Church and right-wing parties has been strong enough to delay discussion and block any meaningful action (Valenzuela, 1998). On other issues, such as the elimination of gender discrimination in the civil, criminal and labour codes, SERNAM has taken a proactive role. The modification of the labour code in particular has been very controversial, with SERNAM raising the rights of seasonal and domestic workers (mostly women), which neither the Ministry of Labour nor the pro-government Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT)

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[18] But as in the case of previous attempts of this kind, some of the women active in the popular women's movements felt that the Concertation did not represent them (Angelo, 1990, cited in Waylen, n.d.).

considered important. Proposals regarding home workers and domestic workers provoked heated discussion in Chile's Congress, which failed in the end to establish new regulations for home workers. Representatives from different parties—including some of those in the ruling coalition—opposed establishing the same minimum wage for domestic workers as other workers, fearing reaction from the middle classes. More recently SERNAM has taken the lead in developing new legislation in family law and violence against women (Valenzuela, 1998).

In other words, the greatest space to achieve change exists on the least controversial issues. For example, SERNAM has not even broached the subject of abortion. And this is to some extent due to divisions within SERNAM itself, which reflect divisions between the parties—especially between the Christian Democrat-oriented members, who tend to have more conservative views about the family, and the Socialist women who support a more feminist agenda (Waylen, n.d.). With the successful election of the Socialist president in January 2000 (to assume office in March 2000), one might expect more space opening up to achieve gender-equitable change.

Not surprisingly, SERNAM's relations with women's movements have also been ambivalent, because it is seen as an arm of the government. There has been some disappointment with SERNAM's conservative approach to gender issues. But it is in particular the popular women's movements and groups who feel alienated in SERNAM. Many poor and working class women complain bitterly that they "don't see themselves represented by" or "do not identify with" the women from SERNAM; nor do they feel consulted in the identification of issues and definition of legal and other campaigns that SERNAM wages (Schild, 1995).

One of the underlying problems is that the Chilean women's movement, especially its popular stream, has been losing its dynamism and momentum since the return to competitive elections. This means that SERNAM, in turn, is losing potential power since its existence is due in part to the strength and dynamism of the autonomous women's movements outside the state and the pressure they are able to exert on the political parties that form the government. Here SERNAM may be in a catch-22—since its very existence may be part of the conditions that are weakening the women's movements (Waylen, n.d.). Some observers argue, for example, that the women's movement has been beheaded by the creation of SERNAM and the subsequent migration of feminist leaders into the formal institutions of the state. And women's groups and NGOs may also be losing potential resources because financing that used to go to them directly now goes through SERNAM. NGOs have to bid for funds, creating a patron/client relationship between SERNAM and NGOs (Waylen, n.d.).[19] There are, of course, many other reasons that can explain why the women's movement (and social movements, in general) went into decline: the already-mentioned institutionalization (or NGO-isation) of the

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[19] The issue of competition for funds needs to be placed in a broader context: the decline of external or "Northern" funds in the 1990s, with the richer nations sending a smaller percentage of their GDP in the form of aid; the diversion of this aid away from Latin America (some donors have completely withdrawn from Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela); and multilateral funding agencies sending most of their support directly to the state (ALOP, 1999, cited in Foweraker, 1999).

women's movement, being a particularly important cause, as well as the undeniable fact that participants/activists of women's movements (and other social movements) do not want to be endlessly active—especially when they have to make ends meet in an increasingly harsh economic environment. In sum, while the Chilean state, through the activist work of SERNAM, has become a terrain for gender struggles, judging from the complaints of many poor and working class women it would seem that these are "struggles waged in the name of all women, but only by and for some" (Schild, 1995:142).

Uganda and South Africa

While electoral strategy and women's representation within the parliament has been far more successful in Uganda and South Africa than in Brazil and Chile, "state feminism", it seems, has been a less important, and less developed, part of the strategy in the African than in the Latin American cases. There may be a number of different reasons for this. One may be the nature of the dominant political parties in the two contexts. The Latin American polities, as we have seen, are dominated by older, more disciplined and rigid political parties that have traditionally excluded women, while both the ANC (now a party) and the NRM are more recent, movement-type organizations that have mobilized women and consequently been under pressure to accommodate some of their demands, including reserved seats and quotas. With the success of the electoral strategy in Uganda and South Africa there may have been fewer arguments (and fewer individuals) for setting up (and staffing) a woman's machinery within the state. Conversely, frustration with the slow pace of the electoral strategy in both Brazil and Chile seems to have focused the energies of the women's movements on capturing a space within the state.

But another factor differentiating the two sets of countries is the nature and capacity of public administration itself. It is well known that in many Southern countries, concerns for fiscal prudence and economic stabilization have, over the past two decades, significantly weakened the capacity of the public administration to carry out its remaining areas of responsibility (Bangura, 1994). In the face of such deeply entrenched bureaucratic malaise, transforming the state to become more sensitive to gender (racial, ethnic) differences becomes a formidable challenge. These pressures have been more strongly felt in sub-Saharan Africa (although the South African public administration does not suffer from the standard ailments associated with long-running recession and adjustment), while public administration in Brazil and Chile has been relatively more stable and immune from the more radical externally driven reforms.

In Uganda, the project of state building had to begin from a very rudimentary base, since much of the state apparatus had been destroyed during the country's prolonged civil war. Adding to this have been recent public management reforms that have sought to rationalize and downsize the civil service. The WID Ministry, set up in 1988, was demoted to one of the three sections of the Ministry of WID, Youth and Culture in 1991 as a result of adjustment-inspired civil service reforms. And in 1994, the Ministry of WID, Youth and Culture, as a "non-priority" administrative unit, came under renewed attack and was nearly dismantled through reforms proposed by the World Bank and IMF (Goetz, 1995). Though the threat of extinction was

fought off successfully, there was talk at one stage of absorbing the Ministry's WID Unit into the NRM's Directorate of Women's Affairs—a striking reminder of the problematic association that the women's agenda in Uganda has developed with the NRM. Indicative of the WID Unit's precarious position is the fact that most of the activities it has undertaken have relied on donor funding, including the impressive nationwide consultative process it initiated to elicit women's views across Uganda on the country's new Constitution, as well as the bureaucratic initiative of setting up gender focal points in line ministries (Goetz, 1995).

In South Africa, although there has been considerable political will for pursuing gender equity, various government departments have limited capacity to make new resource commitments and create new structures in the environment of strict fiscal discipline imposed by the 1996 economic reform programme. Another major constraint has been the inevitable confusion and loss of co-ordination as the South African state has sought to transform itself from an apartheid state into a non-racial democratic one, capable of addressing the vast socio-economic disparities between the races in the country. With these constraints and inevitable delays, much of the bureaucratic machinery for the representation of gender issues has yet to be installed. In response to the concerns of women's groups and networks, and the effective caucusing among them that occurred during the transition to democracy, the option of a Women's Ministry was rejected and instead a "package of gender structures" was favoured. This includes gender focal points in a range of government departments, an Office on the Status of Women (to be located in the Office of the Deputy President) and a Commission on Gender Equality (much like the Human Rights Commission) to keep an independent eye on national progress on gender equity outside of government but accountable to parliament (Albertyn, 1996; Gouws, 1996). There are as yet few assessments of how this package of mechanisms is working in practice.

To conclude, democratic transitions, however restricted, represent propitious moments for making interventions into the state, because the state is potentially more fluid during such transformations than at other times. But as numerous observers have argued, this space is often limited because transition often has a top-down, elitist nature. Moreover, the ability of those working on the "inside" to push for change on a sustained basis depends less on having an institutional space *per se*, and much more on the iterative relationships with autonomous women's organizations on the "outside" that they are able to establish and exploit. In other words, the "women's machineries" cannot operate in a political vacuum. This message is sometimes lost on those advocating gender mainstreaming as a technocratic initiative. But there is also a potential paradox here: the creation and staffing of women's spaces within the state may in itself weaken the women's movement outside the state, especially in the immediate post-transition period when the vitality and cohesion of national women's movements may be at an all-time low.

The impact of women's presence in politics

What is strikingly similar about the Latin American and African case studies is the areas where the gender ministries and women parliamentarians have been making progress (constitution writing, legal rights, violence against women),

and those that have been extremely difficult to approach let alone influence (economic planning and decision making). In fact, one policy area that has consistently eluded the scrutiny of women's machineries in public administration has been macro-economic decision making. The same applies to women in national legislatures.

Some have argued that part of the problem lies in women's lack of fluency and skill in economic analysis (Pearson, 1995). As such, the work of feminist macro economists is a valuable resource that women's machineries can use to help them to focus on the design of policy reforms and to facilitate communication with the economists who dominate macro-economic policy making. The Women's Budget Statements and Initiatives first introduced in countries like Australia and Canada, and more recently in South Africa, which essentially require all government departments to account for the impact of their activities on women, may be another useful tool for facilitating the technical capacities of women's machineries.

In a recent review of gender issues in Uganda's economic reform programme, Diane Elson and Barbara Evers (1997) conclude that women and men have not shared equally in Uganda's impressive growth. Structural adjustment policies have been particularly disadvantageous to women, who have been burdened with heavy workloads as the country has sought to expand the production of so-called non-traditional agricultural exports, and the access of girls and women to health and education services has dropped because user fees are too high for them to afford. They conclude that the presence of women in national political decision making has had little impact on public expenditure decisions, and offer a number of possible explanations for this apparent failure:

> This may be because, in absolute terms, there are not yet enough women in positions of power; or it may be that women have insufficient voice in public expenditure decisions; or that the few women in positions of power do not share the priorities of poorer women (Elson and Evers, 1997:25).

While all of these points are relevant, there is an additional macro-political factor, without which it is difficult to understand why women's presence in national legislatures and public administration is not making any difference on public expenditure and economic policy. The deliberate attempts to "get politics out of economic policy" by creating insulated technocracies has enormous implications for democratic consolidation in both developing and transition countries (Bangura and Mkandawire, 1998). It may lead to a Janus-faced policy in which politics are formally democratic but decision making in the policy field is authoritarian—i.e. made behind closed doors, insulated from public debate and scrutiny (Bangura and Mkandawire, 1998). While gender bureaucrats well versed in economic analytical skills may be able to contribute to what goes on inside these insulated technocracies (in ministries of finance, for example), this can hardly substitute for a more open public debate that enables women's groups and networks, along with other social groups, to scrutinize economic decisions and policies that affect the well-being of their constituents. Therefore to see women's exclusion from economic policy making simply in terms of the skills that gender bureaucrats and legislators lack (and need to be equipped with) misses the larger question of whether or not the emerging political arrangements enable (or hinder) the public to exercise

some kind of review and control over the validity and lawfulness of the actions and decisions taken by the executive.

Having said this, it is also important not to dismiss those critical areas in which women's machineries and women parliamentarians have had greater impact—raising the political legitimacy of violence against women, enhancing women's awareness of their existing rights through civic education, and facilitating social legislation on highly significant issues such as divorce, child custody, domestic violence, and reproductive health and rights—and which address very fundamental aspects of women's oppression. But here again, success in raising these controversial issues, and maybe even legislating for them, has gone hand in hand with a failure of the state (the judiciary and the police, in particular) to guarantee the effectiveness of such important individual civil rights across national territories and for all social strata. In fact, the failure of the developing state in this regard is one of the main factors distinguishing Southern women's experiences of the state from that of their Northern counterparts (Rai, 1996). This failure or "ineffectiveness of state-as-law, the abating of some rights and guarantees that, as much as voting without coercion, are constitutive of citizenship" (O'Donnell, 1993:1361), goes to the heart of what many see as the most intriguing feature of the new democracies (compared to the institutionalized democracies).

On somewhat similar lines, Teresa Caldeira (1998) has developed a fascinating analysis of post-authoritarian Brazil that questions its democratic consolidation. Violence, both civilian and state, increased considerably after the end of military rule and the consolidation of democratic procedures at the level of political system. As is well known, these acts of violence have been directed at prisoners, children, rural workers, indigenous populations and common citizens, not only by the police, but also by private guards and vigilante groups. This reflects the fact that in Brazil, individual and civil rights have remained underdeveloped, together with the justice system that is in principle in charge of assuring them.

While social and labour rights have enjoyed some legitimacy and institutionalization (due to pressure from left-wing and labour movements as well as state action in its populist-corporatist incarnation), the field of justice and civil rights is the least developed and most vulnerable to abuse. Disrespect for human rights and widespread opposition to them, killings by the police, use of physical violence as a ubiquitous form of punishment of children of all social classes, defence of the death penalty, domestic violence against women, and widespread use of radical medical interventions and manipulations of the body (such as sterilization, caesarean section and plastic surgery), all express the lack of legitimacy of individual rights in general and what Caldeira calls the "unboundedness" of the body, in particular. Brazilian feminists and women's movements, she argues, have been most innovative and have contributed most to democratic consolidation when they have addressed the spheres of justice, law and individual rights, such as in the campaigns against domestic violence and for reproductive rights.

"Where have all the women gone?": Women's movements in the post-transition period

The imperative of participating in transitional negotiations and processes of constitution-writing catalyzed women's groups to create an organized women's constituency through varied forms of interest aggregation and coalition-building. Compared to this high point when women's groups were able to present a united front through their umbrella organizations—if only temporarily—the women's movements in the post-transition period appear highly dispersed. This is how Alvarez (1998b) and Caldeira (1998) characterize the Brazilian women's movement of the 1990s, and how Meer (1997) and Goetz (1998) describe the women's movement in post-apartheid South Africa. These are also the two countries that have seen some of the most vigorous and diverse forms of women's mobilization.

One of the cross-cutting characteristics is that in the post-transition period national women's movements have been "stripped of their most competent cadres", "be-headed" or "decapacitated", as their leaders and key organizers have been drawn into new state institutions representing gender issues, political parties and parliaments. But the other side of the coin is that feminist ideas have, through these media, become more widely diffused—even if in a diluted form. Some would, of course, consider the translation of the feminist transformational project into neat categories and a laundry list of policy demands to be "a betrayal of the revolutionary feminist cause", as one interviewee put it (Alvarez, 1990:235). According to these feminists something fundamental has been lost in the process of translation, and the migration of movement activists into mainstream political institutions where they attempt to effect change from within has ultimately been self-defeating. We take a less sombre view of what has been gained and lost.

There are nevertheless many troublesome aspects to the partial institutionalization that gender issues have found in the state and other mainstream institutions. There is the danger that the partial institutionalization of women's issues within the state apparatus may lead to complacency within the women's movement, which might indirectly compromise their efforts to mobilize around the state. The setting up of women's police precincts in Brazil, mentioned earlier, is a case in point. Although many feminists were disappointed with the way some of these precincts replicated the sexist practices of regular precincts, feminist pressure outside the state was not forceful enough to address this problem. Ironically, it turns out that the setting up of these "women's spaces" within the state contributed to the de-activation of autonomous feminist groups dedicated to combating violence against women. By 1985 most of them had broken up and the pressure they were able to exert on the state had consequently declined markedly (Alvarez, 1990:247).

But this is not the entire story. Two other interlinked developments have influenced the women's movements in these countries. First is the so-called NGO-ization of the women's movements, especially through donor-driven, poverty alleviation programmes (PAPs) of which social safety nets are an important part (Alvarez, 1998a). And, second, the time, energy and allegiance of some movement participants has been diverted to transnational networking and lobbying at international forums. Both, it seems, have contributed to the

weakening of national women's movements and the cross-class alliances that some had managed to forge.

The first development dovetails with the tendency toward privatization and consequent selectivity and residualism of social programmes that has accompanied the adoption of neoliberal economic policies. As research on the dynamics of residualism in the context of developed countries has shown, this type of social service provisioning is likely to accentuate and perpetuate social divisions and inequalities by distinguishing recipients from the rest of the community, and by structuring social expenditure as a gift rather than a right; in short, it works against the social dimensions of citizenship (Esping-Andersen, 1990). But the social sector reform proposals that are currently in vogue also constitute an attempt to link the neoliberal market-based model of social provisioning to the "alternative" approaches of participation and empowerment in a kind of "neo-liberal populism" that seeks to strengthen civil society and deepen democracy (Vivian, 1995:19).

The reform strategies thus emphasize a system of welfare provisioning that is decentralized, often involving NGOs and the private sector rather than relying exclusively on traditional government channels. However, indicative of the disparate goals underpinning these programmes and their contradictory perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of various actors (especially the state), is that decentralization is combined with the state ostensibly maintaining responsibility for establishing, directing and setting priorities for the PAPs. (This assumes a benevolent state.) Moreover, lending institutions and donors actually maintain central control over the implementation of these projects and over the national economic and social policy agenda. When such external controls are portrayed as being applied in the interests of the poor, the implication is that the donors are allied with "the people" against the state (Vivian, 1995:15).

The formalization provoked by the proliferation of NGOs and competition for funds has a number of implications. The self-reliance and self-help that characterize this model of social provisioning, as we have seen, are often euphemisms for reliance on the unpaid work of women. Many working class women members of neighbourhood associations (in Brazil and Chile, for example) now find themselves working for NGOs—usually in voluntary or secondary positions. Approaching the problem from the vantage point of poor women, Mayoux (1998) voices concern that this policy shift may merely substitute one inadequate and unresponsive system of welfare provisioning (i.e. the state system), with another system that is even less well-resourced, less co-ordinated, more patchy and even more dependent on women's unpaid labour input. In other words, this system of social service delivery may be most "cost-effective" (from the point of view of donors, for example) than the state system it replaces, but *at the expense* of the women (and men) who constitute its "flexible" and casualized workforce.

Politically, the implementation of PAPs by NGOs seems to have taken away the negotiation and campaigning element of their work, and in the fierce race for financial survival they are being nudged into conforming to the latest fashions in an externally defined agenda, and into becoming more accountable to *their funders*. In the case of Chile, for example, "in the last-ditch attempt to

keep themselves economically viable many women's NGOs are letting go of the kinds of projects that were closely associated with their feminist commitments" (Schild, 1995:136) (e.g. popular education projects such as workshops on sexuality, parenting and broadly conceived leadership training), while they take up projects that are more attractive to funders (e.g. women's health and micro-enterprise development). Many of the NGO professionals who have worked with popular women's groups over the years (in income-generating projects) are sceptical of the viability of micro-enterprise projects; according to these activists, preparing poor women to become "micro entrepreneurs" is an expensive proposition, with meagre outcomes. In the zeal to promote micro enterprises as the panacea for the poor, neither the effort nor the cost is officially recognized. However, many of these activists—no doubt out of necessity—go along with the idea of micro enterprises (Schild, 1995).

The NGO-ization of the women's movement has also tended to break down the traditional connections that many middle class feminists maintained with working class women, alienating the latter from the movement's new activities, most clearly from transnational networking (Valenzuela, 1998). In some organizations there is increasing disquiet among grassroots women members about the amount of time and organizational resources spent by the leadership on issues that are seen as being of no direct and immediate benefit to them. Ultimately the gains made by the international women's movement through lobbying and political action at the global level—as Gita Sen (1996) and others have described—will have to take into account the tensions and resentments that this is creating within some organizations.

However, as both Alvarez (1998a) and Petchesky (1999) have rightly argued, the distinction between women's NGOs and the women's movement is a very ambiguous one. For a start, the vast majority of NGO activist/professionals "also view themselves as an integral part of a larger women's movement that encompasses other feminists … as well as poor and working class women for or on behalf of whom they profess to work (Alvarez, 1998a:5). Second, NGOs vary tremendously in their power, resources, ideology, their relations to donors and government, "and above all the extent and quality of their connection with grassroots movements" (Petchesky, 1999:58). While the positions taken by Alvarez and Petchesky on the issue of "NGO-ization" provide interesting contrasts, one point they both highlight is the importance of looking at the *relations* between NGOs and their grassroots constituents. As Petchesky puts it, "to maintain their legitimacy and their claim to be representative … NGOs and their leadership require organic ties to grassroots social movements (or community-based organizations). Such ties cannot be taken for granted; they must be consciously nurtured" (1999:63). However, the point raised by Alvarez (1998a) and others—namely, that it is precisely these relations that are changing and becoming weakened (in some contexts more than others)—is what many observers and activists are concerned about.

III: Feminist Autonomy—Between a Rock and a Hard Place

This section returns to some of the questions that the paper has continuously raised about the political strategies of women's movements. Should feminists give up on party politics and electoral strategies, and concentrate their limited human resources on cultivating a solid constituency and on interest aggregation among their members? What kinds of risks do different strategies entail?

Avoiding "dirty" politics: The dangers of abstention from institutional politics

If participants in women's movements have, in many countries, suffered co-optation by the state or been marginalized in "women's auxiliaries" in political parties, then it is not too difficult to understand why some exhibit weariness about mainstream politics and are ambivalent about becoming embroiled in party politics. Such hesitance takes different forms depending on context, for a variety of reasons and with a range of consequences. In order to illustrate this diversity, three snapshots are juxtaposed below.

In many East/Central European countries women were active participants in the dissident and opposition groups before and during the transitions, but rarely did they voice gender-specific issues or demands. As it is widely recognized, the entire feminist agenda became discredited through its association with state socialist "emancipation from above". In this context Einhorn (1993) talks of "an allergy to feminism", and the following quotation she cites from Jirina Siklova, former Charter 88 activist and founder of the Gender Studies Centre in Prague, is quite revealing of the sentiments that prevailed—in the early 1990s, at least:

> We have a lot of experience with 'directive emancipation', reduced very often only to the duty and necessity of mandatory employment, and we tend to transfer this experience to the feminist movement ... We are sceptical of every form of messianism, and this scepticism is directed to feminism as well. Slogans like 'sisterhood is global' ring bells of Marxist slogans like 'proletarians of the world unite'—and they are simply suspicious to us (cited in Einhorn, 1993:182).

Moreover, many of the outspoken women in the region seem to question the core (Western) feminist tenet that women's confinement to the private sphere is oppressive and their public involvement in the economy and the polity is liberating (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998). For Szalai (1998), for example, the family in Hungary is a site of political resistance, a much more authentic space for politics than the public sphere—even after the collapse of communism.[20] While this radical rejection of Western feminism may prove to be in large part a function of the rejection of communism, emerging feminisms in this part of the world are developing an understanding of women's interests and issues that

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[20] Kiss provides a more nuanced picture. She (like many others) argues that the family was a place of relative personal autonomy, "where it was possible to experience genuine solidarity, community, love", but which nevertheless did not have much to offer women—who "were primarily companions, friends, lovers, catering for, showing solidarity with men, who were struggling for higher living standards, to make ends meet, or against political oppression" (Kiss, 1991:51).

is more compatible with the family, with motherhood and with femininity (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998:14).

Within this climate of general distrust of feminism, the few feminist groups that have survived into the 1990s hide their feminist orientation and put the emphasis on the pragmatic side of their activities. The most important types of organizations are made up of women entrepreneurs (Jaquette and Wolchik, 1998). In Hungary, the few ongoing feminist initiatives are those providing services for women in need—shelters for battered or homeless women, counselling, legal advice, and so on (Szalai, 1998). Nor do women appear to be attracted to the more classical forms of political participation, at least as indicated by their serious under-representation in party politics. But they are very visible outside the formalized spheres of party politics—in the tens of thousands of freshly organized associations, local level chambers and single-issue NGOs, as well as in various committees of the local government. Szalai provides evidence that women's presence in local government decision-making bodies actually safeguards a sufficient level of expenditure on the modernization of local childcare facilities, as well as day centres and homes for the elderly (1998:200).

A somewhat similar emphasis on "pragmatic" and "practical" solutions marks the emerging women's associations in Uganda. As was noted earlier, while women acknowledge the positive role that the NRM has played in enhancing gender issues at the policy level, there is increasing weariness among some participants in the women's movement about their association with the NRM, partly out of concern that the party is trying to capture and control the female constituency (Tamale, 1997:134).

Aili Mari Tripp (1994) argues that, because of the ways politics was equated with sectarianism in the country's recent past, the women involved in urban associations in Uganda insist that their groups are based primarily on economic concerns—even if the group is active politically in advocating women's rights. When asked whether the activities they engage in through their associations could be the basis for broader political activity, most respondents were extremely disparaging. The response of one interviewee is worth quoting at length—particularly since it comes from the leader of a women's rights organization (and not a self-help group struggling for basic needs):

> We don't want these organizations to become terribly political. It would hurt too much. There would be too much pain, too much tension that we do not need right now. Everything has been so politicized along tribal, religious and party lines. Women through these organizations are rejecting that ... We do not want to go back to the way it was, back to the repression, back to having to escape to the bush for fear of one's life. These organizations are non-denominational, non-tribal, non-partisan. The reason they are generally organized around sex is because of the gender division of labour in our culture (cited in Tripp, 1994:120).

By organizing to meet their everyday needs and formulate their own organizational strategies, the women in self-help groups, voluntary associations, saving associations and other such groups are responding to their exclusion not only from formal economic structures but also from formal politics. They are also deliberately distancing themselves from public authorities (even at the local

level) because of recent experiences of corruption and co-optation. Moreover, the author maintains that these self-help groups are ultimately redefining the meaning of politics by seeking tangible solutions to everyday problems caused by the vagaries of markets and the failure, negligence or outright repression of the state (Tripp, 1994:128).

A third snapshot comes from Peru, where women's involvement in communal survival strategies has a long history. These strategies acquired particular economic and political significance in the 1980s. The Peruvian case, however, is interesting also for the contrast it provides with the other two. Here political circumstances pushed the women leaders of community kitchens to the political centre as candidates for elections—a process through which many of them were gradually coming to redefine themselves and their roles. But this process was violently interrupted by the Shining Path's terror campaign when 40 neighbourhood leaders, of whom 10 were women leaders of livelihood organizations, were brutally murdered (Barrig, 1998).

Lima's community kitchens, built by women of the popular sector, grew in the midst of the economic crisis of the 1980s. By the mid-1980s the groups were already connected in loose federations through a pyramidal structure that elected representatives and helped facilitate negotiations with the government and NGOs (over the provision of cheap food). They had achieved legitimacy in part for their democratic style (which they contrasted with male community leaders), neutrality among political parties and the fact that they had proven they could "deliver the goods". On the issue of political autonomy the women leaders had been most persistent—which many observers argued had been important in helping them negotiate with public officials and in maintaining legitimacy with the grassroots (given the tarnished image of the politicians). As the centralization process progressed, however, a gap between the leaders and the community women emerged.

President Alberto Fujimori's closing down of the Congress in 1992 brought the independent organizations into the political limelight. Many of them invited the local level women leaders to join their lists of candidates for constituent assembly elections and municipal elections. This promotion from community leadership to the centre of the political arena widened the gap between the community leaders and their social bases even further. Describing the community kitchens' style of management as "the worst exploitation" and the movements' leaders as a "corrupt stratum of leaders", the Shining Path was able to capitalize on the resentments of the women left behind in the neighbourhood organizations. The terrors produced an abrupt break in relations between the groups and their leaders and brought the projects of "self help" and civic participation to a virtual halt.

There are two points emerging from these snapshots that merit further reflection. First is the argument that feminist politics works best outside the traditional sphere of institutionalized politics. This comes through particularly clearly in Szalai's (1998) interpretation of women's activism in Hungary. Some of the proponents of this position assert that women's movements (and other new social movements) are at their best when they create new spaces for struggle, transform cultural values and give everyday practices and people's lives new meanings. Taking to task those who have argued that women's

movements in Brazil have not been contributing to the democratization of political struggle in its strict sense, Teresa Caldeira argues that these observers miss the innovations and contributions of women's movements because they look for them in the wrong places. "Instead of exploring the effects of the new political spaces and practices that women have been creating, they want to find women where men have always been, participating in traditional ways in institutionalized politics" (1998:83).

But even though a major objective of all social movements (and not just women's movements) is to define new, non-state arenas of politics, the state—whether federal, provincial or local—remains the most important arena of politics. The relatively high figure for women's involvement in institutions of local governance cited by Szalai (above) for Hungary is therefore interesting. Some have argued that local politics is more accessible to women and easier to combine with domestic and childcare responsibilities, in contrast to women's absence from party political meetings and parliamentary sessions, which do not lend themselves to being meshed with family life (Einhorn, 1993). But the argument that women are far more effective at the local or community levels than at the macro level needs to be tested more rigorously by examining the role of women's movements in the wide-ranging decentralization processes that have been under way in many developing countries.

The most impressive example emerges from India's Panchayati Raj institutions, where 30 per cent of all seats in the institutions of local governance—in both rural (*panchayats*) and urban (municipalities and municipal councils) areas—have been reserved for women. One million women, it has been estimated, have been elected to the *panchayats* (Mayaram, 1999). As we noted above, since 1998 Uganda has also embarked on a somewhat parallel path, where 30 per cent more seats have been added to the (district level) Local Councils for women (this differs from the Indian institutions, which give women 30 per cent of the existing seats). But it is interesting to note that in both cases women's entry into local politics has been guaranteed through "reserved seats". As Mayaram notes for India, "the overwhelming perception of feminists in India remains that without reservation for women, power structures [even at the local level] will remain male bastions" (1999:2). Another example referred to earlier comes from Brazil, where there has been unparalleled institutionalization of the women's health movement, through representation on a wide range of commissions to oversee health policy at various governmental levels. It seems important, therefore, to examine in more detail the role that women are playing in the ongoing processes of decentralization (and the extent to which financial resources are also decentralized to make participation in decision making at the local level meaningful).

The second point worth noting is that the emphasis on localism can also carry serious pitfalls, most importantly an ambivalence toward the state (even at the local level) and the need to democratize it. While it is of utmost importance that women's movements encourage political activity at the local/grassroots level, it is equally necessary that the political limitation of such activity be recognized. It is "politically incomplete ... because the localism that is the strength of grassroots organizations is also their limitation" (Sheldon Wolin, cited in Phillips, 1991:49). What concerns us here in particular is how discourses celebrating women's activism at the local or community level can be

used to perpetuate and legitimize a dualistic view of politics that relegates women to the local or community level of grassroots activism, while the world of institutional politics is left to men.

Nor is it clear how community level activism contributes to democracy and to women's empowerment. Several questions need to be constantly asked: what has been the broader significance of these movements in terms of the demise of authoritarianism and the construction of democracy? What are the interconnections between local level associational life and national level democratic political institutions? And what are the links between local level associational life and community or local level governance? The much-cited examples from Brazil and Chile, where women's community activism did contribute to the demise of authoritarianism, happened under quite particular historical circumstances. The specificity of the political context in which these communal survival strategies occurred—of widespread discontent and of open resistance, and of some sense of a shared goal (removal of dictatorships) and common values among participants—is often lost on those who assume that an active associational life both contributes to and is a precondition for democracy (Molyneux, 1998a).

Emancipation from above?

If the state or party in power is already articulating the strategic interests of the female population, such as their rights to employment, juridical equality, education and social welfare in opposition to traditional forms of patriarchal oppression, does this not make feminist demands for autonomous space redundant? Nowhere has this question been more sharply posed than in the former communist countries where, under a programme of "emancipation from above", the state *gave* women rights to employment and welfare (arguably more for instrumental rather than idealistic reasons), as well as formal political representation (albeit in parliaments that were themselves token institutions) (Einhorn, 1993; Molyneux, 1994; Siemienska, 1998; Szalai, 1998). The issue of women's political mobilization was tackled through party-linked "mass organizations" charged with the task of channelling demands and grievances to the leadership and helping to improve women's situation within the context of carrying out party policy.

The case of Cuba is exceptional in many respects and raises some of the relevant issues with greater clarity (Molyneux, 1996).[21] Unlike the Eastern European experiences, the Cuban revolution had a popular, nationalist and democratic character. More to the point, as far as gender relations were concerned, Cuba exhibited less of the puritanism of the Soviet bloc countries, and much was made of the leadership's (i.e. Fidel Castro's) interest in "the woman question". Nonetheless, the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC), of which Fidel Castro's sister-in-law (Vilma Espín) is life-long head, is structured and has functioned in ways that are not too dissimilar from its counterparts in the former Soviet bloc. Operating as a "mass organization" under the general direction of the Communist Party, the FMC declares an ethical commitment to "women's emancipation", premised on women's entry into the workforce, formal juridical equality and social rights to health and education. In ideological

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[21] The following discussion on the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is based exclusively on Molyneux (1996).

terms, Vilma Espín has consistently maintained an openly hostile attitude to feminism. She has been particularly critical of the insistence of feminists on the need for autonomous organizational forms, which is at variance with the FMC's endorsement of "democratic centralism" under overall Party control.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the FMC, one point that has emerged clearly from its evolution and adaptation over the years, especially during Cuba's "special period" of economic crisis and adjustment, is that while it has no doubt assisted the entry of women into the public sphere (through education and employment) and enjoyed popularity in the early years for the tangible benefits it brought to many women, it is becoming fossilized over time and increasingly unable to voice the concerns of its constituents.[22] As the 1970s progressed, although the US embargo took much of the blame, the women mobilized by the FMC to participate in the various national campaigns increasingly voiced their grievances and made persistent demands for improved childcare, housing and transport, and longer opening hours for shops. But "these areas, neglected in what was in many other respects an exemplary record of public provision, were far from the concerns of the FMC" (Molyneux, 1996:14).

By 1996 the FMC was widely regarded as irrelevant to the needs of Cuban women, and was considered unable to discuss the most serious problems they faced except in familiar rhetorical terms. Some of these tensions became apparent as the FMC attempted to re-fashion itself as an NGO in order to meet the needs of its constituents (especially young women whom it had failed to attract into its ranks) who were increasingly burdened with economic adjustments to the crisis. It claimed to have expanded the number of childcare centres and also counted among its successes the setting up of "Women's Houses" offering a range of services (courses in bicycle repair, sewing and hairdressing) and support (to victims of domestic violence, etc.). But the low take-up of the services it offered (in Havana at least, for which figures are available) revealed not only the inappropriate form these courses took (their limited scope, arranged to run for six weeks with a large dose of ideological training), but also the ambiguity of the FMC, in the eyes of its clientele, as an arm of the government. Those seeking advice on issues such as drug abuse, HIV infection, prostitution or alcoholism knew that they might well face an official response involving the law. "If the FMC were to play a useful role in the delivery of social welfare", notes Molyneux, "it would have more success if it redefined its status, either acting as part of the welfare ministry, ... or acting as an autonomous body, a genuine NGO" (1996:26).

The main point to retain is the difficulty of articulating women's interests and demands in a once-and-for-all fashion through some top-down programme of emancipation, however well-meaning its architects may be. The point of having an internal feminist critique present within social and political life (whether in the form of publications, neighbourhood associations, NGOs or other unofficial groupings), *but separate from the state apparatus*, is precisely to provide an

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[22] It may very well be that Cuban women, like many women in Eastern Europe, have a far more sombre view of their forced entry into the public sphere, and of a system that demands so much of its women (the so-called triple burden of paid work, housework and "voluntary" political/community work).

avenue and a space for women's evolving concerns to find a distinct articulation (Molyneux, 1996). This is also one way of seeing why feminists have a stake in democratic politics.

This section has navigated through the difficult territory of "feminist autonomy". It began by highlighting some of its dangers, when autonomy means political isolation and abstention from institutional politics. It then moved to the opposite end of the spectrum, explaining why feminists have insisted on the need for some autonomous space independent of political parties and the state.

Concluding Remarks

The suppression of the conventional political arena often facilitates women's political activism. This paper has adopted a broad understanding of women's movements, looking at a wide range of "women in movement" under authoritarian settings—in human rights organizations, in popular feminine groups of various kinds (church and mosque-linked), and in the self-declared feminist groups. Such political mobilization, as well as international support through a variety of United Nations-related conferences and activities, has given women's movements undeniable visibility in the politics of transition, and some success in pressing their demands on the political parties involved in transitional negotiations and the drafting of constitutions.

But with the consolidation of the "normal" processes of democracy dominated by political parties, women's movements (like other social movements) have become increasingly marginalized and dispersed. The fact that women's gender identity is not always transparent or primary effectively means that women rarely act as a bloc. This makes it extremely difficult to establish peak bodies for policy concertation. It has therefore proved much more difficult to organize women in defence of their other interests, than to demonstrate against authoritarian rule.

Some feminist activists (especially middle class, professional women) have moved into political parties and the legislature. But, because they lack class-based access to party forums, popular women's groups have found themselves increasingly alienated from the formal political institutions. At the same time, the proliferation and formalization of NGOs and competition among them for funds has meant that many women who were previously members of neighbourhood associations (in Brazil and Chile, for example) now find themselves working for NGOs, usually in voluntary or secondary positions. Politically, NGO involvement in poverty alleviation projects seems to have taken away the negotiation and campaigning element of their work. In this context women's groups and associations have found it difficult to engage in effective forms of coalition politics and interest aggregation in the new democratic polity. The much-celebrated heterogeneity of women and their movements, the serious divisions within the movement on the question of how to effect political change, and the NGO-ization of the movement thus pose a series of daunting problems for the representation of women's interests as a group.

For those women who have moved into the state bureaucracy or conventional political parties, the perennial question is how to make an impact on mainstream politics without becoming absorbed by it. The more established political parties in Brazil and Chile have remained remarkably resistant to women's participation and the representation of their demands. The newly formed parties in these countries have been more accessible to women, though it may be argued that participation in these smaller parties produces more symbolic than real benefits. The adoption of quotas and reserved seats by the South African ANC and the Ugandan NRM, which dominate politics in their respective countries, has significantly enhanced women's political profile. But given the lack of any realistic political options for women outside these two parties, women's political leverage vis-à-vis the party hierarchy remains limited.

Although the state has incorporated (some would say co-opted) the participants and the banners of the women's movements, it has been extremely difficult for those on the "inside" to translate even the "watered-down" goals of the movement into concrete policies capable of making a positive impact on the lives of female citizens. Efforts to induce change have been patchy, and in the realm of public expenditure decisions, extremely difficult. This is in part due to the lack of effective pressure from an organized women's constituency (noted above) that can articulate a coherent set of issues and priorities for policy attention, and monitor its adoption and implementation by state agencies. It is also due to the *dis*abling environment in which these women bureaucrats find themselves. Deliberate attempts to "get politics out of economic policy" by creating insulated technocracies have enormous implications for democratic consolidation. While gender bureaucrats well versed in economic analytical skills may be able to contribute to what goes on inside these insulated technocracies (ministries of finance, for example), this can hardly substitute for a more open public debate that enables women's groups and networks, along with other social groups, to scrutinize economic decisions and policies that affect the well-being of their constituents.

It is useful to recall at this point that in the Nordic countries, where the quota system for women was first introduced, two conditions were key to success—first, quotas were put on the agenda (and kept there) by strong women's sections within social democratic parties (the *políticas*!); and second, the social democratic tradition legitimized efforts to change the relationship between the public and the private spheres by interfering in the market on behalf of women (Helga Maria Hernes, 1988, cited in Phillips, 1991:87). While the first condition may be within grasp in some of the emerging democracies through different forms of electoral engineering, and through the partial and tenuous insertion of women's concerns within public administration, it is the second condition that remains elusive—despite recent cracks in the neoliberal consensus.

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