This article focuses on the most visible and accessible features of the Latin American women's movement, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The NGOs have played a critical role in advancing women's issues and advocating for feminist policies.

The Latin American women's movement has been characterized by its focus on issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and human rights. The NGOs have been instrumental in advocating for these issues and pushing for policy changes.

Key Words

Latin America, non-governmental organizations, feminist movements, gender policy, NGOs

Abstract


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Rebecca's Reading List


5. Rebecca's Reading List

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Notes on conclusions

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Notes on conclusions (Eds.). London: Zed Books. (p. 119-135)

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actors in this reshaped movement field: feminist non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs are hardly new to Latin American feminisms. From the beginnings of feminisms' second wave in the 1970s, professionalized and institutionalized movement organizations were established alongside more informal feminist collectives or associations in many countries and both types of groups typically centered their energies on popular education, political mobilization, and poor and working-class women's empowerment. However, the 1990s witnessed a veritable 'boom' in NGOs specializing in gender policy assessment, project execution, and social services delivery, propelling them into newfound public prominence while increasingly pushing many away from earlier, more movement-oriented activities.

In the 1980s, the professionalization or 'NGOization' of significant sectors of Latin American feminist movements represented a strategic response to the return of electoral politics and (fragile and uneven) processes of democratization in much of the region. When feminists' former allies in the opposition to the national security States assumed the reigns of government in the mid-to-late 1980s and 1990s, many feminist groups began honing their applied research, lobbying and rights advocacy skills in the hopes of translating the feminist project of cultural-political transformation into concrete gender policy proposals. Most newly professionalized feminist groups fashioned hybrid political strategies and identities - developing expertise in gender policy advocacy while retaining a commitment to movement-oriented activities aimed at fostering women's empowerment and transforming prevailing gender power arrangements. In collaboration with the 'global feminist lobby', local NGOs succeeded in pressing many Latin American governments to enact a number of feminist-inspired reforms - such as electoral quotas to enhance women's political representation and legislation to combat domestic violence.

In recent years, however, Latin American States' embrace of what has been dubbed the 'New Policy Agenda' - driven by beliefs organized around the twin poles of neoliberal economics and liberal democratic theory (Hulme and Edwards 1997a: 5) - has inspired a less self-evidently progressive set of gender-focused policies, centered on incorporating the poorest of poor women into the market and promoting 'self-help', civil society-led strategies to address the most egregious effects of structural adjustment. As States are downsized, NGOs in general 'have come to be regarded as the vehicle of choice - the Magic Bullet for fostering [these] currently fashionable development strategies' (Gruhn 1997: 325). And local governments and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) increasingly have turned to feminist NGOs in particular to evaluate gender-focused policies and administer the targeted self-help, social service and training (capacitación) programs for poor and working-class women currently in vogue throughout the region. The technical-professional side of feminist NGOs' hybrid identity consequently has been foregrounded and critical feminist advocacy potentially compromised, while NGOs' empowerment goals and a wide range of movement-oriented activities are increasingly pushed onto the backburner.

I begin by situating feminist NGOs within Latin American feminist field, describing the their specificity as compared to other type (non-feminist) NGOs, and mapping intra-regional degree of NGOization. Whereas some critics have depoliticizing and deradicalizing effect argue that feminist NGOs' political hybridity role in 'advocating feminism' by advancing agenda while simultaneously articulating vital women's movement and civil society constitute.

I then turn to three recent developments: NGOs' ability to advocate effectively for feminist and social change. First, I will suggest that they have turned to feminist NGOs as gender expert advocates on behalf of women's rights. Feminist NGOs' cultural-political interventions, gender equity and women's citizenship to be seen as the growing tendency view NGOs as surrogates for civil society, (selectively) consulted on gender policy matters as 'intermediaries' to larger societal concerns retain important linkages to such constituent-expansive Latin American women's movements, women's groups and feminist organizations.

New [Gendered] Policy Agenda - are denied debates and thereby effectively politically that as States increasingly subcontract feminist out government women's programs, NGOs' ability to advocate for more thoroughlygoing perhaps be jeopardized. These developments deeply trouble many have infuriated their militantly 'autonomous' camps worry that growing numbers of feminist have been driven to focus their energies and rejecting contestatory activities, to the actual or potential national or international policy advocacy a cultural-political intervention. I will conclude with a adverse structural-political conditions, therefore, within the New Gender Policy Agenda and rearticulating the movement-activist and NGOs in the region.

This article draws on fieldwork and over 20 in Chile, Peru, and Colombia during 1997 and
field: feminist non-governmental organizations to Latin American feminisms. From the wave in the 1970s, professionalized and nationalizations were established alongside more coracies in many countries and both types of energies on popular education, political action and women's empowerment. However, om in NGOs specializing in gender policy, social services delivery, propelling them to increasingly pushing many away from activities.

ition or 'NGOization' of significant sectors presented a strategic response to and (fragile and uneven) processes of gion. When feminists' former allies in the States assumed the reigns of government 0s, many feminist groups began honing their advocacy skills in the hopes of cultural-political transformation into activities are increasingly pushed onto the backburner. These developments, I shall argue, threaten to de-hybridize feminist NGO strategies and identities.

I begin by situating feminist NGOs within the increasingly heterogeneous Latin American feminist field, describing their varied activities, underscoring their specificity as compared to other types of feminist groups and other (non-feminist) NGOs, and mapping intra-regional differences in the pace and degree of NGOization. Whereas some critics have argued that NGOs as such have a depoliticizing and deradicalizing effect on movement politics, I will argue that feminist NGOs' hybridity enabled them to play a critical role in 'advocating feminism' by advancing a progressive gender policy agenda while simultaneously articulating vital political linkages among larger women's movement and civil society constituencies.

I then turn to three recent developments that potentially undermine NGOs' ability to advocate effectively for feminist-inspired public policies and social change. First, I will suggest that States and IGOs increasingly have turned to feminist NGOs as gender experts rather than as citizens' groups advocating on behalf of women's rights. This trend threatens to reduce feminist NGOs' cultural-political interventions in the public debate about gender equity and women's citizenship to largely technical ones. A second and related trend is the growing tendency of neoliberal States and IGOs to view NGOs as surrogates for civil society. Feminist NGOs are now often (selectively) consulted on gender policy matters on the assumption that they serve as 'intermediaries' to larger societal constituencies. While many NGOs retain important linkages to such constituencies, however, other actors in the expansive Latin American women's movement field – particularly popular women's groups and feminist organizations that are publicly critical of the New [Gendered] Policy Agenda – are denied direct access to gender policy debates and thereby effectively politically silenced. Finally, I will suggest that as States increasingly subcontract feminist NGOs to advise on or carry out government women's programs, NGOs' ability to critically monitor policy and advocate for more thoroughgoing (perhaps more feminist?) reform may be jeopardized.

These developments deeply trouble many NGO activist-professionals and have infuriated their militantly 'autonomous' feminist critics. Many in both camps worry that growing numbers of feminist organizations seem to have been driven to focus their energies and resources on more technical, less contestatory activities, to the actual or potential detriment of more effective national or international policy advocacy and other modalities of feminist cultural-political intervention. I will conclude by suggesting that, despite adverse structural-political conditions, there is potential room for maneuver within the New Gender Policy Agenda and propose possible strategies for rearticulating the movement-activist and technical-professional faces of NGOs in the region.

This article draws on fieldwork and over 200 interviews conducted in Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Colombia during 1997 and 1998, as well as on previous...
research on Latin American participation in the preparatory processes for the recent string of UN Summits (see Alvarez 1998). I should make clear before I go any further that I am directly implicated in the story I’m about to tell. During the three years (1993–1996) I served as Program Officer in Rights and Social Justice for the Ford Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I evaluated, selected and funded gender-related research and advocacy projects, worked closely with a wide variety of feminist NGOs, and found myself—as never before in my fairly lengthy career as a US feminist internationalist activist and student of Latin American women’s/social movements—smack in the middle of transnational flows of feminist ideas and resources. The ensuing analysis therefore constitutes more than an academic exercise or an effort to solve a social scientific puzzle. It also grows out of my abiding concern as a Latina/Latin American/Latin Americanist activist-scholar to interrogate critically our always changing, multifaceted, and sometimes-contradictory cultural-institutional-academic practices as feminists.

SITUATING NGOS IN THE CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN FEMINIST FIELD

How and where Latin American activists practice their feminism changed markedly in the 1990s. Feminism—like many of the so-called new social movements that took shape in the region during the 1970s and 1980s—can today more aptly be characterized as an expansive, polycentric, heterogeneous discursive field of action which spans into a vast array of cultural, social and political arenas. As I have argued elsewhere (Alvarez 1998), Latin American feminisms have undergone a notable process of centering and diversification over the course of the past decade. That is, the reconfigured feminist movement field today spans well beyond social movement organizations, conventionally conceived. The 1990s saw a dramatic proliferation or multiplication of the spaces and places in which women who call themselves feminists act, and wherein, consequently, feminist discourses circulate. After over two decades of struggling to have their claims heard by male-dominant sectors of civil and political society and the State, women who proclaim themselves feminists can today be found in a wide range of public arenas—from lesbian feminist collectives to research-focused NGOs, from trade unions to Black and indigenous movements, from university women’s studies programs to mainstream political parties, the State apparatus, and the international aid and development establishments.

The diverse women who transit in this wide-ranging movement field interact in a variety of alternative and official publics and through a number of media. New, more formalized modalities of articulation or networking among the multiple spaces and places of feminist politics were consolidated during the 1990s. These range from regionwide identity and issue-focused networks, like the Afro-Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Network and the Latin American Committee for (CLADEM), to networks focused specifically such as the Regional NGO Coordination in Beijing Summit.

NGOs have played a central role in setting forms of formal articulation among the vast and varying feminist field. They have been crucial movement webs—the capillary connective sympathizers who now occupy a wide variety (Alvarez 1997; Alvarez et al. 1998). That innumerable newsletters and publications, ences and seminars, establishing electronic other communications media, NGOs have all gone through which the spatially dispersed a feminism field remains discursively articulated: the case of the US, the ‘feminist movement organizations or an aggregation of individual sera of a set of changing, contested aspirations and social goals, cognitive backing, and emotive evolving feminist identity’ (1995: 27). Latin in fashioning and circulating the discourses of ethical-political principles that are can fixed or these are continually contested and resitu today identify as feminists.

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF FEMINIST NGOS

But just what exactly are feminist NGO: non-feminist NGOs and from other actors in this field? Though the concept of non-governor indiscriminately deployed in developmen actor not clearly situated within the market—from peasant collectives and con trolled policy think tanks—among actors in field, the term ‘feminist NGO’ has come to with distinctive orientations and practices.

Indeed, in recent years, feminists in the developing world have ever more commonly drawn a sharp line between the activists’ established, paid, professional staff and volunteers, receive funding from bilateral or (foreign) private foundations, and engage in developing plans for projects aimed at providing advice or asesoría to the mov
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(CLADEM), to networks focused specifically on impacting the UN process,
such as the Regional NGO Coordination established in preparation for the
Beijing Summit.

NGOs have played a central role in setting up and sustaining these various
forms of formal articulation among the vast range of actors who make up
the feminist field. They have been crucial to articulating what I call social
movement webs - the capillary connections among feminists and their
sympathizers who now occupy a wide variety of social and political locations
(Alvarez 1997; Alvarez et al. 1998). That is, in producing and circulating
innumerable newsletters and publications, organizing issue-focused confer-
ences and seminars, establishing electronic networks and a wide gamut of
other communications media, NGOs have functioned as the key nodal points
through which the spatially dispersed and organizationally fragmented
feminist field remains discursively articulated. As Mansbridge suggests in
the case of the US, the 'feminist movement...is neither an aggregation of
organizations nor an aggregation of individual members but a discourse. It is
a set of changing, contested aspirations and understandings that provide con-
scious goals, cognitive backing, and emotional support for each individual's
evolving feminist identity' (1995: 27). Latin American NGOs have been vital
in fashioning and circulating the discourses, transformational goals, and
ethical-political principles that are constitutive of the movement, even as
these are continually contested and resignified by the diverse women who
today identify as feminists.

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF FEMINIST NGOS

But just what exactly are feminist NGOs? What distinguishes them from
non-feminist NGOs and from other actors in the broad-ranging feminist
field? Though the concept of non-governmental organization is sometimes
indiscriminately deployed in development discourse to refer to any social
actor not clearly situated within the realm of the State, political society, or the
market - from peasant collectives and community soup kitchens to research-
oriented policy think tanks - among actors in the Latin American feminist
field, the term 'feminist NGO' has come to denote particular kinds of groups
with distinctive orientations and practices.

Indeed, in recent years, feminists in countries such as Brazil and Chile
have ever more commonly drawn a sharp distinction between NGOs and 'the
movement'. The former are typically characterized as having functionally
specialized, paid, professional staff and, sometimes, a limited set of volun-
teers, receive funding from bilateral or multilateral agencies and (usually
foreign) private foundations, and engage in pragmatic, strategic planning
to develop reports or projects aimed at influencing public policies and/or
providing advice or asesoría to the movimiento de mujeres (the grassroots

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women’s movement) and varied services to low-income women. Though sometimes engaging in similar asseroria and policy-oriented activities, the latter is commonly understood to be made up of feminist groups or collectives that have largely volunteer, often sporadic, participants (rather than staff), more informal organizational structures, significantly smaller operating budgets, and whose actions (rather than projects) are guided by more loosely defined, conjunctural goals or objectives. But such a stark distinction between NGOs and the movement underplays the hybrid character of most feminist NGOs, ignores important differences in the timing and degree of movement NGOization in different countries, and obscures the diversity of NGO activities and practices.

Prevailing characterizations of NGOs – in both movement and scholarly discourses – often fail to capture the specificity of those operating within the feminist field. The academic literature most commonly defines NGOs as ‘intermediary organizations’ that ‘are typically composed of middle-class, educated and professional people who have opted for political or humanitarian reasons to work with (or on behalf of) the poor and the marginalized’ (Pearce 1997: 259). These grassroots support organizations (GRSOs) ‘channel international funds to [member-serving grassroots organizations or] GROs and help communities other than their own to develop’ (Fisher 1998: 4).

While feminist NGOs in most Latin American countries are typically made up of university-educated, middle-class (and most often white or mestiza) women and many do work in some capacity with poor and working-class women’s groups, they are distinct from non-feminist GRSOs in at least two key respects. First, most feminist NGOs do not see themselves as working only to ‘help others’ but also to alter gender power relations that circumscribe their own lives as women (see Lebon 1993, 1997 and 1998, Soares 1998). In a comprehensive survey of 97 Mexican feminist NGOs, María Luisa Tarrés found that ‘a strong identitarian component ... marked the logic of women’s NGOs ... the space created by the NGO stimulates a re-elaboration of the identity of its members as social and political subjects’ (Tarrés 1997: 4).

Second, the vast majority of NGO activist-professionals also view themselves as an integral part of a larger women’s movement that encompasses other feminists (in other types of organizations and ‘sueltas’ or independents) as well as the poor and working-class women for or on behalf of whom they profess to work. As one interviewee affirmed, ‘In Peru, NGOs have a double identity ... we are centers and we are movement.’

This double or hybrid identity led most professionalized feminist institutions to build horizontal links to a wide variety of organized expressions of the larger women’s movements – from women in trade unions and urban community organizations to Church-linked mothers’ clubs – while constructing vertical links to global and local policy-making arenas. And it has been this two-way political articulation that arguably fueled feminist NGOs’ success in advancing a progressive gender policy agenda (Alvarez 1994). The (actual or potential) backing of sizeable, organized female constituencies proved crucial to feminist NGO parties and government officials to endorse their justice claims. Having a firm foothold in the large NGOs accountable to other actors in the predominance of more technical-advisory acts distancing NGOs from movement cons advocacy.

**INTRA-REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN THE NGO FEMINIST FIELD**

The degree of NGOization of the feminist which NGOs’ technical face supersedes more significantly among countries in the region political environments in which feminisms priorities and preferences of international development feminist movement development in a given level sharper contrast between NGOs and ‘the movement’ because early feminist groups were feminist collective variety. Relatively few funding or had paid administrative or professional institutionalization of the feminist movement professionalized groups – which only themselves as NGOs (Landim 1993) – were protracted and phased political transition process of the political environment in which sociogendered political opening promoted by governments in the early to mid-1980s to formalize their organizations and by the end of that decade. Fully 50 percent between 1980 and 1990 (Lebon 1997: 7).

In Chile – where the heinous 17-year Pinochet treatment-induced poverty made opposition of international humanitarian aid and its second-wave feminist groups, who formed to appear, by contrast, to have been able to it fairly early on. Given State repression at the hardships neoliberalism heaped upon feminist NGOs centered their attention on women of the popular classes and or Pinochet dictatorship. Since the return of a more democratic brand neoliberalism in 1989, is suggested that those links to the base have I shall explore further below.
of services to low-income women. Though asesoría and policy-oriented activities, the be made up of feminist groups or collectives in sporadic, participants (rather than staff, structures, significantly smaller operating or than projects) are guided by more loosely jectives. But such a stark distinction between plays the hybrid character of most feminist ices in the timing and degree of movement, and obscures the diversity of NGO activities f NGOs - in both movement and scholarly the specificity of those operating within the erature most commonly defines NGOs as i are typically composed of middle-class, wo have opted for political or humanitari e behalf of the poor and the marginalized' ots support organizations (GRSOs) 'channel serving grassroots organizations or] GROs their own to develop' (Fisher 1998: 4). ain American countries are typically made c-class (and most often white or mestiza) ome capacity with poor and working-class t from non-feminist GRSOs in at least two IGOS do not see themselves as working only der power relations that circumscribe their 1993, 1997 and 1998; Soares 1998). In a xican feminist NGOs, María Luisa Tarres component . . marked the logic of women's e NGO stimulates a re-elaboration of the nd political subjects' (Tarrés 1997: 4).

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ty led most professionalized feminist linkages to a wide variety of organized movements - from women in trade unions or Church-linked mothers' clubs - while bal and local policy-making arenas. And articulation that allegedly fueled feminist regressive gender policy agenda (Alvarez backing of sizeable, organized female constituents proved crucial to feminist NGOs' ability to persuade political parties and government officials to endorse their women's rights and gender justice claims. Having a firm foothold in the larger women's movement, in turn, kept NGOs accountable to other actors in the feminist field. The growing predominance of more technical-advisory activities, I will argue below, may be distancing NGOs from movement constituencies vital to successful advocacy.

**INTRA REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN THE NGOIZATION OF THE FEMINIST FIELD**

The degree of NGOization of the feminist movement and the extent to which NGOs' technical face supersedes movement-oriented activities varies significantly among countries in the region12 - reflecting the distinctive political environments in which feminisms unfolded, the country-specific priorities and preferences of international donors, and the particularities of feminist movement development in a given locality. In Brazil, for example, a sharper contrast between NGOs and 'the movement' is today drawn by many activists because early feminist groups were mostly of the more informal, feminist collective variety. Relatively few early groups received external funding or had paid administrative or professional staff. The process of institutionalization of the feminist movement in the form of more formal, professionalized groups - which only in the late 1980s came to refer to themselves as NGOs (Landim 1993) - accompanied the pace of Brazil's protracted and phased political transition process. The gradual liberalization of the political environment in which social movements operated and the gendered political opening promoted by some opposition-controlled state governments in the early to mid-1980s prompted growing numbers of feminists to formalize their organizations and develop greater policy expertise by the end of that decade.13 Fully 50 percent of Brazilian NGOs were created between 1980 and 1990 (Lebon 1997: 7).

In Chile where the heinous 17-year Pinochet dictatorship and shock-treatment-induced poverty made opposition movements favored recipients of international humanitarian aid and liberal foundation funds - many second-wave feminist groups, who formed an integral part of that opposition, appear, by contrast, to have been able to institutionalize their organizations fairly early on. Given State repression and government indifference to the hardships neoliberalism heaped upon poor women, most of those early feminist NGOs centered their attention on supporting the survival struggles of women of the popular classes and organizing with them against the Pinochet dictatorship.14 Since the return of civilian rule and a new 'post-social democratic' brand neoliberalism in 1989, many Chilean feminists I talked with suggested that those links to the base have been largely severed, for reasons I shall explore further below.

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In yet another variation, most Colombian feminists I interviewed concurred with Maruja Barrig’s assessment that ‘as compared to other countries in the region, the feminist movement has not expressed itself principally through NGO channels’, but rather ‘small activist organizations prevail . . . which participate as such in various activities of the movement, in a volunteer capacity’ (Barrig 1997b, emphasis in the original).\(^\text{15}\) The clientelism, corruption and ‘narco-democracia’ that permeate the Colombian regime, the historically weak presence of the State in much of the national territory, and the endemic political violence that flows from the above was hardly conducive to setting up specialized NGOs aimed at influencing public policy. Still, the post-1986 political decentralization, coupled with the 1991 Constitution (which mandates State consultation with civil society in development planning), have fueled a process of increased institutionalization in various Colombian social movement fields. And as I shall discuss below, there also seems to have been a marked increase in State sub-contracting of NGO services for policy execution and social services delivery. Several Colombian feminist activists I talked with emphasized that, ‘there are two types of NGOs here: some are “historic”, others more recent, which emerge after the Constitutional Assembly process, and are sometimes narrowly focused, opportunistic, and very nepotistic.’\(^{16}\)

**VARIATIONS IN LATIN AMERICAN FEMINIST NGO PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES**

While scholars have attempted to classify NGOs into distinct types or generations – distinguishing among those engaged in charity, relief and welfare activities, those pursuing small-scale development projects, and those committed to community organization, mobilization and empowerment (Clarke 1998: 42) – I maintain that most Latin American feminist and non-feminist NGOs are amalgams of these types. In any given context and over time, moreover, the activities prioritized by feminist NGOs also have varied significantly.

As in the Chilean case, most if not all NGOs emerging early in Latin American feminism’s second wave focused their activities on popular education and women’s empowerment or provided services and asesoría (advice) to poor and working-class women’s organizations. Some still do. MEMCH – an umbrella organization of popular women’s groups ‘gone NGO’ since the return of civilian rule in Chile – continues to view itself as a ‘bridge between feminism and the popular classes’\(^{17}\) and offers a variety of training courses and other services to women from the urban periphery. *Tierra Nuestra* runs a School for Grassroots Women Leaders in Santiago’s southern zone and promotes the ‘autonomous organization’ of the 64 grassroots women’s groups with whom they continue to work.\(^{18}\) Similarly, Colombia’s current post-Beijing coalition, coordinated by the Bogotá-based NGO, *Dialogo Mujer*, proclaims its intention to foster a ‘popular front found that fully 90 percent of Mexican feminism to their targeted publics and ‘the majority women of the popular sectors, whether they indigenous women’ (1997: 19, 18).

Some feminist NGOs, such as CFEMEA in Colombia, today also center their work on pro related legislation. The latter group, for example, Afro-Colombian Senator Piedad Córdoba and on both women’s issues and non-gender-specific goals ‘integrate gender to their general goals’ to articulate grassroots work with policy- cultural-political intervention, pursuing righ more progressive policies but also to *engender* feminist NGOs, like São Paulo-based *Geledé* promote consciousness-raising programs for advocating for racially-sensitive gender policies, anti-racist jurisprudence and public health in the Southern Brazilian city of Po courses for grassroots women community workshops on gender, race, class, and the professionals, while also engaging in jurisprudence.\(^{12}\) The regional feminist lega Latin American Committee for the Defense themis forms part – claims to work to dev to be more than a pressure group, to interv women’s empowerment. CLADEM spearhe for a Universal Declaration of Human Rights organized to mark the 50th anniversary of but their stated objective was not only to commemorate the occasion as ‘vehicle throu public about women’s human rights.\(^{13}\)

While many feminist NGOs continue to promote *consentación* (consciousness-rai organizations and strive to push gender pol of Latin America’s actually existing den resources and political rewards for doing global and local premium is increasingly plie, project execution, and social services actos that today constitute the expansive types of NGOs and NGO activities have a the potential detriment of NGOs’ movements development, and empowerment activities treating on technical-advisory activities. I *external* to the feminist movement field –}
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proclaims its intention to foster a 'popular feminism of diversity'. Tàrrés found that fully 90 percent of Mexican feminist NGOs provide direct services to their targeted publics and 'the majority claims to be oriented toward women of the popular sectors, whether they be urban residents, peasants or indigeneous women' (1997: 19, 18).

Some feminist NGOs, such as CFEMEA in Brazil and Casa de la Mujer in Colombia, today also center their work on promoting and monitoring gender-related legislation. The latter group, for example, has worked closely with Afro-Colombian Senator Piedad Córdoba and other women parliamentarians on both women's issues and non-gender-specific public policies so that they might 'integrate gender to their general programmatic agenda'. Still others seek to articulate grassroots work with policy-focused or more macro forms of cultural-political intervention, pursuing rights advocacy not just to promote more progressive policies but also to engender cultural change. Afro-Brazilian feminist NGOs, like São Paulo-based Geledê and Fala Preta, for example, promote consciousness-raising programs for Black youth and women, while advocating for racially-sensitive gender policies and gender-sensitive and anti-racist jurisprudence and public health policies. Themis, a feminist NGO based in the Southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, offers legal training courses for grassroots women community leaders and organizes specialized workshops on gender, race, class, and the law for judges and other legal professionals, while also engaging in litigation to advance feminist jurisprudence. The regional feminist legal rights network, CLADEM (The Latin American Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights) – of which Themis forms part – claims to work to develop a radical critique of the law, to be more than a pressure group, to intervene in the cultural, and promote women's empowerment. CLADEM spearheaded a transnational Campaign for a Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a Gender Perspective, organized to mark the 50th anniversary of that UN Declaration, for example, but their stated objective was not only to impact the UN, but also to use the commemorative occasion as 'vehicle through which to educate the general public about women's human rights.'

While many feminist NGOs continue to struggle to provide asesoría and promote conscientización (consciousness-raising) among popular women's organizations and strive to push gender policy beyond the narrow parameters of Latin America's actually existing democracies, however, the material resources and political rewards for doing so appear to be drying up. The global and local premium is increasingly placed on NGO gender policy assessment, project execution, and social services delivery. Amid the heterogeneous actors that today constitute the expansive feminist movement field, specific types of NGOs and NGO activities have attained particular prominence. To the potential detriment of NGOs' movement-oriented advocacy, alternative development, and empowerment activities, growing numbers are concentrating on technical-advisory activities. I now turn to the factors – largely external to the feminist movement field – which are propelling this shift.
THE EXPANSION OF LOCAL AND GLOBAL DEMAND FOR PROFESSIONALIZED FEMINISM

A key factor in NGOs' heightened focus on technical-advisory activities has been growing State and IGO demand for specialized knowledge about women and gender – expertise increasingly supplied by the technically adept, professionalized feminist organizations. Thanks in part to the success of local and global NGO feminist lobbying, there has been a veritable deluge of gender-focused policies and programs in recent years (for a comprehensive overview, see Htun 1998) and many governments today brandish more progressive discourses about women's rights. At least rhetorically, most Latin American States now profess a commitment to gender equity and have adopted an impressive number of policies, programs and plans focused on women.

Colombia's 'White Book on Women' asserted the Samper administration's avowed pledge to 'Pay Society's Debt to the Colombian Woman' (Presidencia de la República de Colombia 1994). And the Chilean government – the putative 'jaguar' of development in the region – professes that 'overcoming discrimination against women... has been necessitated by the government's three fundamental guidelines for the current period – strengthening democracy, national economic development and modernization' (SERNAM 1994: 5). National leaders from Fujimori to Cardoso to Zedillo have echoed such pledges to enhance gender equity and have similarly declared their intention to 'promote women' and 'incorporate them into development'. During the regional preparatory process for the Beijing Summit, a wide gamut of long-standing feminist-inspired reforms – ranging from more equitable participation in public and family life to reproductive rights – made their way into the language of the Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Action and thereby were elevated to the status of norms of regional governance.

Governments appear to have begun to translate some of those norms into legislation. Laws establishing quotas to ensure women's representation in elected office have been passed in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Peru and are presently under discussion in Chile and Bolivia, for example (Jones 1998). Sixteen States have adopted legislation and some have set up specialized police precincts to deter 'intra-familial violence' (Americas Watch 1991; Blondet 1995; Nelson 1996).

The many local feminist NGOs who focused their energies on promoting women's legal rights consequent to democratization certainly had a major hand in fostering this apparent gendered political opening. And the 'global women's lobby' – in which Latin American feminist NGOs have increasingly participated since they hosted the Women's Forum at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 (Sikkink 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998) – has been instrumental in fostering what feminist international relations scholars have dubbed an 'emergent international women's regime' (Kardam 1997: 2). The increased gendering of international regimes, in turn, has brought new pressures to bear on local States, which further helps gender-focused policies and programs. As 'globalization requires that the State demarcate resources come tied to that.'

In virtually all countries in the region charged with proposing and monitoring gender-focused programs and policies have such as those of Chile's SERNAM (Servicio Nacional de Desarrollo de Mujer), feminist movements actively advocated the – though the ultimate mandate, design an agencies actually created typically fell (Valenzuela 1997; Schumacher and Vargas 1997). Colombia or Fujimori's recently created PRC, the institutions appears to have been motivated by not outright opportunistic, considerations – multinational grants and loans now often sensitivity to women's role in development.

GENDERED CITIZENS OR GENDER EXPEF

Most governments have adopted this gender agenda and many now view poor women crucial to neoliberal 'development'. Gender key technical dimension of State efforts to rationalize social policy and mount 'poverty' ameliorate the negative fallout of SAPs (stratify contain social discontent) (Craske 1998: 10 rights advocates have scored significant representation and violence against wom 'policy with a gender perspective' forms a call gendered 'social adjustment' strategi groups most clearly excluded or victimize 22). In the name of promoting gender ec social adjustment programs targeting the those aimed at women heads-of-household or temporary agro-export workers in Chi increasingly summoned to supply the exp and implement such 'gender-sensitive' proj.

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...bear on local States, which further helps account for the recent flood of
gender-focused policies and programs. As one Chilean interviewee put it,
'globalization requires that the State demonstrate sensitivity to gender...
...resources come tied to that.'24

...In virtually all countries in the region, specialized State machineries
...charged with proposing and monitoring (though seldom implementing)
gender-focused programs and policies have been established.25 In some cases,
such as those of Chile's SERNAM (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer) and Brazil's
CNDM (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher), significant sectors of the
feminist movements actively advocated the creation of State women's offices
...though the ultimate mandate, design and performance of the specialized
agencies actually created typically fell far short of feminist expectations
(Valenzuela 1997; Schumacher and Vargas 1993). In other cases, such as the
Consejera para la Juventud, la Mujer, y la Familia established in Gaviria's
Colombia or Fujimori's recently created PROMUDEH (Ministério de Promocion
...de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano), the founding of such women's State
institutions appears to have been motivated by more pragmatic, when
not outright opportunistc, considerations - such as the fact that bilateral
and multilateral grants and loans now often require evidence of government
sensitivity to women's role in development.

GENDERED CITIZENS OR GENDER EXPERTS?

Most governments have adopted this gendered dimension of the New Policy
Agenda and many now view poor women's integration into the market as
...crucial to neoliberal 'development'. Gender therefore has come to be seen as a
key technical dimension of State efforts to privatize social welfare provision,
rationalize social policy and mount 'poverty alleviation programmes (PAPs)
to ameliorate the negative fallout of SAP's [structural adjustment policies] and to
contain social discontent' (Craske 1998: 104). While, as noted above, feminist
rights advocates have scored significant victories in areas such as political
representation and violence against women, much recent Latin American
'policy with a gender perspective' forms an integral part of what we might
call gendered 'social adjustment' strategies - 'programs targeted at those
groups most clearly excluded or victimized by [SAPs]' (Alvarez et al. 1998:
22). In the name of promoting gender equity, many States have mounted
social adjustment programs targeting the poorest of poor women, such as
those aimed at women heads-of-household in Chile, Colombia, and Peru
or temporary agro-export workers in Chile.26 And feminist NGOs now are
increasingly summoned to supply the expertise governments need to evaluate
and implement such 'gender-sensitive' programs.

Despite the local and global feminist lobbies' central role in advocating
for the changed international gender norms that help foster gender-friendly
State discourses, then, the terms of women's incorporation into neoliberal
development are not necessarily feminist-inspired. One Colombian local government official neatly summed up how feminists’ political indictment of women’s subordination is often translated or derogated by State bureaucrats: ‘now things have changed, it’s no longer that radical feminism of the 1970s, now it’s policies with a gender perspective.’ Among many staff members of the women’s government machineries I interviewed, gender seems to have become part of the lexicon of technical planning, a power-neutral indicator of ‘modernity’ and ‘development’ rather than a power-laden field of unequal relations between women and men (Largo 1998; Sánchez 1996; Alvarez 1999). As the Director of SERNAM in the Santiago Metropolitan Region emphasized in our conversation, ‘our work is as technical as possible . . . and there is a great deal of work to be done on the operational side of gender.’

Since targeted social adjustment programs require specialized knowledge about female populations heretofore largely ignored by State and IGO bureaucracies alike, the new imperative to incorporate gender into PAPs and other forms of neoliberal development planning seems to have led States and IGOs to tap local and transnational feminist NGOs for their technical capabilities and ‘gender expertise’. In an era of State downsizing, the gender-planning competency of government bureaucracies have not been expanded and many States have relied instead on contracting private consulting firms and NGOs to advise them on gender matters. Even Chile’s SERNAM – which with its over 350 employees is perhaps the largest of the region’s specialized State machineries – regularly turns to feminist NGOs to conduct research on indicators of gender inequality, draft policy statements, or evaluate the effectiveness of its various targeted social programs. As women’s offices in most of the rest of the region typically lack staff with requisite gender expertise and are generally understaffed and underfunded, global pressures and the technical exigencies of gender planning increasingly have led many to rely on feminist NGOs to provide gender policy assessments and evaluate targeted women’s programs.

In many cases, the policy or program evaluations solicited from NGOs differ little from those provided by private consulting firms or academic gender specialists. That is, governments typically hire specialized NGO research teams to conduct policy impact studies or needs assessments surveys, but seldom encourage, much less require, wider political debate with the civil society constituencies with the highest stakes in gender-focused programs or with other actors in the feminist field. NGOs are most often consulted as experts who can evaluate gender policies and programs rather than as movement organizations that might facilitate citizen input and participation in the formulation and design of such policies. Feminist NGOs’ technical involvement in policy assessment, then, does not necessarily translate into effectual gender policy or women’s rights advocacy and, as I will suggest below, NGOs’ growing contractual relationship with the State may in fact compromise their effectiveness in advocating for feminist reforms.

Representatives of Or Surrogates Organizations in Civil Society?

The recent turn towards feminist NGOs is governments’ professed intention to promotion of all civil society in the task of gen (SERNAM 1994: 7). And among the different feminist civil society, NGOs are now often female social constituencies.

During the Cairo and Beijing Summits, governments invited select feminist NGO preparatory process, thereby presumably civil society participation in these processes specialists from the academy, also were enlisting progress toward gender equity over the New Policy Agenda’s view of NG and essential components of a thriving regenerate (c 1997a: 6), a veritable UN-Summits bona from Northern-based private donors and to those feminist NGOs willing and competent to work as intermediaries in society in the official and parallel prep-Conferences.

Despite governments’, donors’ and IO the ‘thriving civil society’, however, the crit NGOs would participate in the prepara consulted or funded seldom prioritized the actually functioned as intermediaries or c constituencies officials presumed them to NGOs who possessed policy-specialized st UN process, and earned handsome foreign to larger social constituencies – were usual in the official preparatory processes. Gov required more than token consultations w – such as a public conference or seminar. Those funded or consulted were typically able to ‘maximize impact’ with monies capabilities deemed necessary for policy e most politically capable of meaningfully it process.

Typically non-membership organizations NGOs are, of course, acutely aware of the one. Yet for many local States and IGOs a to have become convenient surrogates for María Elena Valenzuela argues that ‘SER
y feminist-inspired. One Colombian local woman told me that when feminists' political indictment is translated or rejected by State agents, it's no longer that radical feminism of a gender perspective. Among many staff members I interviewed, gender as a lexicon of technical planning, a power- and 'development' rather than a power-laden men's and women's experience (Largo 1998; Sánchez, 'Rector' of SERNAM in the Santiago Metro, conversation, 'our work is as technical as it is of work to be done on the operational level programs require specialized knowledge of large enterprises and ISO 9001 standards to incorporate gender into PAPs and vision planning seems to have led States and NGOs to develop a technical mindset. In an era of State downsizing, the gender-biased bureaucracy has not been expanded but on contracting private consulting firms for matters. Even Chile's SERNAM — which rhymes the largest of the region's specializations in to feminist NGOs to conduct research on draft policy statements, or evaluate the social programs. As women's offices in typically lack staff with requisite gender research and underfunded, global pressures gender planning increasingly have led manyide gender policy assessments and evaluate program evaluations solicited from NGOs by private consulting firms or academic institutions typically hire specialized NGOs to conduct studies or needs assessments surveys, require, wider political debate with the civil society's highest stakes in gender-focused programs. NGOs are most often consulted under policies and programs rather than as facilitators for citizen input and participation in such policies. Feminist NGOs' technical advice does not necessarily translate into ng's advocacy, and, as I will suggest, the relationship with the State may be fact advocating for feminist reforms.

REPRESENTATIVES OF OR SURROGATES FOR WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN CIVIL SOCIETY?

The recent turn towards feminist NGOs is also inspired by many neoliberal governments' professed intention to promote the incorporation and participation of all civil society in the task of generating new gender social relations (SERNAM 1994: 7). And among the diverse organizations that make up feminist civil society, NGOs are often hailed as key 'intermediaries' for female social constituencies.

During the Cairo and Beijing Summits, for example, many Latin American governments invited select feminist NGOs to participate in the official preparatory process, thereby presumably heeding the UN's call for greater civil society participation in those processes. Some NGOs, along with gender specialists from the academy, also were contracted to prepare studies evaluating progress toward gender equity over the last two decades. And in keeping with the New Policy Agenda's view of NGOs as vehicles for 'democratization' and essential components of a thriving 'civil society' (Hulme and Edwards 1997a: 6), a veritable UN-Summits bonanza of grant funds was channeled from Northern-based private donors and bilateral and multilateral agencies to those feminist NGOs willing and able (and judged to be technically competent) to work as intermediaries in promoting the involvement of civil society in the official and parallel preparatory processes for these World Conferences.

Despite governments', donors' and IGOs' professed zeal for encouraging a 'thriving civil society', however, the criteria adopted in determining which NGOs would participate in the preparatory process or which would be consulted or funded seldom prioritized the extent to which such organizations actually functioned as intermediaries or conduits for the larger civil society constituencies officials presumed them to represent. In most countries, those NGOs who possessed policy-specialized staff, had previous experience in the UN process, and earned handsome foreign funding — irrespective of their links to larger social constituencies — were usually the ones selected to participate in the official preparatory processes. Governments and donors alike seldom required more than token consultations with NGOs' presumed constituencies — such as a public conference or seminar — as evidence of intermediation. Those funded or consulted were typically those feminist NGOs judged best able to 'maximize impact' with monies allotted or to have the technical capabilities deemed necessary for policy evaluation rather than those judged most politically capable of meaningfully involving women citizens in the UN process.

Typically non-membership organizations, most Latin American feminist NGOs are, of course, acutely aware of the fact that they don't represent anyone. Yet for many local States and IGOs alike, professionalized NGOs appear to have become convenient surrogates for civil society. In the Chilean case, Maria Elena Valenzuela argues that 'SERNAM has privileged interlocution...
with institutions made up of experts and professionals which have contributed through evaluations and studies to design the themes and options of public policy' and further maintains that through this strategy 'SERNAM has tried to make up for its lack of interlocution with grassroots women's organizations, whose demands are expressed in mediated form through the knowledge produced by NGOs' (1997: 22).

That is, the more professionalized, technically adept NGOs seem to have become privileged interlocutors of States and IGOs on gender policy matters. In pronouncing them intermediaries, neoliberal governments effectively have circumvented the need to establish public forums or other democratic mechanisms through which those most affected by gender policies might directly voice their needs and concerns. And as I shall argue below, NGOs and other women's movement organizations openly critical of government incumbents are seldom among the States' designated 'partners' in the implementation of gender and social welfare programs and policies.

NEOLIBERAL STATES AND THE BOOM IN NGO SUB-CONTRACTING

A discourse of State and civil society's 'co-responsibility' for social welfare pervades neoliberalism's recent quest to establish partnerships with NGOs. As virtually all but targeted or 'emergency' social programs are slashed, governments have promoted 'self-help strategies for combating poverty and providing welfare at the local level' (Craske 1998: 105; Barrig 1996). Civil society in general and NGOs in particular are enjoining to help implement such strategies and take on 'the responsibilities now eschewed by neoliberalism's shrinking state' (Alvarez et al. 1998: 1).

Among the most striking local examples I found of the growing tendency to rely on professionalized organizations in civil society to implement government programs was the 'NGO-State Coalition' discourse of the municipality of Santiago de Cali in Colombia. In a brochure entitled 'The Social Face of Cali', the local government celebrated 'the existence of a great number of non-governmental organizations' in the city while stressing that 'over the years, the work of many of these NGOs has become more complex. To their initial ideological convictions, they have incorporated an ever more technical professional dimension in approaching their work, such that along with promoting the development of social subjects, they are equally interested in generating new institutional forms (Alcaldía Santiago de Cali 1997: 6).

The same document goes on to state that 'NGOs are professionalizing themselves and they are beginning to introduce efficiency criteria in their work, which allows them in their contractual relation with the Administration to develop and execute social projects directed at the most vulnerable populations' (Ibid.: 8).

According to David Hulme and Michael Keeping with the shrinking State role in feature of the New Policy Agenda:

[Markets and private initiative are seen achieving economic growth and providing new ways to provide services to poor people in countries where government health and education services are not perceived as the preferred channel for service delivery.]

In interviews with Cali public officials paneas in the city government's efforts to coordinate and orient resources Santiago de Cali: 6. The local Secretary Action raved about how efficient it was to contract programs: 'I could contract 1,000 public workers for 20% of their cost. There are no resources... and that is a problem.' The head of The municipal Division 'We don't execute or implement anything with all of them. 3)'

Since, as I was told, most feminist groups were technical profile, municipal officials programs, as well as the local union technical assistance on gender matters. contracted three NGOs - charged with a promoting community participation, and perspectives - to set up its Program despite its title, focused on birth control for 'vulnerable' women heads-of-household and the care of children and the elderly, Program.

In Chile, 'training with a gender persep de género' - offered by feminist and private consulting firms, and many other major growth industry. Much of this invades the poorest of the poor, particularly those that keep them from slipping through the bottom of the neoliberal economic barre. now coordinates the Women's Office in sub-divisions told me, 'Chile's Subsidia entrepreneurial capacity' to compete in
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According to David Hulme and Michael Edwards, such discourse is fully in keeping with the shrinking State role in the realm of social policy - a key feature of the New Policy Agenda:

[M]arkets and private initiative are seen as the most efficient mechanisms for achieving economic growth and providing most services to most people... because of their supposed cost-effectiveness in reaching the poorest, official agencies support NGOs in providing welfare services to those who cannot be reached by markets... NGOs have a long history of providing welfare services to poor people in countries where governments lacked the resources to ensure universal coverage in health and education; the difference is that now they are seen as the preferred channel for service-provision in deliberate substitution for the state (1997a: 6).

In interviews with Cali public officials, I learned that NGOs had become a panacea in the city government's efforts to become 'more than an executor... a coordinator and orienting force in/of social policies' (Alcaldía de Santiago de Cali: 6). The local Secretary of Social Welfare and Community Action raved about how efficient it was to hire NGOs to execute government programs: 'I could contract 1,000 public servants' but instead I hire 200 NGOs... There are no resources... and that way we can do more in the social realm.' The head of The municipal Division for Women and Gender stressed, 'We don't execute or implement anything... we work with NGOs, but not with all of them.'

Since, as I was told, most feminist groups in the city didn't fit the requisite technical profile, municipal officials turned to GRSOs with 'women's programs', as well as the local university's women's studies center for technical assistance on gender matters. The Division of Women and Gender contracted three NGOs - charged with assessing poor women's health needs, promoting community participation, and training health personnel in 'gender perspectives' - to set up its Program for Integral Women's Health (which, despite its title, focused on birth control). Other NGOs were hired to train 'vulnerable' women heads-of-household in hotel and gastronomical services and the care of children and the elderly, for the municipality's Work Training Program.

In Chile, 'training with a gender perspective' (capacitación con perspectiva de género) - offered by feminist and non-feminist NGOs, women's GRSOs, private consulting firms, and many government agencies - has become a major growth industry. Much of this involves job training programs aimed at the poorest of the poor, particularly women heads-of-household, in an effort to keep them from slipping through the wide fissures at the bottom of the bottom of the neoliberal economic barrel. As one former feminist activist who now coordinates the Women's Office in one of Santiago's poorest municipal sub-divisions told me, 'Chile's Subsidiary State tries to promote people with entrepreneurial capacity' to compete in the free market; those deemed to be