The Practice of Transformative Politics

by Rounaq Jahan
Columbia University

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INTRODUCTION

"With what qualities are women entering into the political arena and public life in a world where politics has been characterized by ills such as corruption, nepotism, dishonesty, sectarianism etc? Are women coming in to endorse and fit in the system or we are coming in with human qualities such as kindness, love, sympathy, peace, reconciliation, which have been lacking all this time especially in Africa? Only when politics is played differently shall we show that society has been missing women's participation all along. Women should come in politics and public offices to clean them, to bring "light" in those otherwise "dark" fora. Women's entry into politics and public life should bring a ray of hope for the people. Otherwise our entry will be in vain."

Miria Matembe, Member of Parliament, Constituent Assembly, Uganda, Plenary Session on **Governance, Citizenship and Political Participation**, NGO Forum, Huairou, China, September 3, 1995).

Whenever women from different parts of the world gather in conferences and describe their struggles to gain a voice in governance, they insist that they stand for not simply gender parity in numbers, more significantly through participation they want to bring to the forefront a different sets of concerns - a more humane and people centered agenda and a different way of doing business. For the feminists, particularly those from the South, the vision of equality and transformation go hand in hand.

From the beginning, there has been a consistently clear message from the women's movement: women want equality in numbers, in power and in responsibility. But they want to use power differently. They want to transform the agenda, values, process and institutions. Women's movements has always insisted on transforming politics as we know it because the movement believes that true social transformation can only be brought about when all power relations are transformed.

While the feminist vision of political transformation has been articulated in different fora including the previous congresses of Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP), the examples of actual practices of transformative politics are less well known. This paper will attempt to provide a few examples of practices of transformative politics not so much as definitive case studies as points of departures for debate and discussion in the workshops. The paper is divided in six parts. Following the introduction, chapter 2 gives a brief historical overview of transformative politics, theory and practices. Chapter 3 describes the key elements of the feminist vision of transformative politics. Chapter 4 provides a few recent examples of transformative politics form different countries. Chapter 5 argues how the Beijing '95 process can be viewed as an example of practice of transformative politics. Chapter 6 is the conclusion which lists a few key issues for debate in the workshops.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The term "politics" has been variously defined by English language dictionaries. For example, Webster's New International Dictionary defines politics as "the total complex of interacting and usually conflicting relations between men living in society!"[1] the relation between men usually concerned with governing or with influencing or winning and holding control over a government...the relations between leaders and nonleaders." Politics is also defined as "the art or science of government: a science dealing with the regulation and control of men living in society." In all definitions of

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politics several key words appear: power, control, regulations, and rules. While politics in the sense of art of governance has traditionally involved hierarchical relations--rulers and ruled--and use of force, deceit, manipulation, corruption, a la Machiavelli or Kautileya, for centuries Philosophers and social reformers have also envisioned other types of politics--a transformed politics and polity--which are more egalitarian and participatory. From the ancient Chinese, Indian and Greek political philosophers down to the modern ones, the well known proponents of both traditional and transformative politics have all been men. The visions of both traditional and transformation upto now have been provided by men. Women's vision of politics or the roles women might have played in the creation of these primarily male articulated visions is not yet known.

In different periods of history socialism as an ideology as well as a practice has been a consistent feature of the vision political transformation. From Plato to Marx, political philosophers envisioned socialist utopias. And though socialist communities in the earlier centuries were short lived, the twentieth century saw large scale experimentation with socialism in various states from the social democratic states of Europe to the communist states in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Socialism as an ideology as well as socialist states also took some deliberate positions on the role of women in society and politics. I am singling out 'socialism' as an example of transformative politics because other ideologies that transformed politics over the centuries e.g. nationalism and liberal democracy were generally silent on the role of women. Socialist ideology in contrast put out a more egalitarian vision of public life and called for women's emancipation as a distinct strategy of social transformation.

In theory, socialism stood for equality between men and women. Socialist movements and socialist states demand greater public role for women. Socialist states created greater opportunities for women in education and employment and expanded women's roles in public spheres. But while socialist states greatly expanded women's economic roles, they (with the exception of democratic socialist states of Nordic countries) did not emphasize the transformation of gender relations. When the socialist states collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe it was relatively early to push back women from representative public life such as from parliament. The artificial gains women made in representative institutions due to women's quota evaporated when the quota systems was withdrawn. Indeed, worldwide there was an approximately 25 percent decline in the number of women parliamentarians due largely to the demise of the socialist system in the Eastern bloc countries!

The records of the two other great ideologies of political transformation e.g. nationalism and democracy are even more

dismal. In the nationalist struggle against colonialism, women were recruited to join as foot soldiers. Many women played key roles, particularly in countries which underwent armed struggles. But after the independence was won and colonial power was thrown out, women were often asked to get back to their "female" roles. The recognition and reward given to Jamilia, the world renowned Algerian revolutionary leader, by the Algerian state e.g. awarding her the sole contract for a cosmetic company is a case in point.

In many countries of Asia which saw prolonged nationalist movements to over throw colonial masters, women were drawn in massive numbers both in peaceful resistance movements and armed struggles. Yet after independence was won, the post colonial states did very little to push for gender equality in public life. What is worse, the nationalist ideology in many states in recent years(especially India and Iran) have turned more extremist and reactionary defining women's place in society in a more restrictive way. Thus, while nationalist movements created a space for women in public life, when the movements achieved their goals women's space was again restricted.

The practice of liberal democracy for a long time completely ignored women's role. For centuries, liberal democracies of Europe did not recognize women as citizens and denied them the right to vote. Women gained equal voting rights only in the early part of this century as a result of their own suffragette movements. But even after half a century of gaining voting rights and being more than half of the electorate, women's representation in parliament in liberal democracies (with the exception of Nordic countries) remains at less than 10 percent. In recent years in the democracy movements of many Asian countries, e.g. The Philippines, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, women's organizations played a very important role. But after the overthrow of the military rulers, when democracy was institutionalized, women gained very little voice in representative institutions. Interestingly enough in all three countries, democracy movements were led by women-Corazon Aquino in the Philippines, Benzir Bhutto in Pakistan, Khaleda Zia and Hasina Wazed in Bangladesh-but they were all catapulted to leadership positions by their dynastic connection with a slain male leader. The fact that these women led the democracy movements did not make much of an impact on the general state of women's participation in decision making positions in these countries; nor were these women able to transform political processes, values and institutions. They succeeded in politics by playing with the traditional rules of the game.

The disillusionment of the women's movement with three great ideologies of our times-nationalism, democracy and socialism-explains why the movement felt so strongly that it needed to articulate its vision of political transformation. In the initial years women's movements and organizations emphasized elaboration of the vision because it was felt that the

movement needed to first shape the vision; strategies and practice would follow once the vision is clarified and catches the imagination of the women. One of the early articulations of women's vision of political transformation can be found in the 1985 pre-Nairobi writings of a Southern Women's Network:

> "We want a world where inequality based on class, gender, and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships among countries. We want a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships. In such a world women's reproductive role will be redefined: child care will be shared by men, women, and society as a whole. We want a world where the massive resources now used in the production of the means of destruction will be diverted to areas where they will help to relieve oppression both inside and outside the home...We want a world where all institutions are open to participatory democratic processes, where women share in determining priorities and decisions...Only by sharpening the links between equality, development, and peace, can we show that the 'basic rights' of the poor and the transformation of the institutions that subordinate women are inextricably linked. They can be achieved together through the self-empowerment of women."

> Gita Sen and Caren Grown, *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*, New York 1987, pp.80-82

A more recent articulation of women's vision of political transformation can be found in CAPWIP's vision statement:

The Asia-Pacific women's new Paradigm for change in the 21st century...

Politics that is both TRANSFORMED and TRANSFORMATIONAL

TRANSFORMED because...

it uses power to create change, to develop people, and to build communities;
it is non-hierarchical and participatory in its structures and processes; and
it accords priority to the disadvantaged sectors, such as the poor grassroots women in rural

and urban areas and indigenous women;

TRANSFORMATIONAL because...

it is development-oriented, issue based,and gender responsive;
it seeks economic, social, and politicalequity between sexes and among sectors; and
it builds a society that is just a humane,and a way of life that is sustainable.

The women of Asia-Pacific region will create a system of politics that is holistic,integrated,
and life enhancing in its perspective."

TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

The feminist vision of transformative politics highlights gender equality as well as transformation of existing values, process and institution (See Box 1). In this feminist vision there are some distinct North/South differences in perspective and priorities dictated by the differences in their political contexts.

Box 1
THE FEMINIST VISION OF TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS

1. Equality	**3. Transformed processes**
a. gender parity	a. participatory
b. gender balance	b. empowering
c. shared power and responsibility	c. transparent
	d. non-corrupt

2. Transformed values	**4. Transformed Institutions**
a. equality and equity	a. egalitarian
b. peace	b. responsive
c. sustainability	c. accountable
d. service	
e. sharing	
f. caring	

Women from the Northern countries, which already have functioning democracies, focus on gender equality and transformation of gender relations. They prioritize the equality dimension-equality between men and women in rights and opportunities and in power and responsibilities. Their vision of transformation highlight changing male roles and eliminating gender specific violence. On the other hand, women from the Southern countries, which have only recently taken faltering steps at democratization, highlight a broader vision of transformation. Their concept of equality include not only gender relations but also North-South and class and race relations. They articulate the vision of not simply eliminating gender specific violence, but also other forms of violence: war, colonization, militarization, nuclear proliferation, economic exploitation and so on. They argue that as women gain power they need to use it "not as an instrument of dominance and exclusion as it has been used so far, but as an instrument of liberation and equality." [(2)]

The equality dimension is articulated in different ways. some emphasize gender parity-50-50 representation of men and women in decision making. Others, including the Beijing Platform for Action, refer to "gender balance" without specifying a numerical target. Still others propose the Nordic formula of no more than 60 per cent and no less than 40 per cent of either sex as an example of gender balance.

The transformation dimension is also conceptualized in multi-dimensional ways. It is argued that the dominant political values, processes, and institutions need to be changed. For example, transformation of values would mean a shift from power as domination to power as liberation; from war and conflict to peace; from efficiency considerations to equality and equity; from growth to sustainability; and from "winner take it all" norms to sharing and caring. Transforming

processes of governance implies, for example, changing them from being hierarchal to participatory; form corrupt to clean; form secretive to transparent; and from burdensome to being empowering. Similarly transformation of institutions is visualized from being top down and bureaucratic to becoming egalitarian, responsive and accountable.

The following two statements from two leading women activists of the North and South describe the key elements of the Northern and Southern vision of transformative politics.

Different Visions of Equality and Transformations

"Equal opportunities in Sweden means: 1. An equal distribution of power and influence between women and men. 2. The same possibility for women and men to achieve economic independence. 3. Care for children and home. 4. Equal access for girls and boys, women and men, to education, including the same opportunities to develop personal ambitions, interest and talents."

(Anita Amlen, Head of NGO office, Sweden, Plenary on Governance, Citizenship, and Political Participation, NGO Forum, Huairou, China, September 3, 1995)

"We want to use power to transform in the sense that certain issues and values, such as education, peace, social justice, equality, health, became dominant topics of the political agenda-we are... (achieving) power not only by supporting women to take leadership in the existing power instruments, but also, and mainly, trying to transform them. Yes, we want to make women's voices heard but most of all, we want to break the ghetto and bring the gender perspective to all social, political and economic issues to all voices."

(Jacqueline Pitanguay, Plenary Session on Governance, Citizen- ship and Political Participation, NGO Forum, Huairou, China, September 3, 1995)

PRACTICE OF TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS

Over the years women have identified numerous strategies for initiating political transformation. The strategies for gaining equality particularly closing the gender gap in numbers are much more well defined. some of these strategies have already been put into practice and demonstrated results. Other strategies for transformation particularly changing values, processes and institution are less clear and their practices are much less frequent. In this section I shall attempt to give a few examples of practice of transformative politics ranging from changing numbers to more qualitative aspects of transformation such as transforming political agenda and changing power relations at the household level.

TRANSFORMING REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS: INCREASING WOMEN'S NUMBERS

In the last twenty years a series of strategies had been devised and put into practice to close the gender gap in numbers in representative institutions and other decision making bodies.(see Box 2)

STRATEGIES FOR CLOSING GENDER GAP IN REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS	
a. Mandate and affirmative actions b. Constitutional and legal reforms c. Electoral reforms d. Increasing pool of women candidates e. Support for women seeking political office f. Funds for women g. Constituency building h. Policy reforms	i. Regular monitoring of progress through presentation of gender desegregated statistics j. Gender sensitization and awareness raising k. Role model and visibility at all levels l. Training m. Positive portrayal of women n. Challenging gender segregation

Mandates and affirmative action such as quotas, targets and time table were used in the Nordic countries to increase women's representation in political and administrative decision making bodies. Political parties and trade unions followed a gender-balanced approach in nominating candidates for elective offices. In national parliament and cabinets, women's representation is now over 30 percent in the Nordic countries.

In North America, too, affirmative action was used effectively to increase women's share of administrative and managerial positions (approximately 40 percent) though it was less successful in increasing women's share of elected political offices (less than 20 percent). In some of the Asia, African and Latin American countries, women's quota was used to ensure at least a minimum level of women's representation in electoral offices.

In the Asia Pacific region, however, affirmative action was not used in a proactive manner as it was done in the Nordic countries and North America. In countries that used quota system e.g. Bangladesh, no attempt was made to systematically increase women's numbers in representative and decision making bodies. Quota was used as an upward ceiling and not as a moving target using a time bound framework as was done in the Nordic countries.

Electoral reforms, particularly introduction of proportional representation, which generally favor greater representation of women has been an effective strategy, particularly in the Nordic countries.

A series of other strategies have been used to increase the number of women in elective bodies e.g., increasing and expanding rosters of women candidates interested in running for offices; establishing campaign funds for women candidates; organizational support in campaign, support for building agenda, media contact, and projection; leadership training, and so on. Nordic countries also used gender desegregated statistics to push for steady progress for women. Gender desegregated statistics on decision making bodies at all levels is presented annually to national parliaments for public scrutiny and debate.

TRANSFORMING AGENDA

In the last twenty years, women's movements in most countries have achieved some degree of success in promoting

their agenda and changing the mainstream mindset and priorities. The most effective strategy was sustained advocacy of women's concerns and feminist visions at all levels and with all institutions public as well as private. In many countries, women's organizations adopted advocacy work as the primary tool to influence and change the mainstream agenda. Advocacy was done through a variety of means: research, publication, gender desegregated data and statistics, experimental projects, media, training, lobbying and so on.

Networking and alliance building within and outside the government was another effective strategy for influencing and changing agenda. Women's groups not only networked among themselves locally, nationally and internationally; they also networked with other civic political organizations e.g., political parties, trade unions, professional organizations, advocacy groups and so on to get support for women's agenda. Femininist working outside government bureaucracies networked and built alliances with feminists working inside to build common cause coalitions around issues and worked in a mutually supportive way. Networking and alliance building had a tremendous multiplier effect on the promotion of women's agenda. By networking with other civic organizations e.g., human rights, environment, peace, indigenous people and so on, women's organizations were successful in building their concerns into other organizations' agenda.

Lobbying was another effective strategy. Women's organizations learnt to use critical periods to lobby different organizations. For example, during election year e.g. Sweden and during democratization or national liberation movement e.g., Brazil and South Africa, political parties were lobbied to include women's concerns in party platforms. Similarly, during the formulation of national five year plans e.g., the Philippines, or preparations of national reports on UN conferences, governments were lobbied to include women's concerns into their plans and documents. Women also started using national, regional and international conferences to advocate their concerns and influence the conference agenda. Women's organizations and networks were particularly effective in the 1990s in lobbying the international conference starting form the Environment Conference in 1992, followed by the Human Rights Conference in 1993, Population Conference in 1994, and the Social Summit in 1995.

Brazil is often cited by the feminists as a good example where women through their participation in the democracy movements in the 1970s and 1980s were able to transform the political agenda of the resistance against dictatorship. To quote one of the leaders of the women's movement in Brazil:

"Besides direct access to institutional power, one of the most powerful strategies used by women to influence the

political sphere has been and still is by changing the political agenda...in Brazil from the 70s till the 80's that was the main strategy of the women's movement...give visibility to issues that had been considered non-existent, unimportant or even ridiculous by the establishment and forcing (them) into political platforms and executive organs...in the 80's we have gone through a time of forging public policies."(3)

In the 1970s and 1980s through their participation in the democracy movement, Brazilian women were able to transform the political agenda of the resistance against dictatorship. As part of the larger democracy movement against dictatorship women denounced state violence, but also brought domestic violence to the political agenda enlarging the concept of peace. Women protested against social inequalities and the injustice of the social class structure but at the same time they voiced their stand against other inequalities resulting from gender, race and sexual orientation. They enlarged the concept of rights placing social rights in the center and also bringing up health, reproductive and sexual rights as key elements of women's rights.
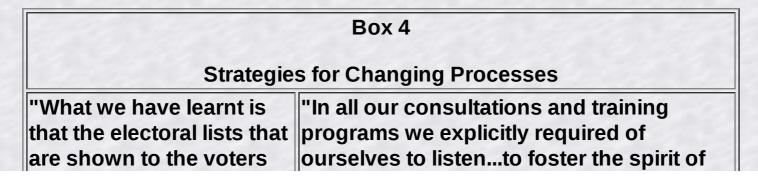
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS

Sharing power and responsibilities at the household level including domestic work has long been regarded as a significant step towards social and political transformation. In the last two decades gender relations have changed in some countries more than in others. In the Nordic countries, for example, public policy interventions such as flexitime for work for both men and women, paternity leave for men to rear children, leave for husbands to join wives employed abroad etc. have helped in greater sharing of power and responsibilities within the household. This greater sharing of power within the household in turn have contributed to greater sharing of power and responsibilities in the public domain. Nordic countries constitute the only region where in the last two decades a steady progress has been made in women's political participation measured by their share of seats in national parliaments (nearly 35 per cent) and national cabinets (over 30 per cent). In other regions of the world, public policy intervention in support of increasing male role in domestic work has been lacking. In the last two decades in most countries women's roles and responsibilities outside the domestic sphere has increased tremendously without corresponding increase in male responsibilities in domestic work. This has led to unequal burden sharing. Lack of time has often been cited by women as a major obstacle to participation. However, even in countries where gender relations have not on the whole undergone significant changes, there are examples of micro level initiatives where there are greater sharing of power and responsibilities within the household. For example in Bangladesh where generally men do not share in domestic work Banchte Shekha a non

government organization succeeded in changing the patterns of traditional division of gender roles and relations among its members. In many of the villages where Banchte Shekha is active, when women are engaged in income earning activities men participate in domestic work such as cooking, child rearing etc.

The last decades have also seen transformation of civil society organizations in many countries, particularly those where representative civilian governments have only recently assumed power e.g. Brazil, Uganda, Cambodia and South Africa. Many of these countries are still marked by deep social inequality based on race, class and gender. There are examples of trade unions and grass roots NGO in these countries which have worked successfully to address the root causes of inequality and inequity. The tools used to empower the marginalized groups include awareness raising, social cohesion through mobilization and finally social action.

TRANSFORMING PROCESSES

Women have identified a series of strategies to transform processes of governance. Open forums are found to be effective in creating a transparent and participatory process. Inclusiveness and diversity are other effective steps in democratizing processes. Discrimination is difficult when governance processes are open, inclusive and participatory. Linking the micro with the macro, the grassroots and the national levels is another effective strategy for changing the governance process. The prevailing top down, hierarchical, political administrative decision making process is viewed as contrary to the feminist vision of a more egalitarian, participatory process. In many feminist organizations women have succeeded in changing institutional processes by making them inclusive and participatory and appointing grassroots women to top levels of decision making. The statements of two feminists from the North and South at the NGO Forum (Box 4) provide excellent examples of how processes can be transformed.

Box 4
Strategies for Changing Processes

| **"What we have learnt is that the electoral lists that are shown to the voters** | **"In all our consultations and training programs we explicitly required of ourselves to listen...to foster the spirit of** |

there are more women on these lists, (those) that are not shown to the public there are a big difference in women's representation."

(Anita Amlen, NGO Network, Sweden, Plenary on Governance, Citizenship and Political Participation, Huairou, China, September 3, 1995)

openness that breeds respect and friendship among the participants; and an attitude of faithfulness to the participatory process that made all our encounters both consultative, inclusive, educational and in spite of the dissonance created fun. Result: people love to come to our exchange and training programs and they become allies in what we would like to see happen in their agencies."

(Remedios Iqnacio-Rikken, former head national machinery, Philippines, Plenary on Institutional and Financial Arrangements, Huairou, China, September 3, 1995)

THE BEIJING 1995 PROCESS
MARKER FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The preparatory processes leading to the fourth World conference on women which is also known as "The Beijing Process" inspired women's visions of democratic participation and demonstrated how global civil society could create global democratic governance. What are the major characteristics of the "Beijing Process"? The Beijing Process was deliberately conceptualized to link the grassroots voices with the national and international agenda. Careful considerations were given to establish consultative mechanisms from the grassroots to the international levels for both the government and non-government sectors. The government and non-government processes and outputs were conceived as interactive, which facilitated cross-fertilization of grassroots, national, regional, and international

perspectives. At each stage of the FWCW preparations, emphasis was placed on participatory planning, consultation, open process, and consensus building. More than any other previous world conference, FWCW preparations were used to create an inclusive global network. Diversity was clearly recognized as a strength and not a weakness of the movement. Diversity of voices were deliberately sought to enrich the visions of the Platform for Action.

In 1990, the UN General Assembly called for the holding of the FWCW in 1995, and requested the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to start the preparatory activities. This set off, world over in communities, countries and regions intense activities, most of it voluntary, designed to bring women's, particularly grassroots women's perspective into the international development agenda and also to bring the international agenda closer to the grassroots women. The motto adopted by the NGO Forum of FWCW '95 was "look at the world through women's eyes", and indeed through the preparatory processes women were able to turn the FWCW from a world women's conference to a women's conference on the world.

The women's movement in different countries were determined to use the preparations for FWCW to achieve two broad objectives: widen and strengthen their political constituencies through mobilization of networks at all levels; and consolidate the gains women have made in the last twenty years, particularly in the last several international conferences - Environment '92, Human Rights '93, Population '94 and Social Summit '95. The slogan of the women's movements was to link the grassroots to national and international levels and to link the agenda of all previous conferences. To achieve the first objective, women's movements started forming Beijing preparatory committees at all levels - grassroots, national, regional and international. These committees tried to pull together diverse women's groups under a broad inclusive umbrella. Numerous workshops and conferences were organized at the grassroots, national, subregional, regional and international levels to assess progress, identify obstacles, and highlight future priorities. The preparatory processes were decentralized - each level was encouraged to draw their own action plans depending on their own contexts; but at the same time attempt was made to build common ground around key issues and bring the voices of grassroots women to the other levels and vice versa. For the first time, NGOs organized parallel conferences and action plans at all levels - grassroots, national, regional and international.

The official preparatory process started later than the NGO preparations. But the official level preparatory activities were also marked by unprecedented openness to the NGOs. Official national preparatory committees and national delegations to the conferences generally included NGO members. For the first time, in all five regions of the world,

NGO conferences were organized before the official meetings of the regional commissions. A record number of new NGOs were given accredition to the official conference. These new NGOs and networks, established in the post-Nairobi decade, built pressure on the established NGOs as well as the UN system to democratize the preparatory process. As a result, a whole group of new actors were able to get entry into the lobbying processes over the official plan documents in the national, regional and international levels.

To achieve the second objective of consolidating women's gains in the previous world conferences, issues based networks e.g., population and reproductive health, human rights, environment, peace, economic justice and so on, started alliance building across networks. They also started to lobby the preparatory processes of the official conferences e.g., regional ministerial and preparatory committee (Prepcom) meetings. Many women's groups and networks were given training in lobby strategies and tactics. As a result, the language of official documents, negotiations over languages, and the processes and procedures of official conferences were demystified.

The inclusive, participatory, democratic preparatory process, in the end, helped to save the day for the FWCW. IN the last six months before the FWCW '95, when the official conference as well as the parallel NGO Forum suddenly started to face serious challenges e.g., bracketing of nearly half of the Platform document in the last preparatory committee meeting in March '95, the shifting of the NGO Forum site form Beijing to Huairou in April, the uncertainties about visa and hotel facilities for all the 40,000 registered NGOs, and so on, women's groups and networks from around the world were able to quickly mobilize protests and actions to counter the attempts to divert the momentum of the conference. Such rapid response was possible only because the "Beijing Process" had by 1995 succeeded in building a strong constituency in each country behind the conference. After nearly two years of mobilization, consultation, and lobbying, women all over the world were committed to have a successful conference. Any attempt to roll back was not going to be tolerated by them.

The success of the FWCW '95 and the NGO Forum, in the face of tremendous obstacles, thus, has to be explained by the democratic principles and practices of the Beijing process. For example, by making participation open and not dependent on invitation - anybody could register by paying $50 up to April '95 - the NGO Forum was able to attract the largest gathering of women. Forty thousand women registered and little over 30,000 participated. NGO Forum also emphasized representation of diversity -ethnic minorities, peasants, indigenous women, disabled, elderly, youth and so on. The numbers and the diversity, especially the presence of youth, demonstrated the strength and the vitality of the

women's movement. Similarly, the official conference, by opening up the NGO accreditation process from the traditional CONGO members to the non-CONGO, enabled hundreds of new networks, based in the countries and regions, to participate and lobby the conference. The successful negotiations over the contested issues and language of the conference document within the relatively short period of ten days of the conference was made possible by the presence of the NGOs in the country delegations as well as the lobbying of the NGOs presence at the FWCW. During the conference nearly one hundred different issue based and regional caucuses met everyday to strategise and lobby and they all grouped together under one umbrella - Equipo - to consolidate their efforts. Most of the brackets were lifted from the Platform document as a result of NGO pressure. The participatory preparatory process finally bore fruit.

CONTESTATION, NEGOTIATION, COMPROMISE

The FWCW '95 was, in many ways, a primer for the women's movement about global democratic governance. Prior to the conference, women's groups and networks successfully built pressure on the governments and international organizations to open the preparatory processes for NGO participation. Once given the opportunity, the NGOs utilized their participation effectively to influence the official agenda. The NGO community also democratized themselves. The new NGOs and Southern based NGOs and networks successfully pressurized established Northern based NGOs to open the doors of the so-called international networks, which were controlled by the latter. This push for democratization and wider participation involved intense contestation amongst women's groups and networks. There were ideological differences and differences in perspective and priorities. In many cases, it was a struggle over power and control.

The process of contestation also involved intense negotiations over differences to find common ground and identify the non-negotiable issues. There were negotiations amongst women's groups to build common cause coalitions. There were also negotiations between the women's networks on the one hand and the governments and the international agencies on the other. The negotiations often resulted in compromises and mutual give and take. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, which was adopted by consensus, was in the final analysis a result of contestation, negotiation and compromise. Unlike many other UN conference documents, which are generally prepared by a few UN officials and consultants, the Platform for Action was formulated through a wide ranging participatory process. It was the outcome of innumerable local level grassroots workshops, national seminars, sub-regional forums, five ministerial level regional group meetings, four expert group meetings, four preparatory committee meetings and various informal consultations.

The consultative processes were time consuming and often generated conflicts. But through contestation and negotiations the women's movements succeeded in exerting ownership over the Platform document.

CONCLUSION

A number of issues emerge from the above analysis that need further debate and discussion.

How useful are binary categories in the real world?

Binary categories such as "transactional/transformative" politics is a good analytical tool for clarifying concepts. But in the real world often it is difficult to find pure ideal types of transactional or transformational politics. Transactional politics may have elements of transformative and vice versa. For example, a political movement may start as transformational i.e. the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, but later when the movement achieves state power it turns transactionsal.

Will Increase in Women's numbers in decision making help transformation?

Whether a quantitative increase in women's numbers would help transformation has always been a debated issue. Some have argued that a greater increase in numbers would not contribute to transformation-others have argued that unless women are present at a critical mass level i.e. 30 percent or more, it would be difficult to push women's agenda. Numbers are important but what needs to happen is simultaneous strengthening of women's constituency and agenda. Without the latter a greater increase in numbers would create a situation like Bangladesh where for 25 years a reserved quota ensured women's presence in parliament but they never took any autonomous proactive stance on behalf of women.

Women as leaders of democracry movements

As noted earlier many of the women leaders of Asia e.g. Mrs. Aquino in the Philippines, Mrs. Zia and Mrs. Hasina Wazed in Bangladesh and Miss Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan came to power at the behest of democracy movements and

though they practised "transactional politics" at least they remained loyal to maintaining democratic forms of government. Many of these leaders e.g. Benazir Bhutto and Khaleda Zia demonstrated a personal trait of autocratic behaviour but they submitted themselves to democratic means of change of governments e.g. elections. The commitment of women political leaders to democracy even when they are involved in transactional politics needs to be further discussed.

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1. Look at page 1.

2. Jacqueline Pitangroy, Plenary Session on **Governance, Citizenship and Political Participation**, NGO Forum, Huairou, China, September 3, 1995.

3. Ibid.

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