Voices, Hierarchies and Spaces: Reconfiguring the Women's Movement in Democratic South Africa

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2004

A case study for the UKZN project entitled: Globalisation, Marginalisation
and New Social Movements in post-Apartheid South Africa

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

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Transitions to democracy do not only result in a re-shaping of the formal institutions of the state. They also have the potential to radically alter the relationship between the state, political parties and social movements. From the perspective of relatively weak women's movements, such as in South Africa, these relationships to state, parties and other social movements are crucial in delimiting political possibilities and shaping ideologies and strategies for change. Changes in what social movement theorists refer to as political opportunity structures and universes of political discourse thus have profound impacts on the nature of gender politics. In examining the South African women's movement, this paper seeks to understand what strategies have been employed by women's organisations to negotiate power vis-à-vis the state and other social movements, how these strategies have been shaped by the context of democracy, and what kinds of equality outcomes can be claimed as the product of women's activism. Although the paper is most concerned with the period since 1994, it locates the contemporary women's movement in the context of its emergence during the early 1980s.

This paper argues that the South African women's movement must be understood as made up of heterogeneous organisations, rather than being viewed through the lens of a single organisation. It seeks to examine the extent to which this heterogeneous movement is able to ensure that the gains made in the transitional period of the early 1990s, when the post-apartheid state was designed, will be made real. This assessment of the women's movements is made against a particular definition of a 'strong' social movement. A strong social movement has the capacity to articulate the particular interests of its constituencies, to mobilise those constituencies in defence of those interests, and is able to develop independent strategies to achieve its aims while holding open the possibilities of alliance with other progressive movements. This definition suggests that a strong social movement requires a degree of political autonomy in order to retain its relative power within any alliance. In addition to these organisational capabilities, the ideological influences of feminism are vital in building robust women's movements. A long term view of the South Africa women's movement against this definition of movement strength suggests that the movement is relatively weak, apart from a brief moment in the early 1990s.

The argument proceeds by firstly outlining the theoretical and strategic debates relating to definitions of the term 'women's movement' in the South African context. I then sketch the interests, strategies and forms of the women's movement as these emerged during the 1980s and in the period of transition to democracy in the early 1990s. In the third section of the paper, I map the current terrain of the women's movement, identifying and classifying different forms of organisation and strategy. The paper concludes by addressing the relationships between social movements, the democratic

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state and the women's movement, examining in particular the impact of the institutionalisation of gender on the women's movement.

Women's organisations, women's movements and nationalism
Attempts to define 'women's movement' raise a peculiar set of considerations, as this is not a movement in which subjects, interests and ideological forms are self-evident. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, women do not mobilise as women simply because they are women. They may frame their actions in terms of a range of identities, whether as worker, student, African, white and so on. In other words, there is not a stable subject for mobilisation. Indeed, as several theorists have pointed out, attempts to disaggregate gender identity are almost futile, as the cultural meanings of 'woman' shift in relation to the numerous other markers of identity and in different contexts. Secondly, there is contestation over how to define the notion of 'women's interests', given the interactions between race, class and other objective and subjective interests. Gender is simultaneously everywhere, in that gender differences are inscribed in practically all human relationships as well as in the ordering of the social, political and economic structures of all societies, and nowhere, in that it is difficult to apprehend as an independent variable. And finally, the women's movement takes different forms in different contexts, operating at some moments as a formalised structure and at others as a loose network. This variety of organisational forms is accompanied by a variety in the range of tactics used, from assimilative to confrontational and even violent.

Although some women's movements, and some forms of feminism, have identified eliminating patriarchy (understood as the system of male domination) as the common interest, in many postcolonial countries the notion of patriarchy has been unhelpful as it fails to account for the particular intersections between class, race and colonial forms of domination, and the oppression of women. Postcolonial feminists have criticised the emphasis on patriarchy and on the sameness of women's interests, for reflecting an ethnocentric and middle-class bias that privileged the western model of women's political struggles as the standard by which to judge all other women's political strategies (Mohanty 1991, Basu 1995). As Mohanty and other postcolonial scholars have argued, feminism and the ideological content of feminist consciousness, should not be specified *a priori* according to the abstract definitions of universalist theory, but should be defined in the context of particular social formations, and should have resonance in the historical experience and political culture of specific societies.

In tackling the difficult of issue of how to define women's interests in the face of these differences, Maxine Molyneux offers a conceptual distinction between 'strategic gender interests' and 'practical gender needs' that has been influential for the analysis of postcolonial women's movements. Molyneux defined 'practical gender needs' as those which arise from the everyday responsibilities of women based on a gendered division of labour, while 'strategic gender interests' were those interests that women shared in overthrowing power inequalities based on gender (Molyneux 1985). While Molyneux (1998) acknowledged that these distinctions might be difficult to pin down in practice, the value of her contribution lay in offering a conceptualisation of women's movements that recognised and allowed for the diversity of women's interests. Arising from this definition of women's interests, it is possible to conceive of a women's movement as containing within it conservative elements that organise women from a particular social base but do not seek to question power relations within that base, let alone within society more generally. By contrast, feminism has a direct political

dimension, not only being aware of women's oppression, but also seeking to confront male power in all its dimensions. In this broad formulation of women's interests, the task of feminism is to examine the particular ways in which power operates within and between the political, social and economic spheres of specific societies – in effect, this is a political project of transformation.

A more limited approach to defining women's interests focuses only on women's relationship to formal political institutions. In this view, the most stable interest that cuts across the range of differences between women is women's exclusion (or at least marginalisation) from the political arena as conventionally understood (Phillips 1995, Baldez 2002). Regardless of race, class, ethnicity, etc, women are consistently defined as political outsiders or as second-class citizens, whose entry into the public sphere is either anachronistic and short-term, or conditional upon their maternal social roles. Here the emphasis is on women's interest in accessing arenas of public power, and less on debating the policy outcomes of such engagements. The task of feminism, in this more constrained approach, is to challenge exclusion. The political projects that are associated with this approach are, for example, women's enfranchisement, struggles around women's representation in national parliaments and the emphasis on electoral systems, quotas and other mechanisms for breaking political-systemic blockages. Inclusionary feminism – or equality feminism – may be seen to create some of the necessary conditions for the removal of gender inequalities, but it is reluctant to tamper with the structural basis of inequalities. This reluctance stems in part from a strategic imperative to maintain minimal conditions for unity among women, and in part from the ideological underpinnings of liberalism, which regards family and market as lying outside the realm of state action.

Like the distinction between women's practical needs and strategic gender interests, the transformatory and the inclusionary approaches to defining women's interests are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they need to be seen as part of a continuum of women's struggles for full citizenship, which may take a linear historical form (that is, a shift from inclusionary demands to transformative demands over time), or may be present within a single movement at a given moment, with some sectors pursuing alliances with political elites for inclusion and other pushing towards a more radical set of demands. As I will discuss below, in South Africa both these approaches have been used in order to advance gender equality claims, at times with striking synergy. However, although these approaches may co-exist within women's movements, they are many ways in which they are in tension with one another. It is important to note that each approach has long-term implications for what *kinds* of political alliances are built, which may in turn impact on internal relations within the women's movement. In the case of the inclusionary approach, women's movements need access to political power to pursue the interests of representation effectively. Although they can gain this access through effective mobilisation, they also need linkages with power brokers within political parties in order to ensure ongoing attention to the political system. Consequently there is a tendency for inclusionary politics to become increasingly elite-based. Transformatory feminism, on the other hand, is more likely to be conducted in alliance with other social movements aiming at structural transformation, such as social movements of the poor. This kind of politics may bring certain sections of the women's movement into contestation with elite and party-oriented members, as it is a form of politics that is likely to take a more confrontational approach over party

manifestoes and state policies. The outcome of such alliances may be a marginalisation of these actors from the state and political parties.

Given these differences, analysts of women's movements have attempted to classify movements into different types (Kaplan 1997, Molyneux1998). The most dominant of these, based on Latin American experiences, distinguishes between women's movements that are *feminine* and those that are *feminist*, terms that evoke Molyneux's distinction between practical needs and strategic interests. Both feminine and feminist movements mobilise women on the basis of the roles conventionally ascribed to women, such as their reproductive and domestic labour responsibilities. However, feminist movements seek to challenge those roles and articulate a democratic vision of a society in which gender is not the basis for a hierarchy of power. This distinction is a heuristic device; in practice many women's movements embrace both forms of activism. It recognises that acting as women does not necessarily imply that the gender identities that are invoked are necessarily progressive, in the sense of seeking to eliminate hierarchies of power[1]. The advantage of making the distinction, however, is that it enables a movement to develop in an inclusive manner – accommodating women who are less convinced of confrontational politics - while at the same time holding out a vision for transformatory politics. Feminine consciousness develops from the linkages between cultural experiences of gender and the everyday struggles of poor families and communities to survive, impelling women to political action. While nevertheless 'emphasising roles they accept as wives and mothers [they] also demand the freedom to act as they think their obligations entail' (Kaplan 1997:6). It is the ideological interventions of feminist activists that enable the shift from feminine to feminist consciousness, where the aims of the movement shift to eliminating power relations based on gender.

The extent of inclusiveness is particularly important in countries where women are organised around a wide range of issues that fall outside of conventional definitions of the political as well as western-centric notions of feminism. For example, in South Africa there have been many forms of associational life that provide solidarity networks for women, such as women's religious groups, stokvels and burial societies. These forms of organisation need to be recognised if a more fluid and inclusive understanding of politics is to be developed. It is important to note here that social movements do not merely 'activate' pre-existing identities and consciousness; they also *create* consciousness. Solidary associations such as these often provide the arenas in which women develop collective consciousness that can be mobilised when the survival of communities is at stake, and in many cases collective consciousness developed within these arenas forms the bedrock of indigenous feminist mobilisation. As Temma Kaplan (1997) has pointed out, although the activities within these forms of organisations are 'unspectacular' and may seem politically insignificant, they can be important sources for the emergence of social movements (not only women's movements). Thus, definitions of women's movements should not be so prescriptive or inelastic that they exclude the kinds of organised activities that involve the majority of poor women. Nevertheless, a critical factor in shaping whether women's movements aim to transform society is the existence of feminism as a distinct ideology within the movement, emphasising the mobilization of women in order to transform the power

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[1] For example, in the 1980s both the Inkatha Freedom Party and the ANC mobilized women (separately) on the basis of their maternal identities, yet in the case of the IFP the retention of the traditional Zulu family underpinned its political ideology while the ANC held to a notion of gender equality.

relations of gender. Feminist ideology is pivotal in women's movements, as its relative strength determines the extent to which collective action is directed to democratic ends.

These difficulties have shaped the divergent forms that women's movements have taken in different contexts. Women's movements are not homogeneous entities characterized by singular and coherent sets of demands. Rather, by their nature they tend to be diverse, embracing multiple organisational forms, ideologies and even at times contradictory, demands. Indeed, some activists prefer to speak about the existence of many women's movements in South Africa, reflecting these different tendencies (Fester 1998). Despite these diversities, however, it is possible to name and loosely bind together organisations that mobilize women collectively on the basis of their gender identity as a women's movement. Like other social movements, women's movements wax and wane in the context of particular political, economic and social crises. What needs to be understood is why and when women's organisations act in a co-ordinated way - that is, defining at what moment disparate groups within the movement coalesce in such a way that they *act* as a *movement,* distinct from other political forces. This moment has been referred to by some analysts as 'tipping' (Baldez,2002:5). Tipping – the point at which disparate acts of protest cascade into a mass movement – occurs 'when people come to believe that their participation becomes necessary or even required' (Baldez 2002:6). This point can sometimes be identified by particular events, such as the 1956 Women's March on the Union Buildings, which then become iconic moments for further acts of movement mobilisation, or by distinct periods, such as transitions to democracy, which open possibilities for institutional reform that have long term consequences.

The relationship between women's movements and the national liberation movement
In South Africa, these definitional problems have to be placed against a context in which nationalism was the dominant discursive frame for political mobilisation. An immediate analytical consequence of the embeddedness of women's political action within the frame and organisation of nationalism is the difficulty in distinguishing – and therefore studying – a women's movement as a separate organisational force. Not only could gender not be separated from race and class, but 'the liberation of Black people as a whole is a feminist issue' (Kemp et al 1995:132). Women's activism, both feminist and non-feminist, is deeply rooted in nationalism. For this reason, this paper cannot discuss the women's movement's contemporary forms and challenges without addressing the historical tension between those analysts who regarded women's political activities as indistinguishable from those of nationalism, and those who attempted to define women's activities as distinct and relatively autonomous, if only conceptually.

Nationalism is, in many respects, a double-edged sword for women, enabling women's entry into the public sphere but resting on a profoundly gendered model of political society (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989). Within the nationalist framework, women's inclusion cannot be separated from the notion of distinctly gendered political roles. African nationalism posited an alliance of interests based on opposition to racism, and allowed women to articulate their interests as members of a nation. Their participation in nationalist movements allowed for an incremental process whereby more inclusive egalitarian visions of democracy were inserted into the organisation's normative and policy frameworks. This was accompanied by shifts in the organisational status of

women, marked by the progress of women in the African National Congress (ANC) from auxiliary members to full members, and by the creation of an aspirational framework for democracy that included the value of gender equality. Yet this progressive inclusion belied the *terms* of participation and inclusion, which stressed women's maternal roles (epitomised by the notion of 'mother of the nation') as the basis for participation, and retained male dominance of the ANC-as-party, despite the current presence of a significant number of women in leadership positions within the ANC-as-government. Thus, while nationalism mobilised women as political agents with collective responsibility, they were often restricted from exercising that agency to redress power imbalances between women and men.

The extent to which feminist activists were able to harness and develop feminist consciousness was determined by the extent to which nationalist movements and other social movements were willing to allow feminist approaches to thrive. This condition may be described as one of organisational and discursive autonomy. While autonomy was highly valued in western women's movements – and in many was seen to be a *condition* of existence, in postcolonial countries autonomy is less highly valued. Because women's political activism in postcolonial contexts has been enabled by larger struggles against colonial and class oppression, the result is a more highly developed politics of alliance rather than autonomy. Yet even within the constraints of alliances, the discursive space available to women's movements matters because it denotes the extent to which the movement is able to develop its own goals, priorities and actions. Jane Jenson refers to this as the 'universe of political discourse,' which comprises 'beliefs about the ways in which politics should be conducted, and the kinds of conflicts resolvable through political processes' (Jenson 1987:65). It sets the boundaries to political action by identifying which actors in society are considered to be legitimate actors in particular settings.

Jenson's formulation is helpful in understanding the ongoing tension between nationalism and feminism in South Africa, which reflect differences firstly about the legitimacy of women organising in the interests of eliminating gender inequalities, and secondly the legitimacy of feminism itself as an ideological framework within which to understand that organisation. One the one hand, a caricatured version of feminism was employed in which feminism was understood as a western middle-class and white ideology with little application to the particularities of apartheid South Africa. This view shaped the extent to which women's organisations could legitimately raise issues related to sexuality, reproductive rights and bodily integrity within the confines of what was considered by the liberation leadership to be 'political'. Organisationally, feminism was associated with demands for greater autonomy, for decentralised and democratic mechanisms for agenda-setting and for a view of power that included men's power in the private sphere.

On the other hand, women who were entering grassroots community organisations and women's forums within the union were increasingly raising issues of male power within the workplace and household. In content, if not in language, these demands reflected feminist understandings of the relationship between public and private power. The debate over what issues were appropriately 'political' revealed that for the most part the national liberation movement and progressive civil society understood politics in the narrow sense of relating to a circumscribed public sphere, and as confined by those activities that would directly challenge the apartheid state (Hassim 2003a,

Albertyn and Hassim 2003). Nationalist activists – women and men – placed issues of sexuality, gender-based violence and reproductive rights in the category of 'western feminism', and saw women's organisations' attempts to deal with these as distracting from the key struggle against apartheid. Some have argued that, even within the progressive civil society organisations, there was a deep-seated homophobia that prevailed despite rhetorical commitments to freedom of sexuality (Kraak 2002).

Despite the grassroots understanding of how gender power, the marginalisation of feminism as *ideology* retarded the development of an indigenous feminism that would deal with the particular ways in which the private inequalities related to power in the public sphere (Albertyn and Hassim 2003). The combination of the theoretical and practical difficulties of defining the movement's interests and political identity on the one hand, and the suspicion with which feminism was treated by both internal and exile movements, affected the women's movement's ability to develop political identity relatively autonomously of the ideological power of nationalism. Political identity is an important resource for civil society organisations as they seek to influence and democratise the norms, social relations and institutional arrangements and practices constructed in civil society. The women's movement was pulled into prioritising the democratisation of the public sphere (narrowly defined as the state), while devaluing attempts to deal with social and cultural norms. As a result, while the country has an advanced constitution and widespread protection for women's rights, these are difficult to translate into practice because of deeply held patriarchal views in civil society. The constitutional protections were essentially a bargain struck at the elite level between national women's organisations and the male political leadership; they are not deeply rooted in civil society.

The difficulties in creating independent organisations of women also had other long term impacts. During the 1980s, there was a strong tendency to yoke all progressive organisations under the banner of the anti-apartheid struggle and, indeed, women's organisations aligned to the UDF certainly did see the toppling of apartheid as a key part of the struggle for women's rights. However, these organisations, as well as the ANC Women's League, took their direction from the imperatives identified by the male leadership. In some cases, the intense focus on one goal made it difficult for women's organisations to build the bottom-up participatory style of decision-making that in theory they favoured (Hassim 2003a). In other cases, it limited the kinds of issues taken up to those that advanced the national struggle and obscured the tensions between nationalist organisations, with their mimicry of the conventional structure of the patriarchal family, and feminist tendencies in women's organisations which sought to democratise the private sphere. Arguments for greater autonomy of women's organisations often drew attention to the experiences of women in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola in the 1980s, which showed that women's position did not automatically improve after independence, despite rhetorical commitments by political leaders. The underlying structural forces which produced unequal relations of gender persisted, and were in fact exacerbated by the lack of a systematic approach to the issue of gender inequality (Urdang 1991). This was often cited as an important reason for building the autonomy of women's organisations to ensure that the struggle for gender equality would remain important in the long term.

Even without the explicit language of feminism, however, women activists inside the country, as well as within the ANC in exile, increasingly challenged the nationalist

frame of discourse, articulating political demands in terms of gender equality. During the 1980s, a range of women's organisations established themselves as independent from, albeit in alliance with, other social movements, for example affiliating to the UDF while retaining their own structures and decision-making processes. In exile, the ANCWL shifted from being a 'social worker' to the movement, to articulating a more active role in defining the strategies of mobilisation of women. By the end of the decade, the League had in effect been taken over by a politically sharp and committed group of young feminists. Their struggles for the recognition of women's political concerns and demands for representation within the ANC were surprisingly successful. Few other national liberation movements or political parties globally have incorporated notions of gender equality to the extent that the ANC has done. By 1990, the movement that had initially been hostile to the notion of feminism was able to declare that the emancipation of women had to be addressed 'in its own right', and that urgent consideration should be given to the formulation of policies that would 'advance and ensure the emancipation of women' (ANC 1990). These organisational successes resulted in a particularly close relationship between the progressive sectors of the women's movement and the ANC. Perhaps too close: the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 resulted in the re-establishment of the ANCWL as a national women's organisation inside the country, integrating both women from the ANC Women's Section in exile, and internal women's organisations[2]. Any limited autonomy that had been won during the 1980s was abrogated in favour of a romanticised notion of unity, and of the ANC as the only home for progressive gender politics.

Yet even this closeness was not enough to guarantee women's participation *as women* in the transitional negotiations. It was the ANCWL that was the major impetus behind the establishment of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in 1992, perhaps the closest that South Africa has come to having a strong women's movement, defined against the criterion of relative autonomy in the context of an alliance. The WNC was established as a broad front of women's organisations, including women's sections of political parties, with the single purpose of drafting a Women's Charter of Equality that would gather together the demands of women at all levels of society.

The WNC brought the issue of gender equality directly into the mainstream of public discourse. Its formation represented the moment of tipping, when women's organisations' actions achieved significant national impact. The justification for its formation was the fact that the political parties negotiating South Africa's transition to democracy in 1992 selected all-male teams in the first round. Women's exclusion from decision-making provided the common ground of collective interest for all politically active women, regardless of party ideology. As a result of pressure from the WNC, especially from party affiliates, women delegates were included on the negotiating teams of political parties in the second round of negotiations. However, they remained in the minority, and there were still concerns that the male delegates were seen as more authoritative. The structure of decision-making, particularly at the highest level of party negotiations inside CODESA 2, made the intervention of women very difficult. Nevertheless, the sense of exclusion from these decision-making processes galvanised women into developing the notion of women as a political constituency and highlighted the need for an independent women's movement.

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[2] This process was accompanied by intensive debate about whether organisations such as UWO and NOW should retain some autonomy from political organisations. In the end, the majority of women's organisations linked to the United Democratic Front collapsed their structures into the ANCWL.

The WNC functioned very effectively as a lobby during the transitional negotiations, both because it was able to claim a broad constituency across party lines, and because it was able to mobilize women within political parties to exert internal pressure on their party leaderships. It is important to note that the WNC was not backed up by a strong mass movement of women. Its affiliates tended to be legitimate women's organisations with long histories, but with weak organisational capacities and resources. Nor did the coalition use mass mobilisation as a strategy to back up its demands. Rather, it relied on access to political parties as its main lever of influence. This access, achieved by constructing a coalition that allowed women's sections of political parties not only to join, but also largely to drive the organisation - was key to its success. Furthermore, the coalition was able to utilise the technical expertise of feminist academics and lawyers in ways that previous women's movements had not, enabling it to use the new opportunity structure of the transitional period to successfully advance an agenda for equality. In effect, 'women' became the moral touchstone for the extent to which the new democracy, crafted as it was by elite pacting, included the socially, economically and politically marginal groupings.

Transitions to democracy may certainly be viewed as political opportunity structures that particularly favour women's movements, and some analysts have cited the experiences of Latin American women's movements to make this argument (Waylen 1995). However, transitions should not be seen as automatically enhancing women's access to power. In Central and Eastern Europe women benefited less from democratisation than men, in part because of a far greater hostility to feminism among both organised women and men. The effectiveness of the WNC in the period between 1991 and 1994 suggests that a change in the structure of political opportunity is only meaningful if women perceive these conditions as opportunities, if they perceive them in gendered terms, if they perceive the conditions as requiring them to take action, and if they are able to develop a successful organisational form through which to channel their action (Baldez 2002:10).

The heterogeneity that allowed the WNC to claim an inclusive mass base also raised many internal tensions within the organisation. The WNC found it difficult to maintain its broad basis of support as tensions emerged over the dominance of white, middle class women, and the difficulties of dealing with racial and political differences (Kemp et al 1996, Fester 1997). Although the Coalition debated at length the impact of differences between women on the way in which gender inequalities should be addressed (Meintjes 1996), the common ground between women's organisations proved minimal. In examining the Women's Charter for Effective Equality drawn up by the movement in 1994, it is apparent that a range of diverse interests had to be accommodated. Operating as a kind of wish list for democracy, the Charter did not have to adjudicate or prioritise the range of demands that were made by a wide range of individual women and organisations. For example, it included demands for major structural reform of the economy with demands for cultural and religious rights, as well as protections for the family.

How these demands would be interpreted, prioritised and advanced was left to the post-1994 period. Yet, far from the Charter becoming the basis for a strong and inclusive women's movement to continue into the democratic era, the period since 1994 has been characterised by a weakening and virtual collapse of the WNC. This

outcome was to some extent inevitable, given that the WNC was driven by the women based in political parties, who moved into the state after the first democratic elections. The WNC took the decision, regarded by many as short-sighted, to exclude women who held elected party positions from participation in the coalition.

A further problem, which was articulated clearly within the WNC, but which has persisted for decades in women's organisations, is the urban focus of organisational strategies. Despite the high proportion of women living in rural areas, and despite their highly disadvantaged position economically and politically, they remained outside the mainstream of the women's movement (Zondo 1994). With some exceptions, notably the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) and the National Land Committee (NLC), rural women were relatively neglected by the NGO sector (Meer 1997). The NLC had specific programmes to address issues of access to resources and capacity of rural women to transform gender relations. Most significantly, the formation of the Rural Women's Movement, with the support of TRAC, gave a strong organisational form to rural women's interests. Its efforts are reflected in a strong awareness in the Land Reform Programme about the specific needs of women. After 1994, the RWM virtually collapsed as a result of the loss of leadership and funding, although there are signs of a revival[3].

A lasting consequence of the transitional period was the emphasis of women's organisations on the issue of inclusion, and a slow marginalisation of the politics of transformation. In the WNC, both strategies were held together as complementary, and indeed mutually dependent. This is most clearly exemplified in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality, adopted in February 1994, which calls for increased access to arenas of decision-making, as well as for structural transformation. The strategy of inclusion had broad support among women activists, as it was seen as a means to the goal of changing the conditions of women's lives. It was an implicit questioning of the extent to which non-elite groups could expect that democracy would increase their access to power, and was the basis on which to launch a questioning of the assumptions of the political transition. The demand for quotas was supported because it was seen as an instrument to facilitate women's access to decision-making and to create a political space to articulate a transformatory ideal of citizenship. Representation, then, was not conceived as an end in itself, but as part of a broader agenda of redistribution of social and economic power.

For these reasons, as well, the women's movement participated in shaping the design of the national machinery for women, a set of institutions inside and around the state that would create the mechanisms to articulate women's particular policy interests and hold the state accountable to its broad commitments to gender equality. The South African women's movement thus exemplified the strongest and most progressive version of inclusionary feminism. However, the new emphasis on the state had contradictory outcomes. On the one hand, loss of leadership and strategic vision weakened the structures of the women's movement. On the other hand, the move into the state undoubtedly created room for integrating gender concerns into key law reform and social policy processes. In the following section of the paper, I will examine firstly the impact of the institutionalising of gender on the women's movement in the post-

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[3] The Rural Women's Movement attended the Social Movements Indaba in 2004.

apartheid period, and then examine some of the longer-term consequences of state-centric politics.

Mapping the women's movement in post-apartheid South Africa
One of the most notable changes in the landscape of the women's movement in the post-1994 period was the fragmentation and stratification of women's organisations in civil society. The political centre of the Women's National Coalition did not survive as the layer of the top leadership of women's organisations shifted into positions in the state and bureaucracy. The new stratifications which emerged reflected a disaggregation of the movement into a diversity of arenas, some of which - such as those closely tied to policy making processes - were strengthened by new approaches to civil society within the state, whereas other levels reverted to the more familiar community-based forms of organisation.

The post-apartheid women's movement can be characterised as having three distinct arenas:

- National policy advocates
- Networks and coalitions
- Community based organisations

Two aspects of women's political activism fall outside of this characterisation, but are important to analyse, given my definition of the women's movement as a broad umbrella encompassing diverse organisations and occupying a variety of spaces. The first set of activities is the highly prominent participation of women in political parties in the period since 1994. The second lies at the other end of the spectrum – women's participation in other social movements, albeit as members rather than as leaders, and albeit that the mobilisation of their gendered identities is muted (which is not to say that it is not a valid explanation for why women have joined those movements). I will return to the arenas of political parties and other social movements below.

Looking at the first level of the pyramid, it is evident that there has been a strengthening of NGOs that act as advocacy agents and are tied in to state policy processes (e.g. the Gender Advocacy Programme, NISAA and the Gender Research Project at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies). These organisations have the expertise, and in a relative sense, the funding, to intervene in legal and policy debates and public consultations. They remain extremely active in public debate and have found spaces in the new governance system. Their primary role is to ensure the implementation and elaboration of the rights-based democratic framework, in itself an important political task given the advanced formal rights that were secured in the Constitution. At this level, organisations can make effective links between other allies in civil society, such as the gay and lesbian rights movement, to mutually reinforce democratic agendas and share strategies. They are easily accessible to the state as well as external donors, and may be seen to play a strategic, rather than representative, role in civil society. Indeed, a concern about this level is the tension between the relatively high degree of access to decision-makers, and the relative distance from constituencies of women (and particularly poor rural women). At this level, the difficulty for policy advocates is maintaining 'reality checks' to ensure that what they are advocating is likely to be meaningful to the constituencies they seek to assist (Pethu Serote, Cape Town meeting, November 2003).

However, keeping close relationships with constituencies is difficult to do when funding and gender expertise are thinly spread, making it difficult to 'listen' to how interests are being articulated at the grassroots level. To exacerbate this problem, there is insufficient capacity to ensure that information about what is happening at the advocacy level flows downwards to constituencies of women who are directly affected by particular policies. Although some NGOs in other sectors have developed this relationship to a mass base (e.g the relationship between the Aids Law Project and the Treatment Action Campaign), this has not happened within the women's movement. As a result, the gap between the high level of access to information and also awareness of women's rights among the urban elite, and the marginality of poor women, is exacerbated. Even where victories are scored, for example in the passage of the Maintenance Act, poor women do not always know about these, or, as the Women's Legal Centre pointed out, government departments do not immediately implement the new rulings (Interview with Sibongile Ndatshe, April 2004; Cape Town meeting, November 2003).

Operating in this relationship to the state, women's organisations at this level employ a set of tactics that does not rely on mass mobilisation or confrontation. Rather, tactics, demands and rhetoric might be moderated to fit the discourses of the state in order to make incremental gains and to retain hard-won openings into the state. A number of crucial legislative and policy gains have been made as a result of this strategy. A notable example is the success in legalising abortion, despite the deep opposition to this in civil society and in the rank-and-file membership of political parties. Using a carefully argued strategic approach, feminists were able to frame the demand within the more acceptable terms of health, rather than as an overt right to bodily integrity. Even so, it was only the ANC's strong support for the Termination of Pregnancy Act, and its refusal to allow its MPs a free vote, that made possible the passage of the legislation in 1996. In this case, a partnership between women's advocacy organisations and a strong political party ally resulted in an undoubted victory for women, entrenching women's reproductive rights in ways that are still not politically possible in many older democracies.

The alliance between political parties and advocacy groups is a form of upward political linkage. Equally important are downward linkages between advocacy groups and other social movement allies. There have been relatively few instances where advocacy and mass mobilisation have effectively combined around common issues. In one of the few examples of women's collective action in defence of their interests in the past ten years, poor women organised under the banner of the New Women's Movement mobilised against the Lund Committee's recommended reforms of the state maintenance grant. Their allies were experienced advocacy activists in the Black Sash. Interestingly, however, they were opposed by the ANC Women's League in the Western Cape, who argued that organisations such as the New Women's Movement and the Black Sash represented the interests of relatively privileged coloured women. The ANC Women's League stood by the ANC Minister of Welfare, Geraldine Fraser Moleketi, under whose aegis the cutbacks in grants were being proposed. The opposition alliance of women's organisations was successful in ensuring that the amount of the child support grant increased fairly rapidly (although still not anywhere near the level required to have a poverty-reducing effect). This example shows that pressure from below can strengthen advocacy work and act as a critical lever in re-shaping the priorities of the state (Hassim 2003b).

However, the need to retain allies in political parties and the state (the upward linkage) can at times work against the process of retaining downward linkages within the women's movement. One of the political costs of working primarily with parties and the state, is the emergence of gaps between advocacy groups and those constituencies of poor women who have sought to demand their rights to basic services, such as water or electricity, through direct action. Direct action tactics have tended to bring social movements into conflict with the state in ways that have created new lines of fracture in the political terrain. In certain cases, particular forms of direct action (such as electricity reconnections) have been deemed criminal by the ANC government. In this context, the choice of retaining credibility with state actors may, over time, reinforce the elite bias of this level of politics as access to decision-making via party-political and bureaucratic allies becomes more important than pressure from below. The moderate feminist discourses that characterise this sector and which allow access to political decision-making, can thus act as limits to the women's movement, by gradually constraining the range of potential strategies (and, possibly, citizenship claims) that are considered legitimate.

At the next level, there are a number of new, issue-based networks which have emerged, and which coalesce around common issues (such as the Network Against Violence Against Women and the Reproductive Rights Alliance). These networks straddle the advocacy and policy roles of the first category, but are more likely to have identifiable constituencies. Like the advocacy organisations, the networks tend to be urban-based, with a bias towards location in Cape Town and Johannesburg. While they are primarily funded by foreign donors, many have also gained support from the local business sector on specific campaigns, particularly in the area of violence against women (for example, the White Ribbon Campaign). The remarkable aspect of these networks is that they are characterised by attention to issues that would in the 1980s have been regarded as 'feminist' and problematic – that is, to issues of women's sexual and reproductive autonomy. This may be a function of the discursive shift from nationalism to citizenship as exemplified by the Constitution, as a result of which women's organisations feel less constrained in the types of issues they can take into the national political domain. The new democracy, despite its weaknesses, has opened the possibilities for women's organisations to take up issues that are outside of the conventional definitions of political action, and to demand attention by the state to issues that states have generally been reluctant to regulate (that is, regulating and mitigating men's power in the private sphere).

The challenge for these networks is to hold together organisations that are in some respects competing for similar resources and operating on the same terrain. While they are most effective when they speak with one voice on issues of critical concern, such as gender-based violence, and are able to articulate and lobby for policy alternatives, they are the hardest type of organisation to keep alive. They often lack funding to support the networking office, or, when they are too well-funded, their constituent members may feel resentful that more funding is not being channelled to the actual work on the ground. Coalitions are by their nature fragile structures, having to constantly negotiate the terms of the relationships between members. Where there are scarce resources or where there is some jockeying among organisations to be seen as the representative voice on an issue, coalitions are at their most vulnerable. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the most experienced activists and

organisations in this sector are white women, and black women activists entering the field of violence against women have come up against relatively well-established funding and advocacy networks. As a result there has been considerable racial tension in this sector. It was no surprise, therefore, to find that the networks are the most unstable form of organisation in the women's movement.

Least visible, but most numerous, are the layer of women's organisations at local community level. Women's organisations have always existed at this level, but have been weakly tied in to national networks. The period of the early 1980s was exceptional for the extent to which community level organising was incorporated into a national political project, and women's organisations shaped and were shaped by the political visions of feminism. However, by the mid-1980s, the United Democratic Front dominated strategic decision-making, and women's organisations lost their capacities for independent political action. Twenty years later, women's community organisations appear again to be adrift from any politically cohesive project. Yet community-based organisations are the most numerous type of organisation in civil society, according to the Johns Hopkins study of the size and scope of the non-profit sector in South Africa (Swilling and Russell 2002)The bulk of the non-profit sector is made up of culture and recreation, social services, and development and housing. These areas of work are also gendered, according to the study. Culture and recreation is a sector that includes sport and is, not surprisingly, dominated by men. Whereas education and research, social services, and development and housing, are sectors dominated by women. The study notes that 'this type of organisation, of which there was a substantial number, is involved in supporting and improving the lives of ordinary people through associations, development organisations, and co-operatives. Anecdotally, these types of activities tend more frequently to be carried out by women' (Swilling and Russell 2002:26).

This level of women's organisations has been most distant from the state, even women's NGOs and networks that engage the state. A major part of the work at this level is concerned with women's practical needs, particularly in the face of the HIV crisis. It ranges from welfare work, caring for the ill, organising and financing funerals, to mobilising at community level against rapists (particularly men who rape children). In a number of respects, it is women who have been the shock absorbers of high levels of unemployment and of the failure of the state to provide a comprehensive and efficient system of social security and health care. The emphasis on the cultural value of caring in government policy frameworks - such as the White Paper on Social Welfare - in effect shifts the burden of caring for the young, the sick and the elderly onto women (and increasingly onto children as well), without financial compensation for their time, and without effective support by the state. Yet these increasing burdens are not without political opportunities. In performing caring tasks for people dying of AIDS, women often have to cross cultural barriers of privacy and respect. As one carer noted, 'it is hard to *hlonipha* your brother-in-law in the old way when you clean his sores and the private parts. He respects me now and I have grown to respect and understand his needs' (Interview, Maria June 2004). In her view, dignity and respect have had to be re-negotiated in everyday actions within the household. These cultural negotiations and re-definitions of social roles challenge that commonplace assumption that women are simply victims of the HIV/AIDS crisis. They also challenge the view of the Moral Regeneration Movement, led from the Presidency, that the emphasis

should be on reconstructing the traditional values within families (Albertyn and Hassim 2003).

At the community level women have also discovered other forms of agency. Many are participants in the emerging social movements that are challenging the cost recovery basis on which basic services are delivered. In the absence of perceived weaknesses in the justice system in dealing with violence against women, they have at times carried out 'citizen's arrests'. Although direct action such as marching to police stations with rapists in tow is not widespread, it occurs often enough to remind observers of the enormous degree of agency that exists at this level. Political ideologies in this arena may be characterised as being within a maternalist tradition, in the strong and positive sense of maternalism. At this level, perhaps ironically, the most vibrant and creative forms of collective solidarity are emerging, as women seek to address everyday crises with few resources. Yet community level women's organisations often do not have the time, expertise or resources to address decision-makers, and women within other social movements do not as yet appear to have inserted a gender analysis into the conceptualisation of their struggles.

These three levels within the women's movement should ideally add up to a strong and diverse social movement. In a democratically effective state they would work together to ensure that poor and vulnerable people are an important constituency for politicians, that there is accountability in public spending, that the constitutional values of equality and social justice are upheld, and that both the public and private spheres are increasingly governed by democratic norms. This has not yet happened in South Africa. In the next section, I explore reasons for this, refocusing attention on the balance between inclusionary feminism and transformatory feminism. I argue that the most visible gender politics has centred on issues of representation (that is, equality/inclusionary feminism), rather than on policy outcomes. The challenge is to create the necessary synergies between the different levels – a difficult task in the absence of a mobilised feminist component within the movement. In the following sections I analyse the possibilities for a stronger version of feminism in the context of the current environments of social movements and the state.

Relationships between women's movements and other social movements
Social movements in South Africa have generally been collapsed into the term 'civil society', language which very often elided the significant differences between those movements that sought to transform society, and those organisational forms which represented market or conservative society interests. In post-apartheid South Africa, a much clearer sense of social movements as both distinct from civil society and politically progressive, is emerging. McKinley (2004: 20), for example, sees the new social movements as having effected a radical break with the '"traditional" progressive forces', standing on the side of 'principled internationalism, a socialist vision, and an independent, mass-based mobilisation and struggle as an ideological and organisational alternative to the capitalist ANC'. This formulation conceives of social movements as oppositional to the state, independent (at least formally) of political parties, explicitly political in nature and implicitly democratic. The state thus is seen as the sphere of repression; social movements, by contrast constitute the sphere of justice. Gordon White's characterisation of this view of civil society resonates in South Africa. Civil society functions as 'an idealized counter-image, an embodiment of social virtue confronting political vice: the realm of freedom versus the realm of coercion, of

participation versus hierarchy, pluralism versus conformity, spontaneity versus manipulation, purity versus corruption' (White 1994:377). It is a powerful counter-image, and the binary dichotomy of state vs. social movements has a rhetorical appeal that has a mobilising intent.

Yet the binary opposition of state and society is a difficult one to sustain from a feminist perspective. Neither the state nor social movements have been entirely welcoming spaces for women. Looking firstly at social movements, the conception of these arenas as fundamentally democratic and transformative is in many respects an idealisation that feminists have challenged for some time. In the 1980s, this idealisation pushed to the margins struggles to deal with aspects of and institutions in civil society that are inimical to the values of equality and justice. The narrow understanding of what constituted 'political' action within the mainstream left over a long period of time, meant that issues of culture and tradition were not engaged by social movements. Relations of power within social movements have been masked, and questions of who has voice and agency within social movements often remain obscured. The new social movements that have emerged since 1994 have very often relied on the mobilisation of women on the basis of their practical needs – for example, for electricity, land and housing – but have rarely linked these to issues of the pernicious gender division of labour. Internal tensions of race and gender within the social movements have rarely been directly examined. As Dawn Paley (2004) has pointed out, more than half of the activists in the Anti-Privatisation Forum are women, 'yet it [is] men's voices that overwhelmingly dominated' at a meeting she recently attended. She questions 'how is it that Black women can make up the bulk of the membership of the movements against neo-liberal policies and be so marginalised in the functioning of these organisations?' One of her informants suggests boldly that women are being used. Similar comments were made to me in relation to other organisations where women (as in the UDF, interestingly) were foot soldiers, while men assumed the role of generals.

Of course, this is not meant to suggest that social movements are arenas of action that should be avoided by women,. As the earlier sections of this paper demonstrated, there is a long tradition of women organising in alliance with other progressive political forces, and there is much to be gained strategically from linking struggles against class and race oppression to those against gender oppression. However, it needs to be recognised that social movements in South Africa are profoundly gendered and unequal, and as yet far from inclusionary in their practices or even their visions for transformation, to the extent that these do not explicitly address male social and cultural power.

The women's movement and the democratic state: new challenges; new relationships
If the women's movement's relationship to other progressive social movements has always been fraught, its relationship to the state is equally contradictory. The period of transitional government, leading up to the first national elections and into the first two years of government, was a time of great optimism in South Africa. There was an expectation among many sectors of civil society that the democratic state would have the will and the capacity to deliver on the ANC's election manifesto and to the constituencies of women and poor people. In the case of the women's movement particularly, this optimism was fuelled by the receptiveness of the ANC to gender

issues. Many gender activists who moved into the state saw their new roles as an extension of their activism in a new arena, rather than an abandonment of the women's movement, and many described the new relationship as a form of partnership or synergy. As gender activist and former ANC MP Pregs Govender (2004) has commented, 'in the first few years, many of us in the ANC were very clear about the mandate and priorities that our budget needed to reflect. It had been the right time to assert the interests of poor women. . .'. Thenjiwe Mtintso (2003:577) has argued strongly that women need to be present in parliament and the state:

> Women have got to challenge the socially constructed divide between the private and the public spheres. Entering Parliament is one way of making the private political. Consistent and conscious efforts have to be made to bring women and gender interests to centre stage in decision-making spheres like Parliament.

For the democratic state, too, civil society remained important, albeit in a new guise as the third partner in the development triad of state, market and society (Greenstein 2004). The ANC has argued that it is the most legitimate representative of the interests of poor people, counterposing the state as the arena of democracy to social movements as the arena of mobilisation. This formulation is the inverse of the idealised notion of state as site of repression / social movements as site of justice discussed above. On the one hand, this conceptualisation serves to shift popular mobilisation outside of the institutionalised processes of party competition into the non-democratic (or even anarchic) realm.[4] On the other hand, it reinforces popular notions that there is only one politically legitimate vehicle for the representation of poor people's interests, and that vehicle is the party of national liberation. In this version of state-social movement relations, those parts of civil society that are engaged in a partnership with the state are treated as democratically effective, whereas those which challenge the state threaten to undermine democracy.

Reforms in the mechanisms of governance reinforced this new view of the role of civil society as development partner. The new democratic government changed the nature of public decision making to incorporate a high degree of public participation and consultation, including women as a distinct constituency. These governance reforms were driven by the view that civil society has a role to play in the development process itself, both in service delivery in the context of a state whose institutional reach has been limited by apartheid, as well as in ensuring government accountability in periods between general elections. Drafts of policy, in the shape of the Green and White Papers, are formulated with the involvement of key 'stakeholders' in civil society, and often draw on the expertise of academics and lawyers from outside the state. Portfolio committees in parliament, responsible for oversight of government departments, have regular public hearings on particular aspects of administration. Parliament itself is open to the public at all times. Access has been created for women's organisations, as well as the national machinery to debate the content of policies and examine their gender sensitivity at early stages in policy formulation.

It is clear that, in many respects, women in particular have benefited from the new institutional and procedural arrangements in the state. Women are treated as a constituency with special interests which need to be represented in policymaking. The

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[4] For example, see Michael Sachs' comment on the 2004 election results (Sachs 2004).

national gender machinery was designed to provide a bridge between different sectors of the state, as well as between state and society. Thus, in formal terms, the state has been made more permeable to the influence of organized constituencies of women. In practice, as is the case with national machineries worldwide, the South African institutions are elite driven, under-resourced and dependent to a high degree on donor funding. Expertise within the state to mainstream gender is thin; as a result much of the gains made in relation to gender equality are in those areas where policy addresses women directly as a category (for example, termination of pregnancy and maternal health), while those aspects of policy in which the relationships between women and men have to be addressed (for example, customary law, land) have been much harder to define (Albertyn and Hassim 2003, Hassim 2004). Using Nancy Fraser's (1989) distinction between the identity politics of recognition and the class politics of redistribution, it can be argued that while women have been recognised as a group that has suffered particular forms of oppression, there has been little redistribution of resources and power in ways that change the structural forces on which that oppression rests. Recognition has rather been an avenue for reinforcing elite women's access to the formal political system, while not (as yet) translating clearly into policies that address the needs of poor women. The reasons for this are complicated, and have their roots in part in the tense relationship between feminism and the nationalist movement, and in part in the elite biases of the democratic model adopted during the transition. Key actors within the state, as well as in the women's movement, remained suspicious of the intentions of middle class (mostly white) feminists. In addition, they were (correctly) concerned to allow a far more diverse set of voices to be heard in defining policy goals. The combination of these factors meant that more experienced feminist activists were often bypassed in order to reach poor women within communities. As I have argued above, however, this level of women's organisation is least mobilised and is more likely to be dominated by approaches that stress maternalism as a frame for gender recognition. In her study of the Commission on Gender Equality, Gay Seidman shows how pro-poor rhetoric itself marginalised transformatory goals. She comments that:

> During the first five years of South Africa's democratic experience, gender policymakers appeared so insistent on representing the concerns of poor women that they seemed to undermine the likelihood that already mobilised feminists could participate at all in policymaking discussions –perhaps replacing the risk that democratization would undermine links between grassroots women's groups and the professional feminists who staff new state institutions with a different problem. Instead, it seemed likely that privileging grassroots and popular gender concerns would undermine the state's ability to take up more controversial or complicated feminist issues. (Seidman 2003:560)

Where feminist did have technical expertise that could not easily be bypassed (for example feminist lawyers) or where women's advocacy groups were politically well-connected or run by black women (such as the Gender Advocacy Programme), state openness to women facilitated progressive outcomes. Within the constraints of the terms of reference set by bureaucrats[5], feminists were able to make long term gains in embedding gender equality in overarching policy frameworks, and ensuring that in

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[5] An example of this is the ways in which the members of the Lund Committee of Inquiry, among whom were a number of prominent feminists, were restricted by a very narrow budgetary allocation for child support grants (Hassim 2003b).

many cases the details of legislation, such as the Employment Equity Act and the local government policy framework, specified gender equality as a criterion. Catherine Albertyn (2003:604) notes that 'by 2000, women in South Africa enjoyed unprecedented political and legal equality in the form of political participation and entrenched human and legal rights'.

Despite these formal gains, policy vacillation, resource constraints, infrastructural weaknesses and bureaucratic inadequacies have combined to limit the impact of pro-poor policies of the government. This creates tension for those feminists who entered the state on the assumption that it would be a site of strategic intervention. As former ANC MP and Commission on Gender Equality chairperson Thenjiwe Mtintso puts it, 'When I visit ANC constituencies I experience a feeling of guilt about my privileged position and about my claim to represent their interests as women. I have grappled with my feminism and have questioned the extent to which it articulates the urgent needs of poor women' (Mtintso 2003:573). For Pregs Govender, ANC MP and chairperson of the highly effective Joint Monitoring Committee on Women, the tensions between state constraints and her vision for transformation became untenable, and she resigned her seat in Parliament in 2002.

Returning to the distinction made earlier between inclusionary or equality feminism and transformatory feminism, it would seem that in the democratic period it is inclusionary feminism that has dominated the agendas of the leadership of the women's movement. There have indeed been many gains in this strategy. This form of feminism sought to change existing inegalitarian laws and policies, and to entrench the notion of equality in new frameworks. This emphasis was facilitated firstly by the reform processes which sought to overturn racist laws, and secondly by the presence of a critical mass of women in the new parliament. However, the emphasis of equality feminism on engaging the state had three key unintended and unforeseen consequences for the women's movement. The first lies in the impact of institutionalisation of interests on the politics of interest articulation. Creating a set of specialised institutions for the consideration of gender shifted the issues of gender inequality out of the realm of politics and into the technical realm of policymaking. As Banaszek, Beckwith and Rucht (2003:6) point out, this is increasingly a problem with national machineries around the world: 'women's movements have been presented with an increasingly depoliticised and remote set of policy-making agencies at the national level. . . The relocation of responsibility to nonelected state bodies eventually reduces social movement influence'. In the administration, gender equality concerns have fallen hostage to a range of institutional hierarchies and systemic blockages that are hard to deal with from outside the bureaucracy. The second consequence of the dominant focus on reforming the state, is that very few women's organisations are dealing with issues of cultural norms and everyday practices, which may indeed limit the implementation and impact of legislative reforms. Finally, most activists who moved into the state assumed that public resources would be directed in a concerted fashion towards the reduction of the massive inequalities inherited from apartheid. Instead, anti-poverty policies have been mostly ineffective. While quotas for women have been written into state initiatives such as the Community Based Public Works Programme, the racial and gendered biases in the economy remain intact. Black women are still more likely to be unemployed, to be paid less than men when employed, and to perform unpaid labour (Seidman-Makgetla, 2004).

The most notable attempt to engage the state outside of the equality feminist considerations of political and civil rights was the Women's Budget Initiative, which sought to track the ways in which spending had gendered impacts. The project had real possibilities to raise fundamental questions about spending priorities and to highlight the ways in which women were benefiting (or not) from particular policy approaches. However, within a few years the Ministry of Finance, which had initially embraced the Women's Budget Initiative, downgraded the project, and it is now virtually moribund at the national level.

These comments should not be read as meaning that engaging the state was a misguided strategy for the women's movement, or that alliances with political parties necessarily lead to co-option. Rather, what needs to be considered is *how* the state should be engaged, what kinds of legal and institutional reforms should be promoted and how to build a women's movement that is sufficiently mobilised to support a critical engagement with the state. Poor women in South Africa would undoubtedly be better served by a strong state with the infrastructural capacities to implement functional health, welfare and basic service delivery. Removing formal inequalities is also important, as it creates the normative and enabling environment in which women's claims to full citizenship can be pursued. However, it is self-limiting for the women's movement to pursue inclusion in the state in a piecemeal and depoliticised fashion, seeking to include women into existing policy frameworks without questioning whether the overall policy directions are appropriate for poor women, or how to put new areas of policy or lawmaking on the agenda. For example, Neva Seidman-Makgetla points to the limits of law reform in addressing economic inequalities. She argues that 'the laws on equity…did not directly address the economic context of high levels of unemployment and women's lack of economic assets. Nor did they engage persistent inequalities in homes, communities and schools'. What is needed, she argues, is structural transformation 'rather than just better enforcement of anti-discrimination measures' (Seidman-Makgetla 2004:1).

Changing inequities in social and economic power will require not just the increased representation of women within the state, but also the increased and assertive representation of *poor* women within the state. It requires that those elected into power will pursue redistributional policies, and that a vibrant social movement will act to ensure accountability to the interests of marginal and vulnerable groupings. The roles of interest articulation (rather than merely group representation) and accountability require a different form of social movement of women. The reduction of the women's movement to a 'development partner' has long term costs for democracy, as it reduces the ability of the movement to debate the underpinning norms and values of policy directions. These cultural inequalities can only partially be dealt with by more equitable and gender-sensitive policies; they often reflect power relations that cannot be 'remedied' by state action. Rather, they demand that state policies be supplemented by a vibrant debate in the public sphere about the nature of society. They require a type of social movement that is not merely seeking to make piecemeal interventions in the policy and legislative processes of the state, but is engaged with norm-setting at the broadest level. In strategic terms, this also requires a movement that will form appropriate alliances and seek to influence the norms and procedures of alliance partners, whether these are political parties or social movements.

Conclusion

The South African women's movement does not easily meet the criteria of movement strength identified in the first section of the paper. Although South Africa is notable for the extent to which women's collective action resulted in gender equality being inscribed in its Constitution, and in the design of new state institutions and policy making procedures, the paper shows that the women's movement is currently too weak to ensure that these commitments are acted upon in ways that will remove gender inequalities. The understanding that race, class and gender are intertwined forms of oppression, has privileged strategic alliances with other, more powerful political movements such as the ANC and the UDF. While this was an advantage, in that it gave gender activists (over time) entry points into the highest levels of political power, it also served to limit the extent to which the movement was able to develop independent goals and strategies to achieve these. Since the 1990s, this limitation has translated into a movement dominated by a politics of inclusion directed at political elites (first outside and then within the state). In the context of a weakly mobilised movement and without clear and coherent leadership, the effect of this inclusionary politics has been the neglect, or even marginalisation, of those forms of politics that aimed at more fundamental transformations of gender relations of power in the economy and society. In other words, the leadership of the women's movement has tended to operate with an overly narrow conception of the 'political', being focused on the public sphere of the state, while ignoring, for the most part, the spheres of economy and society.

While participation in the national liberation movement was a catalyst for women's political involvement, women's collective action was rarely utilised as the basis to build a strong mass movement of women. This has had consequences for the post-apartheid period, as the emphasis on inclusion in the democratic state has produced an elite-oriented leadership within the movement. Economic restructuring and social crises, most notably HIV/AIDS, have paradoxically created openings for new forms of politics to emerge within communities. However, these localised forms of action have not yet been effectively linked to a feminist political project. As a result, the potentially the synergistic relationship between inclusionary and transformatory approaches to gender politics that was envisioned by the Women's National Coalition, and that is embodied in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality, has not developed. While the first decade of democracy has laid down the basis for progressive policy frameworks and enabling legislation in a number of areas, the next few years will test the ability of the women's movement to ensure that these are implemented in ways that address the needs of poor women.

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