



FROM STATE FEMINISM TO MARKET FEMINISM

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AIMS AND ARGUMENTS

- **STATE FEMINISM:** alliances between women's policy agencies and women's movement activists → their effectiveness in getting state responses
- No longer captures the complexity of the emerging feminist engagements with new forms of governance
- **MARKET FEMINISM:** feminist engagements with public policy agendas increasingly mediated via private sector organisations and according to the logic of the market → embeddedness in neoliberal market reform



THEORY

- Substantive representation of women (SRW)
 - Representatives (parliamentarians) speak on behalf of female constituents by describing their preferences and consciously held interests
- Constitutive representation of gender (CRG)
 - Representatives (including unelected femocrats and gender experts) articulate these interests in ways that inevitably privilege particular conceptions of gender relations



STATE FEMINISM

- A formal operationalized concept, widely used in cross-national analyses
- ‘the actions by women’s policy agencies to include women’s movement demands and actors into the state to produce feminist outcomes in either policy processes or societal impact or both’ (Mazur and McBride 2008)
- the extent to which women’s policy agencies are ‘state *feminist*’ is an empirical question



FACTORS TO STATE FEMINIST SUCCESS

- Difficulty in identifying cross-national factors
- Success likely when:
 1. Women's movement: cohesive and considers the issue high priority
 2. Policy environment: A good fit between movement and policy actors framing of the issue
 3. Women's policy agencies: hard to determine the factors that related to agencies → success depends more on external factors (1 and 2)



CRITIQUE OF STATE FEMINISM

- Privileging particular interests; benefiting small female elites; focusing on issues compatible with dominant state policies
- States have embraced women's movements and policy agencies' discourses → adopted them to their own neoliberal priorities
- *Theoretically*: women's policy agencies have then not just 'represented women' but also *constituted* gender identities via their representational practices → generating both productive and disciplinary narratives of gender relations.



CHALLENGES TO STATE FEMINISM:

1. NEW FORMS OF GOVERNANCE

- Reconfigured state (uploading, downloading, lateral loading and off-loading of state powers) (Banaszak, Beckwith and Rucht 2003)
- Roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism
- New notions of good governance:
 - Interaction between public/private, collective/individual actors → different partnerships
 - Market mechanisms the regularoty ideal of efficient government (accountability, audit and budget discipline)
 - Public servants turned into 'calculating selves'



EFFECTS ON FEMINIST ACTIVISM

- Women's movement faces a diverse set of institutions, depoliticized and remote set of state policy-making institutions → increased access points >< reduced inclusion
- NGOs empowered financially and organisationally
- Evidence-based inputs prioritised → NGOs interventions framed in objective rather than interest-based terms



2. NEW FORMS OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM:

(I) PROFESSIONALIZATION

- Producing expert knowledge into policy-making
- Feminist organizations increase levels of organizational stability and funding
- Growth of consultancy services, "gender experts"
- Activists accountable to funding bodies rather than political constituents
- Use of economic arguments
- Depoliticization
- A good example: gender mainstreaming (tools such as gender impact assessment) → reduced, static understanding of gender



(II) TRANSNATIONALIZATION

- Increased importance of transnational activism → Transnational advocacy networks (TANs) (Keck and Sikkink 1998)
- Successful in enactment of international treaties on women's rights/gender equality
- Spread of gender mainstreaming a good example
- Boomerang effects (more effective than national level lobbying? E.g. Violence in Finland)



MARKET FEMINISM

- Market feminism seeks to promote gender equality by turning to the channels and mechanisms offered by the market
- The term seeks to capture the institutionalization of the new norms in feminist practices and priorities
- We highlight the emergence of a different form of disciplinary discourse at play
- Not an inherently problematic or positive development



CASE STUDIES

- Focus on changing
 - (i) *Practices*: foregrounding the offloading of policy agency activities to NGOs and its implications of women's movements
 - (ii) *Priorities*: foregrounding the rise of the language of economic efficiency and its implications for the pursuit of gender equality
- Three selected cases: Australia and New Zealand, Chile, and the EU
 - In all three, state feminism well established and researched, and neoliberalism normalized
 - The importance of context



AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

- The cases illustrate the ways in which neoliberalism fundamentally shapes the context where state feminists operate
- *Australia* (see e.g. Marian Sawer):
 - Former pioneer, coined the term ‘femocrats’
 - Closer of women’s policy agencies in the 2000s in the name of efficiency and impartiality
 - Changing funding patters make the position of the agencies more precarious and shape their agendas and policy priorities: short term projects, contracting out, new forms of control (e.g. advance notice to government about media activity)



- *New Zealand* (see e.g. Kathy Teghtsoonian):
 - Women's Affairs Ministry in Aoteara/New Zealand went to great lengths to adopt market feminism → implemented new planning, budget and accountability processes, and moved away from more feminist participatory forms of organizing
 - New priorities and language: VAW and women's unemployment framed as 'important indicators of inefficiency' in service delivery
 - Agencies can survive through the adoption of new practices and priorities that are complicit with the market agenda



CHILE

- Relationship between the women's movement and women's policy agencies (state feminist literature: strong movement, close links, accountability)
- Women's policy agencies subcontract to feminist NGOs to advise on or carry out government women's programmes → need for visible impact and quantifiable project results → gender experts vs. feminist activists
- See e.g. Susan Franceschet, Sonia Alvarez



EUROPEAN UNION

- Gender mainstreaming in the EU → illustrates the subtlety of the processes through which market feminism can occur
- Women's policy agencies, women's movements have adopted the language of GM as a strategic tool
- Technical, bureaucratic, integrationist form (>< participatory, transformative, agenda-setting)
- The form in which it is adopted can provide legitimacy to neoliberal market reform
- Arguments framed in economic terms



CONCLUSIONS

- From state feminism to market feminism?
- Uneven context-specific patterns
- Emergence of market feminism creates both new threats and new opportunities for feminist politics
 - Normalization of neoliberalism
 - New flexible institutions pursuing gender equality, new forms of political engagement
- Need to explore the different disciplinary and productive possibilities offered by each

