Mujeres en el Mundo:
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Women organizing against free trade in Latin America

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"One of our main arguments is that even if the feminist and women’s movements have engaged in the issue of violence they have not linked it to the issue of the economy. Free trade, globalization, that is also a sort of violence against women so what we try to do is put the issues related to trade, economic integration in the agenda of all women so they can become as interested and willing to participate as men in these debates"

Maria Atlano, RMALC and Women's committee at the Hemispheric Social Alliance HSA, dec. 2004

Introduction

The point of departure of this essay is that global restructuring, free trade and integration processes have not been sufficiently linked to women and feminist struggles and yet women are a very important part of the mass mobilizations that civil society has organized to protest big capital globalization from Seattle to Cancun. Moreover those studies that have focused on social organizing around free trade issues lack the different women actors perspective that can only be obtained through field work. This paper’s aim is to try to contribute to start filling this gap. Accordingly, the goal is to analyze how a gender perspective is being built/integrated into the anti-free trade discourses and movements and if this perspective is capable of mobilizing and impacting at three levels: the grassroots of the mobilization opposing free trade, the women’s movement in Latin America and finally the targeted international/national structures.
In particular, the following questions are addressed: which are the conditions that activate feminist groups’ resistance to global restructuring and free trade?, how is a gender perspective being integrated in free trade discussions and in relation to other more “traditional” themes among women and feminist coalitions in Latin America and what kind of strategies and coordination efforts are these groups developing? This is part of a major project dealing with women as transnational actors in the case of NAFTA (see footnote 1).

Global restructuring and women agency

For some time now, scholars have addressed the mixed outcomes of global economic restructuring on gender interactions. For example, for some, trade liberalization has entailed positive results for women working in export processing zones (EZP) and in the maquiladora (in bond processing factories) sector (Kabeer 2004). Nevertheless, some others point to the negative costs of global restructuring policies such as trade liberalization whose cost may mainly on women’s shoulders and other marginalized sectors. In particular, academic work has underscored how global economic restructuring policies such as structural adjustment programs and/or trade liberalization are not gendered neutral policies and have had relevant impacts on women (Beneria 1992; Brodie 1994; Chan and Ross 2003; Domínguez, Icaza Garza, et.al. forthcoming; Evers 2003; Runyan Sissons 1997).

In the long term, the implementation of the major neo-liberal designs favoring a more effective capital mobility all over the world and processes of regional integration through free trade have provoked a new phenomenon that was not contemplated by its designers: the reaction of some sectors of civil society affected by these processes who are trying to get organized in order to re-direct this process. Central to these responses are women’s organizations, which have found each other beyond borders. Overcoming ideological, political and other kind of differences, these women have found common areas of concern and are elaborating common strategies and tactics at the local level to resist the effects of global restructuring.

In some cases, women and feminist groups through transnational networking activities have been able to stimulate a public debate around the dominant neoliberal paradigm on development and to promote public deliberation and public scrutiny as a way to encourage participation and inclusion in decision making processes. Women and feminist groups’ opposition to free trade agreements and global restructuring in Latin America have unfolded amidst intensifying conditions of globalization that activate potentialities for action in different forms and extents.

Free trade agreements have constituted policy options to ‘catch up’ with processes of regional integration through trade and investment liberalization (e.g. Central American Free Trade Agreement-CAFTA) or through subordinating sectors/activities of national economies to the requirements of global and regional markets (e.g. North American Free Trade Agreement-NAFTA). These arrangements together with the privatization and decentralization of state’s assets that have accompanied processes of global restructuring encouraged oppositional and self-protective social forces as well as diverse policy steps that have aimed to overturn these forms of resistance and dissent (Icaza Garza 2004).

Moreover, contemporary policies of economic deregulation have tended to privilege certain groups in society, mainly private big entrepreneurial groups, to the detriment of vast economic sectors such as peasantry and small and medium enterprises. Private interests groups, market actors and some sectors within civil society have found a way to impact on – and in numerous cases to directly participate in economic and political forms of governance (e.g. non-profit associations in the regulation of the telecommunication sector). In some cases women and feminists group’s transnational activism is not only about resistance to free trade but also about how to share its benefits/costs.

Therefore, among women and feminists’ groups in Latin America some have acquired visibility and, through their influence, the capability to shape state’s policy. Numerous private intermediary bodies such as pro-women and pro-gender NGOs have emerged as a powerful and influential “elite” within political processes displacing popular organizations which have increasingly lost public presence in negotiation and decision-making processes (Alvarez 1998).

In particular, women and feminist transnational resistance to free trade have contributed to identify how the power they are trying to fight or influence is no longer solely concentrated in the state but also at supra-national levels. For example, there has been an increasing concern among local civil society organizations in Mexico dealing with issues of gender, trade and democracy regarding the impact that market actors and supranational institutions have in the making/re-making of official discourses. Thus an adaptation of women’s movements’ discourses to a globalized reality has been a necessity although the process is neither uniform nor unproblematic.

There is much literature presenting the experiences and possibilities of cross-border resistance that covers regional forums and world conferences on different issues, diverse thematic networks (see Alvarez 1999, Marchand and Runyan 2000, Friedman, Hochstetter and Clark 2001). Our concept of resistances is inspired by Marchand and Runyan ideas, in the sense that we consider that resistances can be seen as actions against a certain order which can be perceived as permanent or transitional but nonetheless harmful to the interests of a certain group. These actions can be defensive but also “propositive” and account for both large scale mobilizations and day to day practices and strategies (Marchand, Runyan 2000: 19). In the cases we examine below the resistance has taken the form of critical and propositive networks monitoring the known and possible consequences of free trade for most of the population and women of the popular sectors in particular.
Transcontinental resistances to free trade in the Americas as resistance to globalization

The Sub-regional Northern responses: NAFTA

Civil society’s response to NAFTA started some years before the actual agreement came into force. Since the early 1990’s, national and transnational organizations, as well as environmental organizations, took place and ad-hoc organizations like Action Canada Network, Common Frontiers, Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) and the Mexican Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC) started to operate and collaborate (Barry 1999; Macdonald 1994 and 1999; Liebowitz 2000). Although not always agreeing as to their final aim these and other organizations formed powerful alliances. Moreover, even if the treaty was formally only a free-trade agreement it had included two parallel treaties on labour and environmental issues that could be regarded as providing some ground to impact on trade-related issues.

Gender issues were not considered from the beginning even if there were some women’s groups participating actively in the opposition to the NAFTA initiative in both Canada and Mexico (Macdonald L. 2002). These groups had less influence within RMALC in Mexico than in the Action Canada Network, of which the Canadian National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) was a key player (Gabriel and Macdonald 1994 cited by Dominguez 2002: 223). However, there was already the space opened by Mar del Plata and Beijing.

As we have already observed, gender issues were not part of the mainstream of the joint analyses, discussions and criticisms that the anti-NAFTA organizations elaborated in those first years of the treaty. Nonetheless, women started networking around these questions in an informal way quite early. As already mentioned, women’s groups in Canada had already seriously started organizing in 1984 around the first free trade agreement with the U.S. and were very important actors during the massive national debate and election on free trade in 1988. In fact, contacts between Mexico and Canada were already on their way since 1989 with visits from women representatives from the above mentioned organizations to Mexico who met with trade unionists, teacher and other women’s groups.

At the beginning of the 1990s, these contacts multiplied in the form of invitations, training courses, conferences and sharing in a systematic way experiences and differences regarding economic restructuring and organizing (Gabriel and Macdonald 1994a: 21). Also, in 1991 the Canadian-based “Women to Women Global Strategies” and the British Columbia “Federation of Labour Women’s Committee” sponsored a joint tour on free trade to which two Mexican women activists were invited. From these women, Canadian activists learned of organizing strategies that moved beyond the workplace into the neighborhood using methods linked to cultural dimensions (Gabriel and Macdonald 1994a: 21). In 1992 the first Tri-national Working Women’s Conference on Free Trade and Continental Integration was organized, and women from the US, Canada and Mexico began to explore and share in a systematic way their experiences and differences regarding economic restructuring and organizing (bid). In fact, these encounters were a major source of inspiration for the women of FAT (Frente Auténtico del Trabajo) that formed a coalition of independent trade unions active within RMALC to start organizing women’s groups within their organizations and to link the analysis of their problems to NAFTA.

Another sort of tri-national cooperation among women was also promoted by a small NGO, “Mujer a Mujer”, an organisation with offices in Mexico and links in the United States and Canada, which unfortunately dissolved some years ago because of lack of resources (Macdonald 1999: 63-64). “Mujer a Mujer” worked at the level of public education and lobbying as well as training programmes and focused on a gendered and ethnic analysis of the impact of global restructuring on women and possible alternative strategies (Gabriel and Macdonald 1994a: 21).

New reports and analyses started also to appear. Given that economic integration in the case of NAFTA is based on a cheap labor model, the experience of the Mexican maquiladoras was particularly significant. Thus, women from the trade union movement in Mexico became key actors regarding gender analysis of the consequences of NAFTA. In 1997 we find such an analysis prepared by both FAT and RMALC, “The women and the TLC (NAFTA) three years after its coming into force.” This document started by pointing out the importance of the parallel agreements to NAFTA regarding labor and environment that opened for the first time the possibility of having access to supra-national institutions whose creation was considered as an achievement. Afterwards the report focused on the consequences of NAFTA for women working for the export industry, the maquiladora industries. It criticized the treaty as being mostly a way to favor international investments that do not respect international legislation regarding workers rights and environmental norms (despite the parallel agreements) or even ethical behavior codes. It demanded the respect of ILO’s norms concerning women workers protection and the creation of special funds in order to open new job alternatives. Both of these demands were specifically addressed to external actors, transnational companies or international organizations like the World Bank, the latter being hold responsible for structural adjustment policies. There was nevertheless a special chapter on the state’s responsibility regarding social coverage. This chapter concluded with a demand to make visible women’s contribution to production and the economy in general.

It is interesting to notice how references to international norms and structures regarding their link with economic restructuring, appear from the beginning of this report. The same issues will come back in the gender chapters at the continental level as we shall presently see.

From this report and other activities we can observe that in the case of NAFTA, gender issues appear mainly linked to the maquiladora labor problems where
women represented a majority of the workers. However, women from other sectors, like the informal sectors of the economy, that increased after NAFTA implementation, were rarely taken into account. From the end of the 80s we see tri-national coordinated strategies in form of networks and coalitions like the “Coalition for Justice of the Maquilladoras” CIM that appeared in 1989 or the CFO (Comité Fronterizo de Obreras).  

Also, it is important to notice that perhaps to the exception of Canada, the broad feminist and women’s movements in North America did really get engaged issues like model of development, free trade or globalization in general. Other themes like violence, political participation, sexuality continued to concentrate the axis of action of these movements.  

The regional response at the hemispheric level: FTAA and HSA

The project of creating a free-trade area encompassing the whole continent started to be negotiated in 1998 bringing together several civil society organizations that had already been collaborating against NAFTA since the beginning of the 90s. These organizations and their networks representing all countries in the continent formed a broad coalition called the Hemispheric Social Alliance, HSA (or Alianza Social Continental, ASC). This coalition became responsible for broad mobilizations parallel to the different summits within the negotiating framework of the FTAA and for the discussion and research on all themes linked to free trade and economic restructuring. Women and gender issues were such a theme but not surprisingly they were not given the same space and status as other issues. Nevertheless, gender initiatives started to unfold at the same time that HSA. For example, at the “Summit of the People of the Americas” gathered in Santiago de Chile in April 1998 parallel to the FTAA summit a resolution regarding gender issues was put forward. “Hacia una agenda Social Continental con Equidad de Género” (“Towards a Social Continental agenda within a context of Gender Equity”) was an outcome of the discussion within the forum dedicated to women issues. More than 200 women representing organizations from Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Brasil, Bolivia, Peru, Cuba, Colombia, Nicaragua and the border region between Mexico-US and US-Canada-Quebec participated in such a forum.  

This document took up the issue already discussed since Mar del Plata in 1994, concerning the negative effects of a development model based upon economic liberalization. To some extent, the analysis contained in this document becomes broader as regard to gender issues probably due to some lessons learned from NAFTA negotiations and implementation and role that gender issues played in these processes. Furthermore, this document identified certain trends like an increasing sex segregated labor market, men’s massive migration to the US as well as patterns of feminine migration provoked by economic restructuring as common realities among Latin American and Caribbean communities. It proposed alternative economic policies that would take into account the impacts of such policies according to gender, ethical and class factors. It also argued for a democratic participation of all sectors of society in the different commissions dealing with processes of economic integration, the application of an international “code of conduct” for all transnational companies and for a compensatory mechanism that would take account of the socio-economic disparities among countries.

It is important to notice that most of the activists behind these efforts and resolutions came from labor organizations or NGOs working on these issues. However, the broad feminist and women movement was still absent even at the time of the organization of the Women’s March towards the year 2000.  

Despite the lack of an official space, that is to say of a space recognized by the HSA organizers, women activists of the different networks in the region continued to discuss gender issues at the various meetings organized by the HSA. They organized once again a women forum at the HSAs’ second people summit in Quebec in 2001 where the first drafts of the first joint document produced by the organization Alternatives for the Americas were discussed. Although these drafts initially did not address specifically gender issues, under the pressures of women’s groups and networks of the whole continent a ‘gender chapter’ was incorporated and several gender issues were integrated into other chapters.  

In the ‘gender chapter’, there were similar analyses to the ones developed before regarding the impact of economic liberalization on women as family members and workers. Themes like the democratic participation of women in trade negotiations were also raised, but there was more emphasis than before on the diversity and plurality of women’s groups. The final demands were addressed to both trade agreements and governments making clear the shared responsibility of the national and the supra-national level. The chapter also stressed the need for all trade treaties to respect international agreements like CEDAW (Convention for the Eradication of all forms of Discrimination against Women), the Platform for Action from Beijing and the UN Declaration on Human Rights. The responsibility of transnational capital was again underlined in the form of an international code of behavior for all multinational companies and foreign investors in order to protect women workers’ rights against different types of discrimination and sexual harassment. It is interesting to note that such codes were expected to respect both national laws and international norms. In the monitoring of such compliance civil society’s organizations were to be allowed to participate. At the same time women’s access to the positive aspects of globalization - that is, information and communications technologies- was encouraged. (Hemispheric Social Alliance 2002).

The group behind this chapter became formally known as the HSA women’s committee. This is a group formed by several women organizations associated with labour, environment, free-trade and economical issues. In their first bulletin published
in 2004 this group presented itself as "an informal group of women who have formed a committee within the HSA." Thus they acknowledged that their space within the HSA had not yet been formalized, their meetings were still at the margins of the big meetings of the HSA without having a formal place in the coalition's agenda. Besides, they started to confront certain conflicts. These differences, according to one of the Mexican representatives, were similar to those appearing in other women coalitions or networks: there were those favoring a feminist activism, working mainly with women and those in favor of an equity approach, a gender approach involving both men and women.66

After Quebec there was a strategic meeting of the women's committee in the Dominican Republic in the same year (2002). A strategic plan and the main principles of the committee were elaborated at this meeting:

- a critical analysis and a rejection of the FTAA, the empowerment of women to fight neo-liberal processes, to empower the women of the HSA, the creation of alternatives from a gender perspective, the implementation of strategies for advocacy and mobilization, a proposal to the HSA to create strategies around regional bilateral accords and the recognition of the contribution of feminist thought as key analysis and commitment to challenge gender inequalities.67

Although these principles can be considered as general they show that women in this committee were conscious of a double struggle, the one against the integration schemes and the model of development they rejected, and the one against their own organization in order to strengthen their position and proposals. Their space within the HSA was not taken for granted.

The principles stated above were to be implemented by working with individual women, with organizations and networks, through campaigns and grassroots groups, highlighting through a bulletin (that started to appear in mid 2004) their work on issues like FTAA, CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement) and other bi-lateral agreements as well as other important issues of concern like access to essential services, militarization and violence linking them to the free trade model in the Americas region. Also by being active in the HSA operating committee they hoped to strengthen it as a larger alliance (ibid).

In the above mentioned meeting in the Dominican Republic it was also decided to start with certain research activities on concrete issues. Groups in Brazil and Bolivia were to elaborate case studies regarding women’s participation in the struggles against water privatization.68 These studies were presented at the 1st Americas Social Forum in Quito in July 2004.69 It is interesting to observe that these studies were presented as examples of the concrete incidence of globalization and free trade (in the sense of the privatization of social services like the provision of water) in the lives of women, of indigenous groups and of environmental problems. But they were also shown as evidence that well-articulated mobilizations at the local level with transnational support can achieve a disruption of such privatization processes and articulate a feasible resistance movement.

The Women’s Committee continued its networking and meetings during 2003 and 2004 at the various regional HSA meetings but also in relation with other events as the WTO meeting in Cancun. In Brasilia in 2003 the committee discussed the WTO meeting and one of its members, the Latin American chapter of the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) published a declaration on the issues to be discussed in Cancun and how these affected women (Mujeres ante la OMC). Issues like the erosion of agriculture subsidies, trade in services (the Singapour themes) and intellectual property rights were presented as dangerous traps. Thus, the declaration urged women to press their governments not to make any concessions on such issues.70 We see once more how the demands towards the state combine with those to international/global actors or how the transnational mobilization combines with the national.

In Brasilia the Mexican members of the Committee announced that they were organizing for the WTO Cancun meeting an international seminar on the gender perspective of the WTO. The whole committee approved and supported the project. Such a seminar took place in Cancun with a large audience. As a result of the event a strategic plan was designed.71

The women’s committee was also present, even in an informal way at the HSA Miami meeting parallel to the FTAA minister’s meeting in 2003 and afterwards at the planning meetings sponsored by the Continental Campaign against the FTAA and the HSA in Havana Cuba in 2004. However in Cuba more contradictions and differences within the Women’s committee became visible. According to the Mexican coordinator these had to do with a “leadership style” regarding geographical areas. Since the meeting in the Dominic Republic the hemisphere had been divided in 3 regions coordinated by a country of the region: the South by Brazil, the Andean countries by Peru and the North and Center by Canada. In Cuba there was a discussion to convince representatives from the Mexican organizations to coordinate the Northern and Central part. Although the Mexican group was reluctant to assume the leadership they finally had to accept in order to mediate the intra-regional conflict.72

Apart from these leadership problems there was a growing dissatisfaction with the gender chapter approved in 2002 and a process of re-élaboration of such a chapter was started giving more emphasis to the gender equality aspect. The Mexican group within the Committee proposed to carry out a survey among women at the grassroots level, in part to open the discussion in order to give more legitimacy to the process but also with the view of getting new ideas and alternatives. A smaller committee with Guatemala, Argentina and Colombia was selected to take charge of this task. However, the only country that succeeded in carrying out this survey on time was
Mexico whose representatives proposed as an alternative solution to send a proposal to the three coordinating countries so they would discuss it and bring their comments to the Social Forum in Porto Alegre at the beginning of February 2005.4

In spite of all this activism, the Mexican coordinator expressed her concerns that in Mexico, only certain groups within the feminist and women’s movement and mostly in Mexico City were mobilized and active within these issues.5 In the rest of Mexico there was very little work done in contrast to other issues that traditionally-mobilized women and feminist networks, for example the issue of violence. Thus, establishing the link between violence and for example economic restructuring and free trade that can be considered as another kind of violence affecting women is one of the main challenges for anti-free trade feminist activists: “to put the issues related to trade and economic integration in the agenda of all women so that they can become as interested and willing to participate in these debates as men”.6

Final reflections

We can observe how the NAFTA’s resistance movements are centered on labor issues because of structural conditions that link the maquiladora model of investment to transnational capital. The official discourses in the case of NAFTA focuses on the importance of foreign investments and on the reduction of state involvement in the economy. This situation has led to a clear polarization between the state and transnational capital on the one side and social actors critical to this kind of regional integration –among which women workers and diverse NGOs on the other. The actions of resistance from the part of women groups have been based on this polarization but also on the frustrating but nevertheless ongoing process of institutionalization through the parallel agreements. Moreover, this sort of regional integration has a big potential regarding coordination of civil society. The progress of these actors concerning women’s issues in Latin America has been modest in terms of institutionalization but rather strong in terms of grassroots tri-national organizing. Regarding the actors involved in this contesting process, as we have seen, it is mostly women workers organizations (either trade unions or NGOs) whereas middle class feminist activists have not yet joined the protest failing to link their traditional issues with those related to free trade and regionalization.

The difficulty to integrate other sectors of society and other countries in this anti-trade organized resistance may also have to do with the fact that it is not easy to distinguish the effects of free trade and the link of such a phenomena with all kinds of economic restructuring/privatization policies elsewhere in Latin America. It may be the case that in the realities of for example the Southern Cone such issues are not as visible as in Mexico and Central America. Thus the anti-free trade resistance movement may have to develop other kinds of tactics and strategies, as in the case of Bolivia where efforts were concentrated on the water anti-privatization campaign.

Regarding the resistance against free trade at the continental level we have seen how the activist women in the HSA face several challenges. They must create a feminist profile within integration and free trade issues, they must link these issues to those engaging grassroots in the wide feminist and women’s movements in the hemisphere and they must consolidate and legitimize their own space within the broad anti-free trade movement in the continent and within the other anti-globalization mobilization efforts in the region (like the world social forum’s meetings in Porto Alegre or Quito or the anti-WTO demonstrations). Finally, they must reach and convince women from all social sectors in the continent that free trade and economic restructuring are issues that concern them. To achieve this they must overcome ideological conflicts and cultural differences and create strategies that combine the struggle against the state with the one against international institutions.

This task is not easy but given the precedents regarding the impressive achievements the transnational broad women’s movement has obtained (especially since Beijing) one has to be optimistic. Several opportunities have been created and recreated by these groups and much more may be accomplished. To measure the success of these efforts in the present moment is somewhat premature as their movement has just started but given the experiences we have presented it certainly promises to go far.

References


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Frente Autentico del Trabajo, 1997, “Las Mujeres y el TLC a tres años de vigencia”, *Cuadernos de Trabajo*.


**Notes**

1 The research project is “Resistance to global capital at the local level: solidarity links and women workers’ networking strategies in Mexico.” The project is being financed by SIDA-SAREC, the Swedish International Development Agency during 2004-2006. Thanks to this financing the necessary field work leading to the material presented in this paper has been gathered.

2 For example, the chapter ‘Gender in the global economy and Local Resistances’ deal with these issues. This document was produced for the First Social Forum in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Enlazando Alternativas* held parallel to the Third Summit European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean in Guadalajara Mexico on May 2004. This report is available at: http://www.enlazandoalternativas.org/

3 For the Mexican organizations working through RMALC, the struggle against NAFTA has always been linked to finding alternative ways of integration, but not rejecting integration as a whole. For the Canadians and Americans, the main goal of resistance has been the abrogation of both the FTA and NAFTA and the stopping of FTA (Free Trade for the Americas). See Domínguez 2002.

4 The Mur de Plata Conference was the meeting that gathered all proposal for the Latin American Platform to be presented at the Women World Conference in Beijing. At Mur de Plata there was a workshop organized on the theme: Women confronting globalisation and a continental network of women workers (‘Red de Mujeres trabajadoras’) was created with participants from different trade unions and NGOs from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Chile (Domínguez 2002).
5 Direct information from Marjorie Griffin Cohen (2004) who was at the time co-chair of NAC.


7 Maquiladoras are off shore foreign owned factories mostly situated in the border area Mexico-US. They assemble all kinds of industrial products and at the beginning recruited mainly women workers. In late years, the proportion of women workers has decreased and many of these factories move to the South, to other parts of Mexico or to Central America and the Caribbean trying to find even cheaper labour.

8 “Las mujeres y el TLC a tres años de vigencia”, Cuadernos de Trabajo, FAT (1997)

9 For more information and analysis on these organizing efforts see Domínguez 2002 and Domínguez 2007.


11 Matilde Arteaga, FAT/RMALC “Hacia una agenda Social Continental con Equidad de Género” (Towards a Social Continental agenda within a context of Gender Equity).

12 Ibid.

13 This march was a global campaign organized since 1998 in order to protest against the effects of neoliberal policies in women’s lives. It seems that the same networks active at the continental level in anti-free-trade movements got involved in the organization of this march that was to culminate as a women giant demonstration with groups from all over the world, in front of the headquarters of the World Bank, IMF and the United Nations. The coordinator of this campaign in Mexico was Matilde Arteaga leader of the women within the FAT (see above) and also part of the Mexican delegation to Santiago in 1998. Interview with Arteaga 1998.


16 The latter was the position of the Mexican coordinating group. Interview with the Mexican coordinator of the women’s committee Maria Atilano. Mexico City dec. 2004.

17 Bilingual Bulletin by Women for Women in the Americas, Ibid. p. 4.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Las mujeres en la defensa del agua como derecho humano fundamental”, Women’s Committee, HSA. To be downloaded at: www.asc-hsa.org


22 Interview with Maria Atilano, dec. 2004.

23 Ibid: according to Maria Atilano this coordination would be assumed in a collective way by representatives from different groups in Mexico.

24 Several women groups from the region have been present at the meetings of the World Social Forum since it started in Porto Alegre in 2001. Some of them are part of anetwork, Articulación Feminista MARCOSUR gathering also several of the groups participating in the Women’s committee of the HSA. They are particularly active in these forums organizing workshops, campaigns and other activities. See Celiberti Lilian, “El Movimiento Feminista y los nuevos espacios regionales globales” in Jelin 2002.

25 It’s mostly NGOs and networks like the network of gender and economy or gender and the environment but few trade unions, to the exception of the FAT.

26 According to Atilano this link between violence and free trade or economic issues has been done in the case of the murdered women in Ciudad Juarez, many of which were maquiladora worker. However, these linking efforts are still insufficient.