

Université de Montréal

The Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy:  
Building Bridges Between Economic Justice and Gender Equity

par

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## ABSTRACT

How can we explain that gender has become a more visible issue in recent years inside social movement coalitions critical of free trade agreements in Latin America? What has been the role of feminist networks in this process? What have been their strategies in order to build bridges between gender and trade issues? What have been the challenges and outcomes of their work? This research will address these questions by looking at one of the transnational feminist networks that has actively participated in the construction of critical discourse of free trade agreements in the Americas: the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy (*Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía* – REMTE).

The research analyze REMTE's dynamics of transnationalization, its strategies to counter gendered power relations inside transnational collective action and the contribution of this network to social movement coalitions and women's organizations at the national scale. I argue that transnational networking has allowed REMTE to bring gender into the debate of Latin American social movement coalitions - the Hemispheric Social Alliance- and spaces like the World Social Forum. At the same time, REMTE's organizations have been empowered because of their access to economic debates and higher visibility and recognition at the national scale. This research to contribute to an understanding of REMTE as a transnational network that act with an "identity-solidarity" logic (Alvarez 2000), in contrast to an "advocacy" logic targeting the state or international institutions.

**KEY WORDS:** *women's movement, transnational collective action, feminism, Latin America, social movements, free trade coalitions.*

## RESUMÉ

Comment peut-on expliquer le gain de visibilité de la perspective de genre dans les dernières années à l'intérieur des coalitions des mouvements sociaux critiques des accords de libre-échange en Amérique latine? Quel a été le rôle des réseaux féministes dans ce processus? Quelles ont été les stratégies utilisées afin de construire des ponts entre les enjeux de genre et ceux liés au libre-échange? Quels sont les défis et résultats de ce travail? Ce mémoire porte sur ces questions en étudiant le cas d'un réseau féministe transnational qui participe activement dans la construction d'un discours critique face aux accords de libre-échange dans les Amériques: le Réseau latino-américain des femmes de transformation de l'économie (*Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía* – REMTE).

Cette recherche analyse les dynamiques de transnationalisation de REMTE, les stratégies utilisées pour transformer les relations de pouvoir entre hommes et femmes dans l'action collective transnationale et la contribution de ce réseau aux coalitions des mouvements sociaux et aux organisations des femmes à l'échelle nationale. Mon argument est que le réseautage transnational a permis à REMTE d'amener la question de genre dans le débat des coalitions des mouvements sociaux latino-américains – l'Alliance Social Continentale – et dans les espaces de convergence, tels que le Forum Social Mondial. En même temps, les organisations membres de REMTE ont été "empowered" grâce à leur participation aux débats économiques et à l'augmentation de leur visibilité et de leur reconnaissance à l'échelle nationale. La présente recherche contribue à la compréhension de REMTE en tant que réseau transnational qui agit dans une logique axée sur l'identité et la solidarité (Alvarez 2000), plutôt que dans une logique de plaidoyer (advocacy) face aux états ou aux institutions internationales.

**MOTS CLÉS:** *mouvements de femmes, action collective transnationale, féminisme, Amérique latine, mouvements sociaux, coalitions face au libre-échange.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND FEMINISM.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS’ THEORIES.....	14
1.1.1 <i>Defining transnational collective action .....</i>	14
1.1.2 <i>Explaining the emergence of transnational collective action.....</i>	18
1.1.3 <i>Defining targets and strategies .....</i>	21
1.1.4 <i>Evaluating impacts of transnational networking.....</i>	23
1.2 FEMINIST CRITIQUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF TRANSNATIONAL COLLECTIVE ACTION .....	25
1.2.1 <i>Gendering the transnational scale: making power dynamics visible .....</i>	26
1.2.2 <i>Explaining the emergence of transnational action “from below”.....</i>	29
1.2.3 <i>Different logics of association, strategies and diversified targets.....</i>	31
1.2.4 <i>Assessing impacts of transnational networking.....</i>	34
<b>CHAPTER 2 .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>BUILDING A TRANSNATIONAL GRASSROOTS FEMINIST NETWORK .....</b>	<b>37</b>
2.1 EXPLAINING REMTE’S EMERGENCE .....	38
2.1.1 <i>Context: economic transformations and emerging mobilizations against free trade.....</i>	39
2.1.2 <i>Transnational spaces.....</i>	40
2.1.3 <i>Women’s interest in creating REMTE.....</i>	42
2.2 DIVERSIFYING TARGETS: WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT COALITIONS .....	46
2.2.1 <i>Choosing strategies: REMTE’s emphasis on grassroots feminism .....</i>	49
2.2.2 <i>Alliances with global justice movements.....</i>	52
2.2.3 <i>Framing Free Trade Agreements as a Women’s Issue.....</i>	57
2.2.4 <i>Popular education and capacity building .....</i>	61
<b>CHAPTER 3 .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>ASSESSING CONTRIBUTIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKING .....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1 BRINGING FEMINISM INTO SOCIAL MOVEMENT COALITIONS .....	65
3.1.1 <i>Gendering the debate: impacts on agenda setting and discursive frameworks.....</i>	67
3.1.2 <i>Recognizing women’s agency: changes in the organization .....</i>	73
3.1.3 <i>Making diversity and feminism a core principle in social movement coalitions.....</i>	79
3.2 REINFORCING WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS AT THE NATIONAL SCALE .....	84
3.2.1 <i>Impacts on agenda setting and discursive frameworks .....</i>	88
3.2.2 <i>Empowerment of women’s organization skills, recognition and legitimacy .....</i>	91
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>VII</b>
A. PEOPLE INTERVIEWED.....	VII
B. INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	VIII
C. ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONSTITUTE REMTE .....	IX
D. WOMEN’S DECLARATIONS .....	X

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALAI	Agencia Latinoamericana de Información Latin American Information Agency
ALCA	Area de Libre Comercio de las Américas Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
AMARC	Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias World Association of Communitarian Radio
ANAMURI	Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas Rural and Indigenous Women's National Association
ASC	Alianza Social Continental Hemispheric Social Alliance
ASF	Americas Social Forum
CLACSO	Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales Latin American Social Science Council
CLOC	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo Latin American Coordination of Peasant's Organizations
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador Ecuador's Confederation of Indigenous Nations
FTAA	Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
HSA	Hemispheric Social Alliance
IGTN	International Gender and Trade Network
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MST	Movimento Sem Terra Landless Movement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
REMTE	Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía Latin American Network Women Transforming the Economy
RMALC	Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio Mexican Action Network on Free Trade
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

Parafraseando a Bertolt Brecht

Hay *mujeres* que luchan un día y son *buenas*.

Hay *otras* que luchan un año y son mejores.

Hay quienes luchan muchos años, y son muy *buenas*.

Pero hay las que luchan toda la vida: esas son las imprescindibles.

Gracias a las mujeres y a los hombres  
que construyen día a día ese mundo más justo y equitativo

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## INTRODUCTION

Latin American countries experienced important neoliberal economic transformations in the last 20 years: from structural adjustment programs to free trade agreements<sup>1</sup>. Social movements in the region organized in coalitions against such international processes, for example the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) and spaces of convergence like the World Social Forum (WSF). Feminists have been actively participating in these coalitions to bring a gender perspective to the general analysis and debate of the movements. Free trade agreements have been traditionally seen as a matter of “expert” –mostly male- economists even among those critical of neoliberal globalization. Though feminization of poverty is a reality, women are not just victims of globalization and structural adjustment programs; they are also organizing resistance to free trade and contributing to the building of alternatives.

In an article published in 2005, Macdonald argued that despite the inclusive language of social movement coalitions, the gendered dimensions of trade was not very present during the mobilization against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (2005: 22). However, she also suggested that in the case of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), a women’s committee has pushed for the incorporation of gender issues to the Hemispheric Social Alliance analysis<sup>2</sup>. My point of departure is that a shift in the visibility of gender in the discourse and

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the work of Concha (2001), Desai (2002) and Espino (2003).

<sup>2</sup> Gendering Transnational Social Movement Analysis: Women’s Groups Contest Free Trade in the Americas. She argues that “increased attention to the links between gender and trade have led to the formation of a Women’s Committee loosely linked with the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) of social movements, which formed in response to the FTAA initiative” (...) “In contrast to the transnational networks that formed around NAFTA, under the pressure of this women’s caucus, the HSA has been pushed to incorporate gender issues in its analysis of the FTAA” (MacDonald, 2005:34).

agenda of social movement coalitions critical of free trade in Latin America has taken place from 2001 to 2006. In most of the Hemispheric Social Alliance counter-summits, women's workshops are organized prior to the general meeting and the gender dimension is supposed to be integrated in a transversal way throughout the entire event. Changes are also happening at the domestic level. For example, in the 2006 national assembly of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, a specific point addressing women's contribution to this network was presented for the first time (Concha 2006).

The questions guiding this research are: Why and how did a feminist critique inside movements opposing free trade agreements emerge? How can we explain a higher visibility of gender and feminist perspectives in the agenda and critical discourse against free trade of social movement coalitions in Latin America in the last five years? I will argue that transnational networking has allowed REMTE to bring gender into the debate of Latin American social movement coalitions -the Hemispheric Social Alliance- and spaces like the World Social Forum. At the same time, it has empowered REMTE's organizations by providing access to economic debates, more visibility and recognition at the national scale.

This research is based on the experience of the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy (REMTE, the acronym in Spanish of *Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía*), one of the emblematic transnational networks in the region that promotes economic analysis, debate and action from a feminist point of view. I will look at the process of transnationalization of REMTE, its strategies to counter gendered power dynamics inside transnational coalitions; its contribution to women's organizations at the national scale and to the

Hemispheric Social Alliance and the World Social Forum, particularly in the context of the campaign against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas from 2001 to 2006.

REMTE emerged as a space for analysis and action, seeking to contribute to the critical appropriation of the economy by women, their recognition as economic actors, the promotion of their rights and the construction of alternatives (REMTE 2001). Women from rural and urban backgrounds, NGOs and grassroots organizations constitute the network's eleven national chapters, with representation in Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Costa Rica. As part of the regional mobilization against neoliberalism, it has joined other social movements in the World Social Forum –it is a member of its international council-, the Hemispheric Social Alliance and the World March of Women to organize resistance to free trade and promote alternatives that integrate gender equity. The network, according to one of its members, strives to “advance together with other movements and organizations towards a global agenda that must necessarily include the feminist perspective” (León 2001, my translation).

But how do we understand transnational social movements and collective action across borders? What do we look at when we approach these movements from a feminist perspective? What is the contribution of feminists in transnational social movements' theory, but also in practical terms to broader social movement coalitions for global justice? Despite the growing attention of scholars to the study of transnational social movements and mobilization, feminist scholars have argued that overall these analysis still lack a gender perspective. This poses a problem because over a half of the participants in the movements for global justice and the World

Social Forum process are women and although they have gained more visibility and legitimacy as political actors in recent years, the recognition of their contribution remains still limited (Eschle 2005).

Feminist scholars point out some of the limits of mainstream studies of transnational social movements. First, they consider that studies are often male-biased in terms of the cases studied and the strategies we look at. Second, there is a state-centered understanding of emergence, targets and impacts of transnational collective action. And third, gender and power dynamics inside transnational social movements should be highlighted. To address these critiques, I have chosen to focus on an example of women's transnational organizing around the gendered dimension of free trade, macroeconomics and structural adjustment programs, issues that are less known and relatively new for the feminist agenda (in contrast to feminist networks on discrimination, health, sexual and reproductive rights, or violence against women). With this study, I also search to shed more light on the gender dynamics of the social movement field in which REMTE is inserted.

Here I chose to focus on this network because most examples of transnational organizing studied in Latin America deal with feminist NGOs created after United Nations conferences. This process has been without a doubt significant in expanding women's participation in the global political arena (Antrobus 2007; Vargas 2003b; Jelin 2003; Naples and Desai 2002) as women's groups have used these conferences to bring to the international political stage their local concerns. However, the case of REMTE is interesting because it is an example of transnational organizing linked to *feminismo popular*, or "grassroots feminism". I will show that REMTE's emergence, target definition and impacts is better explained by a "solidarity-identity" logic, rather

than an “advocacy-NGO” logic of association (Alvarez 2000), which is present in most of the cases of mainstream social movement literature.

Much of the transnational activism literature focuses on actions directed towards the state, international institutions or multinational economic actors. But transnational social movements and organizations, in addition of actions towards these targets, also work in building transnational solidarity (Dufour and Giraud 2007; Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2004). Although some of REMTE’s organizations at the national level have been engaged in what Alvarez (2000) calls an “international non-governmental organization-advocacy” logic, the case of REMTE as a regional network corresponds more to what she describes as a process of transnationalization “from below” with an “identity-solidarity” logic, going beyond an “institutional/advocacy” logic that targets the state and the international institutions

I have chosen Latin America because networking across borders is not new in the region; there are interesting examples of transnational organizing among women: the feminist regional meetings (*Encuentros*) during the 80s and the United Nations Conferences, since 1975 but especially during the 90s. It is also relevant because it shows the case of a transnational network that has become a key actor in the sphere of social movements but that has still not been explored in the academia. It may complement the understanding of women’s movements across borders, by contrasting these findings with those studies focused on the World March of Women (Dufour and Giraud 2007; Beaulieu 2007), on women and the World Social Forum (Conway 2007; Eschle 2005; Alvarez et al. 2004) or women and United Nations conferences (Antrobus 2007). There is also an important theoretical reflection by Latin American feminists on transnational organizing (Vargas 2003b; Celiberti 2003; Alvarez 1999;

Nobre and Faria 2003; Jelin 2003), an additional contribution that I will make here is review the contribution of Latin American feminist scholars that have addressed these issues.

Finally, the drive of this research also emerged from personal experience. I became interested on this subject as a result of participating in seminars and workshops organized by REMTE and other feminist networks in the World Social Forum and in Mexican social movements' meetings. I realized that integrating feminist perspectives was an essential element to elaborate a critique and propose alternatives for social and economic justice. This perspective allows to see a more complete picture of the transnationalization of solidarities. The presence and commitment of these women have changed the way many of us engage in activism for social justice.

## METHODOLOGY

To analyze how gender has been integrated on social movement coalitions against free trade, I conducted a case study on one feminist network very active within the WSF and the HSA. Snow and Trom define a case study as a research strategy seeking to generate “richly detailed, thick, and holistic elaborations and understandings of instances or variants of bounded social phenomena through the triangulation of multiple methods that include but are not limited to qualitative procedures” (Snow and Trom, 2002: 152). The advantage of this method is that it provides a detailed account and illuminates selected movement-related processes, allowing to challenge or refine theoretical issues and opening up for comparative cases.

To explain the process of transnationalization of REMTE and the contribution of the network both for women's organizations and mixed coalitions<sup>3</sup>, I carried on a qualitative analysis based mostly on primary sources (Interviews and documents produced by the network)<sup>4</sup> and participant observation. According to Lichterman, participant observation is relevant to understand the impacts of movements based on activists various definitions of "success", sometimes different within the same movement, and from the conventional interest-group advocacy activism. It also allows to see the every day life work of social movements (2002: 118-145). I adopt an approach shared by many feminist researchers, which can be briefly described as having particular attention to gender inequality, analyzed through women's experiences; based on reflexivity and participatory methods, with the aim to reduce gender inequality (Taylor 1998). Taking this into consideration, I privilege the actors' discourse to explain the dynamics of transnationalization and contrast this to the theory, recognizing that my knowledge is situated and how that influences the perspective I give to my research. Being a former participant in social movement organizations, I have participated in conferences and workshops on women and resistance to free trade agreements<sup>5</sup>. Because of this, I had privileged access to informers (based on empathy and trust) and to internal documentation, while keeping an analytical distance. I intend to highlight the contribution of this feminist network

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<sup>3</sup> By mixed coalitions, I mean social movements and organizations constituted by both men and women.

<sup>4</sup> Although there are many articles on women in the World Social Forum and transnational feminism, there are no articles that focus on the case of REMTE.

<sup>5</sup> I participated in networks of social movements critical such as the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC). I also participated in two World Social Forums (2002 and 2003), Hemispheric People's Summit (Quebec 2001 and Quito 2002) and Encounters against the WTO (Cancun 2003), the Latin America- Europe Linking Alternatives Encounter (Guadalajara 2004) and the activities of the World March of Women in Mexico (2005).

and the gendered power relations inside coalitions against free trade, understanding how REMTE has pushed for changes in order to attain gender equity as part of the struggle for economic justice.

Blee and Taylor recognize that semi-structured interviews, combined with participant observation, are particularly useful methods for understanding social movement mobilization from the perspective of movement actors because they provide in-depth information based on the actors' experience and interpretation of reality in their own words. This tool can also be helpful to counter the bias on available documentation about social movements that favors "men over women, higher-class participants over those from lower classes and movement leaders or spokespersons over rank-and-file participants", allowing to hear the voices that risk to be lost or filtered by other actors (2000: 92-94).

Another advantage of this method is that themes and categories of analysis can be generated, challenged or reconceptualized by respondents, which helps to understand less-studied aspects of social movement dynamics that generate few documents or are more difficult to locate (Blee and Taylor 2000: 94). The interpretation of initial interviews, they argue, can reshape the direction of the study (2000: 110), which was the case for this research. After the first round of interviews, I realized that the national scale was very present in activists' discourse on transnationalization, so I had to add this variable.

Qualitative interviews bring human agency to the center of movement analysis and are "a window into everyday worlds of activists" (Blee and Taylor 2000: 96), allowing to understand how activists regard their participation, how they understand their world, and how they make sense and justify their actions. This type



of method also allowed me to highlight gendered power relations. In order to study the experience of this feminist grassroots-oriented network, I conducted 17 semi-structured, in-depth audio recorded interviews with key informants from six countries (women that were involved in the creation of the network and continue to be active in it) between January and May 2007, including the coordinator and ex-coordinators of the network.

I also interviewed people that were not part of the network but worked closely with it (coordinators of mixed coalitions). Seven interviews took place in Mexico City (January 2007); four of them were with women from the national coordination of *Red Género y Economía* (Gender and Economy Network, known as REDGE<sup>6</sup>), the Mexican chapter of REMTE and founding member of the Latin American network. Among these women were the ex-coordinator of the regional network and key person in the creation of REMTE; the liason with the World March of Women; a trade union organizer and the coordinator of the Meso-American Women Space. Other interviews were conducted with a feminist researcher from the International Trade and Gender Network and with a trade union organizer from the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, both of them participated in the Women's Committee of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. Finally, I interviewed the director of a funding agency (the Böll Foundation) that has provided resources for some of the publications and activities of the network.

The second round of interviews (10 in total) were conducted in the context of the hemispheric social movement's encounter against free trade agreements (April-

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<sup>6</sup> REDGE participates in the coordination body of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, participates in the World March of Women and has been the national reference for social movements' organizations interested in bringing a gender perspective to their work.

May 2007, Havana, Cuba). I interviewed members of REMTE from three countries of Latin America: the coordinators of REMTE in Colombia and REMTE in Peru (also ex-coordinator of the regional network and founding member), two members of REMTE in Brazil (one is the current coordinator of REMTE, the other is the current coordinator of the international secretariat of the World March of Women).

I also interviewed one of the coordinators of the Latin American Information Agency, close collaborator and editor of various publications of REMTE; a woman from the indigenous social movement from Ecuador CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*); a woman from the peasant's movement in Chili ANAMURI (*Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas*) and representative for Via Campesina; the coordinator of the Hemispheric Social Alliance; and two members of the executive team of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, very active in the HSA too (See appendix A).

In addition, I reviewed the documentation available at REMTE'S webpage: published documents, analysis and paper positions, information on seminars, workshops and activities organized by the network between 2001 and 2006. I had access to internal network's documents, such as meeting's notes, evaluations and discussions provided via e-mail communication. I also examined the documents of the HSA and the WSF in the same period (press releases, programs, meetings' final declarations and action plans) available on the coalitions' webpage to assess changes in the visibility of gender in terms of discourse and assisted to the HSA assembly that took place in the Havana, Cuba (April 2007), previous to the Hemispheric Encounter of Social Movements' against Free Trade Agreements.

This thesis is organized on three chapters. In the first one, I review the literature on transnational social movements and present some of the key concepts used to explain the emergence, strategies and outcomes of transnational collective action. Then I discuss feminist critiques of this literature and their contribution to the study of transnational women's movements. In doing so, I identify some of the limitations in the dominant literature to explain my case study and how feminist propositions of looking at transnational movements became relevant for this research.

The second chapter introduces the case of REMTE, its process of transnationalization "from below" (Alvarez 2000); its strategies to build bridges between trade and gender before, during, and after different counter summits and demonstrations against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas or the World Trade Organization; its alliances with other transnational networks such as the HSA – and the gender dynamics within these coalitions- and its participation in spaces like the WSF.

The third chapter deals with the contribution of REMTE to the integration of gender in the critical discourse of free trade taking into account power relations and power inequality. In order to do this, I follow the categories proposed by Keck and Sikkink (1998): 1) *issue creation and agenda setting*: forum, meetings, and workshops' agendas; 2) *influence on discourse positions*: declarations and press conferences; 3) *influence on institutional procedures*: new rules and new actors; and 4) *influence on policy change*: new programs and new initiatives. Because I will not be looking at the impacts towards the state or public policies, I adapt the categories developed by these two authors in order to talk about "framing" and "agenda setting" between feminist networks and other social movements. In this last chapter I also

look at the contribution of REMTE to organizations at the national scale, highlighting that transnationalization is a bidirectional process.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND FEMINISM**

The study of transnational activism has been a growing field of research in the last decade (Risse-Kappen 1995; Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998; O'Brien *et al.* 2000; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Tarrow 2005; Bandy and Smith 2005; Della Porta, Andretta, Mosca and Reiter 2006). Although these theories have helped to explain the emergence and evolution of social movements across borders, feminist scholars have also made important critiques regarding the limits of this literature, while still recognizing its relevance (Alvarez 1998; Marchand 2003; Ferree and Mueller 2004; Dufour and Giraud 2007; Macdonald 2005; Eschle 2005; Staggenborg and Taylor 2005; Masson 2006; 2007; Conway 2007). These scholars argue, for example, that transnational studies are male-biased in terms of the movements and strategies we look at; that social movements can build the transnational scale independently of international institutions; that the target and evaluation of impacts are often state-centered and considered on the short term; and that gender dynamics inside social movements need to be addressed.

In this chapter, I will look at the contribution of transnational activism literature to explain collective action across borders. I will address some of the key concepts, definitions and typologies used to describe the different forms of transnational activism, its emergence, targets and evaluation of success. In a second part, I present the feminist critiques to this literature around four main axes: 1) the gender dynamics inside transnational social movement coalitions; 2) the emergence

and evolution of transnational activism; 3) the choice of targets and strategies; and 4) the evaluation of impact and success. This theoretical framework will allow me to introduce my case study, the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy (REMTE), which I argue, can be better understood by taking into account these critiques.

## **1.1 Transnational activism and social movements' theories**

This section is divided in four parts. In the first one, I address the definitions proposed by some of the most influential scholars on transnational activism in order to identify what is the category that can best describe the case of REMTE. In a second part, I present the variables that according to these authors allow the emergence of collective action across borders. The following part deals with the strategies used in many examples of transnational networking as well as the choice of targets. I end this section with the discussion about the impacts of transnational social movements.

### *1.1.1. Defining transnational collective action*

Two distinct approaches have converged in the study of transnational activism. On the one hand, International Relations' subfield of transnational studies (Rise-Kappen 1995; Wapner 1995; Smith, Chatfield and Pannuco 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998) started to recognize the importance of non-state actors on the international arena. On the other hand, social movements' theories dealing with contentious politics started to take an interest in globalization and transnational protest (Tarrow 2001; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Bandy and Smith 2005; Della

Porta *et al.* 2006). Social movements were considered as relevant political actors at the global level; their role and their impact on international politics have been the subject of numerous research agendas; the movement for global justice, protests against international institutions and events like the WSF became common research topics among scholars on these fields.

One of the pioneer works on transnational activism is Keck and Sikkink's *Activists Beyond Borders* (1998). Now considered as a key reference, these authors offered an innovative way to approach transnational activists' networks, their strategies and their impacts on the international arena. They addressed the questions of what are transnational advocacy networks, why and how they emerge, how they work and under what conditions they are effective. The book proposed two important concepts which had an important influence on subsequent work on the field: the "boomerang effect" –the idea that national groups may appeal to international allies to bring pressure on their state from the outside- and the definition of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TAN) -a form of organization characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange between activists across borders.

TANs include actors working internationally on an issue, bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 2). To advocate changes in the behaviour of states and of international organizations, TANs rely on their ability to mobilize information strategically in order to create new issues and categories, to persuade, put pressure and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments. This definition of transnational collective action focuses on strategies of advocacy

involving a small but efficient and professionalized group whose targets are the state or international organizations. Although TANs may be part of larger transnational social movements, they do not necessarily engage in contentious politics<sup>7</sup>. REMTE shares values, have a common discourse and exchange information exchange. It also wants to frame an issue (gender) in the trade agenda and persuade larger social movements to adopt it.

In contrast, Tarrow proposes the concept of transnational social movements, following a contentious politics approach. In his definition, a social movement becomes transnational if the mobilized group “has constituents in at least two states, engage in sustained contentious interaction with powerholders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor” (2005: 11). In this definition, a social movement at the domestic level shifts to the transnational level because of the people that participate in it or because the target has changed. Here again, the target of social movements across borders is either the state, multinationals or international institutions<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> TANs involve a small number of activists from the organizations and institutions involved in a given campaign or advocacy role. The kind of pressure and agenda politics in which advocacy networks engage rarely involve mass mobilization, except at key moments, although the peoples whose cause they espouse may engage in mass protests (Keck and Sikkink: 18).

<sup>8</sup> Another definition of transnational activism was proposed by Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco (1997). Their contribution to the field was the development of a theoretical framework to analyze Transnational Social Movements' Organizations (TSMOs). This type of organizations, these authors argue, incorporate members from more than two countries, have some formal structure and coordinate strategies through an international secretariat. They maintain regular communication between organizations and activists, share technical and strategic information and coordinate parallel activities or transnational collective actions around shared goals. They have different degrees of formalization and centralization, and its “density” depends on the degree of coordination, communication, consultation and cooperation. The distinction between transnational social movements and transnational social movements organizations is important because many studies on transnational collective action refer to transnational social *movements* when in reality their empirical cases are based on transnational social movements' *organizations*. For example, studies about global environmental movements that are based on the discourse and actions of non-governmental organizations like Greenpeace, whose strategies do not always corresponds to a social movement.



As a synthesis, Sikkink offered a typology of transnational collective action<sup>9</sup> in her contribution to a collective work coordinated by Jelin -a Latin American feminist scholar- to explore the multiple scales of action of social movements. According to this typology, there are four main types of transnational activism: 1) Transnational Non Governmental Organizations; 2) Transnational Advocacy Networks; 3) Transnational Coalitions; and 4) Transnational Social Movements. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as collective action is a process in constant change.

Each of these non-state actors has different levels of coordination and mobilization. Transnational Non Governmental Organizations for example have a higher level of formalization and are more professionalized than transnational social movements. In contrast, Transnational Advocacy Networks are more informal, the focus is on information exchange and the strategic use of it. They do not have a long-lasting coordination of strategies like coalitions and they do not mobilize either, as social movements do.

Transnational coalitions have a higher level of coordination between actors of different countries, as they have shared strategies (for example, transnational campaigns) to achieve a certain social change. They require a higher level of contact formality, because they need to get together to identify and agree upon common tactics, develop strategies and implement campaigns, which requires a certain development of transnational collective identity. Transnational social movements have shared goals and solidarities and are able to coordinate and sustain mobilizations in more than one country to influence processes of social change linked to their

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<sup>9</sup> Based on her previous work (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002).

disruptive capacity. They develop a high degree of collective identity, but this form of organization is the most difficult to create and sustain (Sikkink 2003: 303-306).

These definitions help explain different forms of collective action. To be considered transnational, the group has to involve people from two or more countries, sharing common goals. Communication and strategic use of information becomes a key strategy. States, international institutions or multinational corporations are usually considered as the main targets of this type of action.

The case of REMTE, I will argue, is a hybrid example. It is closer to the definition of transnational coalition, although it defines itself as a network. At the same time, it presents the characteristics of a Transnational Advocacy Network but its participants rely also on mobilization and social movement strategies. If it is true that some of REMTE's action is directed towards institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) or against the negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), another very important target in its strategy are social movements themselves.

### *1.1.2. Explaining the emergence of transnational collective action*

How do authors explain why and how actors engage in transnational activism? What conditions make possible the emergence of transnational collective action? To answer these questions, in the following section, I focus on some of the elements proposed to explain the emergence of activism across borders.

Sikkink explains that there are push and pull factors that make activists shift from the domestic level to the international field. State repression, isolation or blockage, economic globalization and free trade agreements are considered push

factors because solutions can no longer be found at the national level, so activists have to form transnational alliances in order to continue with their work. The pull factors consist of the parallel meetings to UN conferences, were already existing social activists' networks are able to meet and develop the necessary trust to sustain collective action. The development in communication and technology, as well as the availability of international resources (funding agencies) for transnational activities are also considered pull factors (Sikkink 2003: 315).

Transnational advocacy networks are created, Keck and Sikkink explain, when activists believe that transnational networking will help them attain greater visibility, gain access to a wider public and multiply the channels of institutional access. As for the question of what triggers their emergence, these authors propose three hypotheses: 1) when channels between domestic groups and their governments are blocked or hampered, or where such channels are ineffective for resolving a conflict<sup>10</sup>; 2) when activists believe that networking will further their mission and campaigns, and actively promote networks; 3) when conferences and other forms of international contact create arenas for forming and strengthening networks (1998: 14).

For Tarrow, this last hypothesis is key because in his understanding, international institutions are essential for transnational mobilization as they facilitate actions and connections between non-state actors that were not previously linked, and at the same time they give the recognition and legitimate new activities and actors. According to this author, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, or the

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<sup>10</sup> Setting into motion the “boomerang pattern”, a concept developed to explain how activists, searching to impact public policy or state’s behavior, enhance their local political leverage by putting pressure through a transnational coalition.

World Trade Organization are not just threats to social movements that target them as responsible for their grievances. He sees international institutions as “coral reefs” for transnational activism because they create and open up “an opportunity space into which domestic actors can move, encounter others like themselves, and form coalitions that transcend their borders” (2005: 25).

Tarrow also points to other two factors that have been influential in the explanation of the emergence of transnational collective action. The first one is the “political opportunity structure”, which consists of factors that facilitate or constrain social change efforts, the risks, costs and possibilities for mobilization in the national, intergovernmental and transgovernmental arenas. The second one is the role of the “rooted cosmopolitans”<sup>11</sup>, defined as:

individuals and groups who mobilize domestic and international resources and opportunities to advance claims on behalf of external actors, against external opponents, or in favor of goals they hold in common with transnational allies (Tarrow 2005: 43).

Some of these factors explain in part the emergence of REMTE, namely structural adjustment programs, free trade agreements and previous social networks. Women from REMTE, we will see, believed that a transnational network would allow them to have greater visibility and access to wider publics. From this perspective, transnational social movements emerge because of a favorable political opportunity. However, it does not consider that social movements can also construct their own opportunities for transnationalization. For example, although the UN conferences were an important factor for the creation of many feminists’ networks,

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<sup>11</sup> This type of activists are key in the process of transnational organizing because they are able to access global frames and scale shift when there is an international opportunity.

the case of REMTE was more linked to the Latin American *Encuentros*, a non-institutional, feminist-led space.

### *1.1.3 Defining targets and strategies*

Differences amongst forms of transnational collective action also include the choice of targets and strategies in order to achieve activists' goals. These strategies are directed towards targets such as states, international institutions or corporations. The tactics used by TANs have been described by Keck as Sikkink as: a) information politics (the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact); b) symbolic politics (the ability to call upon symbols, actions or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently far away); c) leverage politics (the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence); and d) accountability politics (the effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles).

Here, I will address only the idea of information politics, which can be adapted to another target than a state or an international organization: a social movement coalition. The concept of frame bridging and information politics involved in the process of transnational organizing will be useful to explain how it is that there has been a change in the integration of gender among social movements coalitions. Communication and information exchange is the first stage for transnational organizing and the most common strategy among transnational activists. Organizations and individuals within advocacy networks mobilize information strategically, showing a high level of awareness of the political opportunity structures

within which they are operating (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 31). Networks operate best when they are dense;<sup>12</sup> have strong connections among groups in the network, and reliable information flows.

Another key strategy to advance the network's goals is to "frame"<sup>13</sup> issues to make them comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage actions. In order to make an issue visible –for example, gender-, a framework must be developed. Network members actively seek ways to bring issues to the public agenda by framing them in innovative ways. By doing this, TANs aim to change perceptions that both state and societal actors may have of their identities, interests and preferences to transform their discourse positions, and ultimately to change procedures, policies and behaviour (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 3).

Snow and Benford (2000) identified four frame alignment strategies that movements use to increase the resonance of their frames: 1) frame bridging (linking two or more frames that have an affinity but were previously unconnected); 2) frame amplification; 3) frame extension (extending aspects of a frame to new areas that are presumed to be important to the target audience); and 4) frame transformation (changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones). An important remark is to acknowledge that some issues can be "framed" more easily than others. For example, in the case of gender inequality, the causes cannot be

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<sup>12</sup> Density refers both to regularity and diffusion of information exchange within networks. Effective networks must involve reciprocal information exchanges (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 28).

<sup>13</sup> A "frame" is defined as an "interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action" (Snow and Benford 1988: 137). Framing, the authors argue, is a dynamic, negotiated and contested process which involves the production of meaning, constantly evolving, generating its own political opportunities.

assigned to the deliberate actions of identifiable individuals who bear responsibility or guilt because patriarchy is a structural problem.

Feminist scholars note that the problem with the literature on transnational activism is that it generally assumes that the target of collective action across borders is the state, international institutions or corporations. The strategies studied in most cases are in consequence related to lobby or impact on these entities. In the following chapter, we will analyze REMTE's strategies to "frame" gender in the social movements' debate on free trade, noting that social movements are also targets (in this case, a coalition against free trade agreements) and thus, the strategies are different from those international networks whose goal is to push for changes in institutional public policy or pressure economic actors.

#### *1.1.4 Evaluating impacts of transnational networking*

What do we look at when analyzing impacts of social movements? How do we measure success or failure of transnational collective action? Most of the works dealing with the impacts of transnational collective action refer to changes in politics and behavior of states and international organizations as a way to measure impacts. (Keck and Sikkink 1998; O'Brien *et al.* 2000). However, as it has been concluded in some studies, it is difficult to demonstrate that a given change is due to the influence of collective action because there are other factors that have to be taken into consideration. Thus, when talking about the outcomes of my case study, I recognize that the work of this network is one of the factors that contributed to changes in the incorporation of gender to the free trade debate, but I do not pretend that it is the only explanation.

Giugni (1999) makes a distinction between movement success and movement impact. For him, success is related to the goals of a movement (for example, stopping a free trade agreement, changing public policies, but also mobilizing a constituency). To talk about impacts, he brings attention to the consequences that movements may have, intended or not, in the socio-political arena (xx-xxi). According to Smith *et al.* (1997) there are many studies on “high politics” of transnational social movements’ activities in explicitly political arenas, but there are not too many studies on the “deep politics” (shaping individuals’ thinking and actions on specific issues). However, this type of impact, these authors recognize, occupies much, if not most social movement energies; therefore, a primary goal of many TSMOs may be to build transnational solidarity beyond state boundaries and give people a global, trans-state identity.

To measure a network’s impacts, I follow the categories proposed by Keck and Sikkink (1998): 1) issue creation and agenda setting; 2) influence on discourse and position of states and international organizations; 3) influence on institutional procedures; and 4) influence on policy change in targeted actors. Although these are intended for targets such as states, international organizations or private economic actors, I will adapt these categories to explain the impacts of my case study to a transnational coalition of social movements.

Although I initially considered looking at impacts only at the transnational level (the HSA and the WSF), after the first round of interviews I realized that I also had to look at the national level. This echoes Tarrow’s proposition on the remaining importance of the national context, because it continues to be a key arena of collective action, as most activists remain rooted in and constraint by domestic political realities (2005: 139).



The literature on transnational activism has been useful to explain many cases of collective action across borders. It is useful to explain some of the characteristics of my case study, namely concepts such as rooted cosmopolitans, issue framing, information politics, and agenda setting. However, in order to understand the case of REMTE from the actors' perspective, we must take into account the critiques and contributions made by feminist scholars on the study of transnational collective action, particularly transnational feminism, to understand power dynamics and non state-centered impacts. I do not pretend to make a synthesis of both approaches; instead, I intend to have a critical view on some of the concepts and assumptions of mainstream literature on transnational activism and explore how feminist theoretical proposals make sense explaining the case of REMTE.

## **1.2 Feminist critiques and contributions to the study of transnational collective action**

In the previous section, I presented concepts coming from transnational social movements' theory that can help explain REMTE's process of transnationalization. However, the understanding of this network would remain limited if we do not take into account the critical assessments produced by feminist scholars that are also addressing transnational women's organizing<sup>14</sup>. In this section, I will discuss the critiques that feminists are making to the field of study of transnational collective action. These critiques consider that there is bias on the selection of the cases we study, at the same time they shed light to the gender dynamics inside social

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<sup>14</sup> See for example the work of Beaulieu (2006).

movements, allow for the diversification of targets (not limited to states or international institutions but also social movements) and consequently, diversification of what we look at when we evaluate the impact and success of transnational collective action.

As scholars study different examples of women movements' across borders (Moghadam 2005; Naples and Desai 2002; Dufour and Giraud 2007; Conway 2007; Beaulieu 2007), they observe that there is no single meaning for transnational feminism. In the case of Latin American, feminists recognize that the movement is not homogeneous because "women" are not a single category (Jelin 2003). In consequence, we have to talk about feminism in plural terms (Celiberti 2003: 280). Despite these differences in transnational feminisms, one thing these studies have in common is that they point out the limits of mainstream theories on transnational collective action. This section is subdivided in four parts to address issues of gender power dynamics, transnationalization "from below", the different logics of association, strategies and diversified targets and the evaluation of non state-centered impacts.

### *1.2.1 Gendering the transnational scale: making power dynamics visible*

Feminist scholars have contributed to show how gender matters in the study of a social phenomenon and how gender dynamics shape access to opportunities and power relations inside organizations. Ferree and Mueller argue that although the feminist movement is recognized as an important movement, most social movement theories still approach male-led movements as if they represented the normative

case<sup>15</sup>. For them, the study of women's and feminist movements challenges social movements' concepts because taking into account gender relations allows having a more dynamic, long-term<sup>16</sup>, and less state-centered approach (2004: 577).

Laura Macdonald, also critical of dominant transnational activism approaches, argues that although these approaches provide useful concepts like political opportunity structure and issue 'framing', they do not integrate an analysis of how gender dynamics influence the space in which social movements function (2005: 22)<sup>17</sup>. For example, political opportunity structures are not gender neutral and have a static and state-centered view of politics. For her, one of the problems is that "dominant modes of interpretation of transnational collective action have uncritically reproduced gender-blind modes of analysis from the literature on domestic collective action" (Macdonald 2005: 26). But as Ferree and Mueller argue, transnational spaces are not neutral. Social and political structures, opportunities, organizations, and frames are gendered (2004: 587).

Eschle explores the role and position of feminism and feminists within the antiglobalization movement. She concludes that the recognition of the participation of women in the global justice movement (GJM) is occasional, but remains limited. Although some women "leaders" are more visible (for example, Vandana Shiva,

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<sup>15</sup> "Formal and informal political opportunities, organizational structures and strategies, and frames and feelings carry gender meanings that have often been disregarded by general theories that have in practice studied men" (Ferree and Mueller 2004: 597)

<sup>16</sup> "Mainstream social movement theories have taken an approach that is too short term and in which gender-specific relations and repertoires appear to be stable, "natural" facts rather than variable aspects of contentious politics for both women and men" (Ferree and Mueller 2004: 588).

<sup>17</sup> She suggests that "while women's movements are a reference when talking about new social movements there has been little attempt to develop a mode of analysis of social movements that is sensitive to gendered differences and the way in which these differences structure social space at the transnational level (...), failing to analyse some of the social hierarchies based in gender, race and class that help create these political opportunity structures and framing processes" (Macdonald 2005: 23).

Susan George or Naomi Klein) this does not translate into a less sexist movement. According to this author, texts produced in the context of global forums occasionally acknowledge the role of women and the need for an antisexist movement but they do so only superficially, without concern for building coalitions with feminism, failing to recognize feminism as an integral presence within the antiglobalization movement (2005: 1748).

Although there is a widespread participation of women inside transnational activism and the World Social Forum process, the recognition of their contribution remains limited, especially when the issues discussed are not seen as “women’s issues”, like violence or discrimination (Eschle 2005; Staggenborg and Taylor 2005). But as Ferree and Mueller contend, “organizational and discursive resources available to women are used not only to challenge gender inequalities but also to mobilize women as a particular constituency to work for and against a variety of other changes in the political and economic status quo” (2004: 576).

Another contribution of feminists is the critique of exclusionary hierarchies within social movements, and how some voices and representations are universalized while others are marginalized. The most visible face of the antiglobalization movement is its opposition to neoliberalism. The struggle is rooted in class identity, but feminists insist on the need to analyze the intersections of capitalism with racial and gendered hierarchies.<sup>18</sup> In this regard:

Même s’il n’y a pas de hiérarchie formelle des luttes, l’anticapitalisme fait largement office d’élément central et les autres dimensions ne sont souvent considérées que sous l’angle des conséquences néfastes de ce capitalisme (Lamoureux 2004 : 181).

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<sup>18</sup> According to Eschle, this is important in terms of coalitions “because the complex intersections of power and the multiple crosscutting identities and oppression they produce, require diverse struggles for social change to connect with one another on a strategic and democratic basis” (2005: 1755).

Feminist intersectional analyses of globalization open up space for the recognition of the multiple axes of oppression and identity that structure and motivate but also limit mobilization. It demands “a more inclusive understanding of the antiglobalization movement taking different forms in different contexts and as needing to integrate a feminist sensibility if it is to be effective and emancipatory” (Eschle 2005: 1751) with the goal of “transforming both feminism and the antiglobalization movement within a more equal partnership” (Eschle 2005: 1745).

### *1.2.2 Explaining the emergence of transnational action “from below”*

The first thing to acknowledge is that transnational feminist activism is not a new phenomenon in Latin America, as there is a history of well-documented connections between Latin American women (Jelin 2003; Alvarez *et al.* 2003; Stephen 1997; Vargas 2003a). For example, Ferree and Mueller state that “women in Latin America, in particular, developed an extensive and diverse network of organizations across the countries in this region, and many of these networks became important in resistance to the dictatorships that spread in the late 1970s and early 1980s” (2004: 586).

For Alvarez, social movements can create their own political opportunity structures by building transnational alternative spaces (1998; 2000). She explains that Latin American feminists have been organizing transnationally since the 1980s, first in regional meetings (*Encuentros*) and later in the processes around the United Nations conferences during the 90s. Celiberti notes that UN conferences have been important spaces of confluence that facilitated exchange, new ways of organization

(national and subregional coordinations) common platforms and strategies that could influence the global agenda. However, she also recognizes the limits of this type of transnational activism, as the effort to institutionalize equity politics was in a context of growing exclusion and social inequality (2003: 280-281).

Contrary to the idea that women's movements transnationalization started with United Nations Conferences, the role the *Encuentros* played was crucial in the transnationalization of Latin American feminists, even though these spaces were merely visible in the media. The *Encuentros* were a resource to build regional networks and were seen as:

places of dialogue, negotiation, coalition-building, conflict, and contestation *among women* which foster processes of both solidarity and contention among the region's feminist and provide a supranational platform where key issues confronting Latin American feminism can be staged, debated and (re)formulated (Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2004: 203).

Following this idea that social movements can build their political opportunities, Masson proposes a scalar approach, which implies that the "transnational scale cannot be considered by analysts as pre-existing to movement action. The transnational scale (...) has to be constructed, materially and discursively, for movements to act" (2006: 5). This process involves that the movements organize themselves "constructing issues and constituencies, and mobilizing the latter to successfully shape, open up and make use of the new trans- and supra-national political opportunity structures" (2006: 5). This perspective is shared by Jelin, who contends that social movements may take advantage or build their political opportunities depending on the ways they structure the interpretative framework of their actions: a change in the framework or action scale, a change on how people perceive and organize their reality (2003: 41).

These arguments constitute complements to mainstream literature on transnational social movements and help explain the emergence of transnational networks beyond a change in the political opportunity structure or by the influence of international institutions in what Alvarez call transnationalization “from above” (to be discussed in the following section). Through mainstream theories on transnational collective action, we cannot fully understand the emergence of networks created outside the logic of formal international institutions spheres. In the case of women’s movements that have been often excluded from such arenas, this bias neglects important aspects of transnational organizing around alternative spaces created by social movements themselves.

### *1.2.3 Different logics of association, strategies and diversified targets*

Transnational activism literature has a focus on actions directed towards the state, international institutions or multinational economic actors (Tarrow 2001, Keck and Sikkink 1998). However, transnational social movements, in addition to these targets, also work on strengthening movements, building transnational collective identities and solidarities across borders. Feminist activism have various targets, not centered only on the state or institutions, but also other social movements that reproduce gender power relations: “feminist women’s movements expose dynamics that are in play in many if not all movements” (Ferree and Mueller 2004: 598).

Alvarez argues that feminists have experienced two different logics of transnationalization: one “from below”, the other “from above”. In her understanding, transnationalization involves the

local movement actor's deployment of discursive frames, organizational and political practices that are inspired, (re)affirmed or reinforced –though not necessarily caused– by their engagements with other actors beyond national borders through a wide range of transnational contacts, discussions, transactions and networks, both virtual and real (Alvarez 2000: 2).

She uses the term transnationalization “from below” to refer to those processes and modalities of feminist activism that transcend the borders of the nation-state and emerged from the movements themselves, like the *Encuentros*. The term “from above” is more related to those processes initiated by United Nations conferences and international institutions (Alvarez, Faria and Nobre, 2004: 199). This distinction of transnationalization is also noted by Masson when she refers to the “constitution and operation of transnational women's movements organizations and transnational feminist networks initiated ‘from above’ as well as ‘from below’” (2006: 6).

In terms of strategies, Staggenborg and Taylor contend that social movements consist of more than contentious politics. From their perspective, contentious politics approach remains focused on political action and protest event. Although this is important, it fails to fully take into account the aim for cultural change and collective identity building, which is a key issue for feminist movements. The other problem identified is that feminist movements not only target a specific state, but specific cultural practices, be it inside governments, institutions, or social movements; therefore the need for a less state-centered approach. Also, changes by feminists' analysis and actions are seen on the long term and often without immediate results.

Staggenborg and Taylor argue that the studies of transnational social movements



are biased toward a limited set of protest forms –mainly marches, demonstrations, rallies, public meetings, boycotts, sit-ins, petitions, strikes, and various forms of civil disobedience. Relying on methods such as newspaper event counts, these studies neglect a wide variety of tactics, including less visible protests within institutions and discursive politics (2005: 46).

Women’s movements have developed tactical ‘repertoires’ that have challenged numerous authorities, cultural and political codes, permeating other social movements and public consciousness. Hence, they suggest taking into consideration alternative places to look for social movement activity and varying ways of assessing movement transformation and outcomes. This calls for a “conceptualization of power and protest that is long-term and less state-centered than that of the contentious politics approach” (Staggenborg and Taylor 2005: 41).

Tactics used by feminist movements are perhaps less visible than traditional marches, strikes or civil disobedience. However “women’s movements continue to combine mass demonstrations, direct action and conventional political actions with consciousness-raising, self-help, performative, cultural, and discursive forms of resistance oriented to cultural and social change” (Staggenborg and Taylor 2005: 46). These forms of protest promote the construction of feminist collective identities and facilitate the creation of new forms of solidarity.

This type of approach acknowledges a more diverse and varied organizational repertoire with hybrid styles. It considers both encounters and mobilizations as significant events and interpersonal networks as strategically important to sustain activists on the long term (Ferree and Mueller 2004: 595). It also contributes to a broader understanding of social movements’ targets and strategies that are not state-centered and aim for long-term cultural changes, allowing to have another perspective

to assess when a social movement is successful, looking at impacts other than changes on public policies.

#### *1.2.4 Assessing impacts of transnational networking*

In terms of impacts, many studies focus on changes in how social movements influence the state or international institutions policies. But Marianne Marchand contends that this “state-centrism” does not allow us to understand and value the different politics and articulations of power by grassroots movements. The strategies that focus on large-scale protest against globalization, she argues, reflect a bias and overlook or make invisible other resistance strategies used by women. Thus, she insists on the need to look at less “spectacular resistance”, taking into account the wide range of possible resistance strategies that exist (2003: 147).

For Staggenborg and Taylor, the study of collective action projects also goes beyond challenges to the state because movements change cultural understandings in addition to targeting the state<sup>19</sup>. Macdonald states that “transnational social movement organizing can alter the universe of political discourse, framing processes and political opportunity structure available to local movements” (2002: 167). She explains, for example, that women’s movements have attempted to influence trade negotiations but also broader social movements and allies within transnational anti-free trade activists’ coalitions (2005: 22). For her,

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<sup>19</sup> “Collective campaigns bring about important social changes and affect movement organization and subsequent collective actions. Public actions and interactions with targets may appear more sporadic than sustained and ideological support for the feminist struggle against women’s political and social subordination is created and maintained through less visible actions in various venues (...) Collective campaigns help to build cultural support for the goals of the women’s movement in addition to having political impact” (Staggenborg and Taylor 2005: 41).

the ability of feminist groups to gradually encourage their social movements allies to adopt a gendered reading of processes of neoliberal restructuring, and to challenge patriarchal assumptions about the economy among their social movements allies, are clear signs of success, even if these groups have not thus far succeeded in influencing the public policy agenda of trade liberalization (Macdonald 2005: 38).

Another important contribution is the scalar approach. As Masson argues, social movements and networks organize and act at multiple scales, and these scales are mutually constitutive. The scales (local, regional, national, international) are linked up because “local problems are known to have a global cause, needing to be (also) tackled at the supranational or even global scale” (2006: 12). For Jelin, having a multi-scalar approach is necessary to assess transnational collective action because actors organize their strategies in a simultaneity of levels and scales, from the local to the global and it is not about choosing a scale but studying the interrelations and interdependences between them (2003: 51). As Masson specifies:

We cannot assume that the internal operation of transnational organizations and networks is bound to the transnational scale (...) they engage in lobbying, protest and collaboration at a variety of scales (2006: 10).

To sum up, social movements also create their own opportunities for transnationalization and build the transnational scale independently of political opportunity structures or international institutions. There are examples of transnational activism that emerged outside institutional settings, for example, the *Encuentros* have been important places of interaction. Power dynamics inside social movement coalitions should be taken into consideration for the analysis because they are a factor of explanation in social movements’ strategic choices and discourses. There are also different logics of associations, and I will look at the identity-solidarity logic and the process of transnationalization “from below”, looking at impacts in social movements themselves. The national scale is an important place to look when

we analyze the contribution of transnational networking. With these elements in mind, in the following chapter, I introduce the case of the Latin American Network Women Transforming the Economy.

## CHAPTER 2

### BUILDING A TRANSNATIONAL GRASSROOTS FEMINIST NETWORK

Why and how is a transnational network created? What motivates national organizations to join transnational activism? In the previous chapter, I have presented some of the key concepts developed to explain transnational collective action: their characteristics, factors of emergence and strategies of action. I have also introduced feminist scholars' critiques to this literature, namely that studies looking at movements and strategies are male-biased and that the understanding of the emergence, targets and strategies of transnational collective action is centered on the state or international institutions; and that gender dynamics inside transnational coalitions are not being addressed.

In this chapter, I will present the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy (*Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía* –REMTE), a transnational network of feminist organizations that aims at building bridges between feminism and the economy, empowering women's movements to see free trade agreements as a relevant issue for their agenda and bringing a feminist perspective to social movement coalitions opposing free trade. REMTE's activists engage in a struggle for economic and gender justice, being critical not only of free trade agreements, but also of social movements that reproduce gender exclusion in their discourse and strategies.

Through this case study, I intend to demonstrate that feminist critiques are relevant in order to understand REMTE's emergence and process of

transnationalization and its choice of targets and strategies. Building on the contribution of feminist scholars (Masson 2006, 2007; Marchand 2003; Staggenborg and Taylor 2005; Eschle 2005; Alvarez 2000; Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2004) I will show that REMTE is an example of how social movements can build the transnational scale “from below”, on a day-to-day basis and not only during international visible encounters. To do so, it is important, as feminist scholars argue, to look at strategies at different scales of action, with other perspectives outside the influence on the state or international institutions.

## **2.1 Explaining REMTE’s emergence**

REMTE was officially created in 1997 by women’s organizations anchored in grassroots and popular sectors, both rural and urban, university researchers, and NGOs from ten Latin American countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela<sup>20</sup>. It defines itself as

A space for analysis and action, seeking to contribute to the critical appropriation of the economy by women, their recognition as economic actors, the promotion of their rights and the construction of alternatives based on economic and gender justice, through the generation of ideas, debates, actions and political initiatives (REMTE 2001, my translation).

REMTE has become a key participant in spaces like the International Council of the WSF and the HSA, where it strives to: “advance together with other movements and organizations towards a global agenda that must necessarily include a feminist perspective” (León 2001). It is critical not only of free trade, but also of social movements that may reproduce gender inequalities in their discourse and strategies against free trade agreements.

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<sup>20</sup> See appendix C for the names of the organizations that participate in REMTE.

REMTE is a transnational network because of its target (i.e. transnational coalitions of social movements), the issues it deals with (i.e. macroeconomics and free trade agreements), its membership (i.e. 10 countries) and its action (i.e. coordinated mobilization and events in many countries). It was created out of the specific economic and political context of Latin America's region in the 1990s. Some of the factors explaining its establishment are considered as external to social movements (for example, neoliberal policies and free trade agreements) and others are internal (organizational dynamics, spaces of meeting created by movements themselves). Since there are already many studies that focus on the external factors (Brenner 2003; Concha and Labelle 2005; Concha 2001; Desai 2002; Espino 2003; Sanchiz 2005; Marceline and Spielfoch 2003), in the following section I will explore the internal factors. By concentrating on the latter, I suggest that movements create their own transnational spaces and that REMTE is a response to a different process than the one linked to UN conferences during the 1990s.

### *2.1.1. Context: economic transformations and emerging mobilizations against free trade*

A first element to explain the emergence of REMTE is the economic transformation that took place in Latin America in the past 20 years, namely structural adjustment programs and free trade agreements. As other authors have demonstrated, economic restructuring has played a significant role in the transnationalization of feminist solidarities (Moghadam 2005; Desai 2002).

The flexibilization of work and the privatization of public services, two characteristics of the neoliberal economic model, have different impacts on women

and men. However, the majority of the analysis on the impacts of free trade has been “gender-blind”. According to feminist economists:

Trade rules are based on a gender-blind analysis that fails to take into account women’s unpaid household work or unequal access to such assets as land, resources and credit, and their often marginalized status within the labor market. While women’s employment in the paid labor force often expands with trade liberalization, the jobs they gain entry into are usually poorly paid and highly vulnerable (Macdonald 2002: 153).

By the end of the 1990s, transnational coalitions of social movements and civil society organizations started to raise awareness on the impacts of free trade. In the Americas, the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) became one of the key players in the mobilizations against neoliberal economic integration.<sup>21</sup> This coalition was first envisioned in 1998, during the First People’s Summit in Santiago de Chile, parallel to the official FTAA trade talks, known as the Summits of the Americas. This represented a window of opportunity to make visible the opposition to this integration process that was seen as antidemocratic and that would have negative impacts on the people of the Americas. The goal was to bring together different movements interested in the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas process. In 1999, in Costa Rica, representatives of social organizations and continental networks formally created the HSA (Interview with Berrón, May 2007).

### 2.1.2 *Transnational spaces*

A second element to take into consideration is that, as argued in the first chapter, transnational feminist activism in Latin America is not new. The processes of preparation and follow-up of United Nations conferences beginning in 1975 and in

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<sup>21</sup> For in-depth analysis of transnational mobilization against free trade in the Americas see Drainville (1997); Seoane and Taddei (2001); Massicotte (2004); and Brunelle (2005).



particular during the 1990s<sup>22</sup> allowed the transnationalization of several non-governmental organizations for women's rights (Vargas 2003a; Antrobus 2007; Jelin 2003). As Sikkink acknowledged, the lack of response to demands at the national level can lead to demands at the international level, which was the case for many feminist organizations whose demands had more receptivity in the regional and international arena and then took advantage of UN conferences to apply national programs against discrimination (Sikkink 2003).

An equally important arena for transnationalization, although less visible, were the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist *Encuentros*, built by the feminist organizations themselves and conceived as places for coalition building among feminists.<sup>23</sup> Alvarez affirms that Latin American feminists have been constructing alternative and counter-hegemonic public spaces at the regional and global levels, experiencing two different transnational activists logics:

An internationalist identity-solidarity logic prevailed in the 'encuentros-like' intra-regional feminist activism of the 1980s and 1990s, whereas a transnational IGO-advocacy logic came to predominate in the region-wide feminist organizing around the Rio, Vienna, Cairo and Beijing Summits of the 1990s (Alvarez, 2000: 3).

Both logics are in interaction and although it is difficult to separate both processes, as many Latin American feminists have participated simultaneously in *Encuentros* and United Nations' conferences, the case of REMTE is better explained from the perspective of transnationalization from below, with an identity-solidarity logic. Its emergence is indeed a response to economic changes in the region, namely structural adjustment programs, but international institutions and United Nations'

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<sup>22</sup> UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), Social Development Summit (Copenhagen, 1995), Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the *Encuentros*, see: Alvarez *et al.* (2003).

conferences were not the key factors to explain why this network was created. Instead, the transnational space for exchange provided by the *Encuentros* and the already existing links between women's organizations of the region were the most important elements for REMTE's creation.

Rosa Guillén, a REMTE founding member from Peru and ex-coordinator of the regional network, confirms Alvarez' argument of the "bottom-up" construction of REMTE. She explains that the idea of the network was conceived at the workshop "*Globalización del Neoliberalismo y Justicia Económica para las Mujeres*" organized for the VII *Encuentro Feminista Latinoamericano y del Caribe* held in Chili in 1996. One year later, this time in Lima, a seminar-workshop was organized to discuss economic adjustment programs in Latin America and its impact on women's lives. It was at the end of this meeting that the network was formally created.

Sara Román, union organizer and also a founding member of REMTE, explains that in the first stage of the network, the idea was mainly to "group women's organizations working on economic issues and start looking at the economic impact of free trade on women specifically"<sup>24</sup> (Interview with Román, January 2007). There were only a few feminist organizations that were dealing with economic issues at the time, so the network aimed to make visible the links between macroeconomics, free trade agreements and women's lives through popular education and the development of ideas that would counter the neoliberal discourse.

### 2.1.3 *Women's interest in creating REMTE*

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<sup>24</sup> This and all the following quotes of interviews are in Spanish, with my translation to English.

According to REMTE's participants, a key factor explaining the creation of the network was the necessity of developing critical knowledge on macroeconomic issues from a feminist point of view that could counter the hegemonic economic discourse of international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These institutions maintained that free trade opened new opportunities for the advancement of women because it would offer more jobs for them. Thus, many feminist organizations, among them REMTE, realized the importance in having an alternative discourse that could serve as framework for collective action.

At the same time, while many organizations of REMTE participated in the process of the Beijing Conference, they remained critical of the process and searched for alternative spaces. In Nobre and Faria's perspective, UN conferences' strategies focused on the empowerment of women as individuals, endorsing gender "checklists" in mainstream political spaces and public policies. This was problematic, they argued, because "while women worked on the implementation of public policies and the incorporation of gender into the state's discourse, market forces were organizing women's life at all levels" (2003: 624. My translation).

Guillén explains that REMTE started with women's organizations working on economic issues "with another perspective, seeing poverty not through the analysis of the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund's 'gender programs' and their projects to alleviate poor women. What we wanted was to change the economic model" (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

Feminist organizations that would later join REMTE had a very critical discourse on free trade and structural adjustment programs. They insisted on the need

to radicalize the feminist movement in Latin America, which they argued, was becoming “institutionalized”<sup>25</sup>. For Irene León, from the Latin American Information Agency (ALAI), REMTE was “the first feminist network that addressed the debate over free trade and took a stand of not accepting these agreements as a fact” (Interview with León, May 2007).

This critical vision attracted many organizations that did not want to enter the discussion of “gender friendly” free trade agreements. For example, Miriam Nobre, coordinator of the World March of Women and member of REMTE in Brazil, explains that:

at the moment of great hegemony of neoliberalism, everything was about positive and negative impacts, only proposing minor reforms, very punctual issues. Having a name that affirmed the transformation of the economy, *women transforming the economy*, attracted a lot of people (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

What is more, those feminists that invested much of their energy and resources in the UN conferences started to question if there were any real changes beyond the international discourse and realized the limits of international institutions lobbying. This situation encouraged organizations to look for alternative spaces for action while realizing the advantage of transnational networking:

At the same time that the cycle of UN conferences was coming to a close and that the ‘disenchantment’ among many of those who had participated in these official processes was growing, there emerged a new global social force that found its point of articulation precisely in its radical opposition to the reigning global neoliberal regime (Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2004: 201).

Thus, another reason to establish REMTE was to provide a means of networking and coordination at the transnational scale to those organizations that were not linked to United Nations conferences networking, where the dominant agenda was, according to REMTE’s participants, more focused on sexual and

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<sup>25</sup> See Alvarez (1999).

reproductive rights. When explaining how the Brazilian organization decided to join REMTE, Nobre affirms that

in my organization, the SOF, *Sempreviva Feminist Organization*, we were very isolated (...) we were not part of the debate of United Nations and the feminist movement was involved in that debate. We were doing a lot of popular education work at the national level, we had alliances with the union and popular movements, but we didn't know where to canalize the work we were doing (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

For Nalu Faria, current regional coordinator of the network, REMTE was created “outside the traditional feminist agenda, with groups that wanted to work with the grassroots but that were also looking for a space to enter into the debate with other social movements” (Interview with Faria, May 2007). Despite the fact that women in REMTE recognized themselves as feminists, Guillén explains that they were interested in “other aspects of the feminist struggle that in the decade of the 1990s were not being raised. We needed a global understanding of the women's struggles with a feminist critique to the economic model” (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

The other important thing to keep in mind is that REMTE couldn't have been created, explains Concha, without all the previous contacts that the Mexican and Peruvian organizations developed through many years of work and trust building among other sister organizations of the region<sup>26</sup>. According to Concha, intense communication was needed to convince organizations to engage in this process, to see that it was worth their time and energy to invest in a regional network. Instead of sending an open invitation to all feminist groups to join the network, the strategy was

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<sup>26</sup> The network started with organizations from six countries that had already links with the organizations in Mexico and Peru: *Género y Economía* network (Mexico), *Mujer y Ajuste Estructural* (Peru), *Movimiento Maria Elena Cuadra* and *Grupo Nitaplan* (Nicaragua), *Mujeres contra el Ajuste Estructural* (Colombia), *Grupo Mujer y Ajuste* (Bolivia) and *Mujeres frente a la Globalización* network (Chile).

to first reinforce the network, and only then make the invitation for other groups to join in. It was a slow process, but well rooted. As the ex-coordinator explains: “before enlarging the network we had to see if it consolidated, and then we could take the next step” (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

In reference to the United Nations conferences in the transnationalization process of REMTE, she argues that Beijing “was a just a push, there was a movement building way before Beijing. What would have been the use of Beijing without a prior movement construction?” (Interview with Concha, January 2007). This echoes Masson and Alvarez proposition that a transnational space can be created by the movement itself and built from a bottom-up approach, so as not to necessarily depending on international institutions.

## **2.2 Diversifying targets: women’s movements and social movement coalitions**

The goal of REMTE is to “contribute to the critical appropriation of the economy by women, through the generation of ideas, debates, actions and political initiatives” (REMTE 2001). Thus, its main activities are focused on education and research. Information sharing, analysis and discussion, also gives the opportunity to make links between organizations. In 2000, the organizations taking part of REMTE decided to coordinate their actions with the following goals in mind:

- 1) Elaborate proposals for global change and resistance to the neoliberal model, from a feminist perspective;
- 2) Affirm women as economic actors, making their contribution visible, as well as highlighting the dynamics of inequality and discrimination that have to be changed;
- 3) Strengthen knowledge, analysis and feminist capacity building;

- 4) Develop analysis of our realities and economic policies and their connections to the lives and rights of women;
- 5) Diffuse and debate feminist economic theory, as a critical discourse coming from a plurality of experiences and visions;
- 6) Promote campaigns or thematic actions in the axis of gender and economic justice;
- 7) Strengthen women as the protagonist of social struggles, both inside women's spaces and in mixed spaces (REMTE 2001, my translation).

After looking at the objectives of the network, it seems clear that REMTE fits better into the identity solidarity logic category proposed by Alvarez that was described in chapter 1. The emphasis has been primarily on empowering women, personally and collectively to later have an influence on social movement coalitions. Feminist economics, REMTE argues, offers tools of analysis not only for feminists and women's issues; it allows social movements in general to enrich and reinforce their analysis, discourse and argumentation.

REMTE focuses mainly on the building of the women's movement and the substitution of the idea of women as merely "victims" of neoliberal globalization and to demand the recognition of women's contribution to economic growth and radicalization of democracy. For Concha, "women have to be the first to develop a political consciousness; they need to be strengthened and to get organized. We leave lobbying to women legislators. We can not start by lobbying, we start by putting pressure. And to do that you have first to build a social force" (Interview with Concha. January 2007). A similar vision is shared by Nobre: "REMTE in Brazil does not organize around the state. It is more oriented towards social movements, the World March of Women, social movements that address the issues we deal with"

(Interview with Nobre, April 2007). According to Faria, the best strategy is to reinforce women's positions (REMTE 2005).

Lobbying also poses problems in transnational networks that face very different national contexts. There was disagreement on what the strategy towards the government should be (confrontation – cooperation), how each group understands autonomy and how to avoid cooptation of organizations, that risk to become less critical when they engage in government's programs. Faria explains that “at the beginning REMTE in certain countries wanted to lobby to influence the government, the World Bank, but this was a source of conflict between us (...). Today it is more through mobilization, not through lobbying” (Interview with Faria, May 2007).

In terms of REMTE's position regarding free trade, the network considers that with neoliberalism there was an increment of labor offers for women, but this was in a context of increasing unemployment and a deterioration of job conditions, resulting in the deregulation, flexibility and a lack of job security (REMTE 2006). It affirms that the neoliberal model has incremented the commodification of women's lives and its position is radical in the sense that its organizations think that to add a “gender” or “social” clause to the agreement is not enough:

if these agreements wanted to have a gender perspective, they would have to be redesigned, putting women's situation in the center of their concerns. Because it is not the case, participating in resistance against the WTO agreements or the FTAA is a women's issue (León 2005: 23).

Mobilization is part of REMTE's repertoire action, in alliance with other social movements critical of free trade. REMTE has participated in marches, actions, and teach-in initiatives against the FTAA, the WTO, and other free trade agreements. The relationship with the state and international institutions is then in confrontational



terms, not negotiation or lobby: “we don’t want to introduce gender into the negotiations, we want to change negotiations, we have the right to say no to free trade” (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

### 2.2.1 *Choosing strategies: REMTE’s emphasis on grassroots feminism*

A particularity of this network is its focus on grassroots organizations. Marked by Latin American *feminismo popular*, REMTE emphasizes popular education, experience-based research, participatory methodologies and decentralization of tasks. This is perhaps what makes this network an interesting case study in transnational organizing. As Román explains: “REMTE is constituted of women’s organizations closely linked to popular sectors, inside the popular movement, not by personalities. Other networks, (...) are constituted by researchers who do not necessarily have an organization behind them” (Interview with Román, January 2007).

REMTE’s participants are women from organizations based in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, closely working with trade unions, indigenous and peasant movements. They define themselves as part of “a feminist movement that struggles to change a world dominated by capitalism and patriarchy, two systems of oppression that reinforce each other in neoliberal globalization” (REMTE 2006, my translation). Moreover, it understands feminism as “a social movement, an alternative and a perspective to understand and transform reality” (REMTE *et al.* 2005, my translation).

In 2000, the network had a regional meeting in Colombia to better define its guidelines, putting an emphasis on being a network of “grassroots-based

organizations that articulate macroeconomics and gender, combining analysis and reflection with political participation and alternative proposals” (REMTE 2000, my translation). According to Guillén, REMTE provides a space for analysis, exchange, communication and action that contributes to the development of alternative economic policies based on equity and sustainability in order to make women’s lives better, particularly the most excluded and impoverished (Rosa Guillén, email communication, November 2006).

This characteristic of REMTE is relevant because as Desai notes, there is often a division among the women that reproduce inequalities based on class and race. On the one side, there are the women who belong to the elites and are able to participate in transnational networks created around UN Conferences, and on the other side there are the women from grassroots movements who don’t belong to these networks. This difference between “a cosmopolitan group of mobile global activists who enjoy the privileges of financial resources and the ability and freedom to travel internationally, and more place-bound actual or potential participants” (Desai 2002: 31) points to the fact that access and participation in the transnational scale of activism is also a question of power relations. As a result, women from the North and educated women from the South are more dominant in the international networks and NGOs than are women from the grassroots.

In addition to class issues, particular attention is also paid to race and sexual diversity, which can be seen in the type of alliances the network has pursued, for example with women from Via Campesina, and with the LGBT<sup>27</sup> movement. The emphasis on participatory feminism is also shared by larger coalitions such as the

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<sup>27</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender movement.

World March of Women, which promotes the building of feminism “as a movement with an increasing number of women who participate in the definition of its path, issues and agendas and engaging in the movement’s decisions” (Nobre and Faria 2003: 629). This strategy of action based in the building of a movement is quite different from what Alvarez calls the INGO logic, which involves a small effective group of experts that can lobby institutions (2000: 17).

Another characteristic is that most of the women that participate in the network are neither “experts” in international trade, nor economists. It is because of their participation in transnational spaces that they start making the links between free trade agreements and women’s lives. For example, Miriam Martínez, coordinator of the women’s space of the Mesoamerican People’s Forum, held every year to organize resistance to neoliberalism in Central America and Mexico, explains that:

we knew about trade agreements only in theoretical terms, from political discussions, but before we didn’t relate them with women’s life experiences. The Mesoamerican meetings have been important to understand that women’s economy had to do not only with productive microprojects, (...) it has to do with the corn, the water, the land, the right for a decent living (...) we didn’t make the link before. It was key to understanding how to get involved in gender and economy and particularly trade agreements (Interview with Martínez, January 2007).

The network also encourages rotating participation of women in international meetings. For example, Concha explains that 15 Mexican women have participated in international meetings representing the network in recent years and none of them were in the coordination team. This is part of a political decision to share functions because according to the coordination team, women who have the experience of participating in international meetings come back to their organizations very

motivated, with new ideas and contacts, which empowers the work of their own organizations at the local level.<sup>28</sup>

In this same spirit, the mechanism for decision making inside the network is through consultation and consensus (via email, phone conversations or meetings). The regional coordination of the network is responsible for 1) facilitating the delegation of responsibilities and completing task; 2) having a global Latin American vision that may orient the collective decision making; 3) following up and monitoring of the network's program; and 4) making immediate strategic decisions without consultation but that have to be endorsed and ratified after. As for the responsibilities of the national coordination, these are listed as: 1) reinforcing the national movement and promote the Latin-American network in the country; 2) incorporating REMTE's proposals in national campaigns and research; 3) promoting a sense of belonging to the network; and 4) maintaining a fluent communication and response to consultations (REMTE 2000).

### 2.2.2 *Alliances with global justice movements*

Feminist organizations of the region have taken an active role in the development of the WSF and mobilizations against free trade (Celiberti and Vargas 2003). These international meetings and participation in mixed spaces like the HSA are valued as very positive experiences. REMTE "shares the challenge of building alternatives to transform the world, which is the axis of the resistance movement

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<sup>28</sup> This will to function in a decentralized way is also practiced by the World March of Women: "Our decision was not to operate with a few international leaders travelling from one side of the world to the other, to every international meeting of the movement; instead, we circulate information and debate between us so that every section of the March in each country can take care of our representation and responsibilities towards other movements where the action is taking place" (Nobre and Faria 2003: 629. My translation).

against neoliberal hegemony” where it participates with a feminist perspective, “to denounce the relationship between the economic model and militarization” (REMTE 2001, my translation).

As was previously stated, REMTE is critical not only of free trade, but also of social movements that may reproduce gender inequalities in their discourse and strategies against free trade agreements. Its members engage in a permanent dialogue with social movements so that the feminist perspective becomes one of the bases of an egalitarian project: “we participate in the building of these spaces, which goes beyond just placing our agenda” (REMTE 2006, my translation).

REMTE works with other social movements in transnational spaces to organize resistance to neoliberalism and promote alternatives that integrate gender equity. Each national coordination participates in their own countries and at the international level in the struggles against the FTAA, free trade agreements, the WTO, and for the cancellation of debt. According to REMTE, trade with justice, a main demand among social movements, involves taking into account gender inequalities if it is to bring about real change.

The HSA provides a space of constant articulation for organizations and social movements of the Americas that aim to achieve consensus for common action against the FTAA. It is a plural and multisectorial coalition, integrated by trade unions, peasant and indigenous movements, women’s and environmental movements, NGOs linked to human rights and popular education, community radio, intellectuals, and religious organizations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See the Hemispheric Social Alliance website: [www.asc-hsa.org](http://www.asc-hsa.org)

It is a civil society initiative to counter regional integration and it has had an important role in disseminating information about the FTAA process. Since its creation in 1998, the HSA has been engaged in monitoring the FTAA's negotiations, organizing the People's Summits and continental meetings, media reports, seminars and debates along a common platform, as well as mobilizations against the FTAA and neoliberal policies in the region. A Women's Committee of the HSA has been formed to ensure that gender remains an important issue in the networks' agenda since the creation of the coalition. In most of the coalitions' counter-summits, women's workshops are organized prior to the meeting and gender issues are supposed to be integrated in a transversal way through the entire event. As a result of analysis and debate, the HSA has produced a document for lobbying and popular education: "Alternatives for the Americas"<sup>30</sup>. In 2002, the HSA launched a continental campaign against the FTAA, a referendum to inform and explain the stakes of the FTAA, which included information, education, organization, mobilization and resistance.

REMTE was among the first organizations that took part in the WSF from the beginning and since then has actively participated every year. It is one of the few regional feminist networks part of its International Council, where it contributes to the organizational and methodological process of the Forum (REMTE 2001). REMTE and the World March of Women define themselves as participants in the creation of this transnational process (Faria 2003). Concha explains that this decision was taken because it was seen as a strategic transnational space where they could: "build links, relationships, have an impact. Because the first place to have an impact

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<sup>30</sup> The document is available in English at : <http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/Campaigns/AFTA.html>

is the movement itself, the social, civic, organized movement” (Interview with Concha, January 2007). Along the same lines, the Globalization and Alliance Collective of the World March of Women state that:

Feminists who had always combined the analysis of gender, class and racism, and whose primary focus was poor women, were particularly quick to recognize that the WSF was a necessary and strategically important political space. Not only did the World Social Forum represents an important opportunity for developing new alliances and coordinated action to further the feminist agenda, it also allowed women to affirm their presence as political subjects, demanding to be in the forefront of this global movement for social change (...) Our relationship with a broad, plural “global” movement, inside and outside the World Social Forum process, gives us the opportunity to be present as political subjects who are not afraid to take to the street, and not afraid to stand against the established order (World March of Women 2005).

Diane Matte, from the World March of Women, also recognizes that feminist participation in the WSF process is “fundamental to tighten the relations between the feminist movement and the movement for another globalization, and to inscribe our priorities in it and strengthen the possibilities for a real social transformation” (quoted in Alvarez, Nobre and Faria 2003: 202). This idea is shared by the women of REMTE, who see the WSF not only as a space for debate and exchange, but as a place to reinforce their own organization and to show the strength of feminism in the mobilizations against patriarchy and capitalism (Faria 2003). In the same sense, León considers that the participation of the women’s movement in the making of alliances and in the creation of critical discourses and new proposals is a necessary effort in order to have a vision of a different world that is inclusive and has a gender perspective (quoted in Alvarez, Nobre and Faria 2004: 202).

As for the alliance with women’s and feminist movements, REMTE emphasizes action with grassroots women’s organizations. In consequence, their activities and declarations are usually co-organized with the World March, the

women from Via Campesina, Diálogo Sur/Sur LGBT, and women from ALAI (Latin American Information Agency). Together, they push to make visible the centrality of gender relations in the economic model and not just the negative impacts of its policies on women (REMTE 2006).

Almost all the organizations active in REMTE are also part of the World March of Women. This synergy is expressed in the World Social Forum and regional forums, where REMTE and the March reinforce mutually their efforts and strategies by proposing seminars, workshops, declarations and actions in common. The organization of joint activities among networks has been very positive in empowering each other's work and having a leverage to influence social movement coalitions. Concha refers that:

The World March of Women reinforces REMTE and vice versa. Now, we are also with Via Campesina, it is a step further that we have taken, women in the WSF are now stronger, we can have a greater impact. Before each network acted on its own, now we're building a force, concentrating our efforts, to make things easier. In Bolivia, for example, we organized panels with all three networks together (Interview with Concha. January 2007).

However, this type of relationship is not extensive to all feminist networks. In the case of the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN), depending on the country<sup>31</sup>, the two networks organized their activities in a parallel way. According to Concha, each network has its own agenda, programs, initiatives and strategies<sup>32</sup>:

We are very different, they address researchers and we address social and civic organizations. We have tried to articulate our work, but up until now, there is a parallelism. Each network addresses different subjects. The IGTN participates in the mixed panels, because they are researchers, they are invited to participate. And

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<sup>31</sup> In the case of Mexico, the women that participate in REMTE have a good relation with the women from the IGTN. Both organizations were active when the coordination of the women's committee of the HSA was in Mexico. However, this is not the case for all the others countries and tensions between feminist networks appear on the transnational level, for example in the Women's Committee of the HSA.

<sup>32</sup> This parallelism was also noted between the World March of Women and the Feminist Dialogues, according to Conway (forthcoming).



REMTE, always with *la raza* (the grassroots), not that much in panels. We organize our panels on our own (Interview with Concha. January 2007).

But the work that occupies most of the network's time and energy is knowledge creation and popular education to build bridges between gender and the economy. REMTE, explains Faria, organize popular education activities with groups of women using the methodological experience of feminism to demystify the economy as a matter of experts, especially men. It maintains a constant dialogue with feminist economists from universities and research centers, and it also publishes tracts and books to systematize information and debates, making it accessible to a wider public. But for her, women's capacity building takes place not only in these activities, but also in their engagement in concrete campaigns, where they exercise their analytical skills and their capacity to make proposals (Interview with Faria, May 2007).

### 2.2.3 *Framing Free Trade Agreements as a Women's Issue*

The first task that REMTE had was to frame its view of the economy, and specifically free trade, as something that women and feminists should be concerned with, in a process defined by Snow and Benford (2000) as *frame bridging*. At the same time, they had to convince their social movement counterparts working on free trade issues about the relevance in integrating patriarchy as a system of oppression at the same level as neoliberalism. In order to accomplish this, an element of vital importance was the creation of feminist knowledge on the situation of women and the impact of economic policies in both formal and informal work and in urban and rural areas.

For REMTE, the economy includes “the daily experience of life. It is not a relationship of things and numbers, but a relationship between people that live and work outside and inside the household” (REMTE 2006, my translation). In looking for an easy way to approach an a priori difficult issue such as macro-economics, women of the network argue that feminist economics is based on the values of solidarity, cooperation, reciprocity and justice and considers work as the base of the economy, making women visible as economic actors and reproduction of life as a central goal of the economy and society<sup>33</sup>.

REMTE has also brought the economic debate to human rights. For example, it states that: “privatization of basic services limits the access to what in our understanding are basic rights: water, electricity, health, education” (REMTE 2006, my translation). It has supported, with the World March of Women, Via Campesina’s campaign for food sovereignty. This campaign involves the right to decide what to produce and under what conditions, also making also the link with women’s sovereignty, self-determination and autonomy of their own body. To arrive at this common position among diverse women (REMTE, World March of Women, women from Via Campesina, women from the Latin American Information Agency, the Gender area of Jubileo Sur, and Sur-Sur Dialogue LGBT), it took years of debates and information dissemination, workshops, meetings and coalition building.

In the first stage, the network spent most of its resources on research in order to document the gender blindness of the economy. Three main axes were chosen: work, services and agriculture, which was the way to build a bridge between gender and free trade agreements, as women were very active in these three areas. The first

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<sup>33</sup> See Carrasco 1999; León 2005; Todaro and Rodríguez 2001.

publication of REMTE was a comparative research done in six countries in 2000. The results of this analysis was widely debated in workshops and seminars, and was finally published under the title “*El impacto de las políticas económicas globalizadoras en el trabajo y calidad de vida de las mujeres en México, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia y Chile*” (Impact of the globalizing economic policies in the work and quality of life of women in Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Chili). The particularity of this study is that it was addressed to social organizations and sought to explain in an accesible language what were the main issues of concern regarding women, free trade and structural adjustment in Latin America.

A second publication was “*Mujeres contra el ALCA: Razones y Alternativas*” (Women Against FTAA: Reasons and Alternatives); a compilation of women’s visions from different organizations in Latin America on the impacts of the FTAA, women’s resistance and alternatives. Coordinated by the economist Magdalena León from REMTE and Irene León, from the Latin American Information Network (ALAI), this work highlighted the diversity of women’s movements, bringing together the analysis of women from peasant movements (MST, CLOC, Via Campesina), indigenous organizations (CONAIE-Ecuador, ANAMURI-Chili), economists from the International Trade and Gender Network, community radio representatives (AMARC), and REMTE. It also presented as an annex six women’s declarations from international encounters.

In 2003, the book “*Mujeres y trabajo: cambios impostergables*” (Women and Work: Pressing Changes) presented the debate of the seminar co-organized in the 2002 World Social Forum by REMTE, the gender working group of CLACSO

(*Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales*) and the World March of Women. In line with their previous studies, it aimed to bring together different women's voices (feminists, urban women's organizations, rural and indigenous women and university scholars) and share their analysis and proposals based on their own experiences. "*Mujeres en Resistencia: Experiencias, Visiones y Propuestas*" (Women in Resistance: Experiences, Visions and Proposals), published in 2005, is another collective work with the participation of women from REMTE in Brazil and Ecuador, ALAI Mujeres, women from Via Campesina and from the World March of Women in the Americas. This time, the focus was not only on economic issues, but also on diversity, sustainability, human rights and peace.

In 2006, a document intended for wide distribution was presented at the Cochabamba Peoples' Integration Encounter: "*Mujeres construyendo alternativas para otra integracion*" (Women Building Alternatives for Another Integration). Signed by the World March of Women, REMTE, Women of Via Campesina-CLOC, Dialogo Sur-Sur LGBT, ALAI Mujeres, and the Gender area of Jubileo Sur Americas, the document addressed not only women's organizations, but the whole movement for global justice, to put feminist economic alternatives into the debate.

REMTE has also contributed to making the participation of feminists and women's organizations in the World Social Forum process visible. Two works published around this were: "*Construir la igualdad: debates feministas en el Foro Social Mundial*" (Building Equity: Feminist Debates in the World Social Forum) and "*Miradas de género y diversidad en el FSM*" (Gender and Diversity Visions Within the WSF). Both were coordinated by ALAI-Mujeres. With the Women's Committee of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, REMTE also participated in the publication of

the “gender chapter” of *Alternatives for the Americas*, one of the continental coalition’s key document for lobbying and popular education against the FTAA.

All these materials are easily accessible through the webpage of ALAI<sup>34</sup> and are distributed for free during the international social movement’s meetings as well as in the local, grassroots oriented workshops organized by each national chapter of the network. In addition to these materials, REMTE produces a bi-monthly bulletin to keep all members informed on the regional campaigns, news, declarations and debates from the region.<sup>35</sup>

#### 2.2.4 *Popular education and capacity building*

REMTE has co-organized seminars and workshops in various contexts because of its emphasis on grassroots education. In November 2001, women participating in the Hemispheric Encounter of Struggle against the FTAA agreed to carry on a continental campaign of communication intended for popular sectors to explain the stakes of the FTAA and its consequences. This was part of a permanent process of education and capacity building with women from rural and urban social organizations (See appendix D).

Counter summits and mobilizations offer the space to organize teach-ins, share testimonies and participate in workshops with other social movements. In 2002, REMTE participated in the organization of a preparatory meeting towards the World Social Forum, the *Encuentro de Mujeres de las Américas: hacia Porto Alegre 2003*, held in Cuenca Ecuador. The objective was to have a common position and strategy

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<sup>34</sup> See <http://alainet.org/publica/>

<sup>35</sup> See [http:// www.movsoc.org/remte](http://www.movsoc.org/remte)

to make women's participation in the WSF visible in the following year. In 2003, the seminar "Gender, Diversity and Pluralism: Strategies on Globalization", was organized in the context of the III World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. The same year, REMTE organized the seminar: "Women's Rights and Free Trade Agreements", with the coalition *Mujeres hacia Cancun* during the mobilizations against the WTO and a few months later, it also participated in the mobilizations in Miami against the FTAA (See appendix D).

At the IV WSF in Mumbai, India, REMTE and the World March of Women co-sponsored the seminar "Diverse alternatives for global changes" and during the First Americas Social Forum in Quito, Ecuador, they were responsible for two workshops: "Feminist economic alternatives", and "Politics for gender equity". They also organized three conferences: "Diversity as ethics of alternatives", "Ending sexist violence" and "Balance of the struggles against racism and new agendas". Later on the same year, these networks participated in the international meeting *Enlazando Alternativas*, in Guadalajara, Mexico, during the mobilizations against the European-Latin American Summit, where it organized a Women's Encounter one day before the whole event began.

The network is present not only when there is media attention or big events. Its organizations have also been part of the coordination in many Meso-American *Encuentros*, which have been much less publicized. Following a grassroots-based approach, these encounters have been taking place each year: Guatemala (2001), Nicaragua (2002), Honduras (2003), El Salvador (2004). It was in this last encounter that the meeting "Mesoamerican Women in Resistance for a Dignified Life" took place, bringing together indigenous women, afro-descendent women, micro business

women, cooperative workers, unionists and feminists to reject free trade agreements on the basis of inequality of access to natural resources, basic services, the right to own land and the right to a healthy environment (Interview with Martínez, January 2007).

By looking at the emergence process of REMTE, its choice of targets and strategies to accomplish its goals, we can argue that a less institutional and state-centered analysis allow us to better understand transnational organizing, especially in the case of grassroots-based groups. Emergence of transnational collective action does not always depend on the opportunities provided by international institutions; it can also come from a bottom-up process, like in the case of REMTE. Even though they had access to the UN Conferences, the women of REMTE chose to mobilize rather than follow more institutionalized politics. Gender dynamics inside social movement coalitions are relevant to understand the choices of the network and the challenges they have to address. Taking this into consideration, the following chapter will address REMTE's impacts and the assessment of success, looking at its contribution to social movements themselves, both in free trade coalitions in Latin America as well as in women's movements.

### CHAPTER 3

#### ASSESSING CONTRIBUTIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKING

Studies on transnational activism that have intended to assess the impacts of NGOs, transnational networks or social movements do so based on their capacity to influence the state or international institutions like the World Bank or the World Trade Organization. To measure success, I argued in chapter one that scholars have developed indicators such as agenda setting, influence on discursive positions, institutional procedures and policy changes (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Despite these indicators, it remains difficult to make a direct link between changes in public policies and transnational collective action.<sup>36</sup>

In the previous chapter, it was established that there are other targets besides the state or international institutions. As Staggenborg and Taylor propose, when we limit our analysis of impacts to the influence on these instances, we are missing out a lot of the work and contribution of social movements. As I have analyzed REMTE from the perspective of the identity-solidarity logic of transnationalization, and considering that the building of solidarity among women and within social movements is among its main goals, it is important to look at the impacts of transnationalization on the less visible daily work to assess the contribution of this network.

In this chapter, I contend that in order to see REMTE's contribution, we have to focus on the work going on inside the seminars, workshops and meetings at the

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<sup>36</sup> See for example O'Brien *et. al.* (2000) and Keck and Sikkink (1998).



transnational and national scale, as well as the building of alliances with other social movements and its participation in transnational spaces. More precisely, I will look at REMTE's contribution to social movement coalitions, specifically the HSA and the WSF, as well as the obstacles that women still have to face in order to frame gender in the agenda. I will argue that feminism is slowly permeating the social movement coalitions, although basically the changes made still remain mostly in terms of discourse.

In a second part, I look at the contribution of REMTE's transnational networking to women's movements at the national scale, an essential place to look at the dynamics of transnationalization as it continues to be a key element for the work of transnational collective action. I suggest that transnationalization is a bidirectional process that needs to be rooted, like Tarrow (2005) contends when he refers to "rooted cosmopolitans" as the most effective transnational activists.

### **3.1 Bringing feminism into social movement coalitions**

Recent studies explore how feminism is integrated (or not) in the movement for global justice (Eschle 2005; Lamoureux 2004; Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2004; Vargas 2003a; Vargas 2003b; León 2002; Wilson 2007; Conway 2007). Despite the inclusive language of social movement coalitions working around NAFTA, Macdonald argued that the gendered dimension of trade has not been present (2005: 22). However, she contends that there have been changes in the case of the coalitions against the FTAA, particularly in the HSA, which have brought more attention to the

links between gender and trade after pressure from the Women's committee of the HSA. (2005: 34).

This analysis is also present in the feminist activists discourse. After 2003 WSF, the World March of Women evaluated that there had only been a partial progress in integrating feminism:

the Forum illustrated the impact of our work in that there were definitely more women, particularly feminists, on the panels. We nevertheless saw that women's presence remains marginal and is only 'politely tolerated'. We are still a long way from achieving genuine dialogue on the role of women and feminism in the construction of another world. The struggle against capitalism is still considered to be the primary struggle in the minds of many. The tendency to centralise power in the hands of a few 'enlightened or more capable' individuals remains strong (World March of Women 2003).

However, three years later, the assessment is a lot more positive. For example the following Declaration, presented in the Cochabamba Encounter for People's Integration in 2006 notes that:

Today, social movements recognize and integrates women's demands, value our organized presence. We are diverse people with diverse agendas. We are organized in different ways, we want to build a society of equals in diversity (...). We believe that we are building the bases of an historical collective subject that struggles for a society without exploitation, women's discrimination, without racism, that respects sexual diversity and guarantees peoples sovereignty, united in our diversity (REMTE 2006, my translation).

What are these changes and how do we explain them? What has been the role of REMTE and other feminist organizations in achieving these changes? What constraints do these networks face? In this section, I will argue that REMTE has helped develop a gender-based perspective, which has allowed gender to be framed on the economic debate of the coalition's discussions and thus, contributed to build a consensus among social movements on the importance of integrating gender equity in the daily practice.

Despite the certitude that working inside social movement coalitions is a key element to advance the goals of the network, the women of REMTE recognize that it is not an easy task. The next section will show that gender dynamics inside social movements are a significant variable to take into account in order to assess the impacts of this network. I will do this by presenting the strategies REMTE uses to integrate gender into social movements and by providing an evaluation of how much the network has succeeded in doing this.

### *3.1.1 Gendering the debate: impacts on agenda setting and discursive frameworks*

For years, trade was an issue discussed mostly by experts in economy; women were not asked to talk about their experiences regarding the impacts of trade agreements. REMTE, in coalition with the World March of Women, has provided this space to question gender-blind positions inside social movement coalitions, the WSF and other regional Forum. Women are engaged in pushing for feminist content and methodologies to pass the message that “*another world without feminism is impossible*”, as a slogan from the World March of Women says.

A first element of the change in the visibility of women has to do with what Keck and Sikkink (1998) defined as influence on setting the agenda and discursive frameworks. REMTE has contributed to placing gender in the debate on free trade agreements, which is the first step to having a shared understanding and a common position on what it means economic justice with gender equity. Having a solid analysis and proposals from a feminist economics perspective has allowed REMTE to gain recognition inside the HSA.

Gonzalo Berrón, coordinator of the HSA, maintains that the development of a gendered analysis of free trade has been a key contribution of women's organizations to the coalition: "they have developed important studies that incorporate a gender perspective<sup>37</sup>. It is very good to have this critical vision on our side; governments do not even take this into consideration" (Interview with Berrón, May 2007).

For Nobre, spaces like the WSF have been very useful in opening the discussion about feminist economics with mixed movements and in changing the vision of women as victims of free trade to the recognition of women as economic actors. She recognizes that women can now use the tools of feminist economic in their discourse: "with REMTE, we were able to go beyond the 'impacts on women' debate when discussing free trade agreements, to question the logic of free trade from a feminist economics perspective" (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

According to most of the women interviewed, REMTE has also succeeded in inscribing new issues on the HSA's agenda. This could be understood as the process of "agenda setting" described by Keck and Sikkink. For Guillén, REMTE has brought to the free trade debate the issue of work and the impacts of neoliberalism regarding health and education:

women's work, paid work, but we also raised the issue of women's unpaid work; we discussed impacts of structural adjustment programs and the diminution of the public budget for health, the processes of privatization of education (...). We showed that macroeconomy had a very strong impact on women and the appropriation of women's work (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

Framing gender in the economic debate is not an easy task, since free trade is not traditionally considered as a "women's issue". Salazar considers that gender and trade

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<sup>37</sup> See for example the study "Las Mujeres en la Defensa del Agua como Derecho Humano Fundamental" a publication of the Women's Committee of the HSA. Available online: [http://www.generoycomercio.org/areas/incidencia/caderno\\_asc.pdf](http://www.generoycomercio.org/areas/incidencia/caderno_asc.pdf).

are seen as “two worlds apart”. For her, free trade has been on the margins of the feminist agenda and conversely, feminism has also been on the margins of the free trade critique. For Salazar, although there have been efforts to develop links between these two issues, these are still very recent, just beginning: “we need more systematization of women’s experiences as economic actors. There is no data on how free trade affects women, it has to be built. When I want to find the numbers, there are no gender indicators to sustain my argument” (Interview with Salazar, January 2007).

Besides the publications of REMTE (with ALAI-Mujeres) presented in the previous chapter, it is important to highlight the efforts of the International Gender and Trade Network on the development of research and studies to support activists demands. A lack of methodology for the analysis and impacts of free trade and economic policies with a gender perspective were also identified, and some efforts are being carried out in this regard, for example, by the Böll Foundation.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding the discursive framework, there has been positive changes, according to Guillén. For her, language has changed inside the coalition’s documents to include a gender perspective. As she explains, in most of the last declarations of the HSA: “you can see that a more inclusive language is being used, with proposals that include those developed by us. And in the collective action plan, our action proposals are

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<sup>38</sup> For research on the gendered impacts of free trade in Latin America, see <http://www.generoycomercio.org/investigacion.html>. Some tools for popular education are also being developed and can be consulted in <http://www.generoycomercio.org/capacitacion.html>. The Böll Foundation has published two important works : América Latina, un debate pendiente. Aportes a la economía y ala política con una visión de género; and “Los impactos de género de las políticas comerciales: avances y desafíos para la investigación y la acción. Programa Economía y Género, 2002 – 2004. All of them available online : <http://www.boell-latinoamerica.org/>

being recognized” (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).<sup>39</sup> She also argues that women now question the use of sexist language in discussions, demanding also the presence of women in general debates, specifically feminists, to develop feminist perspectives.

This positive evaluation is shared by León, for whom REMTE’s capacity to place gender in the debate and to organize workshops and events has given the network a high profile inside the coalition (REMTE 2000). Concha considers that the social movement coalitions are open to gender concerns, recognizing that gender has been assumed as a transversal axis on most of the HSA encounters, although this is still very recent (Interview with Concha, January 2007). For example, in the Cochabamba Encounter (Bolivia, 2006) the axes proposed were 1) Economy and feminism (access to resources, water; production and reproduction; food sovereignty; public services and human rights; work and sexual division of work); 2) Neoliberal economic model (privatization, investments, migration and international cooperation); and 3) Proposals for integration<sup>40</sup>.

However, Marco Antonio Velázquez, Executive Director of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade, contrasts discourse with reality. For him, there is still no equity in representation inside the HSA, as there is still a male predominance in

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<sup>39</sup> See for example the following extracts of the Declaration of the VI Hemispheric Encounter against Free Trade Agreements : “(...) resistimos a las estrategias de las transnacionales que se aprovechan de las desigualdades de género utilizando la mano de obra femenina para bajar los salarios y flexibilizar los derechos laborales de trabajadoras y trabajadores”. Available online : <http://www.asc-hsa.org/node/184>; and “Nuestros objetivos contemplan la lucha contra el neoliberalismo en todas sus expresiones e incluye la superación de la cultura patriarcal y las diferentes formas de discriminación por género, identidad y orientación sexual; contra mujeres, jóvenes, pobres, indígenas, afrodescendientes e inmigrantes” Alianza Social Continental (2006). Declaración Final del V Encuentro Hemisférico de Movimientos Sociales, Redes y Organizaciones que Luchan Contra el ALCA. Available on-line : <http://www.asc-hsa.org/node/88>

<sup>40</sup> See the article by Sandra Trafilar “Las mujeres, protagonistas en la lucha contra el neoliberalismo”, available online : [http://www.movimientos.org/noalca/integracionpueblos/show\\_text.php3?key=8672](http://www.movimientos.org/noalca/integracionpueblos/show_text.php3?key=8672)

general discussions. The importance given to demands with a gender perspective is uneven among all the organizations and movements that form the coalition:

It is still very partial, superficial. It always depends on feminist networks to bring issues to the table, propose initiatives and campaigns with a gender perspective. They try to push the general organization to participate in these activities but they don't always have the echo required (Interview with Velázquez, May 2007).

This problem has also been underlined by Diane Lamoureux, a feminist scholar, who argues that feminists have to insist every time on the need to bring a gender perspective analysis to the overall critique of movements for global justice:

la question de l'égalité entre hommes et femmes est presque toujours mentionnée dans les documents du mouvement altermondialiste, mais la plupart des groupes mixtes ne disposent pas des outils pour les intégrer véritablement dans leur discours ou dans leur pratique (Lamoureux, 2004 : 180).

This vision is also shared by León, for whom there is an increasing number of women actively participating, creating new concepts and proposing new methodologies to analyze globalization, but men, she argues, are still dominant inside mixed spaces and women have to constantly push to incorporate gender beyond discourse. This is problematic because it demands a lot of energy from women: "it's exhausting because every time you have to bring the issue of women to the table, but we have to be in those spaces, because if not, the *compañeros* [comrades] don't see it" (Interview with Quispe, January 2007). The fight against patriarchy is present in social movements' discourse, which is for León a qualitative step forward. But, she argues, "this doesn't translate into gender equity in everything else that is being discussed (...). The gender perspective in the general demands is still not very visible" (Interview with León, May 2007).

Another example of making women's perspective visible is the "gender chapter" of the document "Alternatives of the Americas". Writing this chapter was a source of

a lot of discussion, as there were different visions: which issues to address and how to address them. Many organizations did not consider it to be a good strategy to have a gender chapter separated from the rest of the issues, as it would have been better to incorporate gender in every issue of the document and not just isolate the impacts on women (Interview with Salazar, January 2007).

A recent evaluation of the World March of Women, a key ally of REMTE, regarding feminist participation in the WSF, identified this same problem: there is a tendency to isolate feminist approaches to certain domains such as health, reproductive rights, or political participation. To prevent the marginalization of feminist views, women: “have to act to prevent feminist analysis from remaining restricted to where it is expected to be (...) and so that it contaminates hard centers in the debate on alternatives such as economy, war or violence” (World March of Women 2007).

There is still a lot to be done in terms of achieving equity between men and women beyond discourse. With a more critical view, Román explains that the problem with mixed coalitions is that:

they [men] know the discourse, but taking the initiative to push for gender equity, that is very relative (...) It is also about resources. You have to have the vision that you want it to be that way. If not, it remains only a declaration (Interview with Román, January 2007).

For the women of REMTE, it is not enough to recognize that gender is an important issue to discuss or to include feminism in the discourse, if this does not translate into changes on the day-to day practices inside the coalition. In the following section, I examine some of the changes that go beyond discourse.



### 3.1.2 *Recognizing women's agency: changes in the organization*

What specific efforts and resources are being put into place to make changes beyond those made in the discourse of the HSA in order to integrate gender in its analysis? The perception on how much has feminism permeated free trade coalitions beyond discourse is ambiguous. According to the women and men interviewed it seems that openness to gender issues remains at the level of discourse, and it has yet to translate into concrete organizational terms.

Berrón considers that women in the continental campaign against the FTAA and in the HSA have always had a significant role. According to him, if gender is being integrated into the coalition as a principle for the organization and the alliance is because feminist activism has been strong, it is because women have fought for it:

They have struggled inside the movement to transform the feminist vision into a principle; and they have succeeded, they have won the battle. There are still mistakes, but these mistakes have a political cost, (...) not only because there's a constant vigilance from the *compañeras* but also because men have really interiorized it as a principle (Interview with Berrón, May 2007).

One of the visible expressions of the political commitment of the Alliance towards gender equity is, according to Berrón, the existence of the Women's Committee. This Committee was formed since the creation of the coalition to ensure that gender remains an important issue in the network's agenda and that there are always women's organizations participating in the decisional spheres. In most of the counter-summits organized, women's workshops are organized prior to the general meeting. The gender dimension is formally enshrined as a transversal axis in the HSA events, but the concrete application of this principle usually depends on the force of local women's organizations.

Guillén explains that the network has had a relevant role in the building of the HSA and its national chapters (especially in Ecuador, Colombia and Mexico). For her, it has contributed to the debate on the positions and proposals towards integration by actively participating in most of the discussions and coordination meetings. As part of the Women's Committee and coordination team of the HSA, the network has taken part in the debate about the role that the HAS should play, developing strategies and campaigns along Via Campesina, the information agency ALAI and the World March of Women.

In terms of recognition of women and feminist leaderships, there have been positive developments, according to the women in REMTE. For Faria, women are being recognized as political subjects inside this process of coalition building between feminist organizations and movements critical of free trade agreements: "there is a recognition that this actor exists, has a political weight, mobilizes and makes things happen. Although there is all this rhetoric that still has to translate into concrete political actions" (Interview with Faria, May 2007). REMTE, considers Guillén, is recognized as an ally by other social movements:

with its own voice, its own arguments and with political stands that have to be considered in the strategies to be developed with the *compañeros* of the HSA. We contribute not only by mobilizing women, but also with arguments and with our own agenda that render women's oppression, discrimination and exclusion visible (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

The capacity of mobilization is a key element to explain the recognition of women inside the HSA. For Berrón, women have shown their political force because they have participated in demonstrations in every counter-summit organized in the Latin American region (Interview with Berrón, May 2007). Nobre underlines this as well because for her: "having women on the streets gives us the leverage to negotiate

with other social movements (...) we exist as concrete political subjects” (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

Women have to be present in representative delegations and workshops. But because not all women are feminists and thus there is no guarantee that a woman representative will have a feminist analysis and position, REMTE demands the presence of women who bring feminist perspectives in general debates, in addition to conferences, seminars and workshops organized by the network itself. The goal is to present a global vision from a feminist perspective and be in dialogue with other issues and movements (Faria 2003). Women’s presence in panels, Guillén argues, does not mean that there has to be an equal number of men and women:

we recognize that we don’t have feminist specialists in every subject. When we don’t have them, instead of being there as decoration –we hate to be there as decoration- we recognize that there are less women there because we haven’t developed those issues. So it is also useful to us to say that if we want to be there, we have to develop our own arguments. But if we have the arguments and they are not addressed and recognized, we fight (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

Although Nobre argues that there is a lot more understanding and respect from mixed organizations towards women (Interview with Nobre, April 2007), this recognition is still limited to certain women’s leaderships and is not extensive to women as a collective leadership, for example young women, black or indigenous women and peasant women (Interview with Guillén, May 2007). It also varies depending on the context. The case of the Meso-American region was recalled by one of the women interviewed: “some of the allied organizations still have a patriarchal culture. It is still ‘natural’ that women do the logistics and men take the decisions.

There are degrees... from subtle discrimination to open aggression”<sup>41</sup> (Interview with Martinez, January 2007).

Despite these limits, REMTE’s activists explain that the network’s recognition is based on the following elements: presence and alliance with the World March of Women as a visible movement with mobilization capacity; the initiatives developed by REMTE in coordination with women from Via Campesina and the World March in the World Social Forum; and the ability to achieve agreement on key political proposals among women organizations (Interview with Nobre, May 2007).

One difficulty in visualizing women in the global justice movement is that women have many identities and get involved as part of broader movements and multiple causes (trade unions, environment, human rights, peasant movements). An important remark made by Staggenborg and Taylor is that “not all women’s movements define their collective interests and solidarity primarily in terms of challenges to gender relations, but over time, as women engage in collective actions, participants may develop a feminist consciousness and identity” (2005: 45). This has been the case for many peasants’ and indigenous women who do not necessarily define themselves as feminists, but in their actions push for the recognition of women’s rights. Blanca Chancoso, an indigenous woman that has been a key leader in the CONAIE says:

women were forced to struggle against free trade agreements because poverty hits us harder. We have demanded a popular consultation on the FTAA and when there are street demonstrations, we have been there to defend food sovereignty, to defend our water, to defend our agriculture against GMOs. Women have done everything to make visible their preoccupation and opposition to free trade agreements (Interview with Chancoso, May 2007).

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<sup>41</sup> This comment was made in reference to an incident that took place in the Meso-American Encounter of Costa Rica (2005), where women felt aggressed when during a discussion about political subjects, some men made explicit sexual and sexist jokes. This behavior was denounced in a declaration at the end of the gathering and was communicated to other social movement networks and cooperation agencies (it appeared in many of the interviews I conducted).

Another explanation of this change is that the strategy to form alliances with key movements like Via Campesina and the World March of Women has given REMTE a leverage to negotiate with other actors inside the HSA. As it was shown in the previous chapter, the World March of Women and REMTE reinforce their activities and positions by co-organizing workshops and seminars, developing common declarations and coordinated campaigns. For example, REMTE and the World March of Women were a fundamental part of the World Forum for Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni 2007), organized jointly with Via Campesina, Friends of the Earth and other important movements. This encounter took place in Mali, in February 2007 and brought together more than 600 delegates from all over the world. The objective was to reaffirm the right to food sovereignty and to create an international process to achieve the recognition of this right.<sup>42</sup>

The participation of the World March of Women, REMTE, ALAI-mujeres, Diálogo Sur-Sur LGBT and women from the Via Campesina “was a reference to spark off the feminist debate in Nyéléni – Food Sovereignty Forum and other alliance-forming processes that have helped to expand the anti-liberal alliance towards an egalitarian agenda” (World March of Women 2007). This was considered a step forward because women participated not only in the logistics, but also in the decision making process: “we got involved in organizing, coordinating panels and speakers, besides taking part in the final report and political declarations” (World March of Women 2007).

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<sup>42</sup> See Declaration of Nyéléni (in Appendix D). For more information on this gathering, see : <http://www.nyeleni2007.org/>

Another factor mentioned in the interviews that pushed mixed organizations to modify their language and develop “gender friendly” documents, campaigns and projects was the financial support from cooperation agencies that were demanding “gender indicators” in their projects: “when the agencies saw that gender was a decisive issue and that social movements, trade unions and peasants’ organizations didn’t realize this, they started to condition their support. They have pushed so that they take into consideration the gender perspective” (Interview with Concha and Román, January 2007).

Feminist networks have made specific recommendations to the International Council of the WSF considering that it was necessary to stimulate changes and guarantee balance in the Forum’s practice. They proposed as criteria:

Try to have a balanced composition of delegations taking into consideration gender, regions and expressions of diversity; integrate different political and analytical perspectives -including feminist perspectives- in the treatment of debates; and apply mechanisms of “positive action”, for example, alternating participation for both genders, spokesperson, public presence and relations with the media (World March of Women 2007).

At the same time, they argue, to avoid that the criteria of balancing gender and diversity of the speakers becomes an artificial situation, it should not be treated as a last-minute exercise of “adding” women, afro-descendants, indigenous, or members of the GLBT movement, just to be “politically correct”. It should be instead an orientation “applied from the beginning of the process that seeks to give visibility to different voices and discourses, but also to stimulate the production of contributions, and promote the dialogue among different perspectives” (World March of Women 2007).

It is interesting to note that feminists have played an important role in incorporating diversity into the debate of social movements (for example, the LGBT movement). As we will see in the following section, women in these networks are not just pushing for gender equity, but also for the recognition of plurality and diversity inside social movement coalitions.

### *3.1.3 Making diversity and feminism a core principle in social movement coalitions*

Integrating gender equity into contents, agendas and programs is the first step towards a real integration of feminism as a political vision. Among the changes observed by some of the people interviewed, it was argued that feminism has become part of the “political consensus” among the representatives of the organizations in the global justice movement. However, according to a document addressed to the International Council of the WSF regarding the integration of diversity and equality as principles, the adoption of transversal themes of gender and diversity (since the II WSF) is not enough: “application is still unequal and insufficient, both at the level of thinking (thematic and content) and in its practices” (World March of Women 2007).

Indeed, for Silke Helfrich, director of the Böll Foundation, a financial supporter of the Women’s Committee of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, this has to do with a politically correct discourse (Interview with Helfrich, January 2007). For her, coalitions can no longer afford to ignore gender as an important matter because it would be a violation of a political principle. Salazar also agrees on this “politically correct” discourse in coalitions. Feminists are respected, she says, but “there is hardly a difference in structure, in terms of women’s participation (...) or in the agenda. Gender is an issue that has to appear in the discussion, but it depends on women to

bring it in” (Interview with Salazar, January 2007). For Helfrich, going beyond discourse would require a deep transformational project:

organizational, cultural and political, which involves changing how you ask questions, what conceptual tools you use, what criteria you include in the evaluation, how do you systematically understand gender as a relational and internal democracy issue and not only as a women’s issue. It involves transforming the methodology and gives another quality to your work (Interview with Helfrich, January 2007).

In the specific case of the HSA, there is a sense of trust of women’s organizations in the coalition. For example, the coordinator of REMTE in Colombia expressed that “as World March and as REMTE, we think that there is a place in the Hemispheric Social Alliance for our demands” (Interview with Rivera, Mai 2007). Guillén’s evaluation is also rather optimistic, although she also recognizes the obstacles women have to face when working inside mixed coalitions:

from the point of view of our expectations, we are still far away, but from the point of view of where we started, we have come a long way (...) the HSA is a less aggressive space, less *machista* (...), but there’s nothing given; we have gained a lot but we could go back any moment. We have to make sure that we don’t take a step back (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

According to Conway, there has been a shift in both the discourse and the process of the Quito Encounter in relation to the WSF in Porto Alegre, which is explained by the strong presence of feminists, indigenous and queer organizations. Even though the program was structured “along similar lines with many concurrent panels, the sessions in Quito were comprised of many fewer speakers, more diverse and gender-balanced line-ups and significant time for audience questions and comments” (2007: 61).

Another difference is that there was increased “political visibility, substantive political content, process innovations and important dialogues among these movements” (Conway 2007: 60) while referring to feminists, indigenous and LGBT



movements. REMTE's involvement in regional processes like the Americas Social Forum (ASF) has allowed the network to push for the integration of diversity in these processes. Along with CONAIE, ALAI, and Diálogo Sur-Sur LGBT, REMTE was one of the leading organizations of the ASF in Quito, Ecuador (July 2004).

Finally, another contribution of REMTE, together with other feminist networks, indigenous movements, and LGBT organizations is the building of a new political culture that puts diversity at the core of social movements' work, where all these different actors also have a voice. Making gender and diversity as transversal axis in the World Social Forum challenge andro and ethno-centrist visions and practices, pushing to more inclusive ethics according to Irene León (2005: 15).

This reformulation of new democratic political identities is a theoretical challenge, but also a day-to day practice, which means new priorities in the agenda of the movements; integration of gender justice to economic justice demands; and, the recognition of diversity based on the multicultural and pluriethnic characteristics of the Latin American region (Celiberti 2003: 297). As León puts it: "nothing prevents the set of actors of the Forum to assume as their own the subject of equality between genders and diversity, without waiting for structural transformations" (2003: 611, my translation).

The challenge is also to advance the democratization of social movements' practices and representation. As Vargas affirms, women's affairs have to be considered as democratic political affairs affecting both men and women; at the same time, democratic issues (cultural, social, economic and political) must be considered issues of feminist concern. For her, transversal feminist struggles "augur the

possibility of a different world, sustained by the recognition of the other, based on their difference” (Vargas 2003b: 918).

It has already been argued that women cannot just be “added” to existing analysis or structures (Marchand 2003). This is also the position of the equality policy that the World March of Women and REMTE proposed to the International Council of the WSF. For them:

equality cannot consist in putting themes and views next to each other, with the result of a simple sum; it is more about interlinking, combining perspectives of analysis, and integrating, in political terms, the “partial” causes so that they mutually enrich each other, so as to build a common perspective, in order, for example, for feminism to become one of the pillars of the view for another world, and a commitment of everyone (World March of Women and REMTE 2005).

Different visions and efforts and priorities among social movements, NGOs and cooperation agencies are also a challenge. There is not always agreement in the strategy to achieve changes. It is still an open debate. For example, for some women:

Parallel panels have been more useful because we have control of the decisions taken, how to set it up, call more women, make other women participate, enter the specificities of the debate. Transversalization has not functioned very well. We have talked about it, we have made the effort, but there is still no real transversalization of the gender perspective (Interview with Concha, January 2007)

For others, a parallel women’s Forum, following the format of the civil society events at the UN conferences is not the best feminist strategy. They see it as double-edged, because although it is a space for women, there is also the tendency to isolate these efforts:

the workshops we organized were important, but only women attended, some men were there, because they know our discourse, but there is no recognition that there’s something being discussed there that they can’t miss. Instead, we have to organize ourselves to be in all the other workshops because if we are not there, our positions

will probably not be expressed. That is what is missing; we still have to do a double effort to frame our agenda (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).<sup>43</sup>

This double effort means that women have to coordinate to have their own space previous to the general meeting to agree on the main point that should be discussed. In addition, they have to work to achieve changes in the peasants and workers organizations perception of gender equity. Having segregated spaces makes this task difficult, because what is analyzed in one space remains there, as there is no communication between spaces (Interview with Salazar, January 2007).

One critique of the Women's Forum before the general forums is that by having a space of their own, a separated space, it reinforces the impression that gender only concerns women, and thus it is not considered as a relational issue between both men and women, and a problem of internal democracy of social movements. As Helfrich affirms, inside social movement coalitions there is a misunderstanding of the concept of "gender", usually used as synonym for "women". Gender democracy, she explains, is a question of internal democracy (Interview with Helfrich, January 2007).

Although there is more openness to gender issues, it is still perceived as limited to discourse and depends on the presence of feminists to push for the inclusion of gender analysis. Nevertheless, we should not understand this as a failure, because it is a long term process. The contribution of REMTE to social movement coalitions can be briefly summarized in changes at the discourse level (a more inclusive language, gender-sensitive programs and declarations); some organizational changes (gender as transversal axis of encounters, egalitarian and representative delegations) and cultural

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<sup>43</sup> This same critique was made by the Globalization and Alliances Collective of the World March of Women: "from our own experience we know we must be present and actively participating to ensure the visibility of women's knowledge and work" (World March of Women 2005) and also in Eschle's analysis: "the integration of feminists concerns into antiglobalization discourses remained dependent on the concrete presence of self-declared feminists"(Eschle 2005: 1759).

changes still being developed (incorporation of diversity and feminism as principles of action).

These changes would not have been possible without a key element REMTE has highlighted since the beginning: the empowerment of women's organizations locally and nationally. In the last section, I will show that the dynamics of transnationalization have to be looked at the national scale, because it is there that women's organizations make the concrete work to accomplish transnational campaigns and declaration.

### **3.2 Reinforcing women's movements at the national scale**

As noted in the preceding section, we should not only limit the analysis of the contribution of REMTE to transnational spaces. To assess more precisely REMTE's impacts, we need to take into consideration the national scale, instead of just focusing on the impacts on the transnational scale. It is important, as other authors have shown, to have a multi-scalar approach (Masson 2006; Jelin 2003).

It has been ten years since the foundation of REMTE. Why do activists keep the network alive after all these years? For Alvarez, a key element to take into account is to ask why and how local activists look for links at the transnational scale, "what they expect to achieve or gain *locally* as a consequence of their involvement with supra-national official and alternative public spaces" (Alvarez 2000: 3). This was an issue that emerged very often in the interviews. Most of the women interviewed explained that they had to keep a balance between the national and the transnational work. Even

if it is important that women have a presence and visibility in transnational coalitions, this also has to translate in the reinforcement of the national movement.

A common position among the women of REMTE was that a transnational network was valid as long as it has grounded organizations and served to advance and reinforce national processes. The criteria used to decide whether to take part of a campaign, states Concha, is the empowerment of the national women's movement:

the building of the Mexican women's movement, not only personally, but as organizations (...) We helped build the Latin American Network with the thought that this network could serve Mexican women. It does not make sense for us to belong to a Latin American space if nothing happens with the process of Mexican women. That's how we accepted the challenge, to build the national process (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

This argument is shared by Roman, who insists on the importance of being well grounded at the local level to be able to participate at the international level.<sup>44</sup> For her, building a network is a difficult process, but it is even more difficult to keep the network alive. Having resources to redimension the scale of the organization is a good thing, she says, but "you have to be well grounded, with both feet; otherwise you have an 'outside' organization and nothing in the inside, a big head with no feet" (Interview with Román, January 2007).

The key, according to Rosario Quispe, member of the Gender and Economy Network and part of the international coordination of the World March of Women, is "to reinforce organizations that already exist; otherwise it becomes very difficult to maintain a network" (Interview with Quispe, 2007). Hilda Salazar, a researcher from

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<sup>44</sup> A similar argument was presented by the World March of Women regarding the World Social Forum: "The WSF only makes sense where there are local or national struggles, sites of construction of grounded alternatives. The participants of these struggles can better recognize and encourage each other if the pace of the Forum does not hinder action itself. The experience of the Global Day of Action was eloquent and bring us to propose clearly the alternance between local, thematic/regional and international WSF as a way to reinforce the process and making it a reality in more countries" (World March of Women 2007).

the Women's Committee of the Hemispheric Social Alliance reinforces this position recognizing that "a transnational network only functions if there is already a nationally-based organization" (Interview with Salazar, January 2007).

In the case of the Mexican organizations that take part in REMTE, Concha assesses that the network has been useful for the national women's movement: "if women say, this is not going to help us, it dies. You have to turn it into an instrument for popular education, organization, mobilization, political pressure for women to accomplish their rights" (Interview with Concha, January 2007). Along the same lines, Quispe states that national organizations have to avoid "being absorbed" by international processes: "it is a bidirectional process and you must remain anchored to contribute at the transnational level" (Interview with Quispe, January 2007).

Transnational campaigns would just stay in the documents if there was no appropriation of organizations and movements at the national level. We can see an example of how engagements at the transnational scale are translated into action in the case of REMTE in Peru. According to the national coordination report (REMTE 2000), the network developed research on economic rights for women, analyzed documents on the gender perspective of trade agreements and made contributions to the gender chapter of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. It produced an article on globalization and employment with a gender perspective and a bimonthly bulletin on issues of continental integration. It organized the workshops "Economic Rights and Resource Access for Women"; "Women against the FTAA: Relevance of the Gender Perspective in the HSA Proposals"; "Impacts of Trade liberalization for Women's Lives" and "HSA Proposals for a Gender Chapter in Alternatives for the Americas".

All these activities are in addition to the work the organization is already doing nationally. This is the reason why it is important to know the national context in order to participate in the decisions taken at the transnational level, so that activities can be harmonized. However, as Concha explains, it is all part of a process, sometimes organizations are more integrated in the network, but sometimes most of the organization's energy has to go to the domestic work. This is explained, according to her, by differences in the national context and domestic agendas, and sometimes the lack of a common axis of regional work between the organizations of REMTE (Interview with Concha, January 2007). This tension between the national and the international work appeared during the interview with one of the Mexican coordinators:

Now REMTE is proposing a new regional research, but we told them that we have to achieve first our already full national agenda. We also have the Mesoamerican process and the World March of Women. Plus, we have the training to reinforce the network at the provinces, because we can't be just a shell, we have to be in the provinces, in order to gain strength (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

Another problem is that there are not many resources for the regional coordination of the network.<sup>45</sup> The time, energy and resources that the coordination takes is time, energy and resources that will not be spent on domestic coordination efforts. For this reason, it is very important that regional and national activities find a common axis of work. Concha explains that in the past, tensions arose when the Mexican chapter was asked to coordinate the network for a second period. It was eventually turned down:

In the regional coordination, you have to be communicating all the time, get resources for the countries, take care of the accomplishment of the agenda, establish Latin American and international relations... it's a cost. We can't be here and there. For us the first thing is Mexico, if not, it is nonsense, it becomes two or three women

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<sup>45</sup> The coordination changes every two years, with possibility of one re-election.

traveling around. You have to build the national movement, only then you can contribute to the international movement. This is what gives legitimacy and recognition. Build the global from the local, this is what we have been doing. (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

Echoing this last thought, Matte states looking back at the experience of the World March of Women, that it is key to push for “concrete results in communities to change the lives of women. If this is not happening, as a social movement, we need to question ourselves. This can only be accomplished by inter-nurturing the local and global action and vice versa” (Matte 2004: 47). Therefore, it should be kept in mind that transnationalization is a bidirectional process and that it is a challenge to bring together interests and organizing methods of groups from different national backgrounds and contexts.

As we have seen, women’s organizations are part of transnational networks because they feel this will reinforce their struggle at the national scale. At the same time, women consider that organizations have to be well grounded to be able to participate in transnational efforts. In the following section, I present some of the contributions REMTE has made to its member organizations, according to the women interviewed.

### *3.2.1 Impacts on agenda setting and discursive frameworks*

A critical role of REMTE has been the development of an economic critique from a feminist perspective. The network has provided national organizations a framework of analysis linked to mobilization, building bridges between women’s experiences and economic issues. It has been a space to share relevant information, a key element of transnational networking according to Keck and Sikkink (1998). Also REMTE’s interest on working with grassroots organizations, it has encouraged the



development of educational tools to strengthen women's movements. Nobre explains that

before, the economy was not even considered an issue to debate in the feminist agenda. What REMTE allowed us was to access the debate on feminist economics (...) we took advantage of our relationship with REMTE to be in touch with this literature and concepts. I see that women take the opportunity to have alliances with us to start with economic issues; it is important to have a discourse already elaborated, what to say as feminists in economic matters (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

The debate about free trade agreements had been in general absent from feminist organizations' agendas. Women have been linked more to micro-economics and productive projects and according to Salazar, macroeconomic issues are hardly appropriated by women's organization. This is explained because for a long time, the feminist movement agenda was centered on sexual and reproductive rights, which was the UN agenda as well.

There have been methodological and conceptual advances in gender and trade in networks like IGTN, which are providing valuable information on how free trade agreements are gender blind and how they affect men and women differently<sup>46</sup>. The problem is that this information does not always reach grassroots organizations; it remains in the academic and university debate (Interview with Salazar, January 2007).<sup>47</sup>

Once there is a feminist analysis of free trade agreements, the role of REMTE is to socialize this knowledge. Salazar acknowledges that the work of REMTE in

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<sup>46</sup> See Espino 2003; IGTN 2005; Red Internacional Género y Comercio 2003; Rodríguez and Sanchiz 2003; Sanchiz 2005.

<sup>47</sup> According to Macdonald "once women's groups attempt to develop credibility among powerful actors by engaging in complex legal analysis of trade treaties, it becomes difficult for them to communicate effectively with grassroots women's groups. The gendered character of the construction of knowledge, particularly economic knowledge, at the national and international levels is another important area that should be addressed in theories of transnational collective action, and that helps explain the relative weakness of the feminist contribution to the global justice movement" (2005: 26)

Mexico is essential to frame economic issues in grassroots women's organizations (Interview with Salazar, January 2007). For this reason, activists consider that the work of REMTE's organizations is important, because they make the link between the economic model and women's everyday life, a theory based on women's experience (Interview with Quispe, January 2007). For Concha, women suffer the consequences of a model they haven't decided and haven't been able to analyze. According to her, the reason why there is no generalized women's movement in relation to trade is because

It's not even an issue on the public agenda, so the global economic model sounds too complicated. But women live their domestic economy. This is the reason why we are talking about this, doing provincial encounters, national encounters, to be clear on what is the gender perspective and then the significance of domestic economy in the global, neoliberal economic model (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

Another element mentioned is the democratization of the debate on free trade. From a very technical debate in the hands of specialists, social and women's movements have contributed to make this debate accessible to grassroots organizations. Norma Sanchiz, from the Latin American Gender and Trade Network explains that it has been a process of "making visible the social conflict and the hidden interests in the decisions taken (...) situating free trade in the political sphere, along with issues of power and power relations between social sectors and countries as a central category" (Sanchiz 2005). In this sense, Nobre argues that it is of vital importance to make women participate in a debate that has so far been discussed by experts: "in the FTAA debate, we addressed central issues in a simple and clear way, not talking about the technicalities, but looking at the social and political implications of issues like privatization of water and food sovereignty" (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

Like the *Encuentros*, where feminists gained access to new theoretical frameworks based on identity-solidarity exchanges across borders (Alvarez 2000: 8), the space created by REMTE has given women concepts and tools to describe and analyze their daily economic experience. But the network's contribution is not limited to theoretical analysis, it is also guides actions and decision making. REMTE has been important because it has developed a collective thinking, a regional strategy and position that has oriented the national organization's work and to coordinate their agendas (Interview with Guillén, May 2007). The next section will deal with the contribution of REMTE in terms of organizational skills.

### *3.2.2 Empowerment of women's organization skills, recognition and legitimacy*

According to the regional coordinator of REMTE, being part of a continental network enhances the level of political debate of each national organization: "it provides you another level of information, of debate and position. It changes the scale of implication and the possibilities of alliances" (Interview with Faria, May 2007). There is a change of scale being constructed by the movements themselves: "we were already working at the national level, but the insights I had by having an international work was for me an extraordinary learning experience, it opened a lot of curtains for me" (Interview with Martinez, January 2007).

According to Quispe, a sense of "unity, of being integrated at the world level" is developed: "it expands your vision as you see that the problem is global and that united, together, a greater force is created to struggle against this" (Interview with Quispe, January 2007). Guillén explains that:

when you are dealing with regional or international processes like free trade, the FTAA, we know that although we are a national organization, we have an international reference. We are a group of organizations fighting locally, but in the continent there are many other organizations fighting. And you have the certainty that you can consult your *compañeras* of other countries on what they are doing, what we can do together. You have the confidence that you're doing something, and that you're part of a bigger group. Being in an international network empowers your work (Interview with Guillén, May 2007).

The organizations of REMTE at the national level have gained more legitimacy by being part of a transnational network. In a way, this is similar to what Alvarez underlines as a contribution from the *Encuentros*, “a sense that activists – who most often are a relatively small minority in their own national context- were not “alone” in their local struggles for gender(ed) justice” (Alvarez 2000:7). It also gave women more experience and confidence to participate in other transnational efforts along social movements, for example, in the campaign against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas in 2004:

We participated in the campaign of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, with the consultation, because we already had the experience of the national consultation on women's rights, which was part of the activities of the World March of Women (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

For example, in this consultation about the FTAA, a question addressing the free trade agreements' impacts on women was added in most of the countries where it took place. Women's contribution to the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade was specifically recognized in the 2006 assembly, where it was also decided that the Gender and Economy Network (the national chapter of REMTE) would be part of the coordination team (Concha 2006).

Another impact referred to by one of the women interviewed is the recognition of feminist leadership by women working inside mixed movements. This has encouraged women to get organized in women's committees inside their own

organizations. During the campaign against the FTAA, there were many workshops addressed to women. As an illustration, one of the results of these workshops is the following anecdote:

Usually when a feminist arrived to the meetings to talk about gender or women's participation it was the moment people went out to drink a coffee. But suddenly, those same women started to arrive to the meetings to talk about the core issues that were being discussed, very well informed. This had an impact on women; they felt reinforced, recognized in their leadership. It was such a good thing, the campaign against the FTAA (Interview with Nobre, April 2007).

Another important transnational experience for the women of REMTE was their involvement with the mobilizations of the World March of Women. In the case of REMTE in Mexico, Román argues that the mobilizations in 2000 with the World March of Women contributed a lot to the movement's organization:

It helped women to link different processes and developed organizational abilities; it made local and national organizations work together again and it also brought new groups to the same space (...) it allowed greater integration (Interview with Román, January 2007).

Quispe also argues that it "favored the integration of groups that were dispersed before" (Interview with Quispe, January 2007). For Martínez, these meetings, national and international encounters and exchanges, allowed her to become aware of the diversity of women that were participating: "union workers, teachers, grassroots organizations, NGOs... very diverse. It was a possibility to enrich my work" (Interview with Martínez, January 2007). Many provincial committees were formed and are still working even after the mobilizations of 2000 and 2005. This experience, Concha notes, "made women visible and empowered their organizations, the March made women participants; raising their consciousness and political implication". For some women, she says, there was a "before" and "after" the World March of Women, because they turned it into an educational tool for

organization, mobilization and political pressure to achieve women's rights (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

These experiences point towards the development of a transnational women's movement critical of free trade. As we can see, the impacts referred to by these women are centered in the building of the movement at the national level. During the interviews, there was no mention of the impacts on public policies at the domestic level or international institutions. When directly asked about lobby efforts and impacts on public policies, Concha explained that REMTE focused mainly on the building of the movement itself, because "only through a strong social movement you can have an impact. Strength has to come first, and after you have to be clear on what you can negotiate" (Interview with Concha, January 2007).

REMTE's overall impacts are then to be analyzed in non-state spheres, which echo's Staggenborg and Taylor's proposition that there is a need for a "conceptualization of power and protest that is long-term and less state-centered than that of the contentious politics approach" (2005: 48). Again, feminist critiques to mainstream transnational social movements are relevant to understand the impacts of REMTE, because although the network participated very actively in mobilizations against the FTAA, this was just one element of their strategies, not the only one and not the most important one either.

The emphasis of the network has been primarily about empowering and developing women, personally and collectively. It has focused on the building of the women's movement and considered other social movements their interlocutors. This decision comes from a solidarity-logic more than an institutional-advocacy logic aiming to influence the state negotiations on free trade. The strategies used by

REMTE may not be seen as “efficient” in terms of having a direct impact on public policies. However, these strategies reflect the network’s values and identity: decentralization, shared power, collective participation and respect for diversity.

Equally important to understanding REMTE’s impact is to look not only at the transnational scale, but also the national one, where the transnational agenda is translated into concrete actions by the women’s organizations. This is a dynamic process and an analysis based on a multi-scalar vision (Masson 2006; Jelin 2003) therefore becomes especially relevant. By reinforcing local and national movements, the network becomes stronger at the regional and international levels. At the same time, the legitimacy of a regional network like REMTE depends on the national work of each feminist organization.

## CONCLUSION

Transnational collective action is a complex and vast field of inquiry still to be explored from different perspectives. This study has contributed to shed light on a transnational women's network in Latin America, which builds alliances with key social movements for global justice to organize resistance to free trade and promote economic alternatives integrating gender equity. This research began by asking what has been the contribution of feminist networks to social movement coalitions against free trade, specifically the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy (REMTE), in particular its impact on the HSA and the WSF.

The challenge that REMTE takes on is to build a new political culture, where diversity is a strength rather than a weakness, where indigenous movements, women's movements, LGBT movements have a voice and feminist concerns about process, inclusion and participation are incorporated in organizational practices. If reformulating new democratic political identities is a theoretical challenge (Celiberti 2003), for REMTE it is also a day-to-day practice. To unravel REMTE's experience, I first looked at the dynamics of transnationalization reviewing the existing literature on transnational activism. After confronting this theoretical corpus with the fieldwork, it became obvious that some key elements mentioned by the women interviewed were not considered as relevant impacts of transnational networking. Because of this, I chose to explore the proposals and critiques of feminist scholars that address transnational collective action.

Although the literature on transnational activism explains certain aspects of the phenomenon of transnationalization, feminists' contributions to this field are



relevant in order to understand REMTE's experience. These critiques consider that transnational studies are often male-biased in terms of the movements and strategies that are looked at. The emergence, target and evaluation of impacts are state-centered and considered on a short term basis; and gender dynamics inside social movements are also overlooked. Taking this into consideration, I focused on a transnational women's organizing experience that deals with an issue not traditionally considered as a women's issue, free trade agreements. I argued that the contribution of feminist scholars to the field of transnational collective action is relevant as explains certain aspects of social movements across borders that are not considered in the mainstream transnational activism literature.

First, a large section of the transnational activism literature considers that the emergence of networks is explained by an opening of a political opportunity structure. Although international institutions may function as "coral reefs" (Tarrow 2005), my analysis showed that the transnational scale is also constructed by the movements themselves (Masson 2006). The experience of REMTE is an example of how transnational activists' networks can be built "from below", as Alvarez (2000) affirms, and not only through institutional spaces. REMTE's emergence is linked to a bottom-up process, the Feminist *Encuentros*, organized by Latin American feminists since 1981. Even though the conferences of the United Nations may also have acted as a significant space for network creation, this was not the case for REMTE. The network emerged outside the traditional sphere of institutionalized feminism, closer to women's movements from the popular sector with the will to transnationalize grassroots struggles and counter balance the positions of institutionalized "gender experts".

Second, it was shown that the strategies and targets of transnational activism are not always directed towards the state or international institutions. As Alvarez unveiled before, there are different logics for action, “institutional-advocacy” and “solidarity-identity” that are complementary. REMTE is an example of the second type of logic, because it does not act to influence institutions or the state, but to build solidarity within women’s movements and among social movements. REMTE’s position on free trade agreements is a radical feminist critique that does not seek to change public policy or lobby, its goal is to contribute to cultural changes inside other social movements to make feminism a guiding principle of analysis and action.

This type of transnationalization is being built on a day-to-day basis and becomes visible during international encounters. REMTE’s strategies focus on popular education and mobilization and its targets are multiple. It uses seminars and meetings to promote feminist analysis of the economy, to make links between gender and free trade agreements (agenda setting and issue framing) in a combination of scales simultaneously (Jelin 2003). By participating in social movement encounters, REMTE accesses relevant information, builds alliances with other women’s organizations, global social movements and struggles for the recognition of women’s active presence in key transnational spaces like the WSF.

It is important then, as feminist scholars argue, to look at the strategies of different scales of action, that less visible and that operate using different logics, outside of those seeking to influence the state or international institutions. This observation calls for a diversification of targets that go beyond state-centered approaches, considering also other social movements as possible targets of transnational networking. On this matter, it would be interesting to further explore the

work of Wapner (1995) on what he defines as civic politics. Wapner suggests to focus the attention to activities of transnational movements that attempt to modify practices and behaviors of key actors and change perceptions of their interests to rebuild their identities. Activists, he argues, work to change the cultural conditions without always putting direct pressure on the states. For him, the socio-cultural dimension is essential to understand the activities of transnational social movements.

Third, in terms of impacts, this research suggested that the contribution of transnational networking goes beyond the lobbying logic that is usually the focus of studies of transnational activism. In the case of REMTE, impacts were mainly at the level of women's movements, their organization, visibility and empowerment. The activities of the network emphasize education, capacity building and reinforcement of women's organizations. Thus, to analyze REMTE's contribution, it is important to look at the less visible work that is taking place inside seminars, workshops and meetings instead of just considering mass mobilizations. The contribution of the network cannot be evaluated only in terms of changes to the state or international institutions, because it does not work to influence policy outcomes, but to transform the terms and nature of the social movements' debate, bringing new ideas, norms and discourses into it. The incorporation of feminist analysis to the free trade debate is an indicator of how women's organizations have influenced social movement coalitions.

Another element that should be taken into account when looking at the impacts of transnational social movements is that the national scale continues to be of great importance to transnational networks, as Tarrow (2005) affirmed before. REMTE, according to its participants, is relevant as long as it reinforces national organizations. "Rooted cosmopolitans" are a key element in transnational activism,

but this idea of a “transnational elite” is redefined by social movements that explicitly choose strategies and mechanisms that allow participation of the grassroots movements outside national borders.

According to the women interviewed, most of REMTE’s activities aim to reinforce women’s national struggles because building a movement requires concrete place-based work. By reinforcing local and national movements the network becomes stronger at the regional and international level. At the same time, the legitimacy of a regional network like REMTE depends on the national work of each feminist organization. The different scales of action, local, regional, national and transnational, are interlinked. Each scale is part of a bidirectional process because, as REMTE’s women argued, in order to be effective at the transnational scale, the movement has to be strong at the national scale. At the same time, the participation in transnational efforts has to strengthen women’s organizations locally.

This case study also revealed that more attention should be paid to gender dynamics and power relations inside transnational collective action. Power dynamics help to explain the choice of strategies and the balance of outcomes of this network. The WSF and the HSA are gendered spaces, and some groups face obstacles to have their voices heard. Differences in gender, class, race, North/South and NGO/social movements, are relevant for understanding transnational collective action. An analysis that takes this into consideration will present a more complete explanation. This is a contribution of feminist scholars to the theory of social movements, but also a practical contribution of feminist activists to social movement coalitions.

REMTE has successfully “framed” gender in the free trade debate within Latin American coalitions. It has demystified neoliberal economy as a matter of

experts and revealed the specific impact of globalization on women. Its contribution is a feminist analysis of free trade that is being integrated in the broader social movement's framework, by developing a counter-expertise, knowledge production for collective action, common research and regional strategies regarding gender and trade. Its alliances with key social movements (in particular with the women of Via Campesina) and its mobilization capacity has also given REMTE legitimacy and allowed the network to be better positioned and have more influence on the debate within activists' circles.

REMTE has brought a feminist perspective to the HSA and the WSF as it has provided a gendered analysis of free trade and a way of organizing that incorporates feminist principles. It has contributed to democratizing the debate on trade issues that before was in the hands of experts and has also made visible the presence and work of women inside the struggle for economic justice, with a feminist position on the economic integration process, looking not only at the impacts of free trade on women as victims, but also at women's capacity to create alternatives.

Although participation in mixed spaces is seen as necessary and positive, it also presents many challenges. The analysis of REMTE revealed the importance of considering the space where social movements operate as gendered. Feminism seems to be integrated to global justice movements in discourse, but still has to push for deeper transformations in organizational and political culture. It was argued that bringing feminists analysis to the coalition's discussion is usually dependent on the presence of feminist networks. Feminism is slowly permeating the social movement coalitions, although changes still remain basically in terms of discourse. Despite this

limited success, it should be kept in mind that building consensus around the idea that “another world, without feminism, is impossible” is a long term process.

A feminist approach to transnational activism has been relevant to explain the case of REMTE. This approach should be tested with other case studies that do not necessarily deal with women or feminist issues explicitly. There are already studies being done about the contribution of women inside the WSF (Conway 2007; Eschle 2005; Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2004) or in coalitions (Caouette 2006), or the World March of Women (Dufour and Giraud 2007, Beaulieu 2007), but further development of theoretical frameworks is needed in order to understand the diversity of initiatives building transnational solidarities. Particularly important are theories that do not intend to homogenize but allow a diversity of perspectives that reflect different angles of this phenomenon. Possible topics of future research could be a case study on a specific movement, for example, Via Campesina, to analyze concretely how feminism is being integrated, or comparative studies between national organization members of REMTE to see how the transnational translates in concrete national action.

Through solidarity and transnational networking, REMTE has advanced towards the reconceptualization of the economy from a feminist perspective that goes beyond the analysis of “impacts on women”. It proposes a critical view of the logic of free trade agreements, showing the alternatives proposed from feminist economics to develop a more egalitarian and fair economy. As feminist scholars challenge mainstream gender-blind theories of transnational collective action, feminist activists across borders challenge social movements to incorporate gender equity because they believe, in agreement with one of the slogans of the World March of Women, that “in

order to change the lives of women, the world needs to be changed; but also, and simultaneously, that in order to change the world, the lives of women need to be changed”.

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## APPENDICES

### A. People interviewed

Arroyo, Alberto. *Mexican Action Network on Free Trade* (Havana, May 2007).

Berrón, Gonzalo. *Coordinator of the Hemispheric Social Alliance* (Havana, May 2007).

Chancoso, Blanca. *CONAIE* (Havana, May 2007).

Concha, Leonor Aida. *REMTE Mexico, ex-coordinator of REMTE* (Mexico City, January 2007).

Faria, Nalu. *REMTE Brazil, current regional coordinator of REMTE* (Havana, May 2007).

Guillén, Rosa. *REMTE Peru, ex coordinator of REMTE* (Havana, May 2007).

Helfrich, Silke. *Director of the Böll Foundation.* (Mexico City, January 2007).

León, Irene. *ALAI Ecuador.* (Havana, May 2007).

Martínez, Miriam. *REMTE Mexico and Mesoamerican Women's Space.* (Mexico City, January 2007).

Matte, Diane. *Ex-coordinator of the World March of Women* (Montreal, December 2006).

Nobre, Miriam. *International coordinator of the World March of Women, REMTE Brazil* (Havana, April 2007).

Riviera, Mariela. *REMTE Colombia* (Havana, May 2007).

Rodriguez, Francisca. *ANAMURI and Via Campesina* (Havana, May 2007).

Román, Sara. *REMTE Mexico and MUTUAC.* (Mexico City, January 2007).

Salazar, Rebeca. *Mujer y Medio Ambiente, International Gender and Trade Network.* (Mexico City, January 2007).

Salazar, Hilda. *Mujer y Medio Ambiente, Mexican Action Network on Free Trade* (Mexico City, January 2007).

Quispe, Rosario. *REMTE Mexico and representative for the Americas at the World March of Women* (Mexico City, January 2007).

Velázquez, Marco Antonio. *Coordinator of the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade* (Havana, May 2007).



**B. Interview guide**

1. Emergence and transnationalization process
  - a. What were the motivations to create the network?
  - b. How was the network created? What was the context?
  - c. Influence of United Nations
2. Goals, targets, strategies and outcomes
  - a. What are REMTE's activities? What activities do they carry on in common?
  - b. How do they communicate? How do they coordinate actions and discourses?
  - c. Actions and demands are addressed to whom? Do they lobby?
  - d. Who are the allies? Relationship with the World March of Women, with other feminist networks?
3. National-transnational dynamics
  - a. Why work in a network? How a common agenda is built?
  - b. How does transnational networking translate to national work? What are the difficulties of networking?
  - c. How does REMTE contribute to national organizations?
  - d. How do national organizations contribute to REMTE?
4. Gender perspective and mixed coalitions against free trade
  - a. How does REMTE participate in the struggle against free trade? How's the relation with social movements?
  - b. What is REMTE's role in the WSF? In the HSA? What is the use of these spaces?
  - c. What does REMTE does to frame gender in discourse and agenda of coalitions? To give visibility to women?
  - d. What has been the impact of REMTE in these spaces? Have there been changes? What are the obstacles? Has the coalition discourse changed? Are there changes in the agenda? How was this achieved?

**C. Organizations that constitute REMTE**

<http://www.movimientos.org/remte/index2.php3?Seccion=Historia>  
(consulted the 15/06/06)

Bolivia: *Red de Género y Economía*

Brasil: *Red Economía y Feminismo*

Chile: *REMTE - Centro de Estudios Mujer y Trabajo*

Colombia: *Mesa de Trabajo Mujeres y Economía*

Costa Rica: *REMTE Costa Rica*

Ecuador: *Mujeres Transformando la Economía, Núcleo Ecuador*

El Salvador: *Espacio Mujer y Economía*

México: *Red Género y Economía*

Nicaragua: *Colectivo Género y Economía*

Perú: *Grupo Género y Economía*

Venezuela: *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer*

## **D. Women's declarations**

### **Women's Declaration on Food Sovereignty**

**Nyéleni 2007.** <http://www.nyeleni2007.org/spip.php?article310>

We, women from more than 40 countries, from different indigenous peoples of Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania and from different sectors and social movements, have gathered together in Sélingué (Mali) at Nyéleni 2007 to participate in the creation of a new right: the right to food sovereignty. We reaffirm our will to act to change the capitalist and patriarchal world which puts the interests of the market before the rights of people.

Women, who throughout history have been the creators of knowledge about food and agriculture, who still produce up to 80% of the food in the world's poorest countries and are today the principal guardians of biodiversity and agricultural seeds, are particularly affected by neo-liberal and sexist policies.

We suffer the dramatic consequences of these policies: poverty, inadequate access to resources, patents on living organisms, rural exodus and forced migration, war and all forms of physical and sexual violence. Monocultures, including those dedicated to agrofuels, and the widespread use of chemicals and genetically-modified organisms have a harmful effect on the environment and on human health, particularly reproductive health.

The industrial model and the transnationals threaten the very existence of peasant agriculture, small-scale fishing and herding, as well as the small-scale preparation and sale of food in both urban and rural environments, all sectors where women play a major role.

We want to see food and agriculture taken out of the WTO and out of free trade agreements. What is more, we reject the capitalist and patriarchal institutions that see food, water, land and traditional knowledge, as well as women's bodies, as mere commodities.

Seeing our struggle as part of the fight for equality between the sexes, we are no longer prepared to submit to the oppression of traditional or modern society, nor to the oppression of the market. We want to seize this opportunity to leave behind all sexist prejudice and build a new vision of the world based on respect, equality, justice, solidarity, peace and freedom.

We are mobilized. We are fighting for access to land, to territory, to water and to seeds. We are fighting for access to finance and to agricultural tools. We are fighting for good working conditions. We are fighting for access to training and to information. We are fighting for our independence and for the right to decide for ourselves, and for our full participation in decision-making.

Under the watchful eye of Nyéleni, an African woman who defied discriminatory rules, who shone through her creativity and agricultural prowess, we will find the energy to give effect to food sovereignty and, thereby, the hope of building a different world. We will find this energy in our solidarity. We will take this message to women all over the world.

Nyéleni, 27 February 2007

## **Declaración política del Foro Internacional los Derechos de las Mujeres en los Acuerdos Comerciales.**

8 y 9 de Septiembre de 2003  
Cancún, Quintana Roo, México.

[http://www.comitemujeresasc.org/declaraciones/decla\\_cancun.shtml](http://www.comitemujeresasc.org/declaraciones/decla_cancun.shtml)

Nosotras las mujeres participantes de Alemania, Argentina, Austria, Bélgica, Bolivia, Brasil, Bulgaria, Canadá, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Dinamarca, Ecuador, El Salvador, España, Estados Unidos, Filipinas, Francia, Gran Bretaña, Guatemala, Guyana, Holanda, India, Irlanda, Israel, Italia, Jamaica, Japón, Corea, México, Mongolia, Paraguay, Palestina, Perú, Senegal, Suiza, Sur Africa, Tailandia, Turquía, Uganda y Venezuela

### **DECLARAMOS:**

1. Que la quinta conferencia ministerial de la Organización Mundial del Comercio en Cancún, se da en un contexto mundial marcado por un ambiente de guerra, militarización y unilateralismo en diversas regiones del mundo.
2. Que las grandes potencias económicas y las corporaciones multinacionales han desplegado nuevas estrategias de condicionamiento y presión a los países en desarrollo a través acuerdos regionales y bilaterales que ahondan las desigualdades y desventajas que impactan negativamente a las comunidades, a los pueblos indígenas, y particularmente a las mujeres.
3. Que las negociaciones de la OMC y los tratados de libre comercio vulneran los derechos humanos, económicos, sociales y culturales de mujeres consignados en la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos y en múltiples convenios internacionales.
4. Que los pueblos menos favorecidos del mundo se encuentran en una situación de indefensión jurídica debido al estatus desigual que adquieren estos acuerdos comerciales. Mientras que para los países en desarrollado adquieren carácter constitucional no es así para las grandes potencias económicas Una vez que los acuerdos son firmados resulta muy difícil cancelarlos.
5. Que los temas que se discuten en la quinta conferencia ministerial impactan negativamente y de manera drástica la calidad de vida de las mujeres del planeta.

\* La agricultura es una actividad y forma de vida fundamental para el desarrollo de los países ya que constituye el medio de sostenimiento de miles de millones de personas y familias. Además, es la base de la soberanía y seguridad alimentaria y se relaciona con los saberes y riquezas aportados y protegidos durante miles de años por las mujeres.

\* La privatización de los servicios públicos traslada los costos sociales de la reproducción a las mujeres. Los servicios de salud, educación, agua y otros, son responsabilidad pública de los gobiernos y por lo tanto no pueden ser convertidos en simples mercancías por los acuerdos de la OMC.

\* Los tratados sobre propiedad intelectual relacionados con el comercio, usurpan los derechos de las comunidades sobre sus recursos naturales y los conocimientos tradicionales de las mujeres indígenas; favorece la privatización de los recursos genéticos y la biodiversidad, inhiben el desarrollo científico y tecnológico de los países en desarrollo y otorgan supremacía a las ganancias de las grandes transnacionales.

6. Que no deben abrirse a la negociación los llamados “nuevos temas” tales como inversión, competencia, compras gubernamentales, y facilitación del comercio, porque conducirán al empobrecimiento de los países en desarrollo y contribuirán a generar mayores obstáculos a la superación de la desigualdad de género.

7. Que las mujeres promoveremos una agenda alternativa de globalización que ponga en el centro los derechos humanos, económicos, sociales y culturales de las mujeres en la que:

\* Se garantice la soberanía y seguridad alimentaria de las naciones, se reconozca el papel preponderante de las mujeres en la producción agropecuaria y se transformen las relaciones de género que permitan el pleno ejercicio de la ciudadanía de las mujeres.

\* Se establece la preeminencia de los acuerdos y convenios internacionales relativos a derechos humanos, ambientales, laborales, sexuales y reproductivos por encima de reglas y tratados comerciales.

\* Se promueva la instrumentación de instancias y mecanismos que apunten a formas de gobernabilidad democrática entre las naciones en la que los países en vías de desarrollo rescaten su derecho a la soberanía. Estos mecanismos deberán garantizar formas equitativas de participación para las mujeres.

El Foro Internacional los Derechos de las Mujeres en los Acuerdos Comerciales hace un llamado a los gobiernos de los países a no firmar acuerdos que atenten contra la calidad de vida de las mujeres.

Convocamos al Foro de los Pueblos por una Alternativa frente a la OMC a que se sume a esta declaración y haga suyas las demandas de las mujeres que constituimos el 70% de los pobres del mundo.

Cancún, Quintana Roo, México  
9 de septiembre 2003

Relatoría: Mujeres Hacia Cancún

**Declaration from the Women’s Committee of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) at the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Ministerial Meeting in Miami**

<http://www.comitemujeresasc.org/declarations/miami.shtml>

The members of the Women’s Committee of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) present in Miami during the FTAA Ministerial Meeting, declare our inconformity with the direction of the negotiation process that is stated in the Declaration that was signed by the Ministers.

Since the Fourth World Conference of Women that took place in Beijing in 1995, women developed an important agenda about the issues that governments should first address in order to advance a more just and equal society, not only for women but also for our communities. This agenda includes economic, social, cultural, and political issues, and emphasizes the following: gender equity, the right to a life without violence, the struggle against wage and occupational discrimination of women, the right to free association of workers in defense of labor rights, the access to food, education, health, essential services, and to a quality of life and wellbeing that is free from discrimination based on sex, age, and ethnicity.

The achievement of this agenda has been impeded and reversed by the political proposals and impositions of trade agreements, the neoliberal economic model, and patriarchal dominance. This model imposes and reproduces unequal relations between and within nations, and between women and men.

The experiences, research, and analysis of the real impacts of trade agreements such as NAFTA in our countries has demonstrated that these agreements, rather than resolving the acute problems that plague our countries, make them worse.

The FTAA extends authoritarianism and militarization because it constructs a kind of domination and imposition that is deepened within the context of the globalized war (?) and patriarchal domination in our countries. It does not support the construction of a real democracy in which gender equity could be possible and it violates the constitutions, pacts, treaties, and human rights conventions, in which gender is included. The global economic system is not sustainable within this structure of exclusion.

Women Say NO TO the FTAA because:

1. Initiatives such as the FTAA leave our countries legally defenseless since they seek to institute themselves as Supreme Law by acquiring constitutional authority and placing themselves above the national, state, and municipal laws of a country. Countries such as Mexico have experienced how these practices, in the investment chapters for example, have been used by large transnational corporations to undermine the sovereign rights of countries to decide when to accept or reject foreign investment that protects the environment.

2. The agriculture chapters in the trade agreements-and in the draft FTAA agreement- award commercial advantages to the export of agriculture products and procurement from the United States, those that flood national markets with highly subsidized products from transnational corporations. These rules subject small farm economies to unfair competition that lead to the bankruptcy of local agricultural production. The FTAA not only commits an outrage against the productive sector but also destroys the way of life of hundreds of thousands of families. Women in the countryside play a fundamental role in the reproduction of the rural, indigenous and popular family; this has remained irrelevant in the logic of trade agreements. Women continue to be subjected to the heaviest workload, to the need to seek employment in the informal sector, and to being separated from their families and their communities.

3. Migration has become the only alternative for thousands of people-men and women-from the countryside and the city due to the lack of labor opportunities, many of which they lost due to trade agreements. The number of young women migrants has increased with the growing need for the survival of their families. The patrons of migration (?) impose the actual conditions of migration that cannot be more disadvantageous for women. When the women migrate, they have to abandon their families, their children-who generally are left in the care of other young girls or elderly family members; if they migrate with their entire families, their lives are subject to significant inequality in terms of education, health, food, wellbeing. When it is the men who leave in search of jobs in other places within and outside their countries of origin, the women are left alone-without resources- to care for their families. The example of Mexico could not be more dismal: while they have been touted as the model of the benefits of free trade, millions of Mexicans live and work in the U.S. under precarious legal and social conditions, undocumented migrants are brutally persecuted, and the Bush administration has no interest in negotiating a Migrant Agreement and it continues to

maintain the illegal status of workers in order to force them to accept low salaries. The impacts of NAFTA and the national political accords that have emerged from this agreement have caused the foreign remittances that Mexicans living abroad send home to be the primary source of foreign exchange for the country-surpassing even the petroleum industry and the manufacturing and tourism sectors. This is the result of the promises of development that NAFTA offered to Mexico and today the FTAA is offering this same reality to the rest of Latin America: unemployment and expulsion and persecution of hundreds of thousands of women and men.

4. Intellectual Property Rights established in the agreements have permitted powerful chemical laboratories and transnational pharmaceutical companies to appropriate the riches from flora and fauna that many countries in the Americas possess. The villages and indigenous women who live in them and have conserved large areas with the oldest biodiversity, are targets of large mining, forestry, pharmaceutical, water, and energy companies, among others. All of these resources are being converted into goods through processes of privatization and industrialization controlled by large foreign investors.

5. Public services such as water, education, and health are no longer viewed as the means to social wellbeing and instruments for the development of communities but rather will be converted into tradable goods offered to the highest bidder if the FTAA and other similar trade agreements are implemented. The costs of social reproduction will be transferred to families and, within this, to the women. Trade agreements don't only fail to promote equal sharing of responsibility of social reproduction between the genders and within society, but also worsen the conditions of women and their ability to provide health, education, water, and services to their families and communities.

6. The maquila model that promotes the neoliberal system of economic development for the poor countries has been shown to be highly exploitative of the women workers who suffer from low salaries, long distances to travel to work, unclean working conditions, sexual harassment, and labor and human rights violations. The maquila export industry has enjoyed large financial privileges without its growth leading to significant development successes in the regions in which it is located. It has economically weakened other sectors of the national economy and imposed precarious environmental and labor conditions under the constant threat of transferring to other regions. It is not a model of industrialization towards which countries in the region that are working towards national development should aspire, and it is also not an acceptable alternative for women who are interested in joining the labor force. Rather, it is quite the opposite.

7. Trade agreements and the FTAA act with the logic of transforming all human activity into tradable goods from which to reap profits that benefit the transnational corporations and those who accumulate the riches. Because of this, we are witnessing new forms of suppression and exploitation of women, simply because of the fact that they are women, so much so that their bodies are now considered to be disposable.

8. Trade agreements and the FTAA undermine the authority of the State in the society, limit its role and attributes and, in the process, consolidate the presence and concentrate the national decision-making powers of the transnational consortiums that come from the biggest world powers. In the case of our continent, it is the United States.

9. The women of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) don't oppose the processes of economic integration that respect human rights and are inclusive instead of asymmetrical.

However, we do oppose the FTAA and similar bilateral trade agreements that violate human rights and permit the growth of new forms of oppression and domination of women and communities.

The Women Members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance:

Affirm that the FTAA is based on something other than ‘free trade’ that is neither free, nor trade but is rather an instrument used to benefit the few and the most powerful.

We denounce the abusive use of power by transnational corporations and their governments that increase social exclusion and worsen the differential relations between countries, social sectors, and men and women. Women are impacted differently than men by trade agreements, finding themselves in disadvantageous positions in the workplace, within the family and the community.

We therefore demand:

1. The promotion of dialogue and negotiations that create new forms of relationships between countries based on conditions of equity that allow equal participation of women and men.
2. The prioritization and privileging of food security and sovereignty through the promotion of sustainable forms of production that not only value, protect, and acknowledge the role of women in production and reproduction but also empower them. Women should have the right to the use and ownership of land, access to water, the sensible use of the forests and other natural resources that are equal to the opportunities of men. The new forms of economic integration should support and promote alternative rural economies and fair trade networks.
3. The respect of human (economic, social, political, and cultural) rights of migrants that guarantee freedom of movement of people [such as the laws that enable the free movement of capital and goods?].
4. The patrons of migration (?) should take into consideration the different needs of women and men and the impact of migration on children. The contribution that migrants make to the economies to which they travel is made at the price of their personal, family, and community development. Therefore, we insist on the elimination of all forms of violence against and exploitation of women and children.
5. The State should guarantee public services such as health, food, education, and water, and maintain control of strategic resources such as petroleum and electrical energy. Women should be integrated into the decision-making mechanisms that determine use and distribution of these essential resources, especially water.

We want the governments to know that we are following the negotiations and their impacts on our lives and we are aware of the pressure that the United States is secretly exerting on them that is unacceptable because it infringes on the autonomy of countries. (not sure about this part)

We call on our governments to create alliances and develop a united position that benefits the communities of the region.



We the women from the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) demand that the official negotiators change the rules of the game by rejecting the abuse of power and the pressure of the U.S. and we call on them to reconstruct an equal and dignified form of integration.

We the women of the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) promise to promote an alternative model of integration for the Americas.

We present our Political Declaration and the Political Strategies approved in the International Forum for the Rights of Women in Trade Agreements that took place in Quintana Roo, Cancun from September 8-9, 2003.

**ANOTHER EQUAL AND UNITED AMERICAS IS POSSIBLE!**

**Women's Committee of the HSA**