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Vehicles for Change: Grassroots Movements in Latin America and East Central Europe²

I. Introduction

The ideas in this article are filtered through the eyes of three women with strong ties to Latin America and the Caribbean. Our background in grassroots movements led us to pursue a comparison of the role of such organizations during times of transition in Latin America (LA) and East Central Europe (ECE). The recent processes of political and economic liberalization in LA and ECE broke down many of the previous institutional structures and civil barriers, while encouraging new organizations to develop. Grass-roots movements, often formed in response to economic, social, or political deprivations, prove to be effective tools for demanding change, and thus have the potential to assist in the progress toward democratization in both these areas of the world. The impact of grassroots organizing in Latin America sparked our desire to explore the role of women and minorities in search of civil society during transformations in both regions of the world.

Ideal civil society allows for and creates autonomous organizations to balance the power of the state. Citizens become active participants in the formation of a states political and economic structures. A network of this nature allows the power and decision making to be spread out more equitably among the popula-

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tion, guards against the return to dictatorships and promotes a more actively democratic society (Faber 1992).

Civil society cannot exist without the state. The role of the government is to administrate power and to put forth uniform and just rules. The role of the individual in civil society is essential. The individual is encouraged by grass-roots and other bottom up endeavors to take a more active and assertive responsibility for her/his living conditions. This is especially true for societies during transformations because grassroots organizations can provide for the social needs that the government had previously sustained.

II. Structures of Authoritarian States

The Cold War era created a division along ideological lines between those favoring the communist-socialist model, and those allied to the capitalist west. Countries and regions became monopoly chips where proxy wars were waged, financial assistance became a power mechanism and political and economic stability was ultimately tied to the actions of the major power holders of the world. Latin America became one of the playing fields for the struggle between ideologies. Pressure by the US, both passive and aggressive, created chaos in the political and economic policies of countries in LA, particularly countries with leftist tendencies. The anti-communist position forced upon the Latin American countries by the US, in many ways fueled by the fear of a domino effect resulting from the birth of communist Cuba, led to numerous military coups and subsequent repression of citizens with "liberal" tendencies. Military coups and military control of governments became the standard in LA during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Even countries such as Chile and Uruguay, with long traditions of democratic, civilian rule uninterrupted by military involvement, were caught by the military bushfire which swept the southern continent. The policies in ECE, though creating pseudo-egalitarian states, were similarly clouded by authoritarianism and repression.

During authoritarian periods the role of the state in dealing with women and minority issues has varied in both regions. The communist ideology incorporated women into society through the work force. These governments mouthed support for the theory that work would lead to women's emancipation by freeing them from male dominance and by developing their individual potential. As a result of the state-imposed labor policies, women's participation in the workplace was very high (approximately fifty percent). Though not pursued as a policy goal, LA also has one of the highest rates of female employment, both in the formal and informal sectors: women constitute between 16 and 35 percent of the total labor force (Seager/Olson 1986).

Progress in women's rights were made during the communist period. Contrary to women in LA, women in ECE were legally granted a number of formal rights: abortion, divorce, labor rights and a quota system favorable to women's

incorporation into the work force and the political party system. The laws concerning women in LA, on the other hand, have often been primitive, and "machista": abortions are illegal, divorce is limited and the entry of women to certain areas of the work force is still closed, if not by law, by the even stronger force of tradition.

Throughout the Soviet Block ethnic differences were suppressed. The ethnic and religious differences in former Yugoslavia, for example, were successfully contained during the Tito regime. Tito's death left a vacuum in the seat of a powerful authoritarian able to keep this heterogeneous region together. In the absence of a strong central figure ethnic violence exploded creating strict divisions in place of previously fluid lines. Ethnic groups in (Indigenous people and Blacks) LA have often been violently repressed or ignored, branded as "uncultured" and never fully incorporated into society. During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s the development of military regimes in LA aimed repressive policies at any political, social or economic movement which did not follow each country's ideological stance. Politically based opposition was violently stifled. The governments of both LA and ECE were interested in keeping the status quo, and in repressing or exiling individuals and organizations which opposed their power.

The two regions differed in their social conditioning toward organizing. The countries of LA have a long tradition of citizen participation, especially at the community level. The class pyramid in LA, in contrast to the ECE's flat structure, encouraged and made necessary the creation of a number of grass-roots organizations. In ECE, on the other hand, the socialist authoritarian model had been in place since the end of WWII, resulting in a generational inexperience in social organizing and "civil society". The more developed tradition of organizing in LA was a result of citizens position within society, their relation to the state and the mobilizing ability of certain key establishments (i.e. the church, revolutionary groups etc.). These key establishments were unavailable to the citizens in ECE. While many Latin Americans were forced to fight for their basic human needs, such as food, health, education and housing, the paternalistic governments of ECE provided their populations with these basic necessities, eliminating their need for organizing around these issues. In LA organizations were extensive and unaffected by government repression as long as they did not become politicized and threaten the status quo of the military governments. Organizations in ECE, on the other hand, were few and secretive in nature. What transition accomplished in both regions was the formalization and legalization of organizations (Fine 1996/97).

All of these elements have made a marked impact upon the realistic expectations of how groups can develop given the constraints of each region. In LA organizations are further developed than in ECE. In ECE the longstanding communitarian requirements imposed upon them by government resulted in a backlash against group ventures after 1989. In the case of former Yugoslavia and much of ECE this type of organizing is very difficult, though necessary, because of the way these countries were thrown into a market economy. In times

of transition from totalitarian governments people tend to prefer individualist activities and resist more communal initiatives. Individualism has become a guarded commodity, undermining the efforts of grassroots initiatives which thrive on collective involvement (Faber 1992).

III. Grassroots Organizing, Social Movements, and NGOs

Community based grassroots movements are often successful as a result of their lack of structure and their ability to focus on a specific goal. These movements attract diverse sectors of societies, each in search of their particular goal(s) and aspirations. Though grass-roots movements are sometimes encouraged by governments, unable to alleviate the problems arising in their countries, often they are created in spite of, or in protest to their political leaders. In the latter case, these organizations often struggle to effect change in the formation of states' policy. Frequently these local movements will form partnerships with other organizations and form a larger national or international Non Governmental Organization (NGOs). NGOs can operate within states at various levels, as well as operate across national boundaries, working independently of governmental authority. Unfortunately, NGOs often mimic the structures of the international world order: excessive bureaucracy, north-south power inequalities, and the replication of societies gender and minority biases.

Tackling immediate problems facing their unstable nations is a task which relies on grass-root organizing rather than theorizing feminist issues (Acosta-Belen/Bose). Women in many transitional, unstable countries throughout the world, have found it necessary to come together, whether to provide services for their communities, to become politicized or to work for human rights. Women have organized within trade unions, community organizations, church groups or on their own.

Women's movements throughout the world are held by a common bond of solidarity. These movements foster political awareness and participation for women who have historically been passive members of society. Women have been involved as active gender-based actors in transitional societies. "Women are not the passive victims in the socioeconomic processes that maintain their lower status. In LA and the Caribbean various types of resistance, solidarity, and collective action are used by women in diverse geographic regions and under sociopolitical structures." (Acosta-Belen/Bose) Urban organizing, peasant and indigenous groups, all create a sense of female empowerment. These women are not always focused on "feminist" issues as they are defined in the west. The new born solidarity, created as a result of their organizing, is a hopeful seed toward women's gender consciousness.

Although women in ECE benefited from formal rights, they were unable to participate (as were all citizens) in oppositional movements during the communist era. Grass-roots women's movements have had a hard time advancing in

ECE, as a result of women's lack of history and experience in community social organizing, a direct consequence of the effects of communist rule. Formal women's organizations tied to the state structure created an image of women's involvement in the activities of each country, therefore controlling their quest toward independent communal endeavors. In contrast, despite their marginal legal status in LA, women have been strong supporters of change and active members of grass-roots movements. Women's frequent exclusion from formal society, allowed them to form the kinds of organizations needed during pretransition periods. Perhaps one of the reasons for this involvement is that, unlike the communist countries which "included" women as part of their societies, the military governments often did not take into account the power of women.

A. Need-Based Organizing

In LA women's need to persevere amidst the chaos and uncertainty of their worlds created the condition for their organizing. The economic situation in LA drove women to mobilize around basic necessities. "Because of frequent extreme poverty, much of women's organized resistance in LA and the Caribbean is based on survival needs, often at the individual or family level as in the neighborhood or workplace. Many authors argue that survival itself is an act of resistance." (Acosta-Belen/Bose) International debt crisis and the structural adjustment programs throughout the countries of the Third World make survival a challenge. The opening up of the economy in ECE and the move away from socialist measures has created the condition for the development of need based organizations which have bridged the gaps left by the dismantling of preexisting structures.

Need-based women's groups have only recently began to appear in ECE, though it is probable that we will see a marked increase in these forms of organizations. The economic conditions in ECE, resulting from the transition to market oriented economies are similar to those felt in LA. "The neo-liberal economic policies adopted by the new constitutional governments have exacerbated social inequality. Growing poverty has forced communities to rely on more self-help, increasing women's burdens." (Fisher 1993) In LA, women's organizations, often called "movimientos de mujeres" continue to flourish due to privatization initiatives. Many of these organizations which at times take the form of communal kitchens, continue to grow in countries like Chile. "... Poor women have been at the forefront of struggles to gain increased access to infrastructural services, such as water, electricity, housing and social services. ... Because activities like preparing the food, minding the children, and taking care of the home are 'women's work,' it has been women who have collectively organized to protest poor living conditions for they are the ones who have to put the food on the table, whether or not they contribute to the family income." (Lind 1992)

Grass-roots movements and NGOs have attempted to stabilize the situation in ECE, as well as fill the void created by the rapidly disappearing social net established by Communist regimes. The focus of these organizations has been for the most part service oriented. Where political party machines have had greater participation, other volunteer organization participation has waned. The main reasons for this stems from an environment with no recent history of volunteerism except that mandated by the state, the hollow expectations envisioned by the transition to democracy and the competition for sources of funds which are increasingly limited.

Grass-roots movements which developed after the initial move toward transition in ECE, often led by women, involved issues such as the environment, health and human rights. By creating small local organizations, free of bureaucratic and governmental policies, women are able to take initiatives in solving problems within their community. Some of these organizations include the Ukrainian Mama 86, the Czech Prague Mothers, the Slovak South Bohemian Mothers and the Tested Food for Silesia Program. The effects of ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia have also led to the proliferation of many women and minority organizations. Many of the Human Rights groups involved in refugee camps with victims of rape, etc., have been founded by women.

B. Re-Democratization

Aside from women's heavy involvement in local needs-based organizations in LA, they also found the cause and courage to oppose authoritarian governments directly. "During the 1970s (and, in some cases, the 1960s), military regimes and nominal democracies alike crushed progressive movements of all sorts, 'disappeared' thousands of people, and unleashed the repressive apparatus of the state on civil society – all in the name of national security. Contemporary feminists in LA were therefore born as intrinsically oppositional movements." (Sternbach et al. 1992) Latin American women joined forces in opposing the social, political and economic exploitation, and denouncing the militaristic patriarchal state. "Thus, the realities of both state repression and class warfare were instrumental in shaping a Latin American feminist praxis distinct from that of feminist movements elsewhere. For example, from the beginning, feminists in countries ruled by military regimes unveiled the patriarchal foundations of state repression, militarism, and institutionalized violence, a stance that was gradually adopted more generally by Latin American feminists." (Sternbach et al. 1992) In comparing the parallel role of the authoritarian governments with the male-female relationships of private life during the military period, Latin American governments responded to feminist theories and their opposition by stressing the importance of family values, and placing the traditional family, i.e. woman = homemaker, wife and mother, "... at the core of national security ideology, counterinsurgency, and regressive social policies" (Sternbach et al. 1992). While

the government extolled these views of motherhood, the reality of the economic situation drove most women into the work force, and hence into organizing.

In the southern cone (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay) the repressive tactics of the military greatly affected women's lives and led the way to their mobilization. "With trade unions and political parties banned, public meetings prohibited, and tens of thousands of activists murdered or 'disappeared', it was women who took the center stage against the dictatorships. Not only were the first public challenges to military rule in all three countries led by women and their human rights organizations, but behind the scene women's networks of workshops, communal kitchens, popular canteens and health-care projects helped working-class families survive military experiments in monetarism and years of economic crisis." (Fisher 1993) One of the most renowned women's organizations of this type is the group of the mothers of Plaza de Mayo of Argentina, which to this day march every Thursday in front of the Casa Rosada, denouncing the military, and demanding information on their 'disappeared' children and grandchildren. Re-democratization movements brought about cooperation among all different sorts of organizations. Though the "Madres de la Plaza de Mayo" were autonomous, they were joined by human rights groups, opposition political parties, unions, etc., all with the immediate objective of overthrowing the dictatorship.

Organized public opposition to the government in ECE was limited. Women's participation in dissident organizations, though not as accessible and public as in LA, did exist. Women were involved in protests and demonstrations and secret "underground" movements prior to the fall of communism. Women were frequent spokespersons for the oppositional Czech Charter 77, as well as members of peace organizations, like the Dialogue Peace Group in Hungary, which attempted to deal with the violence following the fall of communism.

C. Liberation Movements

The role of women as active participants in trying to overthrow authoritarian governments differed significantly within LA. The liberation movements in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru produced different involvement from women than those of the re-democratization efforts in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Paraguay. The liberation movements, like the social revolutions which occurred in some LA countries (Mexico [1910], Bolivia [1952], and Cuba [1959]), and those of the former Soviet Union, articulated programs in terms of class. These programs continued to emphasize the traditional male leadership, despite extolling egalitarian virtues. Though women were involved in many of the liberation movements "the 'foco' style of organization adopted by many LA revolutionary groups ... encouraged traditions of male elitism and hierarchy within LA revolutionary movements ..." (Miller 1991).

Communism and socialism are concerned with class, not gender or minority, struggles. These political ideologies believe that by leveling economic distincti-

ons, gender, racial and cultural, oppression will also dissipate. As a result, the communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, as well as Cuba and the other leftist liberation movements in LA did not consider the women question to be of much importance. In LA, men's leadership position in most leftist movements, resulted in the postponement of women's issues to post-liberation/revolution periods. These "secondary" issues, whether women or minority based were often ignored once leaders' primary goals were achieved.

The conservative authoritarianism of the governments in LA was countered by the growth of leftist guerrilla groups and political oppositional movements. These political minorities, often espousing a Marxist-Leninist theory, found a firm stronghold in resistance movements during the military regimes of LA. Liberation movements, strongly influenced women and minorities with their "leftist" ideology. "The legacy of the left weighed heavily on Latin American feminism during the early years of the movement, an inheritance that led early feminists to privilege class over gender struggle and, in the Marxist tradition, to focus on women's work and on women's integration or incorporation into the public world of politics and production." (Sternbach et al. 1992) This legacy created divisions among women, the "militantes" who argued that women's objectives should be incorporated within socialist ideology and the "feministas" who believed that women should form their own organizations, independent of political parties or ideology.

D. Church-Based Organizing

Minority organizations in LA were often linked to movements influenced by religious institutions. Liberation theology, a popular ideology born in the 1960s as a result of the call for preference of the poor by the second Vatican council, became a promoter for movements for the oppressed, including indigenous organizations. The progressive catholic clergy sparked the flourishing of popular organizations, especially in Central America. The church was one of the institutions which the military could not, or was not willing, to confront. The church fostered the growth of many groups, provided psychological space and other forms of support and protection. Programs such as Catholic Action, organized cooperatives and popular educational programs for indigenous communities. The greatest success in minority rights made in LA during this period is evident in the advancement of land rights and autonomy for some indigenous peoples.

Minority organizations made incipient inroads into obtaining minority access to political institutions by, for example, creating church led organizations such as the Pastoral do Negro in Brazil and by electing the first black woman to national office in 1987. Though small organizations date from the 70s in Colombia, these were mainly of a transient nature. Few organizations that were created at that time remain, among them the Center for the Investigation and Development of Black Culture and Cimarron (The National Movement for Human Rights of Black Communities).

IV. Barriers to Effective NGOs

Though NGOs have had limited success, several barriers must be overcome for these NGOs to become more effective. Operating in distinct cultures, NGOs in LA and ECE should not attempt to import models of activism but rather create one specific to the needs of their society. This entails policing outside actors with good intentions, heavy pockets and dominating policies and procedures. Projects deemed worthy by Western funders often fail to meet the needs of local and regional NGOs. Another problem is the mission of the NGO and its legitimacy. Immediately after the fall of communism in ECE, there was a proliferation of new organizations (2,000 in the Czech Republic, 1,000 in Hungary and 800 in Slovakia) (Fine 1996). In the early years it was considered fashionable for western foundations to fund ECE NGOs. Many NGOs were created simply to gain access to free money. Now more legitimate NGOs compete for increasingly fewer sources of funds. Unfortunately, limited resources prevent effective action.

A lack of resources, i.e. funding, training, materials, networks, exclude NGOs from reaching a broader section of the population. Training is of primary importance to these new organizations which have begun with little else, in many instances, but good intentions. Given the extent of competition, the need for new funding sources to sustain many of these organizations is imperative. Western funders lend a particular legitimacy to these organizations as well as being a source of information which is regarded as unbiased. They are also perceived as having better access to international media. However, those who accept funds are sometimes regarded by nationalists as traitors (Weil/Nazarenko).

Continued mobilization and organization solely at the regional and local level potentially limits the struggle for advancement. However, the unification of long-standing local organizations to a greater national or international level can prove problematic. Many of these groups are divided by differences of interest and are unable or unwilling to decide on the means to advocate for their goals. The potential for NGOs to influence policy decisions will likely come as these states are stabilized with political and economic reforms. Meanwhile, as has been proven in other societies, change is apt to occur when appeals are made at all levels, regional, national and international.

Difficulties have arisen due to the legal status of NGOs within ECE. Many of these organizations are held to the outdated laws governing charitable organizations established in the late 1940s and early 50s. As yet, laws that govern non-profit organizations have not been forthcoming. Many non profits circumvent the legal issue by establishing foundations, which are not as constrained by the legal system. As the countries of ECE move toward European integration, and are pressured to conform to the legal practices of western countries, it is possible that the legality of NGOs will improve.

Additionally, though networks are solidifying and becoming more organized and effective the danger of burnout by the principal actors is real. Often these

NGOs consist of a small overworked core group. Larger participation is only mobilized for specific short-term projects. Prior experience of grassroots activism in LA makes this less of a problem than in ECE. In ECE, formation of an active citizenry will be difficult given economic constraints, a sense of fatalism, governmental attitudes (which view activism as an obstacle to transition) and the absence of other supporting institutions. Residual antipathy to state mandated volunteerism in ECE continues to constrain some organizations. This should improve as the 'habit' of democracy becomes more entrenched within these nations.

V. The Impact of Transformations

The flux in social, political and economic structures during periods of transition often create a favorable climate for the activities of grass-roots movements. During periods of transition the role of NGOs is determined by immediate problems. In many countries of ECE women and minority organizations have had to contend with the rebirth of ethnic nationalist violence and the hardships of an unstable economic situation resulting from the collapse of communism.

ECE's recent transition toward self-determination has opened the door for capitalism and greater freedom of expression. During the first years of transition in East Central Europe efforts were mainly aimed at setting up the infrastructures essential for independent states, and implementing the reforms designed to safeguard the transition to political democracy and market economy. While in LA the previous institutional structures were reinstated to those of the pre-military period, the structures within ECE had been dismantled to a greater degree. The same contrast stands for political parties. In LA traditional parties surfaced after years of functioning underground, while in ECE new parties flourished in all countries.

The transition to democracy in ECE and the emergence of new independent states has required not only internal restructuring and the creation of direct external ties, but also a fundamental reorientation of society which needs to transform itself from a totalitarian, centrally controlled system into one which prioritizes citizens rights and is based on principles of democracy. This transitional period, which requires extensive changes in the socioeconomic structure at the individual and societal level, has been fraught with economic and social problems and political uncertainties. In LA the transition from years of military/authoritarian rule to democracy resulted in a sense of skepticism in the viability of "democracy" free of military intervention, and in the ability of elected leaders to rule the state. The main issue stems from the lack of an infrastructure able to support democratic principles, a condition endemic to societies in transition.

As a result of the neo-liberal economic reforms in ECE, social problems have been aggravated. The social price of the transition has been unexpectedly high, and will probably continue to increase. The living conditions of national minorities

in countries such as Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania, and of the Roma population as well as that of women have declined considerably. The deteriorating economic situation in ECE, and the growth of capitalist class inequality is creating the need for organizations to deal with survival issues, much like it has in LA. NGOs and women groups are the leaders in need-based organizations because often governments are unable to alleviate problems. Unfortunately, this kind of organizing often enforces women's position in the domestic private sphere.

For women and minorities in ECE and LA the "transition to democracy" offers new opportunities to organize and advance their interests. While democracy has often not guaranteed rights for women and minorities, it does provide a favorable climate for the active pursuit of these rights and interests. The previous regimes of authoritarianism excluded political and social actors and agencies from political life by monopolizing the decision-making process. Prior to the transition, mobilization against the regimes in different forms and levels of organizations, ranging from political parties to trade unions and sociopolitical associations occurred. This was part of the process of democratization. However, the young democracies have not yet been consolidated, and given the marginalization of women and minorities in these societies it becomes apparent that state institutions alone are not equipped or even willing to deal with these members' issues and rights.

The dominant perception in ECE that national minorities threaten territorial integrity and state structures, has created animosity and violence among members of different ethnic or religious entities. National boundaries have never respected ethnic, linguistic or religious divisions, nor is it likely that they ever will. Given the intensity of group affiliations, and that the identification with a primary group could be within a neighboring state, these perceived threats prove to be substantial stumbling blocks to a guarantee of rights. The resulting oppression of minorities, and in many cases women, has led to their organizing in minority or gender-based groups.

Though women found a powerful niche through their organizing in the pretransition period, they were generally relegated to the sidelines once the terms of transition were decided. This resulted in women's virtual invisibility in the new governments. In ECE, a political shift to the right has brought the return of traditional structures. The emphasis on the traditional family has been featured as one of the changes in post-communist ECE, mainly in an effort to soften the blow of the foreseen unemployment, as well as to raise falling birth rates in the ethnically divided regions. As a result women have been one of the hardest hit sectors by the new market economy. In 1991, women constituted between 70 and 80% of the unemployed in Russia, as well as 60% of the unemployed in Poland, Bulgaria and the ex-GDR.

A number of rights tied to women's reproduction have also been affected by the shift to the right of the political pendulum in ECE. "Abortion rights are threatened in virtually every post-communist country, where abortion is a highly contested and intense political issue ..." (Funk/Mueller 1993) Legislation on

reproduction has shifted toward nationalist interests, not those concerning women. Child laws have become restrictive, depending on ethnic group and political party affiliation. In Kosovo restrictions are placed on Albanian women who have more than three children, while Serbian women are encouraged to raise their low birth rates.

Women, especially in the former Yugoslav states, have often found themselves at the center of propaganda campaigns aimed at denigrating specific ethnic groups. Part of the Serbian campaign to foment nationalism was focused on women of other ethnicities. In Kosovo, the Serbians attacked the Albanian majority through propaganda campaigns which portrayed Albanian women as baby factories and Serbian women as victims of rape by Albanians. Women became partisan symbols of these ethnic wars. Albanian women were outnumbering Serbian women in birth rates. Therefore, the possibility (and thus the message) existed that Albanians would one day outnumber Serbs. Aside from the negative propaganda aimed at Albanian women, the Serbs have also tried to boost the birth rate for Serbian women, in part by attempting to restrict legal access to abortion.

While women have often been dominated and exploited during transitions, as in the case of former Yugoslavia, they have not stood by passively. Serbian women's organizations have organized independently to make other women aware of the possible restrictions of their rights, and to fight back against changes in governments laws. Women from autonomous women's organizations and the Women's Party have also formed peace movements, such as the Center for Anti-War Action in Belgrade, to attempt to improve the situation in this war torn region, which was once a country.

Unfortunately not only have women had to endure economic, political, as well as environmental problems, many have been forced to suffer through war. Since 1989 we have witnessed the violence which sprung forth following the fall of communism. The dismantling of the former Yugoslav state, the "ethnic cleansing" coupled with the destruction of cultural remains, the uncertainty of the future, and the volcanic nationalistic feelings which erupted have brought death and dislocation for thousands, many of them women.

In areas not plagued by violence, women are experiencing greater freedom, i.e. women in the Czech Republic. Czech women are well protected by official legislation and now hold the choice, which many clamored for after the fall of communism, to decide whether they would like to remain in the home or be wage earners. Women comprise 44% of the work force, with a high representation as doctors and lawyers, and with membership in such organizations as the Prague Mothers (cleaner air), Single Mothers (legislation for single parents) and the Association of Women Managers and Entrepreneurs.

VI. Conclusion

The "transitions" in LA and ECE are considered positive, evolutionary transformations, in that they are aimed at the development of ideals supported by the Western World. Unfortunately, many of these countries, encouraged by the IMF, World Bank and other international institutions, try to follow the western developmental ideals too closely, without taking into account the differences within each state. The ideals of the West should not be the encompassing standard. Instead these states should adopt the positive aspects from the capitalist west, learn from the latter's setbacks, while creating innovative political, economic, social and environmental structures that speak to each regions unique circumstances. Both regions have attempted to move toward a state of civil society by opening both political and economic structures. The transformations have been complex, especially those in ECE, where the shift has been greater than in LA. Although in LA there have been positive changes in the political structure, the privatization of many of the state-controlled infrastructures, the end of subsidies, and the overall de-socializing of the state has created adversity and further impoverished the lower stratum of the population. ECE has not only been plagued by economic depression, but by political instability and explosive social violence.

The transitions away from authoritarian models in ECE and LA have not occurred abruptly, but gradually, often violently and filled with uncertainty. Despite the vestiges of centralized control and repression, a new elite of professional politicians has emerged to construct new democratic constitutions and institutions. In the case of LA the achievement of democratic principles meant that women were no longer needed as allies and therefore were expected to step down from political endeavors. On the other hand, the economic crisis in ECE resulted in a restructuring of the governments rhetoric as it pertained to women, which shifted from promoting women as active participants in the labor force to stressing their role in the home. Rampant unemployment demanded a significant cut in the labor pool. The lack of representation of minorities in governmental structures has perpetuated their exclusion, and despite recent transitions they continue to be marginalized.

In LA the return to increasingly democratic rule has presented women with new challenges. In many countries women were expected to return to their traditional role in society after the defeat of the military. Working-class women's groups in the Southern Cone found themselves increasingly marginalized from the decision making process once the military stepped down. The newly formed parliaments were male dominated, with often less women involved than before the transition. In Argentina there were fewer women in parliament than in 1951, in the Uruguayan elections of 1985 no woman was elected and in Chile there were only ten women in parliament in 1989. A similar predicament is evident in the new ECEs governing institutions. Women's political involvement has drastically dropped due to the elimination of the quota system present in previous governments.

The shift to electorate and legislative policies has strengthened political parties, while displacing grassroots movements. Most of the women's organizations had not been politically allied during the pre-transition's struggle and now find themselves caught in a vacuum among different political parties. In addition, many of these organizations harbor a deep distrust of the government and its policy makers. Many women's groups, especially the human rights organizations, saw their initial trust in the new governments shattered as leaders in the Latin American countries racked with military repression, pardoned many of the individuals involved with human rights abuses. As a result of their exclusion and uncertainty in relation to the new political institutions women's organizations are struggling to establish their autonomy.

A greater sense of citizen consciousness has begun to develop among women and minorities. Because women and minorities are often not in positions of power, they must find innovative forms of organizing, outside of the official governmental structures. A sizable portion of the grass-root organizing occurred from the bottom up in LA, due to the tenuous position of the lower tiers of the population. In contrast, many of the organizations for change in ECE were established by exiled intelligentsia opposition. The class which took on the responsibility for social change in each area was that which had the most to gain.

In order to ensure a truly civil society, minority as well as women's issues must continue to be prioritized and incorporated into social, political, and economic agendas. NGOs and grassroots movements are at the forefront of attempting to recover and protect these rights. NGOs and grassroots organizations respond to the limitations of government by creating alternate structures which work to harness the untapped resources of marginalized groups.

Abstracts

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Teilnahme von Frauen an Graswurzelbewegungen während sozialpolitischer und wirtschaftlicher Transformationen. Wir untersuchen den Fall von Lateinamerika und seiner Abkehr von den autoritären Regierungen sowie die jüngsten, weniger dokumentierten Fälle von Transformationen in Osteuropa seit 1989.

This article examines the participation of women in grassroots movements as they respond to sociopolitical and economic transformation. We examine the case of Latin America in its shift from authoritarian governments through the more recent and less developed case of the transformations in East Central Europe since 1989.

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Demokratische Regierbarkeit in Lateinamerika: Neue Herausforderungen für Staat und Zivilgesellschaft

Das Thema „Regierbarkeit“ scheint gegenwärtig in aller Munde zu sein, schon wird davon gesprochen, es handele sich dabei um eine Worthülse, die vergleichbar dem Begriff „Zivilgesellschaft“ alles und nichts erkläre (Flisfisch 1989, S. 113). Nun mag es zutreffen, daß der Begriff „Regierbarkeit“ auf eine Fülle unterschiedlicher Phänomene Bezug nimmt, gleichwohl kann seine plötzliche Konjunktur nicht als rein zufällig abgetan werden; vielmehr treffen unterschiedliche Problemlagen aufeinander, in deren Beschreibung die Frage der Regierbarkeit eine zentrale Rolle einnimmt. Als – sicherlich nicht vollständige – Auswahl der Verwendung des (Un-)Regierbarkeitssyndroms im lateinamerikanischen Kontext mag hier folgende Aufzählung gelten:

- Die Einführung/Existenz einer „Regierbarkeitsklausel“ im Wahlrecht, die klare Mehrheitsverhältnisse im Parlament sicherstellen soll, selbst wenn die jeweilige Partei keine absolute Mehrheit erringen sollte. Das Wahlrecht soll damit (wie in Chile und Mexiko) sicherstellen, daß keine Allianzbildung erfolgt und damit mögliche unsichere Mehrheiten entstehen.
- „Unregierbarkeit“ wird in jenen Ländern wie Nicaragua, Ecuador und Haiti vermutet, in denen institutionelle Blockaden zwischen verschiedenen Verfassungsorganen die erwartete gedeihliche politische Entwicklung im Sinne der Harmonie der verschiedenen Gewalten nicht haben eintreten lassen oder zumindest auch für die nahe Zukunft nicht ausgeschlossen werden können.
- Grenzen der Regierbarkeit werden angeführt, wenn, wie in Chile und Venezuela, sich autoritäre Enklaven erhalten oder hergestellt haben, die dem Zugriff und Durchgriffsrecht des demokratischen Verfassungsstaates entzogen sind.
- Die Koexistenz von gewaltförmiger Konfliktaustragung und demokratisch legitimierten Institutionen wie in Kolumbien und Mexiko in Gestalt von Guerilla-Bewegungen oder bei massiver Bedrohung der öffentlichen Ordnung durch organisierte Kriminalität (Guatemala/El Salvador) hat zur Einschätzung geführt, auch in diesen Fällen sei angesichts des fehlenden Gewaltmonopols des Staates die „Regierbarkeit“ eingeschränkt.
- Die Zersetzung staatlicher Herrschaft an sich, sei es durch unkontrollierte Dezentralisierungspolitiken oder durch secessionistische Autonomiebestrebungen (z.B. in Kolumbien und Bolivien) hat Anlaß dazu gegeben, die „Regierbarkeit“ des jeweiligen Landes in Frage zu stellen. Hier wird eine „Auflösung des Staates“ vermutet, da die Gebietskörperschaften und die regionalen Identitäten nicht organisch an die Zentralgewalt zurückgebunden seien.