

**BEIJING +20: THE MEANING OF PARTNERSHIPS:
REFLECTIONS FROM LATIN AMERICA**

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The ‘triangle of power’ and current challenges

The preparation of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 demonstrated the distinct and impressive contribution of feminist movements in all regions of the world. It was not easy. From our experience in Latin America and the Caribbean, we had to deal with the governments of that time that, with few exceptions, were basically conservative and where the weight of the Vatican (in its role as an observer country in the UN), was huge. In this climate it was clear that to achieve an impact on the document of the Fourth Conference we would need to develop our partnerships. At least if we wanted to expand the areas in which we could have an effect.

Thus, throughout the preparatory process, a set of alliances between women belonging to different instances was built: autonomous feminist movements in civil society; feminists and/or women of governments committed to the rights of women, especially in the Caribbean, some Latin American countries and Europe; and, with considerable strength, feminists of UN agencies, particularly, with UNIFEM and ECLAC. These constituted, at that specific historical time, common territorial battles, from the different areas in which they operated. In this way a "triangle of power"¹ was built, which made possible – from the different locations the actors inhabited - a mutual recognition, a sense of common political responsibility. It was through these partnerships is that we achieve the progressive and holistic outcome of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA).

Twenty years after Beijing, is it possible to activate the triangle of power between feminists and women/men from different locations, sensitive and committed to women’s agendas? Many things have changed. There is progress in some dimensions raised by the BPA: favorable legislation, laws against domestic and sexual violence, quotas for greater political participation (even parity in some countries), and women presidents are no longer THE exception, etc. These gains were due largely to the struggles of feminist movements around the world and, more broadly, to privileged moments of the triangle of power that have been enabled the enshrining of these rights in official spaces. However, it is clear that these are gains not of the necessary extent and depth required for the compliance of the BPA and

¹ Lycklama, Geertje, Vargas Virginia, Wieringa Saskia 1996. Triangulo de Poder. Tercer Mundo Editores. Colombia.

Lycklama, Geertje, Vargas Virginia, Wieringa Saskia, 1998. Women’s movements and Public Policy in Europe, Latin American and the Caribbean.. Garland Publishing. New York and London

with the historical debt to the rights of women. There are huge gaps, which reveal the weak political will of governments to priorities rights for women - as economic and social rights, cultural rights, sexual rights and reproductive rights, and the survival of the planet. To achieve this we are challenged to construct, the triangles of power that can achieve these gains at the local, national, regional and global levels.

However, the current possibility to form such triangles of power is not the same as it previously was. One of the limitations on achievement of the BPA in the last 20 years has been the persistence of an economic model that has prioritized market interests over the interests of the people. This has substantially delayed establishment of the socio-economic and gender justice required for compliance with the BPA. Under these conditions, the base of the triangle is undoubtedly the defense of BPA within the indivisible frame of human rights, together with the fight against the root causes that prevent its fulfillment. This involves addressing structural changes, profound changes in economic policies, both in individual countries and in the architecture of the global economy that supports the current model. It also requires a profound change in power relations between women and men, based on a new sexual contract, to democratize the existing sexual division of labor and the need for progress in not only economic but also environmental and social sustainability.

This is a difficult task. because the Beijing +20 process occurs at a historical moment in which it is confronted by other processes of particular importance, in so far as they position a framework from which the BPA could be achieved in the coming years: it coincides with the end of the millennium development goals process, without achieving compliance; with the elaborating the elaboration of the millennium sustainable development goals, linked to the post 2015 process. It will also be influenced by the Cairo +20 process. And all of these, despite their relative achievements are, in many ways, obscuring, neglecting or endangering the advance in women's rights. This is evidenced by the analysis of the various regional and global feminist coalitions, by participants in the post-2015 and Cairo + 20 processes. This IS a moment in which religious, political and market fundamentalist forces have gained unusual strength. Hence the urgency of a new development framework that clearly confronts the injustices exacerbated by the neoliberal capitalist model, deepening exclusion and diminishing democracy.

Challenges to face

At the Latin American Regional Level

- The Beijing +20 process cannot be isolated from others underway. It is essential to move forward at an intersection of the Beijing +20 process with processes running (Sustainable Development Goals – SDG- , post-2015, Cairo +20, plus Conference of Parties for climate Change - COP 19 -, having as its horizon the defense and expansion of human rights, from a macro perspective that enables social, gender,

sexual, sustainable justice and that is in harmony with the rights of nature. Intersecting processes also involve interlocking the various agendas at play - the gender, environmental, social, cultural, economic and financial agendas. Advancing this global agenda will only be possible with clear policies of wealth redistribution and the democratization of power resources. This challenge is crucial because what emerges from these documents will become a guide for the next fifteen years, influencing the form, content and scope of the implementation of the Platform for Action and other international instruments and commitments.

- A critical positioning is important to prevent the post-2015 and the ODS repeating the shortcomings of the MDGs. A central requirement is these processes 1) position people and their human rights at the centre, not businesses and economic growth; 2) going beyond a "minimum floor" to address the points necessary to ensure real change; 3) Placing a target on gender equality and women's empowerment within the guidelines of CEDAW and the human rights framework, with appropriate indicators, quantitative and qualitative targets; 4) Ensuring a cross-cutting perspective, recognizing the interdependence of these measures, and specifying the meaning of gender equality as necessary for proposing new development paradigms.
- Latin America bears the enormous disadvantage of being the most unequal region in the distribution of wealth, which influences the quality of its democracy. It also maintains an export and extractive model that systematically harms the ecosystem. At the same time, it has significant advantages in political will – in the capacity of feminist movements and in the periodical intergovernmental “consensus” demonstrated by the Regional Conference on Women, of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – ECLAC-. Thus the Consensus of Quito (2007), Brasilia (2010), Santo Domingo (2013) and Montevideo (2014) are a clear evidence of the further implementation of the BPA. And they are also an expression of a triangle of power between feminist movements and United Nation instances (such as ECLAC and UN Women), as well as the democratic will of some women in the governments of the region.
- We need to recognise the cumulative effect of the struggles and gains of women in recent decades, articulating with the BPA framework the international standards on women and human rights, and the recommendations of other world conferences: of Human Rights in Vienna, the Population Conference in Cairo, the Conference on Racism in South Africa, the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, together with advances in the struggle to defend the ecosystem (which were not sufficiently recognised in the official Rio +20 process). This historical accumulation of the victories of women provides the basic framework for addressing and enriching the Beijing +20 process.

At national and local levels.

This means: feeding the capacity for social mobilization of feminist and women's movements, and recovering the development of the visions, strategies and approaches emerging from the struggles and resistance of women at local level; seeking to incorporate other movements and democratic forces that are defending women's rights; Campaigns (such as Beijing +20 Campaign: Empowering Women - Empowering Humanity, UN Women) that express what we celebrate and what we stand for at Beijing + 20. This will expand the reappropriation of BPA in the current context and defend it from religious and political fundamentalist advances that are occurring today in several countries in the region. Given the link between local and global processes, these dynamics of mobilization would certainly enrich regional agendas and global agenda.

- Promote clear processes of political mobilization to increase opportunities for partnership and nurture potential triangles of power through dynamics of participation that influences the content of official reports. To do this what is required are: clear channels of participation, transparency and accountability on the part of states; having an intersectional gender perspective, enriched by the presence of women in all their ethnic, racial, sexual, generational diversity is required. And preventing that the participation of civil society is assumed as tangential, insisting that its demands and proposals are effectively incorporated into the official documents and processes.
- At the local level: the struggle for the integration of the agendas is essential to ensure a holistic view of the BPA; being clear that all areas and recommendations of the BPA should be revisited to ensure increased compliance, there are some dimensions that in Latin America are particularly urgent and central dimensions for the self-empowerment of women
 - ***Strengthening their physical autonomy***: asserting their right to a life without domestic, sexual, political, racial violence. Affirming the recognition of sexual rights and reproductive rights, including abortion, as women's right to decide about their own bodies.
 - ***Strengthening their economic autonomy***, stating that human life and its sustainability is the first and only priority. For women, this means radical changes in the sexual division of labor; access to dignified work and social security; symbolic and real recognition of the value of the reproductive economy, recovering the perspective implied by the care economy; the right to access and control of economic and natural resources, including respect for territorial integrity, its habitat and the commons; the right to equitable redistribution of wealth in the country and its mechanisms of power.
 - ***Strengthening political autonomy***: parity, participation of women in the processes of representation and political, social, labor, union decision; laws against political harassment of women; having adequate and sufficient

resources for the effective implementation of the recommendations of the BPA.

- ***Strengthening their sociocultural autonomy***; strengthening the collective voices of women and their movements; recognition of diverse cultures and worldviews relevant to each territory, and the importance of the contributions of women within them; reconsideration of laws from an intercultural perspective; respect for a secular state and culture.

Approaching the autonomy of women from a human rights perspective is the basis for a structural change in the future agenda. It would open new interpretative frameworks and action that will transform the disadvantages and demands of women (highlighted by the recommendations of the MBP) into strategies for structural changes. They are constitutive of a macro-policy project and a democratic agenda, based on intercultural perspective that - 20 years later - realizes the equivalence of multiple viewpoints and worldviews that feminist movements today are bringing to the actual implementation of the BPA recommendations. For such a task, the creation of triangles to be able to respond to this new moment is undoubtedly urgent and would be a gain for women and for democracy.