NGOs as linkages between grassroots women and the state: Prospects for state feminism in South Africa

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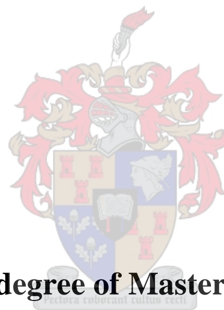

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this mini-thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

……………………………………………. ………………….

AN Slamat **Date**

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ABSTRACT

The core question that is addressed by this research is whether, and to what extent South African women's NGOs contribute to enhancing state feminism through their ability to articulate and mobilise the strategic interests of women at grassroots level to appear on the national agenda, through the channels provided by the National Gender Machinery (structures of the state).

A literature review was conducted that draws on the work of predominantly feminist authors in order to locate this research in previous scholarly knowledge that is relevant to the purpose of this study. The literature review includes elaboration of concepts like state feminism, women's interests, agenda setting, civil society, and linkages between the women's movement and the National Gender Machinery (NGM).

A theoretical framework developed by Stetson and Mazur (1995), which aims at measuring whether gender machineries facilitate an increase in gender equality within the state, is used. The framework utilises two dimensions in order to investigate the level of state feminism within a country, i.e. *state capacity,* which investigates to what extent gender machineries influence and inform policy that is feminist and gender friendly; and *state-society relations,* which investigates the extent to which gender machineries provide opportunities for organised civil society actors (women's organisations) to engage and access policy making and contribute to policy influence. In order to examine the levels of *state capacity* present in South Africa with regard to gender equality, current patterns of politics (a concept used by Stetson and Mazur) are considered. This is done in order to evaluate whether the political context is conducive to the passing and implementation of policy that is of a feminist nature. A qualitative study of the experience of four South African women's NGOs, using face-to-face interviews specially designed for this purpose, was undertaken. The NGOs were interviewed in order to ascertain the status of *state-society linkages*, and whether the state provides access to civil society actors to inform policy making and implementation from a gender-friendly perspective that is reflective of grassroots women's interests. The NGOs interviewed are the New Women's Movement (NWM), the Women's Legal Centre, the Black Sash and the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG).

The findings of the fieldwork are analysed according to the framework of Stetson and Mazur (1995) in order to formulate a response to the research question. Findings include the presence of state capacity that is hostile to gender issues, with minimal (unreceptive) efforts

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to engage society actors in a flourishing state-society relationship. The provision of unreceptive and inconsistent space provided by the state, the lack of commitment to gender by women working within the state, and the state of “decline” that many South African NGOs are facing, have led to a “blockage” in the articulation of gender issues by NGOs that emanates from grassroots level to inform policy making, and contributes to the institutionalisation of state feminism. The national levels have therefore been largely out of touch with the interests of women at grassroots level as a result of minimal engagement and communication through the (dysfunctional) NGM. The state has spoken on behalf of, and decided on behalf of, women what is best for them and their livelihoods. Instead of being a gateway to the institutionalisation of state feminism, the state has acted as a patriarchal entity and has, to a very large extent, further entrenched gender inequality and the hardships faced by ordinary South African women at grassroots level.

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OPSOMMING

Die kernvraag wat deur hierdie navorsing aangespreek word is of, en tot watter mate, Suid-Afrikaanse vroue se nie-regeringsorganisasies (NRO's) bydra tot die verbreding van staatsfeminisme deur hul vermoë om die strategiese belange van vroue op voetsoolvlak te artikuleer sodat dit op die nasionale agenda deur die kanale wat deur die Nasionale Gender Masjinerie (NGM) (strukture in die staat) verskaf word, verskyn.

'n Literatuurstudie, wat die werk van hoofsaaklik feministiese outeurs aanhaal, is onderneem om hierdie navorsing binne vorige akademiese kennis wat relevant is tot die doel van hierdie studie, te plaas. Dit sluit bespreking van konsepte soos staatsfeminisme, vrouebelange, agenda-skepping, burgerlike samelewing, en verhoudings tussen die vrouebeweging en die NGM in.

'n Teoretiese raamwerk wat deur Stetson en Mazur (1995) ontwikkel is, wat ten doel het om vas te stel of gendermasjinerie 'n toename in geslagsgelykheid binne die staat fasiliteer, word gebruik. Die raamwerk gebruik twee dimensies om die vlak van staatsfeminisme in 'n land te ondersoek, naamlik *staatskapsiteit*, wat ondersoek tot watter mate gendermasjinerie beleid wat feministies en gender-vriendelik is, beïnvloed en inlig; en *staat-samelewing verhoudinge*, wat ondersoek instel na die mate waartoe gendermasjinerie geleenthede bied vir akteurs vanuit die georganiseerde burgerlike samelewing om toegang te kry tot en deel te neem aan die beleidmakings- en -implementeringsproses. Om die vlakke van staatskapasiteit t.o.v. geslagsgelykheid in Suid-Afrika te ontleed, word kontemporêre politieke patrone ('n konsep wat deur Stetson en Mazur gebruik word) gebruik. Dit word gedoen om vas te stel of die politieke konteks gunstig is vir die goedkeuring en implementering van beleid van 'n feministiese aard. 'n Kwalitatiewe studie van die ervaring van vier Suid-Afrikaanse NRO's met behulp van aangesig-tot-aangesig onderhoude wat spesiaal vir hierdie doel ontwerp is, is onderneem. Die onderhoude is met die NRO's gevoer om die status van staat-samelewing verhoudings vas te stel, en om te bepaal of die staat toegang verleen aan akteurs vanuit die burgerlike samelewing om beleidmakings- en -implementeringsprosesse vanuit 'n gender-vriendelike perspektief, wat die belange van vroue op voetsoolvlak reflekteer, te informeer. Die NRO's waarmee onderhoude gevoer is, is die New Women's Movement (NWM), die Women's Legal Centre, die Black Sash en die International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG).

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Die bevindinge is volgens die raamwerk van Stetson en Mazur (1995) geanaliseer ten einde ’n antwoord op die navorsingsvraag te bied. Die bevindinge sluit in die aanwesigheid van staatskapasiteit wat vyandig gesind is teenoor gendersake, met minimale (nie-ontvanklike) pogings om akteurs vanuit die samelewing betrokke te kry in ’n florerende staat-samelewing verhouding. Die voorsiening van ’n nie-ontvanklike en nie-konsekwente ruimte deur die staat, die gebrek aan toewyding tot gendersake deur vroue wat binne die staat werk, en die toestand van agteruitgang wat baie Suid-Afrikaanse NRO’s in die gesig staar, het gelei tot ’n “blokkasie” in die artikulering van gendersake deur NRO’s, wat hul oorsprong het vanaf die voetsoolvlak om beleidmaking te informeer, en by te dra tot die institusionalisering van staatsfeminisme. Die nasionale vlak is dus baie uit voeling met die belange van vroue op voetsoolvlak a.g.v. minimale betrokkenheid en kommunikasie deur die (disfunksionele) NGM. Die staat praat en besluit namens vroue oor wat die beste vir hulle en hul bestaanswyses is. In stede van ’n poort te wees tot die institusionalisering van staatsfeminisme, tree die staat op as ’n patriargale entiteit en dra dit grootliks daartoe by om gender-ongelykheid en die swaarkry van gewone Suid-Afrikaanse vroue op voetsoolvlak verder te verskans.

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DEDICATION

To my family, who have always been my biggest source of support and encouragement.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give praise to the Almighty, for all the blessings He has bestowed upon me.

I want to acknowledge my parents, Jerome and Eleanor Slamat, for their unconditional love and support, and all the sacrifices they have made to always provide me with the best.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As a transitional country, South Africa boasts one of the most liberal constitutions in the world and houses one of the most advanced and institutionalised gender machineries (Gouws, 2005:143). The period of negotiation and "transition" from apartheid to democracy represented an "opening up" of politics in South Africa, providing South African women with the opportunity to strategically use this "window" to articulate, mobilise and prioritise gender on the national political agenda. South African women had this opportunity due to women's activism since the 1950s, which was aimed at the overthrow of the apartheid dispensation (Meintjes, 2005). The nature of the transition, which signified a shift away from nationalist discourse to a democratic discourse (one which is largely based on citizenship), presented South African women with the space to assert themselves as political actors by using this opportunity to leverage and articulate that woman's interests be included in the constitution and negotiation process for the renewed South African state (Goetz, 1998:245). The "new" South African state was to be an arena in which all South Africans had equal representation and access, and whose institutions were designed to address issues of gender inequality at all levels of the state, examine the policy influence on gender issues and relations, and seek to address the sources and power imbalances from which gender inequality emanated (Seidman, 2003:541).

In order to assert women's representation and voices in government, the women's movement made incremental gains and was successful in inserting women's issues and concerns into the negotiation process. The impetus behind the creation and mobilisation of the women's movement was ultimately to participate in the transitional negotiations, which were successful in mobilizing and lobbying to make the negotiation process more accessible and open to women and ensured that women's interests were included in the 1994 election (Goetz, 1998:247). The Women's National Coalition (WNC) was launched in April 1992 and acted as an umbrella movement for a vast number of women's organisations, consisting of a broad front of seventy organisations and eight regional coalition networks, which crossed racial and even ideological divides – something that would have been considered as politically unthinkable before liberalisation (Gouws,2005:143; Hassim, 2005a:13; Meintjes,2005 ; Seidman,2003: 544). The purpose of the WNC was the drafting of the

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Women's Charter for Effective Equality, which was adopted in February 1994, representing the demands of individual women and also women's organisations (Hassim, 2005a :58). This framing document was handed to government at the time of transition. It called for structural transformation, increased access of women to sites of decision making and legislation drafting, the recognition of the heterogeneity of women's needs, and the consideration that women's needs are distinctly different from those of men (Hassim, 2005a:13; Meintjes,2005). In this light, the strategy of inclusion exercised by the WNC was one that aimed to create a political space within the state where women could live and exercise a broader conceptualisation of citizenship, which in effect recognised the plurality of women's interests (Hassim, 2005a:60).

The Charter campaign ultimately resulted in the document being accepted as the blueprint for the gender equity policy trajectory the new South African state was envisioned to follow. The sophistication of the WNC allowed it to act as a pressure group to lobby to extend the political rights of South African women, which ultimately led to the proposal of a "package" of institutions to promote, protect and advocate gender equality after the transition. This culminated in the creation of the National Gender Machinery (NGM) (from this point onwards, National Gender Machinery (NGM) shall also be referred to as "gender machineries" or "policy machineries" and may be used interchangeably) in South Africa (Meintjes,2005). The institutionalisation of the NGM therefore represented a culmination of concerted efforts on the part of feminist activists, academics, civil society and grassroots women towards the creation of a strategic space for women within the state (Gouws, 2005:143). The institutionalisation of the South African NGM as the product of successful mobilisation evokes a particular sentiment expressed by Hassim (2005) and many feminist scholars, who concur that the processes of negotiation in the transition period favoured political and social groups that were *effectively organised* at the national level and/or had ties to national political actors (Hassim, 2005a:59). Although the WNC did not regard the goal of increased women's representation in state structures as an end in itself, the institutionalisation of the NGM was seen as a way through which inequality could ultimately be overthrown to make way for a more "women friendly" state (Gouws, 2005:143). The term "women friendly" was first coined by Hernes (1987) in order to explain the phenomenon of Scandinavian states' greatly perceived permeability to women's interests. She defines "women friendly" states as such:

> A women-friendly state would enable women to have a natural relationship to their children, their work and public life…(the) state would not force harder choices on women than on men, or permit unjust treatment on the basis of sex. In a women friendly state, women will continue to have children, yet there will also be other roads to self-realization open to them. In such a state, women will not have to choose futures that demand greater sacrifices from them than are expected of men (Hernes, 1987:15).

Adding to the sentiments expressed by Hernes, Gouws and Hassim (2012) regard "women friendly" states to be those states that develop "gender responsive" policies, where policy makers are open to consider the influence of policy on women's lives, and the large impact gender roles have on the lives of both men and women (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:3)

Furthermore, the South African NGM at the time of transition displayed a comprehensive set of structures within the state and civil society, which outnumbered those in developed countries; even most Scandinavian countries that have widely been perceived as the "poster child" of the "women friendly" state (Goetz, 1998:242). However, at present, eighteen years down the line, most of the institutionalised gender machinery has been dismantled and is characterised by dysfunctionality. This can be seen through the acceptance of the creation of a Women's Ministry that would not only deal with women's issues, but has been named the Ministry of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities (Gouws, 2010b:8), exhibiting the real possibility of this ministry becoming a dumping ground for a range of issues, not only those pertaining to women. In addition, the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and the Status of Women (JMC) has been replaced by a Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and People with Disabilities, which is located in parliament, and a Select Committee on Women, Youth and Disabilities situated in the National Council of Provinces (Gouws, 2010b:8).

Although dissolution and inactivity have characterised the NGM in recent times, at the time of transition the South African NGM consisted of The Office of the Status of Women (OSW), which was mandated to lead the process of gender mainstreaming and consequently with overseeing the implementation of the outcomes of international conferences such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition, the OSW was also responsible for drawing up the National Gender Policy, formally known as the South African National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. The Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and the Status of Women (JMC) has been tasked with performing an oversight function in terms of monitoring legislation and

promoting research in areas and spheres where women have not as yet enjoyed equal treatment and opportunity. The Women's Caucus, which is housed in parliament, has been mandated with the oversight of policy implementation and to coordinate the "women's agenda". The Women's Empowerment Unit has been tasked with the training of, and acting as a support structure to, women parliamentarians. Gender focal points have taken the form of gender desks in each civil service department, on the national and provincial level, tasked with gender representation, engendering and overseeing policy implementation. Lastly, the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), which is independent and autonomous from government, performs an oversight function of gender equality in government and the private sector, engages in research, and investigates complaints relating to gender discrimination (Gouws, 2005:75, 2006:144; Meintjes, 2005:325).

Although pre-1994 saw the force of a mobilised women's movement, with the aim to create a women-friendly state, post-1994 saw a shift in the priorities of the women's movement, and ultimately the splintering of the WNC. The "post-transition period" can be seen as a contributing factor to the loss of momentum of mobilisation behind a single issue on the part of the women's movement, and the eventual disaggregation of the women's movement into a multiplicity of arenas. The culmination of the "new" state resulted in most of the "visionary leadership" (that led the unified women's movement) moving into the bureaucracy and taking up careers in government. In addition to the institutionalised structures created for women, Hassim (2005) provides a framework for the mapping of the South African civil society post-1994 and argues that the splintering of the women's movement can be seen to be characterised in three distinct arenas: the national policy advocacy arena (NGOs), national and regional networks and coalitions, and the arena of community-based organisations, which will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

It is evident that an elaborate gender institutional structure exists in South Africa, which, accordingly, has led to high expectations of a flourishing and comprehensive women's movement aimed at the acquisition of state feminism (to be discussed in Chapter 2). The institutionalisation of the NGM created many expectations, amongst which were that the government would embark on the privileging of the voices and interests emanating from the grassroots level (Hassim, 2005b:20); the accountability of the state towards an increase in gender equality in public and private spheres (and the related government spending towards it); and lastly, that this institutionalisation would bring with it systemic change in the norms and discourses shaping government procedure (Gouws, 2005:144), so that the constitutional

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values of equality and social justice could be made a reality. The splintering of the women's movement in various arenas post-1994 contributed to the disillusionment felt by women, who had high expectations of the influence that the NGM would exert on policy making and the prioritisation of gender interests on the national agenda.

If one takes into consideration South Africa's status as a "country in transition", it is probably understandable that this fairly new "institution" showed "growing pains" in its growth process and seemed to suffer from what Goetz has termed "post-transition exhaustion" (Goetz, 1998:252). However, eighteen years later, although the South African NGM has made gains in particular areas, its championing of issues has been uneven and, in many cases, has not made many visible changes to the lives of women at grassroots level. On the contrary, the evident display of power that traditional courts still have with regard to legislation enforcing the continued subjugation of women and continued traditional practices such as *ukuhtwala* (the kidnapping of under-age girls in order for them to become child brides) indicates the limits of the law when it comes to transformation. Although many efforts have been made by feminist activists in civil society to ensure that gender equity prevails over customary law, the results have not been unambiguously successful. In support of this argument, Claassens (2009) demonstrates how the Traditional Courts Bill of 2008 was characterised by the privileging and dominance of some voices at the expense of others, particularly with regard to participating in the conceptualisation and definition of culture and custom, which formed the basis of the Bill. The Bill was drafted and introduced in parliament with inputs from the National House of Traditional Leaders, with no concern of extending inputs to women's groups or interest groups, thereby further entrenching patriarchal structures and the power of chiefs to determine the content of customary law (Claassens,2009 :16).

South Africa's female representation has hovered around (and in recent times exceeded) the 30% "critical mass" threshold since 1994, which signifies what Dahlerup (1988) regards as the threshold beyond which women's representation in political institutions translates into political influence. Many scholars have embraced this argument put forward by Dahlerup, as it points to the fact that there is not only power in numbers, but that women have a different relationship to the state and, on these grounds, practise politics and see politics differently to how men do. However, others have criticised the idea of "critical mass", arguing that the focus on "strength in numbers" is irrelevant, and that women's ideological commitment to feminism, overthrowing gender inequality, and therefore the presence of a "feminist

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consciousness", is ultimately what matters (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:21). The realisation that the number of women in the state and bureaucracy does not automatically translate into them being advocates of women's interests and gender equality, but rather treading the lines of party politics, can clearly be seen in South Africa. In support of this argument, Gouws (2011) maintains that women working within the bureaucracy do not push gender interests just because of the fact that they are women. Instead, many women working within the bureaucracy have proven to be self-interested political actors who are influenced by alliances and aim to maximise their institutional security and self-benefit. Consequently, for those advocates of democracy (including some feminists) who have in the past argued that there is a positive correlation between female representation and attentiveness to women's needs, the reality of South Africa in particular seems grim, as in the very same period that the South Africa's women's movement celebrated large gains as a result of the institutionalisation of the NGM, the livelihood conditions of the majority of poor South African women worsened.

Although the political will existed to address gender inequality, the difficulty came from translating this set of elaborate institutional commitments into reality, and real credible gains that could be experienced by women on grassroots level (Meintjes,2005). This difficulty has indeed been exacerbated by the dysfunctionality of some of these institutional structures as a result of overlapping and unclear mandates, lack of resources and personality politics (Gouws, 2010b:8). In addition, the restructuring, dissolving and inactive status of structures that make up the South African National Gender Machinery (as touched upon previously), suggests that state feminism, or for the very least the privileging of women's interests in South Africa, seems to be in a dire condition (Gouws, 2010b:8; Gouws & Hassim, 2012:27). Whilst a critical mass of women is present in political institutions, this has not led to the intended level of transformation of gender-responsive governance. Although disillusionment with the state is not unfounded, the state as an arena should not be ignored in totality, as it still provides gateways through which civil society actors can interact with the state. The importance of this interaction with the state is what this research is ultimately based on.

It is in this context that this research finds its problem with the South African NGM, firstly, has the presence of this elaborate structure, in conjunction with one of the highest percentages of women in state structures globally, led to incremental gains with regard to the elimination of gender inequality in the long term? And secondly, has the institutionalisation of the NGM enhanced grassroots participation when it comes to policy making?

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1.1 The aims of this research

The aims of this research were to determine the linkage between women working in state bureaucratic structures and South African women's NGOs (usually referred to as "advocacy agents"); and to what extent NGOs are able (if at all) to exercise policy influence and facilitate increased access for grassroots women to engage with state structures. The focus here is to determine to what extent NGOs are able to articulate and mobilise the interests of grassroots women to be taken seriously enough to appear on the national agenda, and consequently, if the consideration of these issues actually do/ do not contribute to the ideal of "state feminism". The aims of this research, which will be discussed in the following section are meant to be sub-foci in their relation to the research question, which reads as follows:

"Do South African Women's NGOs contribute to state feminism through their ability to articulate and mobilise the strategic interests of women at grassroots level to appear on the national agenda, and through the channels provided by the South African National Gender Machinery (NGM)?"

The "strength" of NGOs resides in their ability to aid the "upward" articulation of gender interests by acting as a strategic linkage and "facilitators" for grassroots participation in policy making, thereby contributing indirectly to the increase in the exercise of grassroots women's citizenship. The conceptualisation of the term "citizenship" that proves most useful in this instance is that of Marshall (1950) and Lister (1997), who define citizenship not only in terms of status (this includes political, social and civil rights), but also refer to citizenship as a form of agency (practice and participation) (Lister, 1997:15). The exercise of citizenship through the lens of agency and participation, and the related ability to contribute to agenda setting, plays a distinctive role in the strengthening and exercise of women's citizenship, possessing the biggest potential for policy making that is transformatory in nature. Despite contemporary policies and procedures of formal equity, women and men possess different relations with the state, mostly premised on the fact that they have been "inducted" differently as holders of citizenship (Waylen, 1996:14).

Furthermore, this research aims to provide a better understanding of "women's interests" than is articulated through women's collective action in order to influence agenda setting and the policy-making process. In this regard, the *nature* of issues that NGOs mobilise and articulate to appear on national level (with the ultimate goal of state feminism in mind) is problematised. Many studies have impulsively identified *any* women's activism as being part

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of a women's movement, in addition to incorporating almost *any* women's activism as being inherently feminist (Beckwith, 2000:435). For this reason, this research wishes to refer to the work of Molyneux (1985) in relation to her work on "women's interests", and the distinction she makes between "practical gender needs" and "strategic gender interests". "Material" needs, or as Molyneux (1985) calls them, "practical gender needs", refer mostly to material needs that arise from the everyday roles and responsibilities acted out by women on the basis of the division of labour and the public-private divide. What Molyneux describes as "strategic gender interests" are those that will be utilised in this research; these refer to the shared interests of women aimed at eliminating gender inequality, and a desire for transforming the state into one that is permeable to women's interests (Molyneux, 1985:231).

Drawing on Molyneux's distinction between "practical gender needs" and "strategic gender interests", Hassim (2004) distinguishes between movements that are organised on the basis of "inclusionary" (feminine) issues, and those that are organised around "transformatory" (feminist) issues. "Inclusionary" issues are focused primarily on the relationship between women and political institutions, and are mobilised on the basis of women's exclusion from political decision making and representation (Hassim, 2004:3). This approach does not aim to eliminate structural inequality or challenge exclusion; rather, feminine approaches are geared more towards ensuring women's access to political power. "Transformatory" approaches, on the other hand, are aimed at ensuring structural transformation and the overthrow of pre-existing paradigms and discourse ensuring male dominance and hierarchy. Although these distinctions are heuristic devices, mainly used to ease analysis, they will be utilised throughout this research in order to display the complexity and heterogeneity of women's interests, as opposed to essentialising "women" as a category. In this way, the outcomes of this research will contribute to existing understandings of social movements, the role they play, and the potential transformational capacity they possess.

In this regard, this research is aimed at investigating how successful NGOs are in articulating and mobilising *feminist* issues through a process of changing and transforming the scope and focus of the national agenda, thereby challenging the existing gender paradigm, as opposed to merely integrating gender perspectives into policy making which has not yielded very positive results for the realisation of "state feminism". Optimally, agenda setting should be a product of women's engagement with the state and civil society, and therefore present the intertwining of interests from all three constituencies (women, civil society and the state) when it comes to policy making (Hassim & Gouws, 2012:8). However, it goes without saying

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that this "feminist project" would be more successful if social movements are aligned with various "power brokers"; in other words, women in national government who share a commitment to the prioritisation of feminist issues. With regard to the utility of a strong "insider"-"outsider" relationship, Karen Beckwith (2000) argues the importance of the phenomenon of "double militancy", which can be explained as women activists' simultaneous commitment to two political arenas. This "split" in identity may occur when women activists work in institutions that are non-feminist in order to help poor women advance their positions, while at the same time being committed to a larger feminist project aimed at transformation of the very institutions for which they are advocates (Beckwith, 2000:443).

"Double militancy" therefore has the potential to result in situations and policies that are hostile to transformation, but at the same time, the existence of this "double identity" could facilitate the transformation of state structures with regard to gender equality. Feminist activists may encourage a "feminist consciousness" within organisations that have previously been identified as "non-feminist", leading to increased political participation and social activism. The support of feminists in organisations and institutions for transformation may strengthen the position of feminists located within state structures who, with the backing of a support base, have more influence to create a gender-based agenda. However, the extent to which the "insider"-"outsider" relationship is successful depends on the strategic choices made by social organisations when faced with political opportunities (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999:187). Those women activists working in the bureaucracy will be referred to as "femocrats" from this point onwards in this research; this is a widely used Australian neologism in feminist literature. Although the term "femocrat" has been used in different ways, depending on the position of the respective feminists, the most widely used definition of the term has been largely positive. Chappell has defined the term "femocrat", in the most widely used sense of the word, as "a powerful woman within government administration, with an ideological and political commitment to feminism" (Chappell, 2002:86).

In addition, this research is aimed at creating greater understanding of the way that power to influence policy making operates between the various spheres of the state (particularly with regard to the NGM) and how the cooperation between "insider" and "outsider" feminists could possibly lead to prospects for the realisation of a political project of transformation, as opposed to just including women in state initiatives aimed at equality. As mentioned above, the aim of this research is not just to investigate whether or not NGOs act as an aid to the

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women's movement by providing a basis for the exercise of women's agency, but also how this ability by women to exercise citizenship on grassroots level aids a transformative project of state feminism. Furthermore, this research is aimed at understanding the importance of the relationship, not only between NGOs and political parties/government in a display of upward articulation of strategic gender interests, but also to highlight the equal importance of "downward linkages" between NGOs and social movements, actors and constituencies (Hassim, 2005:16). By investigating relations between social organisations, the state and institutional structures, this study also brings to the fore important issues to consider, for example, whether feminist organisations can enter and engage with the state and advance their agendas, or whether incorporation means co-optation (Waylen, 1996:17).

This research also includes an assessment of how "pressure from below" can strengthen advocacy work and have the ability to act as a strategic lever in order to reshape the priorities and policies of the state so that they reflect the interests of women on grassroots level (Hassim, 2005a:16). Drawing on an argument by Rai (2006:28), the objective of this research is not only to investigate whether or not institutions contribute to participation levels or not; instead, the interest of this research is characterised by how far the process of participation and engagement with these institutions is part of the outcomes. In other words, the approach of this research is of such a nature that it considers "process" and "outcome" with equal importance.

1.2 Rationale of the study

This research focused specifically on NGOs as a unit of analysis due to their ability to articulate strategic gender interests. Based on their organisation, ability to mobilise and (uneven) expertise, relative to other social movements in society, *NGOs* are the most probable organised groupings to contribute to the possible process of transformation of the national agenda with the aim of creating women-friendly policy. As a result of the ability of NGOs to be more organised, their lobbying and mobilisation around (women's) issues remain the most successful of all societal groupings, and perform a strategic function as opposed to a merely representative function (Hassim, 2005b:15). *Community-based organisations*, although organised on the basis of shared gender issues, have generally shown more concern for the satisfaction of practical needs as opposed to an overthrow of the existing paradigm, and have also shown generally weak connections to national government and funding. In addition, *national policy networks and coalitions* have the ability to bring issues into the state

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arena, although they are often difficult to keep together as a result of the multiplicity of members that belong to these networks.

Based on the ability of NGOs, relative to other societal groupings, to be driven by feminist issues, this research will focus on four South African NGOs, namely *The International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG)*, which has played a big role in strengthening women's activism through the Building Women's Leadership programme; *The New Women's Movement*, together with the *Black Sash*, who have had a particularly strong influence in mobilising against the recommended reforms of the state maintenance grant (proposed by the Lund Committee), and the *Women's Legal Centre*, a legal centre providing legal services and advice to mostly poor women from marginalised communities who cannot afford legal fees. Although ILRIG is not inherently a women's NGO, they have been far more successful in articulating feminist issues than most South African women's NGOs, particularly with regard to women's bodily autonomy and sexual health.

Furthermore, the rationale for approaching this research by looking at NGOs as the units of analysis is based largely on the objection by various feminist academics to the idealisation of social movements as actors that possess democratic transformative ability. In this light, the ability of women to actually utilise NGOs as platforms to exercise agency has been questioned. This has raised questions regarding whether women's voices get heard, and the privileging and articulation of particular groups of women over those of others. Furthermore, as Hassim argues, post-1994 has seen a reliance on NGOs to deliver on practical needs, as opposed to being committed to a transformative agenda (Hassim, 2005b:20). It is in this regard that the rationale for this research originated.

Firstly, the ability of NGOs to provide a linkage between civil society and the national level of government (particularly when it comes to agenda setting) has largely been disputed as a result of more focus on "practical gender needs" as opposed to "strategic gender interests". This has been compounded by the South African government's commitment to "gender mainstreaming", which has been argued by various scholars to contribute to the de-politicisation of gender, reducing it to a technocratic approach to gender equality (Gouws, 2005:78). Secondly, scholars have argued that, in order to fit in with the ideals of the state, the tactics and mobilisation practised by NGOs may be moderated to maintain their linkage to leadership that they have tried hard to acquire. Thirdly, concerns have been raised about NGOs and their "distance" from their constituencies, in which regard it has been argued that

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NGOs have begun merely to serve the needs of the elite, instead of contributing to grassroots participation and representivity. Lastly, there has been little research on the linkage role played by NGOs, based on their "facilitating" ability to contribute to agenda setting and thus strengthening the linkage between grassroots women and the state, and this field does not comprise a large body of work in South African feminist research. The disputed role of NGOs in South African society, compounded by a limited amount of literature regarding the research I wish to embark on, serves as a rationale to further investigate this phenomenon.

This research will not focus on a technocratic approach to gender equality, but rather seeks to investigate how NGOs, as advocacy agents, articulate women's interests emanating from the grassroots level, therefore not only contributing to the exercise of women's citizenship, but also contributing to a more feminist state. In this light, this research is focused broadly on investigating the transformatory influence of South African women's NGOs through their ability to influence the scope, focus and prioritisation of strategic women's interests on the national agenda.

1.3 Research methodology and research design

The research undertaken used qualitative methodology and is descriptive in nature. The research was conducted through interviews with an open-ended questionnaire, which is available as Appendix A at the end of this research paper. Interviews (or more specifically, in the case of this particular research, face-to-face interviews) serve as an important tool, particularly for social science research, as they are known to possess the highest and most accurate response rates and permit the completion of longer questionnaires, thereby extracting more information in aid of the research (Neuman, 2006:301). Interviews consist of structured and prearranged questions in order to extract specific information that is relevant to the research project. As this research focuses on the role played by NGO's through their mobilisation and articulation of grassroots women's interests in order to influence policy and decision making; the use of interviews as a tool proved useful to the context of this research. Questioning NGO's about their (first hand) interactions and experience with the state and NGM with regards to pushing "women's interests" proved most fitting to providing this answers to a specific research question. The questionnaire on which the interviews were based consisted of twenty-two questions and covered aspects relating to the extent to which the South African NGM influences policy making informed by a gender perspective (state capacity); the extent to which the South African NGM creates spaces and opportunity for

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civil society actors (in this case NGOs) to participate in the making of policy; and the legislative process (state-society relations) as outlined in the theoretical framework. The use of interviews, together with an appraisal of the available literature, provided the best possible responses and approach to the research question posed.

The individuals that represented the four South African NGOs that were interviewed as part of the research project were people in positions of authority, such as directors and senior managers. The four NGOs, as mentioned previously, are the New Women's Movement (NWM), the Black Sash, the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG) and Women's Legal Centre. Due to the extent that this research will focus on these four NGOs, it is only fitting that a brief discussion of their histories is undertaken. The reason for this is that these NGOs are not static entities, but rather manifestations of their developing surroundings.

The New Women's Movement (NWM) originated as the brainchild of women on grassroots level in 1997. Currently multiple branches exist all over the Western Cape. The main focus of this grassroots organisation from its conception was to push issues and to better the lives of poor women in rural and urban areas predominantly though empowerment in the form of legal and rights education (New Women's Movement, 2013).

The Black Sash was originally started by a group of six middle-class white women, namely Ruth Foley, Tertia Pybus, Helen Newton-Thompson, Jean Bosazza, Jean Sincliar and Elizabeth McLaren in 1955, in their opposition to the then-Senate Bill, campaigning against the removal of "coloured" people from the common voter's role. Their organisation later grew to become one that represented liberal women, who united in opposition to government policies that were discriminatory and contrary to the constitution. Protest took the form of demonstrations, marches, convoys and vigils. The organisation was first known as the Women's Defence of the Constitution, but was later referred to as "Black Sash" by the media, due to members wearing black sashes at demonstrations in order to suggest their "mourning" of the constitution. After 1994, the organisation moved from being a protest organisation, to a more professional one, mainly operating in research, advocacy, consultation and policy submission spheres (Black Sash, 2013).

ILRIG came into existence in 1983, as part of the Sociology Department at the University of Cape Town (UCT), but started operating independently in 2003. The organisation maintains its research function in order to produce various publications, as well as its educational

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function that operates as a support to other NGOs, social movements or trade unions (Cornell & Berndt, 2009).

Lastly, the need for women's legal services and access to the law was recognised as a global need by the Australian Law Reform Commission in 1993. This commission went on to publish various reports, which elaborated on women's inequality before the law. In 1995, Commonwealth government decided to fund women's legal services on a number of locations. The Women's Legal Centre, that flowed from this movement, officially started operating as a non-profit community based organisation in 1996 (Women's Legal Centre, 2013).

Interviews were set up with these four NGOs on the basis that they were operating in the Western Cape and were therefore accessible for face-to-face interviews, and were available in the short time frame in which the research had to be completed. Interviews were set up with individuals who were of senior authority in the various organisations, and who therefore had profound experience of dealing with the state and state structures when it came to (the successful or unsuccessful) lobbying, mobilisation and articulation "women's interests.

The results of the interviews, together with the arguments of leading feminist scholars, provide the best approach to successfully drawing conclusions and analysing the link between "women on grassroots level", "NGOs", "agenda setting", "policy influence" and "state access and engagement available to civil society actors". In addition, due to the fact that generalisations cannot be made from interviews with merely four South African NGOs, this research will not pose a set of hypotheses that can be proved or disproved. Rather, this research analysed the work of these NGOs on a case-by-case basis.

Using a feminist perspective, this research first expanded on the work of Sandra Harding (1987), which highlights arguments, considerations and contentions involved in undertaking research from a feminist perspective. The work of Harding will be considered because this research will be investigated from a feminist perspective and therefore will make use of feminist methodology. Harding (1987) asks 1) whether there really is an overarching, distinctive feminist method of enquiry, and this questions is linked to the following one on the basis of method, namely 2) what is the cause for recent feminist research being so powerful in its explanation and accounting for social life? (Harding, 1987:1)

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Harding argues that the difficulty with regard to answering the question of whether there is a distinctive method of feminist inquiry has arisen through the confusion among feminist and traditional scholars about the concepts method, methodology and epistemology (Harding, 1987:2). Harding defines "method" to be the techniques undertaken, or the way in which a researcher proceeds, to collect evidence/data. Techniques for gathering evidence can arguably fall into three categories, namely listening to/interviewing/interrogating informants, observing the behaviour of research subjects, or gathering and examining historical records and texts. "Methodology" refers to a theory and analysis of how the research is to or should proceed; this includes ways in which the general theory finds its application in more traditional discourse and disciplines (Harding, 1987:3). Lastly, the concept of "epistemology" refers to a theory of knowledge, which presents a strategy for justifying beliefs. In order to clarify what epistemologies entail, Harding refers to familiar justificatory strategies on which theories of knowledge are based; these include those that are appeals to the authority of God, those that are described as "common sensical" (reason), and those based on traditions, cultures, observations and masculine authority.

However, Harding argues that "method" has often been confused and used to refer to all three aspects of the research. Although methodologies, epistemologies and research methods are co-related and many times co-dependant, too much focus and effort spent on contested definitions may obscure the attention that could be directed towards identifying the distinct features that make feminist research so powerful (Harding, 1987:3). Instead, Harding identifies three features in feminist research that provide the most promising look (although not definitive explanations) at what accounts for the power of the best feminist research. These three features highlighted by Harding will form the basis of the research employed in this study.

In accounting for the best features responsible for the powerful nature of feminist research, Harding points to new and alternative origins of problems (and consequently, the explanatory hypotheses and evidence regarding) situated in *women's experiences* (Harding, 1987:6). Critics have argued that, within traditional discourse, social sciences have only privileged male experiences as a point of departure with regard to research. In this way, problems, and questions about social life, have unconsciously been formulated on the basis of (white, western, bourgeois) male experience, culminating in a "logic of discovery", to search for answers to questions that *men want answered.* In this light, it is evident that the discourse through which social phenomena get framed and defined as problematic, and in need of

explanation, is always for someone or a group of persons. In this regard, problems cannot be separated from the persons experiencing the particular problem. However, Harding argues that it is the acceptance and acknowledgement of this fact that often brings feminist arguments to be at odds with traditional discourse. Traditional methods of inquiry argue that the origins of problems are irrelevant to the results these methods of enquiry yield. The contexts in which social problems originate are treated with indifference; however, the contexts of justification, in which hypotheses are put through a testing process, are seen to provide the distinctive virtue of scientific inquiry (Harding, 1987:7).

Feminists have challenged this view, arguing that the questions that are asked, and those that are not asked, are at least just as important in their contribution to reflecting the social world in totality as are the "answers" that are uncovered. Merely focusing on the experiences of men leads to a distortion of the social world and understandings of it. Harding argues that one distinctive aspect of feminist research is the ability to generate problems based on women's lived experiences, and uses these experiences as a basis against which the relevance of hypotheses are tested.

However, the category "woman" does not constitute a homogenous group, reflective of "universal" women's experience in the essentialist sense of the term (Harding, 1987:7). The intersectionalities of women's identities, that is reflective of race, class, culture and so forth, are often in conflict with one another and offer research that is a rich source of feminist insight and inquiry because it is based on the fragmented identities of women. The questions of women, as an oppressed group, would rarely constitute the desire for pure truth, but would rather present questions that challenge the status quo with regard to how conditions could be changed, how the world is shaped by social forces, and how to go about successfully in emancipation projects. As a result, the best feminist research does not just originate out of mere "women's experiences", but out of women's experiences in political struggles (Harding, 1987:8).

The second feature Harding identifies is *new purposes for inquiry*, which is research undertaken for women, founded on the basis of problematics faced in women's experiences. The goal here is to provide women with explanations of the social world and social phenomena that are wanted and needed by women. The questions (problematics) that result are questions that women want answered, as opposed to traditional social inquiry reflective of questions that men want answered, which have come about in order to control, to pacify and

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to exploit. In this regard, the best feminist research cannot be removed from the context in which the problems originate (Harding, 1987:8).

The last feature Harding identifies refers to the *new recommended common plane of treatment of the relationship between the inquirer and its subject of inquiry*. In the light of this, the best feminist research goes beyond just considering the new developments in feminist subject matter, by placing the inquirer on the same critical plane as the subject of interest. This attempts to make the argument that no research that is undertaken is value free, and that individuals as historical entities frame and project onto their research in accordance with their class, traditions, values, beliefs, assumptions and the like (Harding, 1987:9). This "consciousness" and recognition of inevitable "bias" considers that cultural and traditional beliefs and behaviours shape feminist analyses, just as sexist and androcentric culture shapes analyses in traditional research inquiry. Harding argues that the "objectivist" approach, which is aimed at making the beliefs and culture of the researcher invisible, contributes to skewed research and a distorted view of the social world and social processes.

Only in the acknowledgement that no research is free from the values of the (unexamined) beliefs and cultures of the researcher can understandings and explanations that are more free from distortion be produced. The beliefs and behaviours of the researcher in fact form part of the present empirical evidence, which is in favour of, or goes against, the results of the research study undertaken. The values brought to the study from the side of the researcher should be held up for scrutiny, no less so than the subject of interest in the research is analysed. In this way, the subjectivity evident in the research will lead, in turn, to greater objectivity, unlike traditional methods that insist on the invisibility of the researcher and the irrelevance of personal influence on the research analysis, which then results in distorted views and explanations (Harding, 1987:9). It is in this approach, which is usually referred to as the "reflexivity of social science", that the strength and dynamism of feminist research can be found.

In this research I reflect on the central problem from my position as a black woman in academia in South Africa. I am highly interested in gender issues, committed to feminism and the emancipation of women from all kinds of legal, physical and intellectual obstacles that seek to keep them in bondage. I am highly critical of the treatment of gender issues by the organs of the SA government, have limited experience of the workings of NGOs, but would like to explore their potential in improving the status of SA women. I tackle this research

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fully aware of my biases and commitments, but argue that this is a much more honest approach than hiding behind an “objectivist” approach.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following section, a review of literature by leading feminist academics will be presented in order to provide background to the research undertaken and to help the development of analysis. This section provides a way of "embedding" the study in and "supporting" it with academic literature. The concepts that will be introduced and explored include "state feminism", "women's interests", "agenda setting", civil society" and "linkages between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'".

In support of the research question and the research aims, this chapter wishes to examine first and foremost the phenomenon of "state feminism" and the favourable environment in which this phenomenon may flourish and lead to actual change in the gender paradigm. In this way, the possibility of the role played by NGO's as "advocacy" agents through their ability to mobilise and articulate issues voiced by grassroots women in conjunction with a strong relationship between femocrat "insiders" and outsiders" in order to pressurise women's interests on policy agendas to the state can be assessed in relation to how they may or may not contribute to the as the ultimate goal of "state feminism".

Linkages between "insiders and outsiders" to the state has been considered a vital prerequisite to the flourishing of state feminism in any setting. The potential "dynamism" that may come from a strong relationship and collaboration between state femocrats and feminist groupings in "civil society" are potentially transformatory in nature with regards to changing the existing gender paradigm. In relation to this, "agenda setting" should reflect the product of women's engagement with the state and civil society; with policies reflecting the intertwining interests of women, the state and civil society. However, the increased access of women's voices to inform agenda setting and policy making (which will lead to an increase in state feminism) will guarantee the "feminist project" more long-term success if women inside the state aligned their (feminist) interests with that of "power brokers" outside the state.

The concept of "women's interests" refers to the nature of these "interests" that may or may not be taken up at national level, as a result of pressure exerted from NGO's, femocrats from inside and outside the state, or the overall state institutional structures, are problematized.

The concepts identified will be further discussed in this chapter in order to demonstrate where and how this research locates itself in the feminist body of scholarship, and how related concepts are investigated in order to support this study, with the aim of providing relevant answers to the research question (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:16).

2.1 State feminism

In general, national gender machineries are created with the goal of promoting state feminism. Gouws (2005) argues that "state feminism" is constituted by two dimensions – *firstly*, the supportive role played by women in the state who possess a "feminist mindset", and consequently the influence they exert on policy making; and *secondly*, the access the state provides to the women's movement (Gouws, 2005:74, 2010:2). In simpler terms, Lovenduski and Karam (2005) explain state feminism as the advocacy of interests and demands voiced by the women's movement inside the state. McBride and Mazur (2010:5) suggest that the term "state feminism" in popular, recent discourse has come to describe the phenomena of women's agencies generally, and to analyse whether structures are effective in making the state and its institutions receptive, permeable and inclusive of women and their interests. "State feminism", as explained by Kantola and Outshoorn (2007:3), is a broad and overarching term, which includes the efforts undertaken by national gender machineries to make social and economic policies that are beneficial to women and lead to the improvement of the status of women in society. These efforts undertaken by the state are known to be exercised through special units, mandated with supporting and facilitating the institutionalisation of women's rights within the state through the use of "offices, commissions, agencies, ministries, committees, secretaries, or advisors for the status of women" (Kantola and Outshoorn, 2007:3). In other words, the exercise of women's rights is promoted through the creation of institutional mechanisms in order to create a "women-friendly state".

However, in contrast to the definition of "state feminism" supplied by Kantola and Outshoorn, who express "state feminism" as being solely efforts on the part of the women's policy machineries to pursue social and economic policies in order to advance the position of women, Borchorst and Siim (2008) offer a different conceptualisation of the term. Offering a conception of "state feminism" that to a large extent expresses the work of Helga Hernes (1987) with regard to theorizing about "state feminism" in Scandinavian countries, the authors provide a definition of "state feminism" that encompasses notions of both politics and

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policy and is characterised by the synergy of women's political and social citizenship, and the complimentary, dynamic relationship of feminism from "above" and "below" simultaneously (Borchorst & Siim, 2008:210). This definition, in contrast to that of Kantola and Outshoorn, puts more emphasis on women's agency and their related representation and mobilisation, rather than focusing solely on the role played by women's policy machineries (Borchorst & Siim, 2008:210).

When this "synergy" is taken into consideration, it suggests that "state feminism" is most successful and flourishes when there is a general dispersion of feminist thinking amongst women in the state (and in civil society), exerting feminist pressure from "above", and where there are grassroots and local-level inputs in decision making, exerting feminist pressure from "below" (Gouws, 2010b:3). Women often rely on these institutions to promote their interests in terms of policy making, and in turn enhance their citizenship (Gouws, 2005:74). Optimally, the relationship would be characterised by continuous engagement and uninterrupted channels of communication and exchange, with the aim of influencing policy making through a culmination of civil society and state interests. These interests, in turn, are mobilised by and aimed at the prioritisation placed on women's issues in the national agenda, leadership, representation and decision making (Beckwith, 2000; Molyneux, 1998), and are long term and transformatory in nature. On the other hand, Watson (1999) argues that, by their nature, state bureaucracies and institutions are not designed or permeable to accommodate the transformative thinking that underpins feminism. Even so, Watson suggests that the state bureaucracy still remains an important site for feminist intervention (rather than feminist transformation) in order to strategically utilise the resources owned by the state to alter the quality of women's lives to a more positive extent, rather than a negative one.

In contemporary times, discussions on state feminism, or more specifically the acquisition thereof, have included mechanisms to boost women's representation in government, such as quotas, the formation and drafting of policy, and oversight mechanisms aimed at overseeing implementation and government accountability with regard to its dedication to gender equality (Gouws, 2010b:3). The institutionalisation of gender equality is first and foremost dependent on the political context in which the respective gender machinery finds itself, and also the nature of the gender machinery.

In this regard, Stetson and Mazur (1995) suggest two important criteria that are necessary in order for gender machineries to be successful in implementing gender equality. These are,

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firstly, state capacity– the ability of women's machinery to actually influence the passing of feminist policy; and *secondly*, state-society relations – this refers to the ability of gender machineries to act as a facilitative channel of access to social actors in order to influence the policy process (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:14) (This framework will be elaborated on later in this research, as it forms the theoretical framework that will be employed.) Consequently, gender machineries that are the most successful in their attempts at state feminism and gender equality are those that have high influence and high access rates (Gouws, 2010b:3). Women have often depended on state feminism in order to enhance their citizenship and, as a result, citizenship has been focused mainly on state action and the discursive spaces created for the representation of women's issues through the institutionalisation of state feminism (Gouws, 2005:76).

"State feminism" has been seen as attainable in recent times through the hegemonic discourse around a tool called "gender mainstreaming" that has entered the national and local political discourse through international conferences based on third world development (Gouws, 2005: 77). "Gender mainstreaming" can be seen as a discursive framework through which women's interests are articulated and integrated into all legislation and policy in order to create more "gender sensitive" and "woman friendly" policies and state arenas (Gouws, 2010b:3). Some scholars, such as Shirin Rai (2006) and Jahan (1996), consider "gender mainstreaming" as largely positive, and as a mechanism that possesses transformatory potential with regard to gender equality. Rai (2006:26) argues that the output of political participation of women's groups in different contexts and forums can be measured by the extent to which (or whether or not) gender mainstreaming has taken place in the respective institutional and policy structures. In Rai's conception of "gender mainstreaming", she defines the term as follows:

> a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (Rai, 2006: 26).

In an assessment of gender mainstreaming in agendas, and largely in line with Rai's positive conception of gender mainstreaming, Jahan argues for the transformative capacity and potential of gender mainstreaming, and that this approach could lead to the fundamental change of the mainstream itself, as opposed to just being incorporated and added (Jahan, 1996: 829). Good intensions aside, many feminist scholars have argued that "gender mainstreaming" has indeed led to the "depoliticization", "denaturalization" and "dilution"

(Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2009:1) of the feminist project, because buying into the gender mainstreaming project has resulted in a situation (particularly in African countries) where the necessary resources are not available in order to make gender interests the mainstream/dominant discourse. As a result of "gender" being taken up by government in an "unquestioning" way, "gender" becomes seen in political discourse as removed from women's agency (in that it treats women as recipients of state action, as opposed to individuals or groupings of individuals who choose to act in order to shape their own interests), and as a "problem" needing administrative intervention (Gouws, 2005:78).

Consequently, the ultimate goal of gender equality is characterised by a technocratic approach, resulting in what Kantola and Outshoorn (2007:11) refer to as "piecemeal equality policies" and a "checklist" approach to gender interests. In other words, as argued by Cornwall *et al*. (2009:4), an attempt is made to solve political problems by technical solutions that are characterised by an ahistorical, apolitical and decontextualised approach. In the light of this, the experience of women and the resultant activism that stems from this experience is repressed; and so are the differences between women, leading to an essentialist use of the category "women" (Gouws, 2005:78-79). The result of this approach has been that these institutional policies' links to feminism and the feminist project have grown distant, and eventually out of reach.

Scholars have argued that this "depoliticisation" has been characterised by policy inputs undertaken in institutions, by people who do not have adequate training and expertise to contribute to making and implementing feminist policy (Gouws, 2011:17). Watson (1999:32) argues that, as a result of gender not being regarded as a valid analytic category, advisors in this sphere do not possess the necessary skills and formal training to formulate policy that actually brings about transformation. Watson lays heavy emphasis on the fact that policy planners in general, in the acquisition of gender equality, do not possess the technical training in the methodological skills set needed for making the effects of gender planning more equitable. Often it is also assumed that women in policy planning positions will automatically be able to successfully engage with what is needed for gender planning, on the basis of their "womanhood". However, as mentioned previously, this is not always the case. For the most, policy planning has been characterised by a "gender sensitive" and "gender neutral" approach. Moser (in Watson,1999:34) distinguishes between two kinds of approaches to policy planning, namely "gender planning" and "gender-aware planning". "Gender planning" is described by Moser to be a particular set of methodologies and a skills set, constituting an

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academic discipline in its own right; while "gender-aware planning" is characterised by planners being aware of gender issues in the planning process, but not however utilising the necessary informed (and up-skilled) gender planning tools and processes.

It therefore is only natural that a lack of this kind of feminist academic contribution could catapult gender inequality into a failure to protect women's interests and the reiteration of power imbalances on the part of the state. Furthermore, an absence of this kind of contribution to policy making and planning is indicative of the void that exists in planning discourse with regard to gender planning as an individual planning tradition in its own right. In addition, the dominance of gender mainstreaming as a discourse can contribute to the shrinking of discursive spaces in the state that serve as opportunity structures through which women articulate their interests (Gouws, 2005:79). Kantola and Outshoorn (2007) argue that, as a result of gender equality being the responsibility of all in gender mainstreaming discourse, it has the potential to result in the dissolving of established and separate gender structures, as they are not needed anymore, as in the case of Australia. Furthermore, Watson (2011:1999) lays emphasis on the fact that the impact and influence of feminist literature on planning, as a professional and academic discipline, is a prerequisite for the formal integration of gender into public planning and processes, and ultimately into state feminism.

Mostly due to the persistence of this technocratic approach to state feminism, many feminists have questioned whether the state is actually capable of successfully targeting and alleviating gender equality. This has in particular led many feminists to see the state arena as one that is hostile to the feminist project; and they have therefore argued the cardinal importance of women's organisations autonomous from the state. Although many scholars have argued that autonomy is essential in order for women's interests to be successfully articulated, and for co-optation to be avoided, these organisations are often characterised by low budgets, and in the whole have very little influence on state policies and procedures (Gouws, 2010a:8). This research maintains that, no matter how much they are overpopulated by technocratic approaches, policies, and channels to the state, remain important channels of communication and should not be ignored. Gouws and Hassim (2012) contend that it is not useful for feminist activists to see the state as a homogenous patriarchal entity that acts in favour of, and maintains, patriarchal interests. This approach negates the gains that have been made on the African continent in the past with regard to negotiating certain institutionalised spaces in the state. Instead, the authors suggest that the state be seen as a collection of a multiplicity of spaces, with some spaces being more open and permeable to taking up women's interests

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than others (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:2). This serves as a better way of approaching the state, as a lot of scholarly work does not assess and conceptualise the state in very sophisticated terms.

2.2 Women's interests

The concept of "women's interests" has been subject to a large amount of contestation and debate and, more often than not, been a contentious one. This has been premised mainly on contestation regarding how to define women's interests, due to the intersectionalities of women's identities and the heterogeneity in identity and context and, as a result, divergent interests amongst women. Goetz (1998) posits that women's needs, like those of men, are shaped by circumstance and context, and are highly dependent on intersectionalities of identity, class, race, ethnicity and the like, and therefore the content thereof has been contested by scholars. In addition, she argues that, as a result of *most* women being constrained by their life choices as a result of the public-private divide and the sexual division of labour, gender affects the way that social cleavages and hardships are experienced, despite their circumstance. Specific women's interests emanate from these dynamics (Goetz, 1998:242). Largely in line with what was put forward by Goetz, Lovenduski and Karam (2005) conceptualise "women's issues" to be those issues that mainly effect women for biological reasons or social reasons. However, the authors distinguish between "women's issues" and "women's perspectives". "Women's perspectives" refer more to women's political concerns, emanating to a large extent from political experience; therefore, although men and women might share similar political concerns, women's perspectives are different to those of men on the basis of their different engagement and relationship with the state (Lovenduski & Karam, 2005: 6).

Molyneux (1985), however, takes this argument a step further. Molyneux does not negate the fact that there are certain interests women do have in common, which she rather calls "gender interests" in order to differentiate them from the fabricated homogeneity supposed by the concept of "women's interests" (Molyneux, 1985:232). In making this distinction, Molyneux wishes to pay attention to the complexity of "women's interests" that are at stake, in order to encourage a more useful way of thinking about women's interests. Moreover, the distinction is a heuristic device, and is not extensive; rather, the aim is to problematise the simplistic way in which feminist scholars have formulated the concept of "women's interests" (Molyneux,

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1998:231). In the pursuit of the difficult task of embarking upon an academic analysis of "women's interests", due to the differences between women, Molyneux offers a conceptual distinction between what she calls "strategic gender interests" and "practical gender needs" (Molyneux, 1985:232). Although Molyneux does acknowledge that these conceptualisations of women's interests may be difficult to pin down, the value of this conceptualisation lies in the recognition of differences in women's interests within women's movements.

"Strategic gender interests" are generated through the deduction made by women, on the basis of their social positioning and subordination, and the desire for an alternative to the status quo that represents a more beneficial and accommodating set of arrangements. In this sense, "strategic gender interests" refer almost to what one can call a "feminist consciousness", through which strategic objectives are formulated that are aimed at the overthrow of power and of structural inequalities based on gender (Molyneux, 1985:233). These kinds of interests usually take a "transformatory" form, based on the long-term transformation of gender inequality, the re-positioning of women and the elimination of gender inequality, in order to make the state permeable to gender interests and women's rights.

"Practical gender needs", on the other hand, are explained by Molyneux as arising from women's everyday struggles and conditions based on the gender division of labour. These kinds of interests are usually material, as they are the recognition of immediate perceived needs, and do not entail deductions from and realisations of abstract concepts. In this light, practical gender interests do not challenge or aim to transform gender subordination and inequality, although these interests arise directly from prevailing structures of inequality. "Practical gender needs" usually are the basis on which women's collective participation in social action is mobilised. As a result of the social positioning of women in the gender division of labour, women are primarily in contact with those immediate needs arising from the welfare of the household, and therefore have a particular interest in state provision of domestic and public welfare (Molyneux, 1985:233). This taken into account, if these basic needs and provisions are not met by the state, it poses a threat to the livelihoods of families and children. It can thus be argued that "practical gender needs" are formed on the basis of the maternal social roles of women, and are very dependent on class, as it is usually poor women who are so readily mobilised for the provision of basic economic needs.

In a similar way, drawing on the distinctions made by Molyneux between strategic gender interests and practical gender needs, Hassim (2004) distinguishes between "inclusionary" and "transformatory" approaches to defining women's interests. As in the differentiation supplied by Molyneux, Hassim argues that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive; rather, they should be seen as part of a continuum representing women's struggle for full citizenship, which may take a linear historical form as a result of contextual conditions (Hassim, 2004:3). "Inclusionary" approaches to women's interests represents a more limited approach to investigating women's interests, as the focus is primarily on the relationship between women and formal political institutions. Within this approach, women share a stable common interest pertaining to their exclusion and marginalisation from the political arena (Hassim, 2004:3). Emphasis is placed more on women's access to political power, as opposed to debating the outcomes of women's engagements with the state, and challenging exclusion and the desire to eliminate structural inequality. Women are mobilised on the basis of them being women. In this light, "inclusionary" interests are most likely to be exercised by "feminine" movements, as a "feminine" consciousness develops from the day-to-day material struggles faced by women, emanating from the lack of provision by the state and driving women to partake in political action (Hassim, 2004:4).

"Transformatory" approaches to women's interests are aimed more at the goal of achieving structural transformation in terms of reversing and eliminating structural inequalities, and is more likely to be conducted in alliance with other social movements that possess a "feminist consciousness" (Hassim, 2004:3). Although both "feminine" and "feminist" movements are mobilised on the basis of the traditional roles prescribed for women, "feminist" movements seek to challenge these roles in order to search for an alternative set of arrangements that reflect an equal society, in which there does not exist a hierarchy of power based on gender (Hassim, 2004:4).

However, these distinctions are not rigid, and are indeed permeable to change. "Transformatory" and "inclusionary" approaches to women's interests can co-exist in a movement or social organisation. Also, women who are organised around "inclusionary" approaches to women's interests, or rather "practical gender needs", can develop a "feminist consciousness" through their membership of such organisations. Pertaining to this "shift" in consciousness, Molyneux (1998) argues that it is the ultimate goal of feminism to partake in ideological interventions that shift "feminine" consciousness to "feminist" consciousness. Movements and organisations do not merely "activate" and nourish pre-existing feminist

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consciousness in order to mobilise women; this consciousness is often developed through being members of social groupings (Hassim, 2004:4). In addition, the unity of a movement, which forms the basis of its success to mobilise, is not given; rather, it is constructed (Molyneux, 1985:234).

Adding to the argued complexity of women's interests by feminist scholars, Nancy Fraser (1987) uses the example of the social welfare system in the US to demonstrate how women's interests are defined and come about as a result of institutionalised patterns of political interpretation (Fraser, 1987:105). In undertaking research on the politically contested terrain of "women's interests", scholars like Molyneux and Fraser make a cardinal contribution through arguing that "women's interests" be examined with a broader, more discourse-orientated focus (Fraser, 1987:105). Fraser argues that welfare programmes (institutionalised state action) are seen to interpret women's identities and, as a result, women's needs in accordance with constructs based on norms and assumptions that are largely derived from traditional (conservative) interpretations of the sexual division of labour, and the separation of the public and private sphere. These norms and assumptions have been proven to form a "dualistic gender subtext" underpinning the system ,and in the case of the US, have determined the overall structure of the social welfare system (Fraser, 1987:109). Stetson and Mazur (1995) argue that welfare systems, like that of the US and Scandinavian and European countries, consist of a "two-tier" system, separated into what Fraser (1987) calls the "masculine" subsystem, in which participants are recognised to be *rights-bearing beneficiaries* of the system, and a "feminine" subsystem, in which participants are positioned to be *dependent clients/clientele* (Fraser, 1987:113; Stetson & Mazur, 1995:7). In this regard, women have been seen to become clients of state welfare action, as opposed to having gained full citizenship. Although, under systems such as these, women have been seen to have gained emancipation from patriarchal family structures in the private sphere, the welfare state and policies have strengthened the subordination of women in the public sphere by institutionalising their roles as part of traditional "maternal" discourse (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:8). These "constructions" of needs are often seen as unproblematic, and go uncontested, as a result of the extent to which they are deeply entrenched in societal culture. One can argue that, in this regard, women who are part of this system are not wholly aware of what their needs are, and definitely are not in a position to articulate and realise their needs. Specifically, critics of the welfare state and welfare policies have criticised contemporary post-industrial democracies, which, after reaching a certain level of wealth, have excluded

major parts of society, in particular women, from successfully claiming economic resources and political rights (McBride & Mazur, 2010:11).

2.3 Agenda setting

Flammang (1997) describes agenda setting as the process by which government priorities are set with regard to challenges and problems that merit serious attention, and whereby prioritisation is given by the government to particular issues (Flammang, 1997:253). “Agenda setting” that prioritises feminist interests is most optimally achieved when there is a symbiotic relationship between “insiders” (this refers to women inside state structures who form part of decision making) and “outsiders”, which include social organisations, civil society, the media, and interests groups (Flammang, 1997:253). Because the “agenda setting” process requiring the engagement of “insiders” and “outsiders” to work optimally in the favour of gender equality, Gouws and Hassim (2012) propose that multi-pronged strategies have to be followed in order to advance feminist agendas (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:7). That may be in the form of initiatives to increase representation, through institutionalised influence advanced through the NGM itself with regard to the agenda, internal strategising by women’s sections of parties, horizontal cooperation between women’s social movements, vertical cooperation between women in state structures and the women’s movement, cross-party coalitions between women in different political parties, women’s caucuses in government, and public debates pertaining to legislation (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:7). Similarly, scholars like Chappell (2002:85) have also argued the need for women’s activists to expand their strategic repertoire to one that embodies a multi-pronged and multi-level approach in order for the objectives of political action to be reached more successfully.

Flammang (1997:254) differentiates between two kinds of agendas: a systemic agenda and a legislative agenda. The “systemic agenda” refers to issues and problems that are of legitimate concern to governments, and constitute a more “pressing” concern, therefore requiring enhanced attention. This kind of agenda is characterised by the official stance of the government, and issues that are “naturalised” on the basis of the priorities and convictions of the government. The “systemic agenda” therefore reflects issues that are prioritised due to the nature and context of a specific government and are embedded in political discourse and policy decisions (Kantola & Outshoorn, 2007:12). Thus, the way in which actors frame, name

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and conceptualise their interests, or the extent to which they can change existing discourse, is linked directly to whether this interest will be turned into policy or not.

The "legislative agenda", which is known to be the "institutional agenda of the state" (Flammang, 2007:253), refers to issues that are present for serious discussion and consideration by decision makers. Kenney explains that the "legislative agenda", also termed the "wider public agenda" (Kenney, 2003:184), as constituting problems that are recognised and formulated into issues that are up for discussion and consideration at any one time by lawmakers. These issues are those that are advanced by various constituencies and lobby groups that the government has to satisfy.

It is evident that the potential ability offered by "agenda setting" for women to place their interests at the epicentre of government prioritisation has a transformatory affect not only on policy making, but also on the level of citizenship of women. Recognising the potential transformatory effect of agenda setting, Jahan (1995) contrasts "agenda setting" and "integrationist" approaches to gender equality. She refers to "agenda setting" as a process of transformation and change of existing policy paradigms and discourses, the altering of previous decision-making processes, and the renegotiation and rethinking of the "mainstream" in order to prioritise gender equality. "Integrationist" approaches merely include and acknowledge gender considerations in the "mainstream" (which has generally been in the form of gender mainstreaming), without challenging or questioning the existing policy paradigm and discourse.

However, as mentioned earlier, this "opportunity" to place feminist interests on the agenda successfully is only created in the event that women in state structures, who have a "feminist consciousness", are geared towards articulating the interests advanced by the women's movement in the agenda, and the eventual collapse of gender inequality within the state (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:7). Optimally, an agenda aimed at gender equality should include grievances articulated by civil society and women at grassroots level through stronger cultivation of "vertical linkages" in the form of consultations and debates. Gouws and Hassim (2012) propose that the ideal situation would be for these linkages to be used to provide opportunities for women's empowerment in communities, in addition to targeted service delivery. In this way, the new "equality agenda" will reflect a culmination and intertwining of interests articulated by the women's movement, civil society, women inside the state, and the state, that will have a transformatory effect not only on policy and decision making, but also

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on how the legal system operates and on the status of service delivery (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:8).

With the knowledge that institutions, and therefore institutional procedures such as "agenda setting" and policy making, are characterised by deeply masculinised organisation cultures that are hostile to the interests of women, Watson (2011) argues that the small extent to which feminist research is integrated as a professional and academic discipline, procedures and agendas will merely reflect "band aid" policies and considerations. Feminist research influence will thus inspire ideas aimed at examining how processes should be structured (and corrective policies) with regard to contributing to the agenda, and consequently the formation of policy. Watson (2011:33) argues that it ultimately is naïve to assume that policy makers can contribute to the reversal of gender inequality in an unstructured manner or route.

2.4 Civil society

For the purposes of this research, Hassim's (2005b:14) framework of civil society with regard to the women's movement in post-1994 South Africa will be employed. Hassim argues that post-1994 saw the splintering and fragmentation of the South African women's movement in civil society. The moving of the top layer of visionary leaders in the movement into state structures led to slowed momentum in women's mobilisation and the initial disaggregation of the women's movement into a variety of what Hassim (2005b:14) calls "arenas". The women's movement was therefore characterised by three distinct arenas, namely the national policy advocacy arena, the national and regional networks and coalitions arena, and the local level community-based organising arena (Hassim, 2005b:15). According to Hassim, her conceptualisation of the "women's movement" has the nature of a broad "umbrella movement", including many divergent women's organisations. Two types of political activism fall outside her framework. These include the highly noticeable participation of women in political parties post-1994, and women's participation as members of social movements.

Hassim argues that there has been a prominent strengthening of NGOs to act as advocacy agents with regard to aiding state policy processes. The strength that NGOs possess is based on their expertise in obtaining funding, and their ability to intervene in legal, policy and public debates as a result of spaces they have created for themselves within state structures,

relative to that of any other social movements in civil society. With the primary role of NGOs being to ensure the accountability of government in the implementation and expansion of the rights-based framework set out in the South African constitution, NGOs perform a highly political role (Hassim, 2005b:15). At this level, NGOs possess great influence and clout, as they have the ability to make effective linkages with other social movements (downward, horizontal linkages), and are also in close proximity to state actors and the donor community (upward, vertical linkages). It is for this reason that NGOs are not only seen to perform a representative role in society, but rather a strategic role, as they prove to be a crucial lever, particularly when it comes to mobilisation from below to influence policy formulation.

The next level Hassim identifies is national and regional networks and coalitions. These are issue-based networks, binding together many smaller social organisations, which coalesce around common issues of interest. These networks are also capable of playing an advocacy role; however, their constituencies are more identifiable than those of NGOs. What is noteworthy about these networks is that they draw attention to and advance issues that are usually considered as “feminist” and outside the conventional domain of political action, such as issues surrounding women’s reproductive health and bodily autonomy (Hassim, 2005b:18). In this way, they mobilise issues that states have been reluctant to get involved in into the national domain. Hassim argues that, although these networks possess this noteworthy ability, they are also the hardest kind of social organisation to keep alive because they consist of many members. These networks are most affective when they speak with one voice, although the multiplicity of members has often led to a competition for scarce resources, constantly having to renegotiate coalition terms, and the desire to be seen as representative with regard to certain issues (Hassim, 2005b:18).

The last level in Hassim’s framework is that of the local, community-level organisations, more commonly referred to as community-based organisations (CBOs). Although local-level organisations are the least visible, they are the most numerous kind of organisation in civil society. At this level, community-based organisations are the most far removed from national networks or any other politically cohesive projects (Hassim, 2005b:19). Not only have CBOs been detached from engaging with the state, they have also not created effective linkages to other actors that engage with the state, like NGOs. Local-level community organisations are usually aimed at addressing the practical needs of women, based on their experience of the day-to-day struggles with scarce resources, the gender division of labour, and the maternal social roles lived by women. For example, women have acted as the caregivers for those

suffering from HIV/AIDS, and have to a large extent acted as the "shock absorbers" when it comes to unemployment and negligent state provision of adequate health care and service delivery.

Hassim argues that, although this level of community organisation has fallen within the traditional maternalist tradition, it should not be assessed as being devoid of agency. Women have discovered an alternative form of agency at this level, challenging negligent state action by, for example, carrying out "citizen's arrests", undertaking mini-protests and organising petitions with regard to dissatisfaction with a lack of service delivery. This standpoint of Hassim is similar to sentiments expressed by Harding (1987), since she emphasises that "victimologies" pose extreme limitations to scholarly work, as they give a false portrayal that women have just been victims of their circumstance, that they have not successfully fought back, and that they do not possess the ability to be social agents on behalf of themselves or their families (Harding, 1987:5). Even with the existence of an alternative form of agency, these kinds of organisations have not possessed the ability to directly address decision makers about their grievances as a result of scarce resources, and the lack of expertise and close relationships with national and civil society organisations. Furthermore, these kinds of organisations are usually organised around the acquisition of practical needs, and do not question inequality or have a desire for structural transformation (Hassim, 2005b:20). Although movements at this level, and the work they do, may seem "insignificant" or "unspectacular", the mobilisation around practical needs could lead to a feminist consciousness and the desire to transform the state and its processes, in order to make them permeable to women's interests.

In her research on civil society, particularly with regard to civic participation, Andrea Cornwall (2004) characterises participative institutions through her metaphoric concept of "space". This term is used mainly to examine various dynamics, as a particular space can be filled, emptied, permeable, inviting devoid of meaning or even depopulated. The concept of "space" is also used to refer to two distinct arenas of civic participation. The first arena refers to what Cornwall calls "invited spaces", which refers to those institutions that have originated as a result of government provision, whether in response to popular and donor pressures, or that signify a shift in policy (Cornwall, 2004:2). The second arena refers to "popular spaces", which explains a distinct arena in which people come together and mobilise on their own initiative, whether in protest against government policies, interventions and pressures of foreign donors, or in the name of solidarity in terms of interests being met. These types of

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spaces may also evolve to be institutionalised and regularised, but have the tendency, however, to wax and wane as a result of the fickle nature of public interest. These spaces are mutable and subject to change, as popular spaces may become institutionalised, with statutory backing, and invited spaces can become arenas for the expression of popular public dissent, collaboration and compromise (Cornwall, 2004:2).

When considering “invited spaces”, even though these spaces may seem to have more potential with regard to changing inequality, this “potential” is highly dependent on particular factors and actors, mainly on the basis of the contextual origin of these spaces, and the political, cultural and social cultures that exist in a particular country. However, one also needs to consider that, in most cases, “invited spaces”, their impact and shape, are determined and framed by technocrats, whose interventions place limits on the effects that these institutions may have (Cornwall, 2004:7). As long as participation is defined in narrow terms, levels of engagement through various civic arenas will be dire. Furthermore, these “controlled spaces” are characterised by a very limited, short-term and instrumental view of participation. “Conquered spaces”, on the other hand, refer to those spaces that come into existence as a result of successful demand mobilisation of participants and are seen as more durable and permeable to bring about transformative change (Cornwall, 2004:2).

2.5 Linkages between the women’s movement and the NGM

With regard to feminist and women’s movements, there has in the past been a debate amongst feminist scholars about the utility of “insiders” (women within state structures and those in state institutions) working in conjunction with “outsiders” (these are autonomous women’s social movements outside state structures) to achieve state feminism. Many leading feminists have argued that a strong “insider”-“outsider” relationship and linkages are of cardinal importance to the feminist project (Flammang, 1997: 254; Gouws, 2010:3; Hassim, 2005a). Watson (1999) argues that women in civil society do not have an elaborate understanding of the bureaucracy and how systems work; therefore, it is beneficial for them to have connections with feminists inside the state, who have the expertise to better engage the policy process. However, Beckwith (2000) argues that this “ideal” does not only possess structural limitations, but also involves a problem of competing collective identity problems for women activists. This problem is what Beckwith refers to as the dilemma of “double militancy” (Beckwith, 2000:442). “Double militancy” has the potential to facilitate transformation in

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state structures with regard to gender equality, but at the same time has potential to result in conditions that are unfavourable to gender equality and women's interests.

Beckwith explains "double militancy" as the location of feminist activist women in two political locations/arenas, with a commitment to both sites of collective action. In the same vein, Beckwith uses Alvarez's phrase, "double identity", to further explain the phenomenon of activists' collective commitments to two locations of political activism. Feminist activists situated in institutions and formal organisations committed to gender equality often face a tension in commitments between helping poor women on the one hand (which does not necessarily make their organisations feminist), and their ideological commitment to a larger feminist movement, aimed at challenging the very institutions they are part of (Beckwith, 2000:443).

"Double militancy" often has tension-filled implications not only for feminist activists, but for the women's movement as a whole. Feminists who are located in "non-feminist" organisations often have to negotiate their feminism. Crises of identity and activism can emerge when activists, located within organisations that have the resources to pursue feminists goals, are faced with decisions of whether to challenge and attempt to transform the structures and institutions they are dependent on and advocates for (Beckwith, 2000:443). The relinquishing of a commitment to one of the arenas can take place, in the event that it is imposed by outside influence (e.g. the state refusing to provide sites for feminist activity), or it can be brought about by personal choice on the part of the activist in order to moderate existing tensions. Waylen (1996) argues that this contradictory women's action can be seen in terms of a "patriarchal bargain", which differs in extent, depending on the context. In the light of this, women activists strike a bargain with the (patriarchal) state in order to maximise their organisational security and life options. In other words, women may sacrifice their own beliefs in order to be guaranteed state protection and the livelihood of their respective organisations (Waylen, 1996:20).

For feminists who continue their identity tensions, the choice to embark on discursive struggles may clarify, or even resolve the dilemma of double militancy. The option of "discursive politics" opens the door to renewed framing and reconceptualisation of the meanings pertaining to women and gender, aimed at the acquisition of a more feminist worldview through the changing of feminist discourse aimed at societal change, and the change of institutions and organisations from within to support this change (Beckwith,

2000:444). The extent to which women are successful in changing political discourse will have an impact on the extent to which they successfully influence policy. This focus on the strength of state discourse is ultimately evoked in Foucauldian terms, through his claims pertaining to the fact that knowledge, and the ability to shape knowledge, equals power (Waylen, 1996:18). Largely evoking Foucault's sentiments with regard to the power of defining and changing discourse, McBride and Mazur (2010:12) utilise the phrase, "The definition of alternatives, is the supreme instrument of power". By mentioning this phrase, the authors wish to display the simple sentiment that those who define politics and the conflicts within it, hold power and ultimately control the agenda (McBride & Mazur, 2010:12).

Social movements are successful to the extent that they are able to convince policy actors to adopt a particular "gender frame" as the dominant one. If women activists are unsuccessful at changing and reconceptualising political discourse, it could lead to the establishment of state discourse that is unfavourable, hostile and threatening to the feminist project. In an argument supportive of the tension brought about by "double militancy", Nancy Fraser (1987) advances the notion that institutionalised state action, particularly in welfare programmes, has contributed to the "feminization of poverty" as opposed to the elimination of inequality, even though the benefits and support they provide to poor women may prove crucial to their sustenance. These benefits are system conforming, and further entrench, rather than challenge, structural inequalities (Fraser, 1987:104).

The issue of "double militancy" also has transformative capability. The presence of feminist activism can lead to the internal transformation of organisations that have been known as "non-feminist". In this way, it is evident that belonging to an organisation can facilitate a "feminist consciousness", and that the existence of this "consciousness", prior to belonging to an organisation, is not a "given" (Hassim, 2004:4). In this instance, the presence of a "feminist consciousness" in organisations, and women's membership of these organisations, prove to contribute to the empowering of feminism and possibly the mobilisation of organisations for feminist purposes (Beckwith, 2000:445). This suggests the possibility of the existence of many strands of ideological commitments to women's interests, and gender interests, and also suggests the ability of women's movements to shift the nature of their commitments to interests. Displaying another approach to the "split commitments" experienced by activists, Gay Seidman (2003:542) points out the "double burden" that feminist activists residing within the state have to bear. This double burden consists of the

responsibility of ensuring the representation of women's voices (and therefore interests) in policy making on the one hand, whilst simultaneously having to mobilise constituency support for the feminist cause.

"Double militancy" has the potential to introduce political participation and social activism to organisations that have previously been identified as "non-feminist". The support of feminists in organisations and institutions towards transformation may strengthen the position of feminists located within state structures, especially in relation to a support base and influence on a gender-based agenda (Beckwith, 2000:445).

The transformative capacity of "double militancy" can also be seen with regard to coalition building around certain campaigns and issues that did not have a successful impact on policy when undertaken by feminists alone. Women in government are seen to offer channels of strategic access to women's institutions that, through their ability to transform, contribute to a strengthening of a commitment to gender, which transcends political party divisions.

However, the transformative capacity of "double militancy" can only be reached if and when social organisations utilise political opportunity structures successfully. It is evident that social movements and organisations have the ability to play a significant role through acting as a channel, provided that feminist actors have access to the policy-making process. However, political opportunity is inherently gendered and can be advantageous for women's movement activism, or could prove to be harmful to the ability of social movements to influence legislation. Sawyers and Meyer (1999:201) demonstrate how strategic choices made by social movements to utilise political opportunity structures, or to forego these opportunities, have a direct impact on the extent to which social movements are able to successfully mobilise interests in the state arena.

In times of movement decline or in hostile environments, social movements go into decline (survival mode), although they continue to exist away from mass attention, which constitutes what Sawyers and Meyer term "abeyance". When a movement is successfully mobilised to take advantage of political opportunity structures that present themselves (even in situations that do not prove favourable to gender interests), this "visibility" and engagement can affect the shape of a respective policy domain, and therefore the policies that emanate from this domain. When looking at policy domains as "sites of struggle" amongst actors that push various policy interests, it is only logical that the increase in public attention, political

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mobilisation and therefore the inclusion of many "new actors", may lead to even greater policy reforms.

However, when a movement goes into decline, or rather "abeyance", it is indeed removed from mass mobilisation and is absent from policy domains. This can facilitate policy domain changes that, as a result of the absence of visible mobilisation on policy, may lead to less responsiveness on the part of the wider public and policymakers. Consequently, this may lead to the formation of policies that are not as favourable to the feminist cause, or, may even threaten it (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999:188). Movement fragmentation or decline may take various forms, such as marginalisation, co-optation and de-politicisation. It therefore is important to acknowledge the extent to which movement decline is a result of an interactive process between activists making choices with regard to political opportunity changes in the state arena (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999:193).

Although movement continuity is achieved, this disengagement with the policy process can lead to political cost, loss of mobilisation momentum in the future, and therefore the "missing" of political opportunities. "Missed opportunities" therefore lead to setbacks in policy, and can also interrupt successful mobilisation in the future (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999:202). In the light of this, although social organisations potentially have the strategic ability to mobilise behind issues in order to influence agenda setting, movement "abeyance" could most likely lead to a missed opportunity to impact the agenda. There is, therefore, a direct and deep correlation between strategic choices exercised by activists, government decisions on public policy, and policy that then becomes legislation (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999:187).

2.6 Conclusion

The literature review embarked on above sheds light on academic work already undertaken, in order to embed this study in feminist literature and concepts. The concepts that this study has recognised as relevant for the research that are reported on in the next chapters include: state feminism, women's interests, agenda setting, civil society, and linkages between the women's movement and the National Gender Machinery (NGM). There are divergent opinions and theoretical approaches of scholars with regard to these concepts.

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CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Framework by Stetson and Mazur (2005)

The theoretical framework employed for the purposes of this study will be that of Stetson and Mazur (1995:14), which measures whether national policy machineries contribute to and enhance gender equality. The aim of using this framework in particular is to investigate to what extent the South African women's policy machinery is feminist, and to what degree the machinery influences feminist policies (these are policies that are permeable to the interests of women, which are drafted by taking into consideration women's voices and the articulation of interests emanating from grassroots level) and provides women's groups access to influencing feminist policy and implementation. Through the use of this framework, this research will seek to investigate the extent of state feminism in South Africa.

The central question driving the Stetson and Mazur framework (and study) is whether there is a linkage between women as civil society actors and the state, premised on the extent to which civil society actors are able to engage with the state and exercise policy influence. The framework investigates whether, how and why institutionalised women's agencies have been effective partners for women's movements outside the state in facilitating access to policy-making arenas, and also in influencing the outcome of such policy (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:14; Stetson & McBride, 2010:1).

Facilitating women's access to the state is largely about the issue of representation; therefore, the authors argue that the framework ultimately represents the process of making democracies more democratic. The central assumption of this framework is therefore that if policy actors define gendered issues in a way that coincides with the goals of the women's movement, it will lead to the facilitation of women activists and their ideas to influence policy in the policy arena (McBride & Mazur, 2010:5). In order for this question to be investigated successfully, it requires that categories get set to measure agency, activity and action in order to determine whether or not the national policy machinery is feminist, and to what extent the women's movement has established linkages with the National Policy Machinery (NGM). The authors draw on comparative literature from various countries to

study categories of state action. These angles of studying state action were then adapted to studying women's policy machineries and are comprised of two areas of inquiry, namely:

- *State capacity*: This investigates and considers to what extent institutionalised women's policy machinery influences the drafting of policy that is of a feminist and gender friendly nature.

- *State-society relations*: This refers to the extent to which national policy machineries provide opportunities for organised women's society-based groups and organisations to have access to the policy-making and implementation process (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:14).

In order to distinguish whether state capacity and state-society relations do exist, the authors consider variables (independent variables) and the influence they have on these two areas of inquiry by measuring agency and action in these two categories. The influencing variables on state capacity and state-society relations that may be proved or disproved through research consist of the following:

Firstly, the pattern and context of politics surrounding the establishment of women's policy networks is considered. This is premised on observations suggesting that the status of state feminism (and therefore the achievement of feminist goals) in a given country is highly dependent on the circumstances and context regarding the formation of the respective policy machinery (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:16). For this variable, it is considered whether the national policy machinery came about through initiative on the part of the government in order to gain the loyalty and support of women voters, through party platforms pursued by women in party organisations, or through activism on the part of feminist activists and the like (Gouws, 2005:145).

Secondly, Stetson and Mazur consider how differences in organisational and agency forms can potentially contribute to the furthering of feminist goals. This encompasses investigating whether the existence of, for example, an independent body, government bureau, national ministries, or a collection of bodies, is successful in increasing the likelihood that national policy machineries achieve feminist goals (Gouws, 2005:146).

Thirdly, the authors consider the extent to which the contextual conception of the state increases the likelihood to encourage social change, and therefore the furthering of feminist policy goals. With regard to this variable, cultural conceptions and attitudes towards agencies as presenting the main vehicles for social change are seen to contribute to a higher capacity

on the part of the state towards solving social problems (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:17). Cultural definitions of state agencies and the state influence the degree to which women's policy machineries would draw on resources emanating from the state to further feminist goals.

The fourth and final variable proposed by Stetson and Mazur in order to measure state capacity and state-society relations constitutes the extent to which the particular form and mode of women's organisations increases the likelihood of active state feminism. In this regard, feminists' views of the state are considered, and whether these perceptions of the state are hostile; and whether activists view the state as a possible vehicle and ally to improve the status of women. In addition, the pattern (form) of the women's organisation is considered, and whether the women's movement is a coherent one, a set of loosely knit groups, or a combination of the two (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:18).

3.2 Criticism of the framework

Like any scholarly research undertaken, the content of this framework has been critiqued with regard to its credibility, utility and sophistication. This section will serve to identify the criticism that has been and could be mounted against the framework, and then address these criticisms by arguing the cardinal relevance that this framework possesses for researching state feminism, despite the potential and real pitfalls highlighted by critics. Accordingly, in using this framework developed by Stetson and Mazur (1995), this research wishes to give the assurance that the pitfalls that are identified will be avoided.

The biggest criticism that can possibly be levelled against the framework of Stetson and Mazur is their claim of comparative (cross-national) applicability, when in fact the framework is heavily Euro-centric. Although the framework proves to be appropriate in uncovering the dynamics of state feminism and the reasons why some countries provide a more responsive context to the flourishing of state feminism, it has been argued that the framework cannot be applied to African countries. This critique is understandable, on the basis of the case studies the authors use in order to prove their hypotheses. Their research has looked only at advanced industrial countries, including Australia, France, Denmark, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, the United States, Spain and Poland (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:13). As can be seen from the fourteen cases that were selected to make up the study, the authors' approach to a comparative analysis of state feminism was to use the "most similar" approach, for which cases were selected that have the most characteristics in common in order to maximise their similarities (that is, with the

exception of Poland). No African case studies were undertaken, and it is on these grounds that this research recognises the reluctance of some feminists to use this framework, particularly when investigating African cases, in fear of exercising the infamous European "cookie cutter" approach.

When looking at the framework from this perspective, particularly with its heavy emphasis on state capacity and state-society relations, the African context with regard to the acquisition of state feminism has been very different from that experienced by western countries. Generally, state capacity in the African context has been dire, with a poor institutional capacity and a weak bureaucracy being the order of the day. In addition, the framework puts heavy emphasis on state-society relations. Vibrant civil societies have not been the strong point of many African countries, which can be seen as a reflection of the resulting policy machineries and that more often than not have suffered underdevelopment and dysfunctionality.

This dysfunctionality experienced by many of the policy machineries existing in the African context can be directly correlated with their condition of emergence. Unlike most western countries, where policy machineries have generally emerged due to struggle and protest by an organised women's movement, most African policy machineries were conceived during periods of nation building and transition, and on these grounds have commonly had to deal with the threat of nationalism and co-optation into nationalist movements by means of an independence discourse (Gouws & Hassim, 2012: 25). In this vein, nationalist discourse, particularly during the "wave of nationalism" that spread through and engulfed the majority of African countries, has been known to displace all other discourses, including that of feminism. More often than not, policy machineries were used to integrate women into the dominant state discourse on the basis of dominant party terms. This co-optation of women into the dominant (nationalistic) state discourse was done in ways that were conducive to the goals of the dominant party, which used women's organisations as vehicles through which to control women's participation (Waylen, 1996: 11). In most African countries, nationalism utilised an implicit "instrumental agenda" that mobilised women when they were needed for regime support, the labour force, or even fighters in conflict under the distinct impression that promises for women's gains after emancipation would be realised, only to return to domestic life in the private sphere and traditional gender roles once the state of emergency was over (Kandiyoti, 1991:429).

Consequently, women's struggles were seen as less important than and defined by the larger struggle of the nation, which confined women's activities to a narrow scope, limited within the traditional maternal theory of women's needs and roles in support of the nationalist project (Hassim,2004 66). Hassim (2004) argues that nationalism has often led to what is called the "First Lady Syndrome" in many African countries, where gender structures have become the "pet project" of presidents' wives who have been known to use these structures for their own ends and initiatives (Waylen, 1996:8). Accordingly, as a result of women's participation being characterised by the traditional maternal tradition, women's groups have exercised extremely narrow mandates and, at the same time, limited agency. The participation of women under nationalist discourse has been limited to them being the "mothers of the nation", and their activities have been limited to providing support to the men at the helm of the struggle for liberation, such as taking on the role as "tea ladies" when meetings are under way. Women's groups have often been subjected to state clientelism, control and co-optation, marginalising women's ability to make credible inroads into the state. This problem in particular has led to what Gouws and Hassim (2012) refer to as the "missing link", or lack of functional relationship between civil society (women's organisation) and the state, an aspect that the framework of Stetson and Mazur relies on heavily (Gouws & Hassim, 2012:27). Women's movements in many African countries have often had to deal with the phenomenon of nationalism, which has resulted in the eroding of state-society linkages that, to a large extent, are the pre-condition for making state feminism a real and credible possibility.

It is evident that nationalism is not constructed in a gender-neutral fashion. On the contrary, as mentioned earlier, nationalism has limited the scope of women's participation and agency to the stereotypical roles and expectations of the traditional notion of "motherhood". Kandiyoti (1991:1) says that the hindrance of nationalism and cultural difference has not only infringed on women's rights as enfranchised citizens, but has clearly been articulated in a way to control women and their sexuality. In order to expand and support the argument that the control of women and their sexuality is in fact central to national and ethnic processes, Kandiyoti draws on the work of Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), who demonstrate five ways in which women have participated in ethnic identity processes on controlled terms in support of the "bigger" nationalist project. These include, firstly, women being considered as reproducers of ethnic collectivities and "mothers of the nation"; secondly, their role as reproducers of boundaries between ethnic groupings, therefore reinforcing the notion of

"ethnic purity"; thirdly, as sole guarantors of ideological reproduction of a respective ethnic grouping and transmitters of an ethnic grouping's culture, through motherly socialisation and acting as teachers; fourthly, as signifiers and teachers of inter-ethnic or national differences, used in a symbolic way in order to contribute to the ideological discourse that is used in order to reproduce and facilitate the transmission of ethnic and national culture; and fifthly, as active participants in political, national or economic military struggles (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989:7).

It is apparent that the nationalism experienced in particular African countries has acted as a strong influencing factor on how women's policy machineries would be integrated after independence, and the effectiveness thereof. The relationship between women and nationalism is therefore a very complex one. On the one hand, women are invited by national movements to participate as national actors, through their roles as mothers, teachers, workers and sometimes even fighters. However, the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine roles and conduct are clearly outlined, pressurising women to form their interests in such a way that they would fall within the terms and frame of reference set by nationalist discourse. Although the maternal basis on which women were mobilised displayed a revolutionary quality, nationalism, however, robbed and limited the exercise of women's agency. In these nationalistic terms, feminism is not at all autonomous, but bound and defined by the nationalist discourse that produces it (Kandiyoti, 1991:432).

Liberation and the transition to democracy (in general) may have opened up opportunities for women to insert their interests; however, the traditions of nationalism and social justice that exist in dominant parties have proven hard to overcome. In many cases, the traditions of ethnic mobilisation have been carried over and re-institutionalised, despite the presence of democratic mechanisms such as formal representation initiatives to kick-start women's influence in the bureaucracy, thereby leading to co-optation into the existing parameters of party systems and being robbed of effective democratic mechanisms of representation (Hassim, 2005a:59).

The aim here is not to present western approaches, emergence or progression towards state feminism as the ideal and to demonise African national women's machineries. Rather, the aim is to highlight the different "African" country-specific contexts of state feminism that this framework has not considered, particularly an approach that is conducive to the remnants of nationalist politics, African political structures, African civil society, African state-society

relations and state capacity. Furthermore, as a result of this framework and its findings being based on the case studies of fourteen "western" countries, the framework may be critiqued for making the error of reductionalism by using a small sample of cases and drawing generalisations with regard to state feminism from these cases. Authors such as Waylen (1996) argue for the need for new forms of analysis, which are able to accommodate diversity, specificity and heterogeneity (Waylen, 1996:10). Recently there has been a particular emphasis on treating research on a case-by-case basis, thereby avoiding the pitfall of "essentialism". Other scholars contend that research is ultimately useful at uncovering dynamics when it is inductive, as opposed to deductive (Martin, 1990: 183). On these grounds, the framework put forward by Stetson and Mazur may be subject to criticism of the "essentialisation" of women's identities, due to the fact that cross-country analysis often presents a problematic situation for some scholars as a result of its use of generalisations.

This then is tied to the next point of contention: the importance to recognise African women's different experience and context, and their relation with their respective states (and the nature of the states in question) and, as a result, their different interpretation (and conceptualisation) of "feminism", "state feminism", "women's agency" and "national policy machinery". The authors have actually inserted provisions to counter what they call "conceptual stretching", that is the conceptualisation of these terms as products of the particular country context, its history and culture. On these grounds, the framework may be perceived to lack flexibility and utility in its application to a variety of case studies, additionally negating the rich contribution that the consideration of context may bring to the scholarly body of state feminism.

Although criticism mounted against the framework is not unwarranted, the framework is not without merit, and proves useful and relevant in investigating the dynamics of state feminism. A systematic analysis of cross-national trends undertaken through this framework of how state structures may or may not improve the status of women, necessitates the phenomenon to be interpreted in abstract terms. Although this may open up the framework to criticism on the grounds of "essentialism", "reductionism" and generalisations, the framework serves as a conceptual tool to interrogate and investigate dynamics in state feminist discourse, and on these grounds helps facilitate theory building. In this regard, as mentioned by Gouws (2006), "theory informs practice, and practice shapes theory". This refers to the possibility that this kind of research could also open new ways of interacting and thinking with regard to the state and related activism (Gouws, 2006:2).

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Theory and practice, therefore, are not and cannot be separated. In addition, one has to take into consideration that the framework supplied by the authors was not aimed at providing definite answers to questions with regard to state feminism in comparative analysis. Rather, the authors extended an invitation to their readers to utilise the framework in whichever way they felt fit to further investigate the dynamics of state feminism. This framework therefore presents a heuristic device through which knowledge is generated, and is therefore aimed at a greater understanding of the complexity and ultimate importance of the state, and of state-society relations that create a context that is conducive to state feminism to a greater or lesser extent. The emphasis therefore should be on using methods, or in this case frameworks, that can best answer the research question in a way that is consistent with the goals of the particular study (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007:200). As mentioned previously, not only is this framework extremely relevant to the investigation of state feminism, but it is also relevant to the goals and purposes of this study, which include the investigation of the success of the "upward" articulation of interests and the extent to which NGOs aid the articulation of strategic gender interests emanating from the grassroots level to the national level. Ultimately, the aim of this research was to investigate the strength of channels of communication between women (i) on grassroots level, (ii) in NGOs and (iii) on the national level. It simultaneously also investigates the extent to which the present levels of communication, interest articulation and participation contribute to influencing policy making, agenda setting and, ultimately, state feminism. In this light, with the awareness of the pitfalls present, I will proceed to apply this framework to the South African case with the utmost care to prevent pitfalls.

Again, as alluded to previously, the South African case study will not be forced to fit into the framework in order to make the application and outcome of the research "successful". Rather, it will be used as a mechanism or device with which to investigate a crucial aspect when it comes to South African state feminism – not only the importance of the state as a facilitator of action, but also the relationship between state and civil society in the aim of state feminism. Because of the cardinal importance of state-society relations and their influence on the everyday lives of citizens (in this case women), and whether or not women are able to fully exercise their civic rights, this research is even more important. In this regard, there is no point in avoiding the use of a framework on the basis of the above criticisms, as no framework is conceptually perfect, a direct replication of the complexity of social life, and

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devoid of loopholes. Rather, it offers a systematic way of investigating and interrogating a particular area of scholarly interest.

African countries have had varying degrees of success when it comes to the creation of women's policy machinery. Most African machineries have only achieved modest goals of creating more space in the state for women to inhabit, but have not made particular gains in changing the lives of women at grassroots level. In this regard, South Africa has stood out in its successful institutionalisation of a comprehensive and integrated national policy machinery, put in place as a result of one of the most impressive women's mobilisation efforts seen yet. Given South Africa's set of institutionalised structures since 1994, and its relatively functional state in comparison to other African countries, South Africa offers a far more conducive context for this framework than its other African counterparts. In addition, when it comes to the presence of women's organisations in society, the South African context exhibits a relatively vibrant civil society in addition to the 45% representation of women in parliament, making the previously discussed notion of "double militancy" a greater possibility.

This link between civil society and the state appears to be more pronounced in the South African context, and is far more difficult to study in the context of most African countries, as this state-society "link" proves to be non-existent, or has suffered erosion, contributing to pronounced "ghettoization" or co-optation of women's movements by the state. Consequently, although this framework has been deemed not to be applicable to the African context, this research argues that South Africa be seen as an "exception to the rule". The "South African exception" with regard to using this framework is illustrated by the previous application of the framework to the South African context by Gouws (2006).

3.3 Conclusion

The framework developed by Stetson and Mazur (which is aimed at measuring state feminism through researching state capacity and state-society relations) will be applied to the South African context in the next two chapters. The framework will be utilised because of its relevance, and the fact that it serves best for researching the strength of linkages (in respect of interest articulation in the South African context) between the grassroots level, NGOs and the national government. The framework aids this research, since it provides for an investigation of the extent to which opportunities are granted for organised women to access the policy-

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making process, and whether policy machineries are able to influence policy that is gender friendly.

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CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the research undertaken employs qualitative methodology and was conducted through interviews with the use of a questionnaire set up specifically for this research study. Questions were framed in accordance to the research question and theoretical framework to encourage a structured conversation with respondents, which would yield the most relevant information needed for this research. Questions were framed in order to measure the extent to which NGOs, by way of the South African Gender Machinery, facilitate an increase in gender equality through investigating two dimensions, namely: state capacity and state society relations. This chapter serves as an insight into responses provided by NGOs to questions in the questionnaire, in order to provide the reader with a transparent appraisal of the positions, insights and experiences of NGOs which will form the basis of analysis in the following chapter. South African NGOs that were interviewed to form part of this research, as mentioned previously were the New Women's Movement (NWM), the Black Sash, the Women's Legal Centre (WLC) and the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG).

NGOs were used as the unit of analysis and point of departure for this research. This was done on the basis of the general strength, know-how, ability and resources of NGOs to mobilise around issues and to take on the role of advocacy agents and political actors – to a greater extent than other organisations in civil society. This sentiment was expressed through Hassim's framework of civil society, as discussed in Chapter 2. In order to determine clearly what *kind* of organisations were involved in the research, the respondents were asked, "What kind of organisation/movement do you represent? Does it constitute a social movement and NGO or does it form part of an issues-based network?" ILRIG, the Black Sash and the Women's Legal Centre asserted that their organisations took the form of NGOs, while the New Women's Movement strongly insisted that their organisation constituted a social movement. Looking at the work of Tarrow (1998) on social movements gives a better understanding of the phenomenon of social movements. It provides a better tool of assessment and analysis with which the self-perception of the NWM (that the organisation constitutes a social movement) can be assessed.

The work of Tarrow (1998) provides a useful approach to researching the phenomenon of "social movements". It defines social movements as "collective challenges, based on

common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow, 1998:4). This description of the phenomenon of a "social movement" requires an organisation to have various properties in order to be identified as a social movement. These properties include collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity and sustained interaction with authorities or opponents.

Social movements are usually known to mount "contentious challenges" through collective action, which is often characterised by challenging, blocking or interrupting the activity of elites and opponents, or behaviour that constitutes social codes and the preserving of the status quo. Although contemporary times may have been witness to leaders of social movements combining their engagement with contentious challenges to participation in political institutions, the main form of action and engagement by social movements has remained "contentious challenges", despite newly acquired skills of lobbying and expertise (Tarrow, 1998:5).

Secondly, social movements are made up of people who have common, overlapping interests, and who form a collective entity in order to mount common claims and frame grievances against opposition groups or the state. Thirdly, as social movements are formed on the basis of common and overlapping interests, the recognition and awareness by participants of the common interests of the group as a collective entity translate into solidarity and a collective identity, which are what mobilisation is premised on. Lastly, a large part of recognising a social movement is based on consistent and sustained collective action against opposition groups or elites, as only through sustaining collective action in "contentious politics" do groups become actual social movements (Tarrow, 1998:6).

The properties of social movements mentioned above, namely collective challenge, common purposes and collective identity, help organised groups to engage in "contentious politics". However, unless the respective collective entities can keep their interaction of challenge intact with targeted groups and individuals, they either dissolve, become a "resistance"-based grouping, or they retreat into isolation (Tarrow, 1998:7).

Similarly, although the New Women's Movement has perceived itself to be a social movement, in reality this has not proven to be the case. The NWM, as a collective entity, has been characterised by collective challenge, common purpose and solidarity through a collective and shared identity. However, sustained engagement to challenge the state or state opposition groups on a consistent basis has not constituted the action of the New Women's

Movement. Instead, the NWM has in many respects retreated into isolation, which has for the most part been on the basis of choice, hostility and disillusionment with the state, a sentiment that was expressed during the course of the interviews. The choice of this collective entity, with regard to keeping its distance from the state, led to the NWM having to forego many "state sponsored" political opportunities. Because of its lack of consistent engagement and challenge, the NWM, in terms of the research by Sydney Tarrow, does not constitute a social movement, but rather a non-governmental organisation (NGO). As articulated by Della Porta and Diani (2006:5): "[W]hile recognising the importance of organisations operating within movements, we should not make the mistake of identifying the latter with the former". The NWM may have acted in concert with other NGOs and organisations in order to mobilise behind issues, and may arguably have formed "temporary formations" as a social movement, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Therefore, as set out in Chapter 1, this research has been premised on the role of four South African NGOs in articulating interests emanating from the grassroots level, and the extent to which their role has helped facilitate state feminism in South Africa.

Furthermore, due to the focus of this research on the extent to which *grassroots women's interests* are articulated through NGOs to inform policy making on the national level, there had to be certainty about to whom these NGOs provide services or membership and whether they fit the criterion of representing grassroots women and their interests. Therefore, the NGOs were asked to whom their organisation provides services, whether they operate on a membership basis and, if so, how members are recruited. While conducting the interviews, it became clear that all four NGOs were involved in providing services to, or working with, people (ILRIG and Black Sash worked with both men and women) on the grassroots level, particularly those who are poor and form part of marginalised communities. Only one of the NGOs, the New Women's Movement, asserted that they were a membership-based organisation, and that women paid a membership fee of R10 per year. The members were recruited by the various community branches of the Movement to form part of the larger provincial organisation.

Some of the NGOs were either in direct contact with individuals on the grassroots level or with smaller community-based organisations (CBOs) that represent and consist of grassroots women; other NGOs had contact with both individuals and groups. The NGOs were asked whether they had direct contact with women on the grassroots level, or whether any other organisations like CBOs formed a communicative linkage between women on the grassroots

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level and the NGOs. The New Women's Movement indicated that direct contact was maintained with women on the grassroots level through various branches of the organisation acting as intermediary linkages. ILRIG, the Black Sash and the Women's Legal Centre maintained a mixture of direct contact with individuals and contact through community-based organisations, based on which activity or function was undertaken. With regard to rights education, legal advice, workshops and one-on-one consultancy, contact was directly with the grassroots level; however, with regard to advocacy and consultation, contact is through community-based and smaller organisations.

In order to ascertain what informs the mandate and actions of the NGO, the respondents were asked about the aims, objectives and mission/vision of their respective NGO; and whether or not the organisation embraces feminism as a guiding principle in its goals or values. The responses of all the NGOs indicated a commitment to empowering grassroots women, mostly in marginalised communities. These women are generally disempowered as a result of historical gender patterns or spin-offs of various patriarchal power manifestations that shaped relationships between men and women. The empowerment could be through education, campaigning or the acquisition of skills in order to affect their quality of life. The mission/vision of the NWM, the Black Sash, ILRIG and the Women's Legal Centre reflected a basis of dedication to the rights outlined in the constitution. In other words, they ensure that grassroots women receive justice with regard to having access to social, economic and political rights. ILRIG concerns itself more with the alternatives to globalisation, with a distinct focus on the effects of neoliberalism and globalisation on women, and therefore runs the Building Women's Leadership Programme. Black Sash has been dedicated to "making human rights real", as expressed in their policy statement, and the NWM has taken up seeking social and economic justice for women from marginalised communities. The Women's Legal Centre expressed a dedication to a South Africa where women could live happy and empowered lives in a safe and equal environment as a result of having access to all the rights they are entitled to as outlined in the Constitution. Although the NGOs had different impressions and perceptions of feminism (as became evident from the interviews), the NWM and Black Sash, which are concerned with the equality of men and women on the basis of rights, communicated that their organisations unofficially endorsed feminism, whereas ILRIG and the New Women's Movement acknowledged officially endorsing feminism as a guiding principle in their goals and values.

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Because only four NGOs were involved in this research, it should be specified that it is not possible to generalise from this research, nor is it extensive with regard to interviewing a broad range of NGOs that deal with grassroots women's interests and form part of South African civil society. Although the results of this research may not be a representation of broad, general trends, the investigation of the way in which the state and society interact with regard to gender interests and the level of willingness on the part of the state to take a proactive role in building a more gender-friendly state, highlight important dynamics of the basis of interaction. In addition, investigating these dynamics proves important not only for investigating the extent to which the South African NGM does or does not embrace state feminism, but also serves the purpose of informing practical solutions.

4.1. Investigating state capacity and state-society linkages in the South African state

4.1.1 *"Patterns of politics" surrounding the establishment of the South African National Gender Machinery (NGM)*

As highlighted in the introductory chapter of this research, the establishment of the NGM in South Africa had been precipitated by a broad women's movement, called the National Women's Coalition (WNC), which was established in 1992 and acted as a broad umbrella movement that transcended ideology and class, including society actors, academics and feminist activists. The effectiveness of the level of mobilisation possessed by the WNC was clearly seen by the movement creating space for themselves in the transition talks in order to inform the "new South African state", and its Constitution of gender interests. Not only did the WNC's presence during the transition period contribute to women taking the role of political actors, but this presence and sheer mobilisation strength ultimately culminated in the establishment of an elaborate, decentralised gender machinery. The legacy of the strong women's movement post-1994 was mentioned by all four NGOs that were interviewed in the research process.

The NGOs were asked about the current state of the South African Women's movement, framed in the question: *"In your opinion, do you think that there is a women's movement currently present in South Africa? If so, do you consider yourself part of this women's movement?"* Three of the four NGOs interviewed perceived there to be a women's movement currently present in South Africa, and all three of these NGOs considered

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themselves to be part of this women's movement. One of the NGOs interviewed (WLC) did not perceive there to be a women's movement currently present in South Africa, but did share the same disappointment of the other NGOs at the fact that the present women's movement is largely and unhealthily fragmented. The overall sentiment, which was shared by the NGOs, was one that was very hopeful for a future broad, overarching women's movement, similar to the one seen just before the transition period. With regard to the overall sentiment expressed by the NGOs in reference to the large-scale fragmentation faced by the women's movement, one NGO (NWM) expanded on this matter, maintaining that, although fragmented, the South African women's movement has always existed, characterised by different organisational forms and focused on different issues, e.g. violence, reproductive rights or policy.

This description of an "unhealthily fragmented women's movement", as expressed by the NGOs during the fieldwork, can be regarded as accurate, particularly when considering the current pattern of South African politics when it comes to issues concerning gender. The power of traditional leaders currently is strong, even though the Traditional Courts Bill was not passed in 2008. However, the revised Bill had made its way to being considered at the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in 2012, and contained minimal differences from the original Bill, thereby indicating a legal solidification of the power possessed by traditional leaders (Claassens, 2009:10). The Bill has been opposed by various academics, women's groups and NGOs based on its infringement of women's rights. This is particularly true with reference to the fact that women do not have the right to represent themselves in these courts, having to be represented by a male relative, and that widows in particular may not enter the courts while in mourning for fear that they would "contaminate" or "taint" the sacred space presented by the courts (Gouws, 2012:11). In addition, traditional leaders' voices were privileged throughout the consultation on the content of the bill and, in particular, on the definition of custom, and what exactly "custom" entails. No effort was made by traditional leaders to gain input from women's interest groups, rural women's groups and women living under customary law *before* this Bill was presented to the (NCOP) (Claassens, 2009:10).

Controversy surrounded the fact that, even within institutional structures, consultations on the content of the Bill supported and encouraged certain voices, while supressing and silencing others. The particular silencing of women's input in these consultations on the Bill was mentioned by one of the NGOs (Women's Legal Centre) interviewed in this research, which had been present while the consultations were under way. The respective NGOs maintained that, in some meetings, women who had attended were actually silenced by all the traditional

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leaders present in the establishment. What is more, those individuals who were overseeing the hearings were in favour of the traditional leaders, and did nothing to address their behaviour or further grant the rural women more opportunity to voice their interests.

The Traditional Courts Bill was discussed in the NCOP (with six of the nine South African provinces rejecting this bill, calling for its withdrawal) and in the Justice Portfolio Committee. Women made a limited input to its content, and the women's parliament, host to many women members of parliament, called for mere amendments to the Bill, regardless of the fact that women's organisations, academics and the CGE had asked for its withdrawal. Despite the fact that 45% of parliamentarians are women and that a myriad of women outside the state, in the form of women's NGOs, women's groups, interest groups and academics, are overtly and publicly objecting the passing of this Bill, the Bill is still seriously being considered to become official policy. Instead of denouncing the very act of this Bill even being proposed and considered, and challenging the state's intentions in gender issues in a concerted effort with civil society actors, the lack of action by women MP's has proven disconcerting.

In the light of the above, one could say that the working together of women within the state in conjunction with women's groups outside the state in order to bring transformation of the gender status quo is yet to be seen. Many people often consider women working in political structures (which have in the past been characterised as a male domain) to bring some kind of "virtue" to operations and processes exercised within the state; and to be inherently dedicated to the pushing of gender issues premised on the fact that they are women. However, as argued by Gouws (2011), women, just like men, act as self-interested political actors who are influenced by their alliances with men and other women in the respective political structures, and are interested in advancing their careers within the bureaucracy by toeing the lines of party politics and dominant party interests. Accordingly, as argued by Gouws (2011:96), self-interest may override the preference and dedication given to gender interests.

In addition, the Alliance for Rural Democracy (ARD), comprising a large number of women's civil society organisations, also rejected the Traditional Courts Bill. This alliance consists of approximately thirty cross-sectional civil society organisations, sharing a joint concern about the harmful spinoffs the Traditional Courts Bill will have on those (particularly women) residing in rural areas, thus showing the importance of gender organisations forming alliances.

Given the fact that the President of South Africa is a traditionalist, it is of no surprise that the traditional leaders enjoy considerable power because of the support they provide to the Zuma government and the close ties they continue to have with the President. This was particularly pronounced during the President's rape trial in 2005. His traditional (patriarchal) views towards women, gender relations and the status of women were evident when he defended non-consensual sex on the basis of Zulu culture, in terms of which a man cannot leave a woman aroused and not satisfy her. With some of the African National Congress Women's League (the women's arm of the dominant political party) sporting t-shirts with Zuma's face accompanied by the logo "100% Zulu boy", and hurling abuse and threats at the complainant outside the court, their support of the President was made public knowledge (Waetjen & Mare,2009:60). In a country where the President holds patriarchal views of women dictated by his culture, and where the ANC Women's League (which has the most access and ties to the national body decision makers) supports Zuma as President of the ANC, credible space for gender inroads into the state remains "blocked". Receiving maximum media coverage, the court case was held up as the "culturization of politics" (Gouws, 2012), the "politicization of culture" and the "depoliticization of gender" by banishing it to the moral private sphere (Waetjen & Mare, 2009:53).

A very recent example of the pattern of politics surrounding gender in South Africa was the release of the official National Development Plan 2030, which, for the most part, is gender blind. As this strategic plan for the country is one that will run up until 2030, one would expect the South African NGM to use it as a window of opportunity to create space for and to receive input from women's organisations in civil society about to how this plan would affect their lives for the next eighteen years. One of the NGOs interviewed in the research mentioned that no initiative was taken by the NGM to *invite* them to make submissions and inputs with regard to the planning of the development plan. On the contrary, the respective NGOs had to make a pronounced effort to approach the planning commission directly with regard to the fact that it had not actively involved women's groups and organisations; on this basis their submissions then could not be denied (interview with Jennifer Williams, director of the Women's Legal Centre, 2012).

Furthermore, the landscape of NGO funding in South Africa has been in crisis, as mentioned by all four NGOs in their respective interviews. At present, all four of the NGOs responded, when asked, that their main source of funding came from foreign donors who were sympathetic to their cause. All the NGOs displayed delight at the fact that donors chose to

fund their NGOs as a result of being sympathetic to their cause, and therefore most of the funding did not affect the scope and content of their mandate. However, all the NGOs interviewed highlighted the fact that NGO funding is currently in crisis, and that the source of donor funding has proved very susceptible to fluctuations in the global economy. The NWM indicated that the present funding crisis faced by NGOs has led to a situation where NGOs can no longer be fussy over funding when external funding dries up. This NGO was the only one that asserted that it has started accepting funding from the state, but on condition that there are no strings attached.

This highlights the possibility of future state funding of more and more NGOs, women's groups and organisations that find themselves in financial difficulty. What would be particularly detrimental to gender issues and a possible movement towards state feminism or a "women-friendly" state is the possibility that state sponsorship of organisations may not only affect the scope and mandate of civil society groupings, but also influence the gender agenda to stay mum on and not be critical of acts committed by the government or politicians.

4.1.2 The organisational form of the National Gender Machinery

As stated in the introductory chapter, at the beginning of independence, the South African NGM boasted an elaborate structure committed to gender issues. However, currently, many of these structures have been dissolved, out of operation or have been mired in internal crisis. This not only includes the past dysfunctionality of the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), the dysfunctionality of the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) and the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), but also the dismantling of the machinery in order to create the Women's Ministry, The Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and People with Disabilities (NA), and the Select Committee on Women, Youth and People with Disabilities (NCOP). Additionally, there is a lot of ambiguity and confusion with regards to the relationship between the Women's Ministry and the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE). This is largely due to the budget of the CGE being channelled through the Women's Ministry, when in actual fact the CGE is an oversight body, mandated by the constitution to provide oversight over departments within the state, including the Women's Ministry. However, the fact that the budget of the CGE is channelled through the Women's Ministry has resulted in confusion, conflict, and the wrongful perception that the CGE is accountable to the Women's Ministry.

4.1.3. The perception and conception of the South African state in furthering feminist goals

In order to investigate whether NGOs are hostile towards the state, or see the value of engaging with the state as a credible vehicle for the articulation of their respective issues to be translated into legislation/policy, the NGOs were asked *whether information derived from grassroots level is communicated to oversight bodies*, such as the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), the Women's Ministry, the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and People with Disabilities, or the Select Committee on Women, Youth and People with Disabilities. Responses varied from outright hostility towards the state and Chapter Nine institutions, to more moderate responses. Two of the four NGOs (NWM and ILRIG) expressed that they currently did not interact with NGM structures. The NWM said that it was very sceptical of the existing NGM structures, and that submissions had been greeted with negative responses or no response at all in the past. While ILRIG maintained that acting as an intermediary link and speaking on behalf of grassroots was not necessarily what they did, information emanating from the grassroots level was given/planted back into communities to inform their action with regard to "fights" against the state.

The Black Sash and the Women's Legal Centre stated that they communicated information gathered from grassroots women to structures within the NGM; however, these dealings were on a need-to basis and also included other institutions like the Departments of Health, Justice, Social Development, etc. These NGOs felt that engaging with NGM structures was strategic, in order to get an advocacy point or any other key issues across to government so that this could inform the making of policy. However, both NGOs felt that these institutions had severe limitations, with one of them expressing its lack of knowledge with regard to what happens in parliamentary processes, where submissions go, on what grounds and how recommendations get teeth, and whether they are even considered.

As expressed in the framework, the level of state feminism differs in various locations, mostly due to the variations in the politics of the women's movement. Consequently, some forms of women's movements and the institutionalisation of state structures make the country more conducive to the flourishing of state feminism. These include, particularly, women activists' views of the state, and whether they see the state as a possible vehicle for transformation or are hostile towards the state as a form of patriarchy (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:18). In order to investigate to what extent activists see the state as a vehicle for transformation, the NGOs were asked the question: *"[D]oes your NGO have close linkages*

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to women in parliament/government, who help articulate the interests communicated by your NGO?" This particular question was asked to investigate to what extent NGOs have linkages to the bureaucracy, and therefore believe that it would lead to their interests being taken up more successfully. It was also asked to ascertain whether the phenomenon of "double militancy" was present (as theorised on by Karen Beckwith (2000), referring to linkages of women's movement outside the state to women working within the state, and the possibility of women in the bureaucracy articulating issues pertaining to gender and contributing to the realisation of state feminism).

All of the NGOs stated that they did not have overt, direct linkages to women in the bureaucracy. They rather had "supporters" or "allies" on particular issues, people who are open and sensitive to the gender issues presented. In addition, in every single interview the NGOs mentioned that their linkages with particular women in bureaucracy were strong at first (just after 1994), as a result of most leaders of NGOs and organisations moving into the bureaucracy and state structures. The NGOs displayed clear discontent about the big gap currently in the relationship between women's NGOs and women working in state structures. While doing the interviews, all the NGOs involved mentioned that, once former women activists entered bureaucratic structures, they resorted to toeing party political lines and were under a lot of pressure not to push a feminist agenda in their respective departments.

In order to ascertain the nature of these issues that are communicated to NGOs, and then communicated to the NGM structures on a usual basis, the NGOs were asked *whether the most prominent issues raised by grassroots women constituted material needs, or whether issues were aimed at the transformation of gender inequality.* The main issues communicated by grassroots women mostly centred around those issues pertaining to their day-to-day survival (e.g. bread and butter issues such as food prices and the cost of living), in addition to the problem of how to access their rights to service delivery. Issues of mainly service delivery (which is to be sensitive to the needs of women) were very prominent, encompassing aspects such as health, housing, access to education, sanitation, child maintenance and grants, and gender-based domestic violence. However, it should be borne in mind that all the NGOs involved in the research provided education to grassroots women; although a lot of attention is placed on material needs, education around these needs and the politics thereof can be seen to address transformation in the long term.

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In order to investigate the nature of the way in which NGOs engage with the state to communicate the interests of grassroots women, NGOs involved in the research were asked the question: *"[W]hat strategies and tactics are/and have been used by your NGO in order to articulate interests of women on grassroots level, in order to inform the making of legislation/policy?"* Options presented to them in the questionnaire included: campaigning, lobbying, writing letters and submissions, mass meetings/public input sessions, public hearings and submissions on legislation. Two of the NGOs interviewed (Black Sash and Women's Legal Centre) stated that they had used all of the tactics and strategies presented in the questionnaire, although they had followed a path of litigation when these tactics and strategies had not proven successful. One of the NGOs (NWM) indicated that tactics and strategies have included *some* of the options, namely campaigning (at grassroots level), submissions and public and mass meetings. In addition, this NGO asserted that the use of the media attracted a lot of attention with regard to campaigns and marches. The other NGO stated that it had not made use of any of the above strategies and tactics in order to communicate women's interests with the aim of informing the making of legislation and policy. Instead, they act as a support function to other organisations and NGOs that are aimed at articulating their interests to inform legislation, by the provision of education and research around these issues.

Furthermore, the NGOs involved in the research were asked *whether the tactics outlined above have proven successful, to the extent that issues represented by their respective NGOs were taken up seriously and drafted into policy.* This question was specifically asked in order to investigate the extent of the capacity the South African state has when it comes to seriously taking up gender issues to inform policy. All the NGOs articulated that they had *mixed outcomes* when it came to the issues they had raised being drafted into policy. Two of the NGOs (Black Sash and NWM) expanded on the matter and mentioned that they had worked in a network with other social organisations and NGOs on the child support campaign, in order to have child support grants extended up to the age of eighteen, as opposed to the age of fourteen. Both NGOs asserted that this Bill had been passed relatively quickly. In addition to this, the above-mentioned NGOs also contributed to the realisation of the cost of living campaign (NWM and Black Sash) and participated in the people's budget campaign in order for parliament to pass a money laws amendment bill and amend the budget (the related procedures amendment bill). One of these NGOs (Black Sash) maintained that the presence

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of political will to actually implement the money laws amendment Bill and the related procedures amendment Bill seemed to be very low.

In a related question to the previous one, the NGOs were asked about *the extent to which the issues that they have articulated to oversight bodies were seriously adopted to appear on the national agenda.* Three of the four NGO's responses coincided; they mentioned that *very few* issues articulated by their NGOs were taken up seriously enough to appear on the national agenda. Very few attempts of the NGOs with regard to interest articulation were successfully taken up; the majority resulted in failure. Two of these NGOs mentioned the importance of the media in making enough noise and helping the issues articulated by their NGOs to be pushed through to actually be seriously considered. From what was mentioned by these three NGOs, issues that were seriously taken up to appear on the national agenda included those of reproductive rights, the extension of the child support grant, issues of food security (the people's budget campaign), issues of social security and gender-based violence.

In an attempt to investigate the capacity of the NGM with regard to supporting information from grassroots women to inform policy making from a gendered perspective, the NGOs were asked the question: *"[T]o what extent has the South African Gender Machinery (NGM) acted as a channel of communication between NGO's and policymakers?"* The overall sentiment amongst the four NGOs that were interviewed was that the extent to which the NGM acted as a channel of communication between NGOs and policy makers was very limited. The NGOs mentioned that, although some opportunities were presented, they still remained very limited.

In addition to this, the NWM maintained that having the opportunity as an NGO to have the NGM acting as a communicative link to policy makers is largely reserved for those NGOs who possess the know-how, the lobbying and advocacy skills, and are, more often than not, representative of grassroots women. The WLC asserted that, although the NGM does not act as a communicative link to a very large extent, it is selective in terms of which issues to push through to policymakers to get attention. Regarding issues being pushed through to policy makers selectively, the NWM and the Black Sash made particular reference to the child support grant campaign as an example of the "privileging of issues". (These two NGOs had worked together on the child support grant campaign in a network coalition with many other NGOs and smaller organisations.) The NWM asserted that mobilisation behind the extension of the child support grant had been successful only because of the large degree to which the

members of this network had made "enough noise" in the media and exerted immense public pressure on state bodies. In addition, the Black Sash stated that the Bill (relating to the extension of the child support grant) had been passed relatively quickly because, politically, it was the "right thing to do" for government at the time, given the degree of public attention this issue received.

In order to ascertain the extent to which the NGM has opened opportunities and space for NGOs to access the policy-making process, NGOs were asked *how successful these tactics have proved in allowing NGOs to take part in the development of policy in order to communicate grassroots women's interests.* The Black Sash stated that it had been successful in taking part in the development of policy, particularly because some of their staff members have served on many committees and boards, some of them in government, some closely related to government and others as part of regulatory bodies.

The WLC maintained that it being allowed to take part in the development of policy depended on which department or committee was involved, and that some committees were much more open to having NGOs help with the development of policy, while others had the ability to completely shut women out depending on the nature of the issue that was to be addressed. The NWM displayed outright hostility to the government and maintained they were not allowed to help with the development of policy as much as they would like to; and that government was very selective and cautious regarding women being part of the process of developing policy. ILRIG maintained that the development of policy is not what they aim to do.

A related question was posed to NGOs, viz. *"Has your NGO been allowed to sit in on portfolio committee meetings, in order to ensure that the policy making process is taken from a gendered perspective?"* Three of the four NGOs confirmed that they had been allowed to sit in on portfolio committee meetings, while ILRIG stated that their organisation had never been invited to sit in on portfolio committee meetings. Alongside the majority consensus, the NWM added that, although it had been invited, it did not always attend these meetings as a result of first wanting to build the capacity of their members to be able to engage meaningfully and articulate issues successfully. The NWM said that no representatives from prominent bodies in the NGM had come to give a workshop on the machinery and how to engage successfully. On these grounds, a passive approach by the state is seen to have reciprocated a passive approach from civil society. The WLC stated that although it has been

allowed into the meetings, this is not to say that their suggestions are successful, as most parliamentarians possess attitudes of indifference towards women's NGOs. The Black Sash maintained that, in addition to the NGM granting the opportunity for their organisation to sit in on committee meetings, they have also been invited to high-level discussions that are not public. The opportunity to sit in at high level discussions proved to be favourable to the Black Sash, as it presented the NGO with an increased ability to put forth suggestions during policy drafting.

In addition, the NGOs were asked *to what extent oversight bodies within the NGM had created space and opportunities for them to make inputs in the development and drafting of policy.* All the responses indicated that very little space was created by the state for them to make an input on policy. Three of the four NGOs (WLC, NWM and ILRIG) indicated that the very little space created by government was negotiated solely on the terms of the state, and that there very often was a big gap between what is articulated by NGOs and what is actually taken into consideration by bureaucratic structures. The WLC maintained that, when space was opened, it was characterised by half-hearted efforts, and that circumstances are much to the inconvenience of NGOs. Examples of this include being invited to meetings and input sessions at very short notice, and opening submissions for decision-making processes over a weekend. The NWM mentioned that, as a result of the passive approach to gender issues being taken by the state, there was no real opportunity for the creation of credible space. In this regard, South Africa has not begun to explore what it means to create spaces for grassroots women. The Black Sash asserted that NGOs being invited into spaces created by the bureaucracy in order to make inputs on policy is largely dependent on political connections and allies. In this light, what was referred to as the "art of politics" determined whether NGOs or organisations would receive formal recognition from decision makers.

In an effort to further investigate to what extent the state has created space for NGOs as civil society actors, NGOs were asked *to what extent the NGM created space and opportunity to inform and pass on information with regard to policy decisions that have been taken.* Three of the four NGOs interviewed stated that very little space had been created in order to inform NGOs with regard to policy decisions that had been taken. These NGOs reacted negatively to this question and added concerns that there had not been a *consistent* space created at all, and that most of the time they had to watch the media or the parliamentary monitoring website (which also sends out e-mails) in order to gain information about legislation being passed. Other concerns included that the little space created was on the terms of the state, and that

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oversight institutions within the NGM were mired in their own crises and therefore had not been able to do much with regard to opening spaces to give NGOs feedback. ILRIG stated that this question was not applicable to what they do and to the function of their NGO.

When NGOs were asked about *how feedback of legislative/policy decisions was then communicated and passed on to women on grassroots level*, two of the four NGOs (WLC and NWM) mentioned that feedback was given through booklets, and orally in the form of workshops that are usually done in a variety of languages in order to accommodate grassroots women. The remaining two NGOs (ILRIG and the Black Sash) articulated that giving feedback was not necessarily what they do, and that their role rather encapsulates supporting other member-based organisations and NGOs through making their specialised services of advocacy, consultancy, education and research available.

Overall trends, similarities and differences in the NGO's interactions, relations and experience with regard to the National Gender Machinery were established during the course of the interviews. The information yielded through fieldwork will be analysed in the following chapter in order to make sense of the status of South African state feminism, the related obstacles and possibilities, so that the research questions posed in Chapter 1 can be answered sufficiently.

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CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The framework utilised in this research, as mentioned in Chapter 3, was developed by Stetson and Mazur (1995) and is aimed at investigating levels of state feminism by considering two components, namely state capacity and state-society relations. This chapter seeks to analyse and interpret the findings, as discussed in Chapter 4, which were acquired through conducting interviews with four South African NGOs. The research was undertaken in order to ascertain to what extent levels of state capacity and state-society relations have proven successful in the pursuit of institutionalised state feminism in South Africa. The research question, as put forward in Chapter 1, reads as follows:

"Do South African Women's NGOs contribute to state feminism through their ability to articulate and mobilise the strategic interests of women at grassroots level to appear on the national agenda, and through the channels provided by the South African National Gender Machinery (NGM)?"

5.1 Analysing state capacity and state-society relations in the acquisition of State Feminism in South Africa

When considering the level of state capacity that is present, particularly with regard to the ability of the South African National Gender Machinery to influence that policy is passed from a gendered perspective, many different issues need to be considered. Although the legacy of the women's movement before independence presented incredible gains for South African women, the strength of a unified women's movement in South Africa, especially recently, has become a thing of the past. The legacy of the once powerful women's movement, its sheer size and the circumstances around the establishment of the NGM, have not guaranteed a sustained level of gender informed policy and dedication to issues of gender, particularly in recent times.

Recent examples of the dwindled commitment to gender by the state include the persistent strength of traditional courts (particularly in political discourse), the gender-blind nature of the National Development Plan 2030, and the support for President Zuma's patriarchal views by possibly the most strategic women's organisation (ANCWL) present at the national level,

as discussed in Chapter 4. Acts committed against women's rights and human rights, such as gender-based violence and poverty, have gone without being addressed, despite the public outcry from civil society women's groups, women's organisations and academics. This highlights the disregard for gender issues on the part of the state, and the lack of political will to address gender. Furthermore, due to internal dysfunctionality, the dismantling of the once extensive set of structures has contributed to an increasing reliance on a few structures, as opposed to the decentralised nature it boasted at its conception. As most structures within the NGM have been mired in crisis, this has contributed to the decrease in NGM activity, particularly pertaining to the opening of policy-making processes to civil society actors and functioning in an efficient manner to inform policy from a gendered perspective.

Levels of NGO engagement with the machinery to articulate the interests expressed by grassroots women in order to inform policy showed mixed results in the interviews. Two NGOs were sceptical, while the other two did engage with the machinery on the basis of issues, but this was done on a "need-to" basis and when it proved strategic to do so. As reflected in the responses yielded during the fieldwork, some South African women's NGOs can be regarded to be in a state of "abeyance", as theorised about by Sawyers and Meyer (1999). The term "abeyance" signifies a state of decline of organisations based on the lack of interaction with the state. This lack of interaction is characterised by social actors failing to make use of political opportunities for mass mobilisation that present themselves, regardless of whether opportunities are positive or negative in nature. Although these social actors still exist as part of civil society, they exist in survival mode, away from mass action.

The decline of these organisations can be seen to be in direct correlation with the choices made by activists with regard to visible action in policy domains and mobilisation opportunities (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999:188). Although some South African NGOs have maintained to persist in a state of "abeyance", disengaging themselves from interacting with the NGM (state), or only engaging on particular issues, has led to many "missed opportunities". These "missed opportunities" have led to marginalisation and setbacks in the passing of policy, which has to a large extent been "gender blind" or at times even hostile to gender issues. The missing of political opportunities for mobilisation has led to a situation in South Africa in which the formation of policies have, to a large extent, not been favourable to the feminist cause. These "missed opportunities" of South African women's NGOs can clearly be seen in the lack of broad NGO mobilisation around insisting on gender inputs in the National Development Plan 2030 (as mentioned previously) and the New Growth Path.

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The utilisation of political opportunity can be determined by the ability of South African NGOs to mobilise effectively on issues by means of networks, which mobilise on certain issues. The findings revealed that success in pushing interests through the NGM, to inform policy from a gendered perspective, was achieved mostly by means of NGO networks. This success, in reference to the taking up of issues to inform policy, was expressed mainly by two NGOs (the New Women's Movement and the Black Sash) that had formed part of a network of NGOs and other civil society groups to push issues such as the extension of the child support grant, the people's budget campaign, the cost of living campaign (issues of food security and social security), gender-based violence, the and money laws amendment bill. Furthermore, the Alliance for Rural Democracy (ARD), which organises around issues pertaining to the Traditional Courts Bill (TCB), also proved to be an example of how recent mass mobilisation in South Africa mostly occurs by way of networks.

The above highlights the possibility that the mobilisation by means of networks, and the extensive use of the media in helping the articulation of issues, may signify the presence of a "mini-movement", or perhaps many "mini-movements". However, these "mini-movements" have displayed the tendency to have short lifespans, and to arise and mobilise around certain issues, but die down after the aims are achieved. This possible "cycle" of movement, which climaxes and declines around particular issues, could also signify the change of form of the movement every time a climax is experienced, with different or similar actors mobilising around new issues.

Della Porta and Diani (2006:188) argue that these protest cycles, in particular the "ebb and flow" of these cycles, are determined by constantly evolving strategic choices that the movements are presented with due to their interaction with other prominent actors in society. These mobilisation efforts are known to be pushed by a range of actors and groups within civil society with divergent aims, although the campaigns represent an interrelation of aims and objectives that are mobilised towards a collective aim. Cycles of collective action can be seen constantly to be met by reactions from authority and leadership, which then, in the case of South Africa in particular, take a more political turn, as bargaining with the state means the shifting of responsibility for initiatives with regard to gender issues towards the state. This has signalled the winding down of the "appearance" of a social movement once mobilisation behind particular issue is no longer deemed necessary (Tarrow, 1998:168). South African NGOs display a retreat back into a state of "abeyance" and fragmentation once the aims behind mobilisation have been met.

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In addition, the informing of policy from a feminist perspective through the ability of the NGM to act as a communicative linkage between NGOs and policy makers, was expressed by the NGOs to be very limited, although presenting some opportunities. In this regard, the "dilemma" of "double militancy", as argued by Beckwith (2000), has proven to be very pronounced in the South African NGM. The utility of having feminist activists inside the state, working in conjunction with and by means of linkages to women's organisations outside the state, has been accepted by most academics to facilitate a great part of the feminist project. However, this issue is more complex than appears at face value.

The phenomenon of "double militancy" refers to the "split identities" and split commitments of women activists to two political locations (Beckwith, 2000:442). In this regard, feminist activists' commitments are split between helping poor women through state initiatives (which is not necessarily feminist in its nature) and their commitment to the larger feminist movement, which serves to challenge the very institutions they form part of (Beckwith, 2000:443). In order to resolve the state of their "split commitments", activists within the state may make the personal choice to relinquish one of their commitments, or it may be imposed on them by a hostile environment.

In this regard, it is evident that many feminist activists working in the South African NGM have relinquished their commitment to the larger feminist project in order to reduce split commitments, but have also done so in reaction to the nature of the institutional culture. This can be seen in the information yielded by the interviews with the NGOs, where all NGOs asserted that they did not possess direct and overt linkages to women in the bureaucracy, but had "supporters" and "allies" on certain issues, as opposed to consistent issue articulators. "Double militancy" does have a transformative potential, however; as argued by Beckwith, this can only be done through feminist activists embarking on internally changing political discourse in order to successfully affect policy and also lead to the creation of a "feminist consciousness" in organisations that have previously been seen as "non-feminist" (Beckwith, 2000:445).

However, in the case of the South African NGM, although "supporters" within the bureaucracy are present and act to push for certain issues (based on the nature of the issues), it leads to a situation where the NGM informs policy in an inconsistent fashion. *Consistency* in this regard becomes of cardinal importance, as interests constantly change with the times and therefore need constant concerted engagement and efforts by both women activists within

the state and those outside the state to even start the process of transformation. For the most part, as mentioned by the NGOs, women activists entering bureaucratic structures have struck "bargains with patriarchy" in order to maximise their organisational security and career prospects, and also to neutralise commitments to gender convictions. This has consequently led to a decrease in the probability that the transformation of state feminism (as a result of feminist activists working within the bureaucracy to influence policy from a gendered perspective and to make credible gains for the feminist project) may take place in South Africa.

Consequently, the capacity of the NGM to influence policy from a gender perspective is very limited. The channels for the articulation of interests by NGOs on behalf of grassroots women continue to be blocked, although some issues are privileged to be seriously considered to appear on the national agenda and to be drafted into policy. In addition, examples have been highlighted where actors within the bureaucracy act as "gate keepers" and prevent, supress and limit gender issues from reaching the national level. Despite "institutional blockades" being present, NGOs have also asserted that the most prominent issues communicated to them were of a material nature. These were issues pertaining to women's day-to-day survival and rights to various services. Even though there may be a desire on the part of NGOs towards institutionalised state feminism, the NGOs have been perceived and accepted by grassroots women (and by the NGOs themselves) as vehicles to target the provision of pressing material needs, as opposed to mobilising behind strategic, long-term gender interests. In this contest between material needs and strategic gender interests, long-term gains for gender have evidently taken a backseat in order to target the immediate conditions of hardship experienced by grassroots women. In this light, taking into consideration the very few issues that are seriously considered to inform policy (policy development and appearing on the national agenda), these issues, more often than not, constitute issues that are of a material nature, and are not aimed at the transformation of gender inequality. To a large extent, the issues that make their way to national level to be taken up seriously on the national agenda and in policy development constitute a slight increase in levels of democratic participation through the help of NGOs, as opposed to increased levels of state feminism.

Through the use of various tactics to get their interests communicated and taken up in the NGM, most of the NGOs interviewed had been allowed, on previous occasions, to take part in the development of policy or to inform the policy-making process from a gendered

perspective, through space and opportunities granted by the state. The creation of space with regard to NGOs taking part in the development of policy, being allowed to sit in on portfolio meetings and making inputs in the development of policy is only provided to a limited extent, and is not on par with what NGOs find sufficient. Nonetheless, space was created by the NGM, although the *quality* and *nature* of this "limited" provision of space needs to be called into question.

The interviews yielded that, although space was opened for NGOs, this "space" was characterised by half-hearted efforts, miscommunication (sometimes hostility), the strategic selection of issues (and who puts these issues forward) and inconvenience. The space was negotiated solely on the terms of the state and presented no guarantee that the issues articulated by NGOs would be taken up seriously to inform the policy-making process. Evidently, the creation of space and opportunity by the NGM in order to give women's NGOs access to the policy-making process is done through a *passive approach* to gender. In other words, state action with regard to gender has been characterised by a reactive, "damage control" approach, as opposed to a proactive one, in which the only (half-hearted) state action is sparked by broad-based civil society mobilisation and dissatisfaction, instead of providing credible opportunities and state access in the first instance. In turn, this passive approach on the part of the state can be said to have been reciprocated by a passive approach from some civil society organisations, as expressed by one of the NGOs that were part of the research (New Women's Movement). The reciprocated approach from civil society can be seen in NGOs being provided space to inform policy, but refusing to engage with the state, leading to "missed opportunity".

This passivity on the part of the state can also be seen in the lack of educational opportunities provided by the state to inform NGOs about the workings of the NGM, how to engage it successfully, what are the processes around recommendations given by NGOs, what happens in parliamentary processes, on what grounds they are considered seriously, or if they are even considered at all. As expressed in a side comment by one of the NGOs interviewed as part of the research (Black Sash): "We go to parliament and protest at the gates, but we don't know what happens inside". Also, the same passive approach is evident in the lack of a state-created consistent space to inform and pass on information to NGOs with regard to policy decisions that have been taken. The effective flow of two-way communication through channels provided by the NGM, to inform policy and communicate policy decisions between NGM and NGOs, is yet to be seen and continues to be blocked.

As a result of the "bottleneck" of information exchange that is experienced in the relationship between the NGM and civil society actors, the chances of state feminism have decreased dramatically. Those within the bureaucracy have dictated and defined political discourse, defining which kind of women form certain groups, and what their interests and needs are, without *effectively* and *consistently* engaging with women on grassroots level. Consequently, the interests of women on grassroots level continue to go without being addressed by the state, leaving these women with no voice. The state therefore speaks and decides on behalf of women what the needs and interests of South African women are. Not only does this lead to a waste of resources and time by undertaking misguided initiatives to advance the position of grassroots women, but it also leads to the state acting as a patriarchal entity by reinforcing gender inequality in South Africa. Therefore, one can argue that, due to the lack of credible and effective communication and engagement, a situation has arisen where there is a *misrepresentation* of women's rights in South Africa. This also illuminates the fact that leaders working within the bureaucracy and at the national level have not even begun to understand the wealth and widespread benefits of engaging with civil society, in consistent state created space..

In the pursuit of state feminism in South Africa, this research favours a mostly "bottom-up" approach, in addition to the "traditional" "top-down" approaches. In other words, this research favours the route of effective integration of the NGM at the *national level*, particularly with regard to policy implementation, but equally importantly at the *local level*, particularly with regard to grassroots participation and the communication of interests to inform the drafting of policy at national level. However, this research maintains that transformative potential exists on the local level, particularly with regard to how the concerted action and engagement of civil society actors (e.g. NGOs) at this level could potentially facilitate a move closer to state feminism in South Africa. Significantly enough, the integration of gender machinery at the local level has been recommended and therefore recognised as important by the National Gender Policy, which is largely informed by the South African National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (Office of the Status of Women, 2000). This framework serves as an overarching guideline for the countrywide implementation of transformatory initiatives with regard to gender equality, through an "intersectoral approach" aimed at cooperation within and across various South African sectors to achieve this goal. The aim of this framework was to place gender

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equality at the epicentre of the South African transformation process, through implementation in all sectors and at all levels of state organisation (Office of the Status of Women, 2000).

In addition, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has expressed support for and has been a prominent actor lobbying for the creation of gender structures at the local level. Policy statements put forward by SALGA, as well as recommendations by the National Gender Policy Framework, contain a strong belief in the potentially transformative capacity that civil society organisations (CSOs, such as NGOs and CBOs) hold in the development of local government, particularly though participation (which would generate social capital) and engagement, in order to ensure that local government stays relevant and responsive to the needs of those at grassroots level. Past propositions have called for engagement and consistent state-created spaces, and have presented the possibility for a move towards gender transformation from the bottom up. Grassroots participatory mechanism policies have been on the cards in South Africa for the past eighteen years, although their implementation still has to be seen.

Even so, the option of participatory grassroots mechanisms continues to present an opportunity for civil society actors, such as NGOs, to engage the state, policy and decision making more effectively due to the availability of a consistent state-created space, and the potential of these spaces to act as credible channels of interest communication to feed into the national level. Increasing the extent of state feminism through the use of local government provides the possibility of a viable avenue and vehicle for change. This is largely due to the relative proximity of local government to women at grassroots, its knowledge of the needs and interests of grassroots women, and the potential inherent in the “bridging” and consolidation function between the state and civil society that this level holds (Schonwalder, 1997:760). As stated in the National Gender Policy Framework document (quoted from a SALGA document): “[L]ocal Government is the sphere of government closest to the people, and the one that impacts most on women’s lives. It is best placed to analyse and respond to the needs of different women” (Office of the Status of Women, 2000).

The *potential* dynamism that exists at this level is due to the prospects that it holds for the linking of localised struggles into broader networks of social, economic and political power, thereby challenging the structural inequality faced by women (Pieterse & Oldfield, 2002). Approaching the “local” in order to facilitate a move closer to state feminism opens more political avenues into the state in terms of interest articulation, which has not been made

available under formal democracy and related "gender mainstreaming" policies, and has proved meaningless to the feminist project. Approaching the ultimate goal of "state feminism" from the local level presents an alternative to "gender mainstreaming" initiatives that operate in a "top-down" manner and are ineffective in encouraging change, mostly due to the fact that they are far removed from women on grassroots level. However, the participation in state-created spaces by women at grassroots level cannot merely be confined to the simple attendance of meetings; what rather is required is involvement and participation that empowers through active engagement with the state, which creates a "feminist consciousness" and also leads to the generation of social capital (Cameron, 2001:98).

In order for participatory grassroots mechanisms to prove effective (which is probably the most challenging part), the establishment of such space should not be approached just as a means to an end, or as a mere tool to increase the effectiveness of information to inform policy directly. This approach signifies a pragmatic, means-end approach that privileges practical and technical implications with overwhelming attention to programme design and implementation, which has characterised the approach of government to "gender mainstreaming" policies. On the contrary, the approach that would generate the most gains for the feminist project is one that is inherently political, in which the local is politicised and where engagement with the state is seen as an end in itself. Through this approach, the process of engagement is viewed as being equally important as the outcome itself, and serves to empower those women at grassroots level who actively engage with state-created space (Schonwalder, 1997:756). In other words, this approach, in the formulation of Steifel and Pearse (1982), can be seen as "the organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control" (Steifel & Pearse, 1982:146).

Consequently, the local can be seen as a political site of empowerment for social actors such as women's NGOs, particularly when it comes to knowledge generation. Taken as an indication of the practice of NGOs, all four NGOs asserted that women belonging to the respective NGOs took part in participatory information gathering at grassroots level. In this way, participatory grassroots mechanisms provide a favourable environment for grassroots women not to only participate in knowledge creation to inform policy, but simultaneously to gain a "feminist consciousness" through being active stakeholders in the generation of knowledge and information emanating from the grassroots level. In addition, social actors, such as NGOs and other women's groups present in civil society, are offered the opportunity

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to benefit from such participation, while simultaneously developing the strength of their organisational structures.

This research does not seek to romanticise the "local" in any way; on the contrary, it is fully aware of the problems that exist on this level. Although pitfalls to this approach may exist, it does not render this approach a useless one that should be abandoned. Instead, concentration on local mechanisms in order to facilitate the articulation of interest to the national level and to inform policy presents a credible avenue for increased levels of state feminism, although there should be caution (Schonwalder, 1997:755). In order to be genuine, consistent state-created space, in other words participatory grassroots mechanisms, will have to be candid in their influence on decision making and policy making as an outcome of grassroots participation. However, the probability that these interests, emanating from grassroots women, may be met by resistance in the bureaucracy from elites who are not open to gender issues is a stark reality (Pieterse & Oldfield, 2002). In addition, the political will of government agencies and departments (state structures) needs to be present regarding the devolution of power to civil society actors to have an input in policy and entitlements.

Most of all, a decentralisation of political power through the creation of grassroots participatory mechanisms has the potential to be co-opted by local elites and political parties operating at the local level in order to advance their interests (Mohan & Stokke, 2000:249; Pieterse & Oldfield: 2002; Schonwalder, 1997:755). This in particular can be seen to be a credible threat, particularly when it comes to the funding crisis that South African NGOs have had to face of late, an aspect mentioned by all four NGOs. This could lead to NGOs not only compromising their agendas, but also their autonomy. On the other hand, there also exists the possibility of participatory mechanisms being integrated into already existing state programmes and using grassroots women as a form of cheap labour in project execution (Schonwalder, 1997:755).

The problems that exist on the local level are credible and real. Furthermore, the utilisation of the local level in order to bring about an increase in state feminism is even more complex in the South African context. Although a "bottom-up' approach is favoured by this research as presenting one of the most credible options for the achievement of long-term state feminism (due to the privileging of grassroots voices), it is also aware of the extreme dysfunction that exists in numerous spheres within South African local government. This assertion is substantiated by the Auditor-General's latest results on local government that reflects the

defunct status of the majority of local governments. Results include the fact that a vast majority of local governments are plagued by financial mismanagement and communication deficiencies: 70% of South African local governments lack consequences for poor performance; 70% have displayed poor internal controls; 57% have displayed poor and problematic implementation of these key controls; and there is a gross lack of necessary skills competence among officials (who are responsible for the successful functioning and running of respective local governments) in leading positions at approximately 72% of local governments (Auditor-General South Africa, 2012). Serious deficiency thus can be said to exist at the local government level in South Africa, and this warrants a drastic need to rethink local government functioning and implementation. Just as there is considerable room for improvement within local-level government, there also exists space and opportunity for the establishment of gender desks and consistent state-created space at the local level through the integration of the gender machinery at this level.

The rethink of local government functioning and implementation and the need for related internal capacity building, monitoring and compliance measures have proved to be urgent, particularly when considering the extent to which the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) have facilitated the integration of gender structures at the local level. Findings by Hicks and Baccus (2012), in a study conducted for the CGE, show that *general trends* of IDP performance are characterised by the lack of mainstreaming gender considerations into municipal programme “design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation”, and are often “gender blind” in nature, containing little (or no) reference to key gender policy frameworks. Their findings also reflect the lack of gender disaggregation when it came to targets that were set and the capturing of data, therefore contributing to difficulty in monitoring the progress of interventions, as well as maintaining the relevance of services provided to women at grassroots level.

The shortcomings of the IDPs with regard to the mainstreaming of gender frameworks at the local level question the genuine availability of opportunities for participation for grassroots women to voice their interests. In addition, the dysfunctionality that exists in most municipalities when it comes to initiatives pertaining to the increase in participation by women and women’s empowerment reflects the limited impact that contributions and inputs by grassroots women may have (Hicks & Baccus, 2012).

Further, participatory grassroots mechanisms would only prove successful depending on the extent that women's NGOs exploit these spaces and choose to engage actively with the presented political opportunity. However, a lot of *potential* exists within South African NGOs, particularly when taking into account the role that the Rural Women's Movement performed through exploiting a largely negative political opportunity that was presented by the Traditional Courts Bill. A "negative political opportunity" in this regard refers to a situation which may lead to a drastic change in the status quo; often one in which women and women's interests are at a disadvantage. Although women and their interests may be presented with a disadvantageous situation, it presents itself as an opportunity and "space" for action that can be exploited to the benefit of women.

The negative political opportunity, in the form of the Traditional Courts Bill presented the possibility of the erosion of women's rights and deeper entrenchment of patriarchy through increased authority of traditional leaders legalised under South African law (Claassens, 2009: 10). Given that most women's NGOs are concentrated in urban areas, the Rural Women's Movement, which operates in all nine provinces in South Africa, largely performed a function that was supposed to be played by the state by recording the testimonies and concerns of rural women with regard to the content of the Bill. In conjunction with the support of various NGOs, CBOs and other civil society organisations, four two-day consultations on women's views of customary courts and the content of the Bill were held. The sessions were held between 2008 and 2009, in the Eastern Cape (Qunu), Mpumalanga (Nelspruit), Pietermaritzburg and the North West (Madikwe) (Claassens, 2009:11). The facilitating role played by the Rural Women's Movement in mobilising opposition to the Bill, in conjunction with civil society actors and groupings, particularly those that are more rurally based, provided a current example of the potential that exists for a women's movement in South Africa. However, the optimal context where this "potential" for organised mobilisation could flourish is one where the gender machinery is not only implemented efficiently at the national level, but where gender machinery is also integrated at a local level. This level could form a conduit for the articulation of interest emanating from the grassroots level to the national level, in order to inform policy so that responses to these interests may remain relevant.

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5.2 Conclusion

South African women's NGOs have shown potential ability and willingness to transform gender, particularly when taking into account the utilisation of a negative political opportunity presented by the Traditional Courts Bill and the extent of the mobilisation to counter this Bill. In addition, an alternative route to attaining state feminism, through the establishment of grassroots participatory mechanisms as consistent spaces for grassroots women to voice their interests to be part of decision and policy making, presents hope for the future. However, attention should be paid to the complexity that comes with the establishment of grassroots participatory mechanisms.

Evidently, the need for women with close linkages to women in the bureaucracy and women's movements has proved, and will continue to prove, crucial for the realisation of state feminism. In this regard, women in the South African bureaucracy have disregarded their commitment to gender issues in the name of party politics, institutional security and personal benefits in order to ease the conflict that arises as a result of "double identity" and "double militancy". The pattern of politics also suggests a total disregard for gender issues, based on actions and decisions not only of the president and political elites, but also the ANCWL – the closest women's organisation to national-level decision and policy making. This has for the most part created a hostile political environment for state feminism to flourish, as actors at the national level have become "gate-keepers" regarding issues that are taken up selectively to inform policy. For the most part, gender issues have been disregarded.

Furthermore, the success of institutionalised state feminism warrants not only state capacity and state-society relations, but also the consistent engagement of civil society organisations and strong linkages between "insiders" and "outsiders". NGOs as social actors have been in a state of "abeyance" and decline as of late, and as a result have foregone and missed many political opportunities for mobilisation behind issues. The decline of social actors, together with the fragmented state of the South African women's movement, may hurt future concerted mobilisation efforts. In addition to the "missing of opportunities" due to a state of abeyance, NGOs have not been given the opportunity of a credible and consistent space that is receptive to listening and taking grassroots women's interests seriously to inform policy, and thereby pave the way to South African state feminism. Due to the propensity of NGOs to articulate mostly material issues, as expressed by women at the grassroots level, strategic gender issues have fallen by the wayside in the minimal number of issues that do reach

national level to inform policy. This is due mostly to the fact that material gender needs are easier to address than those of a strategic nature that are aimed at changing gender inequality in the long term. One can argue that NGOs that focus on the satisfaction of material needs can form the basis for later mobilisation around strategic gender interests, and that women at the grassroots level may gain a "feminist conscious" through the act of belonging to an NGO and participating in its activities.

Taking all the above into consideration, South Africa has witnessed state capacity that is hostile to gender issues, with minimal (unreceptive) efforts to engage society actors in a flourishing state-society relationship. As a result of the hostile political environment, the provision of unreceptive and inconsistent space by the state and the decline of social actors such as South African NGOs, the desire to attain institutionalised state feminism is out of reach. This has led to a blockage with regard to the articulation of gender issues emanating from the grassroots level by NGOs, in order to inform policy making, and contribute to the institutionalisation of state feminism. The national levels therefore have been very out of touch with the interests of women at grassroots level, as a result of minimal engagement and communication through the (dysfunctional) NGM. In many cases, leaders at the national level therefore have decided on behalf of women what their needs and interests are, and what their identities as various groups of women constitute, without credibly engaging and listening to the needs and interests of women at grassroots. Therefore, instead of being a gateway to the institutionalisation of state feminism, the state has acted as a patriarchal entity, and has to a very large extent further entrenched gender inequality and the hardships faced by ordinary South African women at grassroots level. The state has spoken and decided on behalf of women what is best for them and their livelihoods, while overlooking what the interests of grassroots women are.

This research has proposed that credible efforts towards establishing grassroots participatory mechanisms will facilitate a move closer to state feminism, due to consistent space for grassroots women to articulate their interests and develop a "feminist consciousness" through participation in knowledge creation. Furthermore, the effective integration of gender machinery at the national level, serving to implement policy, and the simultaneous integration of the gender machinery at the local level, serving to feed grassroots interests to the national level, present an opportunity for a move closer to South African state feminism. This route holds a lot of potential for success, particularly taking into consideration the ability and potential of mobilisation efforts by South African civil society in reaction to the Traditional

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Courts Bill. However, orchestrators of this route need to be vigilant, as it will only prove successful if a merely technocratic approach is avoided, if elite capture and co-optation are avoided, and if there are direct, strong linkages to actors within the bureaucracy. Most importantly, this route may only present a real opportunity for a positive shift towards South African state feminism if the defunct status of local-level government is addressed seriously.

Based on the research undertaken in this study, further research could possibly be done on the appearance of the multiplicity of "social movements" that mobilise around particular issues, but disappear once the issues have been addressed. Research pertaining not only to the circumstances around the appearance of these "mini-movements", but also to the circumstances under which they may become a fully-fledged women's movement (as in the past) that engages with the state on a consistent basis, will make a significant contribution to South African feminist literature. Finally, future research could include further investigation of effective mechanisms to rectify the dysfunctionality that exists at a local level with regard to the mainstreaming of gender.

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APPENDIX 1:

QUESTIONNAIRE

1) In your opinion, what kind of organization/movement do you represent? Does it constitute a social movement, an NGO or does it form part of an issue-based network?

2) Who does your NGO provide services to? Does your NGO operate on a membership basis; in other words, are members recruited to form the NGO?

3) What are the aims and objectives of your NGO with regard to gender equality?

4) What is the mission/vision of your NGO? In your opinion, does your NGO officially or unofficially endorse feminism as a guiding principle in its goals and values?

5) Are there any organisations (e.g. community-based organisations) that act as a communicative link between your NGO and women on grassroots level, when it comes to interest articulation? Or does your NGO maintain direct contact with women on grassroots level?

6) How do you obtain information from grassroots women in reference to their interests?

-mass meetings

-open consultations and input sessions

-written letters and submissions

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7) What is done with the information after it is obtained and communicated from women on grassroots level?

8) Is the information communicated to other oversight bodies, such as the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), the Women's Ministry, The Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, Children and Persons with Disability, or The Select Committee on Women, Children and Disability?

9) What are the most prominent kinds of issues raised by women on grassroots level? Do they constitute material needs, or are they issues that are aimed at the transformation of gender inequality?

10) What strategies and tactics are/and have been used by your NGO in order to articulate interests of women on grassroots level, in order to inform the making of legislation/policy?

-campaigning

-lobbying

-writing letters/making submissions

-mass meetings/public input sessions

-public hearings

-submissions on legislation

11) What are the issues that your NGO normally addresses and communicates to oversight bodies?

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12) Does your NGO have close linkages to women in parliament/government, who help to articulate the interests communicated by your NGO?

13) In your experience, have these tactics proved successful to the extent that issues represented by your NGO were taken up seriously by parliament and drafted into policy?

14) Have/do the strategies prove(n) effective in terms of allowing your NGO to take part in the development of policy, in order to communicate grassroots women's interests?

15) To what extent has the South African National Gender Machinery (NGM) (which includes the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), the Women's Ministry, The Portfolio and Select Committees and the Women's Multi-party Caucus) created spaces and opportunities for your NGO to make an input in the development and drafting of policy? If so, how regularly?

16) To what extent has the South African National Gender Machinery (NGM) acted as a channel of communication between NGOs and policy makers?

17) How is the feedback, which is resultant of policy and legislative decisions, communicated to women on grassroots level?

18) Has your NGO been allowed to sit in on portfolio committee meetings, in order to ensure that the policy-making process is taken from a gendered perspective?

19) To what extent does the National Gender Machinery (NGM) create spaces and opportunities to inform and pass on information with regard to policy decisions that have been taken?

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20) To what extent have the issues, articulated by your NGO to oversight bodies, been taken up seriously to appear on the national agenda?

21) In your opinion, do you think that there is a women's movement currently present in South Africa? If so, do you consider your NGO to be part of this women's movement?

22) How is your NGO financed? Does it depend on the state or donors for resources? Does the source of funding affect the scope and content of your mandate?