

# Transnational Feminist Movements in Latin America and the Caribbean. Contributions for the Study of European Activism\*

Movimientos feministas transnacionales en América Latina y el Caribe. Contribuciones para el estudio del activismo europeo

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.papo25.tfml>

Received: September , 04, 2018

Accepted: April , 03, 2019

Published: June , 29, 2020

## Abstract:

The article addresses the building of Transnational Social Movements (TSM) in regional settings, with a focus on the Latin American and Caribbean feminist activism in the context of the struggle against neoliberal globalization since the 1980s. A regional approach of TSMs is relevant because even though these actors are shaped by global collective identities and repertoires, they are also rooted in specific local, national, and regional conditions. Socio-historic conditions in a region lead to collective identities that shape regional TSMs and have an impact, at the same time, on the articulation of global TSMs and on the dynamics of global contestation. Indeed, these regionally articulated transnational identities and repertoires are then transmitted to the global TSMs. The article analyses the Latin American Transnational Feminist Movement (TFM) and, in light of this case study, discusses the process of movement building in the feminist struggle against austerity in Europe after the crisis of 2008. It looks at the formation of feminist collective identities and the organisation of transnational spaces that might lead to the emergence of a European TFM with the capacity to perform in the international arena as a unitary actor.

**Keywords:** transnational social movements, transnational feminist movements, Latin American and Caribbean feminist movements, European feminist movements, neoliberal globalization and austerity.

## Resumen:

El artículo aborda la construcción de Movimientos Sociales Transnacionales (MST) en escenarios regionales, enfocado en el activismo feminista latinoamericano y del caribe en el contexto de la lucha contra la globalización neoliberal desde los años ochenta. El enfoque regional sobre los MST es relevante porque, aunque estos actores están moldeados por identidades y repertorios colectivos globales, también están arraigados en condiciones locales, nacionales y regionales específicas. Las condiciones sociohistóricas en una región llevan a las identidades colectivas que dan forma a los MST regionales que, a su vez, tienen un impacto sobre la articulación de los MST globales y sobre la dinámica de la contestación global. De hecho, estas identidades y repertorios transnacionales articulados regionalmente se transmiten luego a los MST globales. El artículo analiza el Movimiento Feminista Transnacional Latinoamericano (MFT) y, teniendo en cuenta el presente estudio de caso, discute el proceso de construcción del movimiento en la lucha feminista contra la austeridad en Europa después de la crisis de 2008. Se analiza la formación de identidades colectivas feministas y la organización de espacios transnacionales que puedan conducir al surgimiento de un MFT europeo con capacidad para actuar en el ámbito internacional como actor unitario.

**Palabras clave:** movimientos sociales transnacionales, movimientos feministas transnacionales, movimientos feministas latinoamericanos y del caribe, movimientos feministas europeos, globalización neoliberal y austeridad.

## Introduction

During the so-called “lost decade” of the 1980s in Latin America and the Caribbean, the crisis of the foreign debt triggered a period of unrest in the region, with different types of activists united against the contradictions of neoliberal economic policies. Among them, there was an intense mobilization of women at a transnational level. The article addresses the formation of this Transnational Feminist Movement (TFM)

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against globalisation and the key factors involved in this process. Bearing this analysis in mind, it looks at the European scenario of feminist activism in the aftermath of the crisis of 2008.

Thus, the main objectives of the article are exploring the articulation of the Latin American TFM and, taking this analysis into account, assessing the scope and limits of the transnational connections between the European feminist activism against austerity. The hypothesis is that Latin American and Caribbean feminists have built a TFM thanks to the convergence in alternative transnational feminist spaces of a diversity of feminist identities brought together by their common opposition to the consequences of neoliberal globalisation. In Europe, the protests against austerity that spread through the region since 2011 created a similar scenario to the Latin American one in the 1980s, paving the way for the formation of a European anti-austerity TFM. However, the lack of transnational feminist spaces that promote an intersectional movement building stands as a key obstacle.

## **Transnational Feminist Movements**

Studies of Transnational Social Movements (TSM) often locate the rise of these global networks in the context of globalization (Della Porta et al., 2006; Guidry et al., 2000; Smith et al., 1997; Tarrow, 2005). The notion of “global civil society” emerged in the nineties, related to a new understanding of citizenship and civil society in the era of globalization (Kaldor, 2003, p. 50). Social movements increasingly performed in the international arena and the study of these actors focused on the global dimension, making way for an interest on TSMs (Echart, 2008, p. 40).

In a globalised context, the activity of TSMs has allowed the creation of transnational collective identities; the interests and demands of this activism transcend borders and lead to the articulation of transnational alliances (Eisenstadt, 2007, pp. 214-218). The alternative cultural frameworks that sustain the collective action at an international level are based on ideas and values shared by actors in different parts of the world (Echart, 2008, p. 69). As a result, we have seen the emergence of transnational activist identities like those linked to the Alterglobalization Movement (AGM).

The organisational form of TSMs is defined as Transnational Social Movement Organisation (TSMO). Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco described TSMOs as the International Non-Government Organisations that promote institutional and political changes at international level (Smith et al., 1997, p. 59). In fact, both Tilly and Tarrow think about social movements as interactions between activists and the authorities that constitute their target (Tarrow, 2005; Tilly, 2004). In the same line of thought, McCarthy and Zald distinguish between a Social Movement (SM), defined as a set of opinions and beliefs that advocate for certain changes in society, and a Social Movement Organisation (SMO), which is the formal organisation that identifies their goals with the preferences of a SM (1977, pp. 1217-1218). This conceptualisation works the same way at a transnational level. So, for example, the World March of Women (WMW) is a TSMO, an organisational form of the Feminist TSM, which would also include other feminist organisations, coalitions, networks, or TSMOs at an international level, as well as the part of the population supporting feminist ideas.

Still, if we look at studies on Transnational Feminist Movements (TFM), Moghadam uses the term Transnational Feminist Networks (TFN) to refer to their organisational form (Moghadam, 2015, p. 53), which can be understood as a type of TSMO. Moghadam’s terminology relates more with Keck and Sikkink’s work on Transnational Advocacy Networks (TAN) (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Given the work already developed on TFNs, I will keep this terminology and I will use the combination TFM/TFN to refer to the Feminist TSM and its organisational forms. So, in the previous example the WMW can be considered a TFN, while the Feminist TSM would be the TFM.

According to Jackie Smith, TSMs emerge when the political opportunity for the participation and incidence of social movements is more favourable at an international level than in the national arena (Smith

et al., 1997, p. 57). This has been the case of TFNs, which have from the very beginning performed at a transnational level. Indeed, even though the rise of TSMs is inevitably linked to globalization, transnational feminist activism has been considered an early precedent of contemporary TSMs (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). These authors brought to light the similarities in ideas and practice between the transnational network for the suffrage of women and contemporary TSMs. In doing so, they revealed the lack of attention that both History and International Relations had paid to the international dimension of a movement that, like Fred Halliday highlighted, by the beginning of the 20th century had put together a significant infrastructure at a transnational level (Halliday, 1994, p. 192). Moghadam also revealed how sociological theories of social movements, upon which the above-mentioned approaches to TSMs have been built, lacked a gender perspective and had ignored women's activism (Moghadam, 2000, pp. 57-59).

Women have been mobilizing at a transnational level for a long time, articulating their own TFNs. In Moghadam's words, these are "structures organised above the national level that unite women from three or more countries around a common agenda" (Moghadam, 2005, p. 4). She claims that "these movements and organizations are based on a sense of collective identity, shared meanings, and common goals on the part of members" (Moghadam, 2000, p. 60). It was the case of the international movement for women's suffrage. Rooted in a collective identity beyond national borders, this movement adopted a transnational character. Still, according to Moghadam, subsequent international feminist organisations, like the early Women's International Democratic Federation (created in 1945), had an *international* but not a *transnational* character. A condition for the latter one would be "a conscious crossing of national boundaries and a superseding of nationalist orientations" (Moghadam, 2000, p. 60). Moghadam suggests that activism from the second-wave feminism was also marked by national or regional contexts, with disagreements between Western feminists and Third World feminists. The inclusion of diverse voices from different contexts would be a key for the articulation of a TFN. In that line of thought, Marchand argues that intersectionality has become a key strategy for transnational feminism (Marchand, 2014, p. 187).

The United Nations (UN) Decade of Women (1975-1985) was crucial for the formation of international alliances between women's movements. The UN Conference of Nairobi 1985 has been considered a turning point for the crossing of national boundaries. Many TFNs were formed between this and the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, including Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Women in Development Europe (WIDE), the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) or the Committee of Latin American and the Caribbean for the Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM). Since then feminist movements across the world have developed a common vocabulary, agenda, and strategies, adopting an increasingly supranational form (Moghadam, 2000, pp. 61-62).

Precisely, the 1980s is considered the beginning of the globalization process, when globalization reached not only the economic level but all levels of human activity (García Segura, 1999, pp. 315-350). Moghadam makes a direct link between the rise of TFNs and the processes of globalization, both regarding the negative consequences they have had for women and the increasing access to information and computing technologies that promote transnational activism (Moghadam, 2005, p. 3).

Taking all this into account, in the following section we focus in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, where the above-mentioned transnational links have fostered the formation of a transnational feminist activist identity against neoliberal globalization, rooted in socio-historic conditions that have shaped resistance in the region. The "lost decade" of the 1980s, when contradictions of globalisation became evident, brought about an intense mobilization of women and their articulation at a transnational level.

## Typologies of women's collective action in Latin America and the Caribbean. Organisation and socio-historic conditions

In her study of women's movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, Maxine Molyneux uses the term "women's collective action" (WCA), or what Sheila Rowbotham defined as "women in movement": "women acting together in pursuit of common ends" (Molyneux, 1998, p. 225; 2003, p. 227; Rowbotham, 1992). These definitions comprise the great diversity of women's movements in the region, including "more diffuse and decentred" forms of "female solidarity," based on women's "practical interests" and not only "strategic interests" (Molyneux, 1998, pp. 223-236). We explain here the categories that intertwine in these definitions.

First, Molyneux distinguishes between three types of female mobilization according to their autonomy: *independent or autonomous movements*, which have total control of their agenda, in general traditional feminist movements; *associative linkage*, independent women's organizations that establish alliances with other political organizations, with an autonomous mandate but looking for negotiation on the integration of their demands in the agendas of the other organizations; and *directed mobilizations*, when there is an external authority that controls the collective action, sometimes without defining a specific feminist agenda and without any explicit commitment to women's specific interests, sometimes as part of a universal emancipatory project that integrate women's own project for emancipation (Molyneux, 2003, pp. 227-235).

Second, Molyneux describes two types of women's interests that shape WCA: *strategic*, involving claims to transform patriarchal social relations and women's position in the established gender order; and *practical*, aimed at satisfying needs arising from women's position in the sexual division of labour. In any case, they are not contradictory and the struggle for practical interests might eventually lead to the consecution of strategic interests (Molyneux, 1998, pp. 231-235).

Finally, she describes two different strategies to pursuit women's interests at a political level: as *particularistic demands*, or as part of a *general interest*. The first ones have played an important part in feminist movements, including reproductive rights or violence against women, but women's struggles have also placed these and other demands as part of broader emancipatory projects (liberal, socialist, or nationalist). According to Molyneux, feminist movements in the South has been often related with broader agendas for social reform (Molyneux, 1998, pp. 236-240).

Latin American feminism feeds from all these different types of WCA. At the same time, it has been shaped by the socio-historic conditions of the region, which have made way for the creation of multiple women's identities that have fostered very heterogeneous movements and demands (in political, socioeconomic, or racial terms), and for the connections both between these diverse women's movements and between them and other struggles. This diversity and these connections have allowed the articulation of a rich and heterogeneous Latin American feminist movement with a transnational character.

Three types of historic processes lie in the organisation of collective action in the region: colonialism and neocolonialism; the military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes; and the socioeconomic crises. As they intertwine with the historical and social conditions of patriarchy, they have affected women's realities in different ways. According to Gina Vargas, Latin American women have organised in these contexts, creating three lines of activism (Vargas, 2008a, pp. 32-92).

1) *Traditional feminism*: it has had a similar trajectory to the international feminist movement. First associations were composed of medium and high-class activists in the 19th century. Initially these groups mainly claimed equality in public spaces and their first steps had been related to a feminism of equality. It flourished at the beginning of the 20th century with the struggles for women's suffrage, the divorce law, education for women, and their access to public positions. It gained relevance again with the UN Decade of Women (1975-1985), with an increasing orientation towards radical feminism and intersectional perspectives. Regarding their organisation, they are mostly autonomous or independent movements.

2) *Grassroot or social feminism*: it has been linked to the defence of the means of livelihood and the struggle has organised around the gender roles of women. It gained prominence during the oil crisis in the 1970s and the “lost decade” of the 1980s. The soup kitchens, food programs for infants, or self-managed projects boosted greatly. Besides, in the context of the military dictatorships that rose in the region in this period, many women (like those in the association of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo) joined the struggle for human rights from their gender roles as mothers of political prisoners and “disappeared” people (Fuentes, 1992, pp. 55-60). Once in grassroots movements, as a result of the consequences of the economic crisis and the patriarchal logic of military regimes and their repression techniques against women, these activists connected with the struggle for women’s rights and the feminist view of violence and power relations (Fuentes, 1992, pp. 55-60).

This type of movements has also risen as a consequence of armed conflicts like those in Nicaragua or Colombia. Participating from their gender roles, these women have criticised the specific violence women suffer in these conflicts (Luna, 1991, pp. 131-141). More recently, similar movements have been born in Mexico and Guatemala to denounce violence against women in cases like Ciudad Juárez<sup>1</sup> and other situations of extreme violence in the borders of these countries. Mostly, they are organizations like the Mothers of May, formed by family and friends of women victims of violence. Thanks to these associations, *feminicide* gained visibility in Latin America, promoting the theorization of this concept and its inclusion in the penal code of some countries (Lagarde, 2009).

According to Molyneux, the relevance of women’s grassroots movements in Latin America has given rise to a “social feminism” (Molyneux, 2003, p. 269). Collective social claims have an important repercussion and wide participation.

Also related to this social feminism, we can mention two other varieties of Latin American feminism: *community feminism* and *indigenous feminism*. Both have gained relevance in the last three decades (in relation with the struggles of indigenous peoples, especially in the 1990s), with important contributions from the *xinka* women in Guatemala and the *aymara* in Bolivia (Gargallo, 2014, pp. 151-196), and they stand as a particular contribution of Latin American feminism (Cabezas González, 2014, p. 2).

In their structure and organization, these movements present autonomous forms, especially in the case of community feminism.

3) *Militant women*: it is made up of women that took part in leftist organisations like trade unions, movements for independence, or political parties (Vargas, 2008a). Latin American women have had an important presence in revolutionary processes across the continent, including the Mexican Revolution (1910), the Cuban Revolution (1959), or the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua (1979) (Jaquette, 1994). In some cases, the lack of representation of women in these movements and the refusal to include their claims in the revolutionary processes resulted in the creation of women’s committees in the organisations. In some other cases, militant women left these movements and organised autonomous groups in the context of the rise of the so-called “other” social movements (Günder Frank & Fuentes, 1990), formed mainly by indigenous peoples, women, young people, and peasants. Regarding their organisation, these movements were mostly directed.

## **Transnational feminism in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Feminist Encounters**

The above-mentioned varieties of feminist activism have met in different circumstances. Traditional feminist organisations took part in the struggles for independence in the 19th century. Women’s movements also joined forces at the beginning of the 20th century, at a time of a rise of all trends. However, it is especially remarkable the convergence that started to take place as a result of the UN Decade of Women (Fuentes, 1992, pp. 55-60).

The preliminary meetings before the First World Conference on Women in Mexico D.F. in 1975 fostered women's organisations in many Latin American countries, as well as alliances and networks between them. Feminist movements made contact with women in grassroots peasant or urban organisations, and militant women from the traditional left started to be aware of the difficulties to introduce women's demands in their movements. During the 1990s the UN continued with this process, with the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, followed by a series of five-year reviews. The actions to prepare the Fourth Conference constitute the Beijing Process. In Latin America, this process strengthened the alliances between feminist and women's organisations. As a result, the Committee of Latin American and the Caribbean for the Defence of Women's Rights (CLADEM) was formed.

Since the end of the 1980s, women have also participated in the mobilizations against neoliberal globalisation, a scenario that paved the way for the convergence of movements in the region (Perea Ozerin, 2014). In fact, during the 1990s and the 2000s, there were a series of protests in many Latin American countries against the negative impact of neoliberal policies, reaching a climax with the Zapatista uprising in 1994 (Álvarez et al., 2004; Seoane & Taddei, 2001). They were part of the transnational AGM, in which Latin American movements and particularly feminist activism played an important role. There were important political changes in the region related to this unrest, with new progressive governments in countries like Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Uruguay.

The Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM), born in 2000, is a significant example of a TFN from this period. It was articulated as a direct response to the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) integration process, at a time when feminist activism in the continent organised transnationally around the spread of free trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) (Marchand, 2014, pp. 183-185).

In the case of Latin American feminism it is particularly relevant the role of the *Encuentros Feministas Latinoamericanos y Caribeños* (Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters - EFLAC) for the formation of TFNs. Organised every two or three years since 1981, the EFLACs have fostered the articulation of TFNs on different issues. Women from all the typologies of collective action described above have attended these meetings, promoting debates on feminist ideas and practice beyond local, national, and regional settings. Indeed, these encounters have become transnational spaces where local activists have discussed and reflected on the different discourses and practices in regional feminism. According to Sonia Álvarez, while a lot of attention has been paid to the spaces provided by the UN, studies of transnational feminism in Latin America have ignored the impact of non-official spaces like that offered by the EFLAC. This alternative forum allowed the diversity of women's movements in the region to put on the table all kinds of issues affecting women, discuss them from very different perspectives and, at the same time, reshape discourses and practice of Latin American feminisms (Álvarez et al., 2002).

If we look at the main discussions and themes addressed in the EFLAC since 1981, an expression of the agenda of recent Latin American feminisms, we can find issues that remain as priorities of transnational feminist activism. The following topics have stood out along these meetings (Vargas, 2008b):

1) "*Autonomy of defence*": in the face of the marginalisation of women's demands in other struggles of the Left (regarding issues concerning women as much as feminist theory), in the 1<sup>st</sup> EFLAC (Bogotá, Colombia, 1981), activists claimed the autonomy of the movement and of feminism as a political theory and practice that should be taken into account as an historical struggle against class oppression (Jaquette, 1994, pp. 2-5). In the 6<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (El Salvador, 1993), this issue was again on the table as a result of the Beijing Process and the institutionalisation of the movement. In the 7<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Cartagena, Chile, 1996), a balance of the participation in Beijing was made. Autonomist activists like María Galindo, from the Bolivian organisation *Mujeres Creando*, were very critical. They warned about a potential depoliticization of the movement and a marginalisation of most radical proposals like economic justice and free abortion, arguing that the feminist discourse might lose its most transformative essence. On the other hand, those defending institutional

participation contended that otherwise the movement risked being marginalised. Gina Vargas, from the *Flora Tristán Centre of Women* in Peru, represented the region in Beijing. According to Vargas, that participation met two strategies: one towards regarding governments (to negotiate) and another regarding civil society (to maintain their presence as an autonomous movement with capacity to mobilize people in the streets and shape politics). In the 12<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Bogotá, Colombia, 2011) autonomy was again discussed, this time in relation to ethnocentric feminism.

2) *Theorization of patriarchy and feminist analysis*: it was the main debate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> EFLAC (Lima, Peru, 1983). There were also discussions between militant and autonomist women.

3) *Intersectionality*: together with autonomy they have been the topics involving greatest conflict and debate. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> EFLAC (Bertioga, Brasil, 1985), this debate related to ethnic politics, with an important presence of black and indigenous women. In the 5<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (San Bernardo, Argentina, 1990), it concerned a variety of collectives like the *pobladoras*, women from grassroots movements or trade unionists. This issue was also addressed during the 8<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1999), thanks to the Caribbean feminists and young activists who put on the table the generational debate (Vargas, 2008b, pp. 159-181). In the 4<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Taxco, México, 1987), the discussion addressed the ideological and political perspective, with the presence of women from socialist countries like Cuba and Nicaragua, and regarding sexual orientation, with the celebration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Latin American and Caribbean Lesbian Meeting. For the 10<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Sierra Negra, Brasil, 2005), four working groups were organised on racism, ethnocentrism, youth, and sexuality and lesbianism (Vargas, 2008b, pp. 159-181). In the 14<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Montevideo, Uruguay, 2017) a working group on the different names of feminism highlighted the different voices, practices, and experiences that constitute the movement. This Encounter also included a working group on racism and discrimination (Censat, 2018).

4) *Violence against women in armed conflicts*: with contributions mostly from Centro American women in the Fourth EFLAC (Taxco, Mexico, 1987). In the 14<sup>th</sup> EFLAC in 2017 there were at least three working groups on violence, including on: urban violence, wars and collective resistance, and gender violence (Censat, 2018).

5) *Neoliberal globalisation*: it dominated discussions in the Ninth EFLAC (Playa Tambor, Costa Rica, 2002), at a time when the AGM was in the rise with the celebration of the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (Brasil) in 2001. Activists again pointed at the limitations of the UN and the institutional participation in the context of the global spread of neoliberalism.

6) *The gender gap and the violation of reproductive rights*: taking the campaign against fundamentalisms launched in 2002 by the AFM as a reference, in the 11<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (México D.F., 2009) these issues were directly linked with the extremist ideas coming from religions, neoliberalism, militarism, and other doctrines.

7) *Sustainability of life (capital versus life conflict) and the relation between the body and the territory*: in the 13<sup>th</sup> EFLAC (Lima, Peru, 2014), there were three core debates: critical interculturality (social, ethnic, cultural, economic, and sexual diversity in regional feminism), sustainability of life (capital *versus* life conflict), and reflections on the connection between body and territory. This last conceptualization has been a key contribution from Latin America. The defence of the bodies of women as political subjects is related with the defence of territories as spaces for life, from a material, cultural, historic, and symbolic perspective (EFLAC website). Related with these issues, in the 14<sup>th</sup> EFLAC there was a working group on feminist economics and another one on self-care and feminist “buen vivir” (good living) (Censat, 2018).

## Transnational feminist activism in Europe

Bearing the Latin American case in mind, the key factors we must take into account in order to study European transnational feminism activism are the following. First, the impact of socio-historic processes such as the rise of international institutions (in particular, the launch of the UN Decade of Women) and the globalization processes (and the global social response in the form of the AGM) for the articulation of European TFNs. Second, the existence of transnational spaces where the diversity of WCA in the region can meet up and share their different agendas and perspectives. And third, the construction of a transnational feminist identity that goes beyond national or regional identities.

From a socio-historic perspective, the origins of contemporary women's activism in Europe are often located in the Enlightenment period during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Still, Molyneux argues that it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> that women started to organise against patriarchy and discrimination based on sex in many parts of the world (Molyneux, 1998, p. 222). It was in this period when the transnational movement for women's suffrage was born. Like in Latin America, these first steps of transnational feminism were crucial for the rise of women's movements in Europe. Different typologies of WCA like the autonomist *suffragettes*, the women in the socialist Second International and the more liberal International Women Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), constituted in Berlin in 1904, participated in this TFN (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, pp. 51-58).

In the case of Europe, the UN Decade of Women and the mobilizations against neoliberal globalisation were also key factors in the formation of TFNs. Still, there are two specific socio-historic processes in the region that are worth mentioning here: the European integration process and the rise of the above-mentioned "other" social movements in the 1960s-1970s.

The construction of the EU has entailed an increasing compromise with gender equality since the inclusion of the principle of equality in the retribution of women and men workers in the Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 (Rodríguez Manzano, 2010, pp. 38-39). The decade of the 1990s has been considered as the "golden years" of gender equality in the EU, being the implementation of *gender mainstreaming* a landmark in this trajectory (Perrons & Plomien, 2014, p. 301). This compromise and the activities resulting from it have been monitored by TFNs with institutional links like the European Women's Lobby (EWL), born in a conference in London in 1987. Based in Brussels, the EWL has the support of the European Commission. Other EU-level TFNs coordinated with the EWL are the University Women of Europe (founded in 1981) and the European Network of Migrant Women (created in 2012).

On the other hand, the rise of the "other" social movements in Europe in the context of the cycle of global protests during the 1960s and 1970s, which reached a climax in 1968, has been considered a precedent of the AGM due to the transnational connections established between activists in different parts of the world. They brought to light the political discourses of feminism, ecology, pacifism, antiracism, and solidarity with the struggles in the Global South, criticising traditional social movements for ignoring these demands (Taibo, 2005, pp. 59-63). These mobilizations fostered links between movements in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe that would crystallize during the 1980s. There was a common agenda that, according to Olaf Corry, affected especially environmental activists, but also feminism and antimilitarism. Corry mentions the Socio-Ecological Union, an Eastern European movement that brought together all these types of activism and would be integrated in European transnational networks (Corry, 2014).

In addition, the UN Decade of Women fostered connections between women's organisations in Europe, promoting the creation, for example, of the Women in Development Europe (WIDE). Alterglobalization spaces like the European Social Forum (ESF) played a similar role. In particular, the Assembly of Women facilitated the collaboration between Eastern and Central European feminist movements, which had been historically lacking (Mitrailia, 2007). Indeed, the Assembly of Women in the ESF (Paris 2003, London

2004, Athens 2006)<sup>2</sup> and in other alterglobalization spaces like the Mediterranean Social Forum (Barcelona, 2005) (Vivas, 2005), as well as the international encounters fostered by the World March of Women in Europe (Brussels in 2000, Vigo in 2004 or Marseille in 2005), have been the main meeting points for alterglobalization feminist activism of all types in Europe (World March of Women, 2008). Women's commissions in leftist political parties like the Party of the European Left and independent feminist organisations have participated in these meetings. Still, Greek feminist activist Sonia Mitralia (2007) has claimed that independent feminist spaces are needed in order to deepen into women's demands and give visibility to the European feminist movement (Mitralia, 2007).

The mobilizations in the aftermath of the crisis of 2008 in Europe can be compared to the protests during and after the Latin American "lost decade". In a similar way, they opened up a favourable scenario for establishing connections between European feminisms, in which a transnational anti-austerity feminist identity might crystallize. According to Marchand, these protests had a more national character than the earlier AGM and were more directed at the failure of nation-states to control the economy (Marchand, 2014, p. 185). Indeed, there were not global actions like those in Seattle in 1999, which marked the international irruption of the AGM; the response was more decentralised. Yet, by 2011 protests spread across Europe, with particular intensity in Southern countries where the crisis had worse consequences.

Feminism was present in these protests. There were specific campaigns such as: the *Marea Violeta* (Violet Tide) movement and the *strikes of care* in Spain in 2012 (García Grenzner, 2012), the demonstrations at a European level organised by the Portuguese branch of the World March of Women on the 8 March 2012 (Marcha Mundial das Mulheres Portugal, 2012), or the strikes of the Greek cleaning workers in 2013 (Waterfield, 2014). And feminist anti-austerity activism also participated in mixed movements and actions, like the 15-M in Spain (Ezquerria & Cruells, 2015, pp. 42-60) or the Anti-austerity Marches in UK (Feminist Fightback, 2015). A more institutional organisation such as the EWL reported on the negative impact of austerity for women (European Women's Lobby, 2012), and organised campaigns against these policies (European Women's Lobby, 2013). WIDE was also involved in European networks against austerity (Transform! Europe, 2011).

In all these cases, women's activism brought to light the impact of austerity policies on women, pointing at their predominance in the public sector (which suffered continuous cutbacks since 2010 in most of the European countries affected by the crisis) and their traditional role as carers (women have been bearing the burden of the crisis, as social policies have also been cut). Even though there was not a common transnational space where all the varieties of European WCA could share their different ideas and perspectives, a common agenda that transcends regional borders resulted from the mobilisations. European anti-austerity feminism laid bare the consequences for women of economic policies of adjustment based on austerity, bringing to our attention the intensification of the role of women as caretakers and guarantors of reproduction, the devaluation of reproductive work as the welfare state is dismantled, the growing inequality and vulnerability of women in the context of austerity, and the deepening of the conflict between life and capital as a result of these policies. And they defended alternative politics to austerity, which prioritise equality, human sustainable development, the environment, and common welfare, over the centrality of markets in current capitalist society (Marcha Mundial das Mulheres Portugal, 2012; Ezquerria & Cruells, 2015; Gayle, 2015).

## Conclusions

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the actions and spaces related with the UN Decade of Women, the AGM, and the EFLAC promoted the articulation of a TFM. The conditions for its existence have been identified as an agenda that transcends regional issues; a diversity of activists and forms of organisation that allow intersectional perspectives and concerns; and a feminist transnational forum that has been shaping

activism in the region (the EFLAC). The context of crisis in the 1980s, followed by strong mobilizations in the region against neoliberalism, set the conditions for the articulation of transnational spaces where a transnational feminist identity was shaped. This identity has integrated an intersectional perspective, bringing together the different identities, discourses, and strategies that have characterised contemporary WCA in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the case of Europe, in addition to the UN Decade of Women and the AGM, we can highlight the specific process of the EU integration as a factor for the formation of TFNs. These networks would be of an institutional character and we have not found alternative transnational spaces similar to the EFLAC. The AGM provided with some alternative spaces like the Assembly of Women but always as part of wider transnational spaces. The anti-austerity protests, which can be read as a continuation of the AGM, have not resulted yet in the articulation of such feminist transnational spaces. They have contributed to the construction of a European feminist identity against austerity, but independent feminist spaces like the EFLAC, with capacity to bind together all types of WCA in the region, would be needed to build a TFM against austerity similar to the Latin American alterglobalisation TFM.

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## Notes

\* Reflection paper

- 1 During the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, hundreds of girls and women disappeared and were killed in Ciudad Juárez (Mexico). The number of victims is not clear, since many of the women disappeared have not been found yet (Lagarde, 2009).
- 2 The Assembly of Women has not been organised in all EAFs, being the first Paris 2003. Similarly, participation in the Assembly of Women has been unequal in these spaces; while the meeting in Paris was quite successful with the presence of 3000 activists, only 300 women attended the one in London.

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*How to cite this article:* Perea Ozerin, I. (2020). Transnational feminist movements in Latin America and the Caribbean. Contributions for the study of European activism. *Papel Político*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.11144/Javeriana.papo25.tfml>