Costa Rican Women's Movements: With or Against the State?

Assessing state initiatives against gender-based violence in Costa Rica, 2010-2020.

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Introduction

Costa Rica's reputation is quite different than that of its neighbouring countries. The country does not have a history of authoritarian regimes and abolished its armed forces in the 1940s. Without (hardly) any conflicts, Costa Rica was able to focus on improving living standards, including conditions of women. In comparison to other countries in the region, Costa Rica was (and is) quite ahead in terms of human rights. However, as this study shows, the country still struggles with inequalities between men and women. Women in Costa Rica are confronted with these inequalities on a daily basis, including discrimination and violence. In order to tackle these issues, women's movements have risen since the 1940s and have pressured the Costa Rican government to improve conditions and the status of women.

The aim of this thesis is to find an answer to the following question: Have state actions to achieve gender equality in Costa Rica been effective according to women's movements? The study contains an evaluation of the state actions against gender-based violence in Costa Rica in the last decade. In order to find answers to the question, the study is divided in three chapters. The first chapter introduces the three main analytical pillars of the study: the state, social women's movements, and international influences. The concept of State Feminism is applied to the analysis to clarify this triangle and to describe the relationship between women's movements and the state. This chapter is followed by an analytical section that focusses on the specific country of the case study, Costa Rica. Finally, the third chapter describes the case study and provides answers to the main research question. Both secondary and primary (interviews) sources are consulted during this investigation.

In the first chapter, the concept of State Feminism is introduced, which examines the influence of women's and/or feminist movements on state policymaking. In order to answer the research question, it is important to research the impact of feminist movements on state policymaking in Costa Rica. This recent approach, researched by McBride and Mazur, arises from a combination of four main subjects, namely institutionalism and state; social movements; democracy and representation; and policy and framing. After applying these concepts to State Feminism, McBride and Mazur describe different levels of social movement's impact on state policymaking. This typology identified by the authors will be applied to the case of Costa Rica in the second chapter. The section of state feminism studied by McBride and Mazur will be followed by the process of state feminism in the Latin American region. The rise of new social movements worldwide made its way to Latin America and marginalized groups, such as women, started to rise in the region as well. Feminist groups demanded equal rights and pressured governments into installing national women's agencies. Conferences on Women held by the United Nations from 1975 to 1995 and Human Rights Reports published by the Organization of American States strengthened the demands of women in the region and most Latin American countries had installed some form of women's agencies by the 1990s.

Before identifying the level of impact of women's movements on state policymaking in Costa Rica, chapter 2 provides relevant information on the rise of women's and feminist movements in the country since the 1940s. It will be made clear that women's movements in Costa Rica have developed quite different than in other countries in the region. Reason for this is that Costa Rica

does not have a history of military regimes, so women were not active in protesting against the state. When women did protest against state policies, they chose for nonviolent strategies. In order to pressure the government to improve women's conditions, feminists formed alliances with (international) organizations, provided seminars on women's rights and discussed the issues in the form of dialogues with government representatives. In comparison to other Latin American countries, Costa Rican feminists have achieved several advances in acknowledging women's rights such as the right to vote in 1949 and the establishment of an independent National Women's Institute (INAMU) in 1991. Nevertheless, the chapter will also focus on discrimination and violence against women, two issues that Costa Rican women face on a daily basis. It will be made clear that despite the advancements in women's rights on paper, the Costa Rican government fails to protect women from discrimination and violence.

Chapter 3 describes the relationship during the last decade between active Costa Rican women's movements and the state agency National Women's Institute (INAMU). New social movements have risen since the 2000s and some of them are consulted during this research. Besides interviews with founders of social organizations, employees of the institute and victims of gender-based violence are consulted as well. Even though the institute is headed by a Minister for Women's Affairs, it does not enjoy the status of a stand-alone ministry. The chapter focusses on the relationship between the institute and women's organizations and attitudes of women's organizations towards cooperation with (other) government institutions.

A summary of the work and an answer to the research question will be provided in the conclusion. It will also discuss the limitations of this study as well as suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1

State Feminism, Social Movements, and International Influences in Latin America

Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this research is to find an answer to the following research question: *Have state actions to achieve gender equality in Costa Rica been effective according to women's movements?* In order to find answers to this question, the research is divided in three chapters. The aim of this first chapter is to examine the theoretical side of the research question and therefore uses the theory of State Feminism, followed by academic literature on (New) Social Movements and International Influences in Latin America. The concept of State Feminism is applied to this research because it describes the influences of feminist movements on state policy making. Literature on State Feminism mainly focussed on Western democracies. This research will link academic literature on western societies to the process of state feminism in Latin America. New social movements, such as feminist movements, raised in Western countries as well as in the Latin American region. With the rise of these feminist movements, demands for gender equality and changes in legislation to protect women increased as well. Support of international organizations such as the United Nations and The Organization of American States, strengthened women's positions in Latin America. As a result (most) Latin American governments established national women's agencies to improve the status and conditions of women. The process of state feminism in Costa Rica will be discussed in chapter 2.

1.1 State Feminism and State Policymaking

As mentioned, the theory of State Feminism describes the influence of feminist movements on state policymaking (Hernes, 1987; McBride and Mazur, 2010). The following historical account about State Feminism is based on research that has been done by McBride and Mazur (1995; 2008; 2010; 2013). In their work, the authors describe the alliances between women's policy agencies (institutions) and women's movements and examine the access of the movements to policy making. Many other researchers interested in the topic have used McBride and Mazur's literature about State Feminism in their own studies (Valiente, 2007; Franceschet, 2003; Craske, 1999) and therefore, literature about the concept often links back to their research. The edited volume *Comparative State Feminism* (1995) was their first work on this topic and many studies have followed, each critically examining their previous works.

1.1.1 Conceptualization of State Feminism

According to McBride and Mazur, women's movements have been the most prevalent of all social movements of the contemporary era and have also suffered the longest. After decades of activism with little to no reactions from governments, political leaders have finally responded by establishing institutions to cope with the demands of women's groups such as women's policy agencies, also described as women's machineries, or offices (2010: 3). The United States was one of the first countries to have a permanent agency for women in 1920, called the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour. More and more countries have followed in establishing women's agencies and offices, especially during and after World War II. The United Nations (UN) has been the source of encouragement and advice to them, as the UN had its own institutions for women such as: the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and its administrative arm, the Division

for the Advancement of Women (DAW). Another reason for establishing women's agencies has been the rise of women's movements after World War II, especially on the Left where activists stood up against male dominance and were seeking policy change. The women's rights strategy focused on and promoted antidiscrimination and equality. Other activists were active in leftist parties to include women's demands in the social and democratic policy agendas (McBride and Mazur, 1995). The question is whether these initiatives have been helpful for women's movements in gaining access to state policy-making arenas and influencing policy outcomes (McBride and Mazur, 2010: 3). In order to answer this question, one must know more about the development of the theory of State Feminism.

Helga Hernes (1987) coined the concept "State Feminism" in her book *Welfare States and Women Power: Essays in State Feminism*. With this term, she gave a name to the idea that governments could help feminist organizations to promote women's rights through policy and that individuals within the state could promote a "women-friendly" approach to state action by including women's needs into policy making (McBride and Mazur, 2010: 4). McBride and Mazur followed Hernes in studying the topic and use the concept of state feminism in its complex analytical sense: "State feminism is the degree to which women's policy agencies forge alliances with women's movements and help them gain access to policy arenas and achieve their policy goals" (2010: 5). In other words, the concept represents the relation between women working for the state – women's policy agencies – and women in civil society – women's movements – where the state gives power to the civil society by actively listening to their demands. Examples of this relation between state agencies and social movements will be discussed in the following chapters. One of the outcomes of studying this relation is according to McBride and Mazur that women's movements are more likely to achieve positive state responses when they have an alliance with women's policy agencies. They indicate that "the agencies facilitate movement success by gendering issue definitions used by policy actors in ways that coincide with movement frames in policy debates, leading to both access and policy change" (McBride et al., 2010: 5). Thus, state institutions improve the success of women's movements by using problem definitions in ways that correspond with movement frames in policy debates, leading to both policy access and eventually policy change.

Women's Policy Agencies

In order to understand the relation between women's policy agencies and women's movements, it is important to understand the development of these agencies (or machineries). There have been three waves of women's policy agencies, according to McBride and Mazur. In their chapter *Women's Policy Agencies and State Feminism*[1], they define women's policy agencies as "state-based structures at all levels and across all formal government arenas assigned to promote the rights, status, and condition of women or strike down gender-based hierarchies" (2013: 655). Thus, these institutions make sure women's needs are included in all policy areas. The first wave of women's policy agencies took place before the 1970s. Only a few women's policy agencies were set up in western democracies such as the United States, Canada, and France. These offices mostly focused on the status and condition of women and women's issues in the area of employment. After the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, more agencies were set up worldwide (McBride and Mazur, 2013). "Delegates at the 1975 UN International Women's Year conference in Mexico City decided that all governments should establish agencies dedicated to

[1] *Handbook on Gender and Politics*. Oxford University Press, (2013).

promoting gender equality and improving the states and conditions of women" (True and Mintrom, 2001: 30). As a consequence of this conference, the second wave occurred from the 1970s until mid-1990s. According to Rai (2003) all western countries had national offices by the mid-1980s and by the mid-1990s, 127 countries across the globe had installed national women's offices. Rather than women's condition alone, the second wave of women's policy growth focused on gender equality. The goal was to incorporate a gender perspective into all areas of government policy, known as "Gender Mainstreaming" (True and Mintrom, 2001). Gender mainstreaming will be further explained in the next section. The third and final wave began in the late 1990s and particularly showed changes in Western European countries. The focus on women and gender had shifted towards diversity goals where the agencies were responsible for inequalities due to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and disability (McBride and Mazur, 2013). Thus, women's policy agencies have come a long way since the first offices were installed. The three waves define the increase in women's offices as well as the development of the agencies. Adding to that, the focus of the women's agencies has shifted from the area of employment to inequality between men and women, the topic of this research.

Gender Mainstreaming

As mentioned, gender mainstreaming is the goal to include women's needs in all policies. True and Mintrom (2001) look into the growth of state institutions that promote gender mainstreaming. These institutions try to integrate a gender-equality perspective into all areas of government policy (McBride and Mazur, 2013; Staudt, 2003). Although these institutions have received little or no attention outside of feminist policy circles, they do represent a powerful challenge to politics and policymaking across the globe. True and Mintrom argue that transnational networks consisting mostly of nonstate actors (women's international nongovernmental organizations and the United Nations) have been the "primary forces" in spreading gender mainstreaming. The transnational feminist movement in particular has played an important role in the spread of gender-mainstreaming (2001: 27). In the two decades after UN's first IWY (International Women's Year) conference in Mexico-City in 1975, permanent gender equality machineries have been installed by a majority of nation-states worldwide. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 introduced a Platform of Action which intensified the role of national women's agencies. This platform has led to positive outcomes as "… even countries where women are known to suffer considerable gender injustice have instigated institutional changes to advance the cause of women and gender equity" (True and Mintrom, 2001: 30). To take the role of women's agencies even more seriously, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) Expert Group on National Machineries for Gender Equality came with a recommendation in 1998 that women's agencies "should be at the highest level of government falling under the responsibility of the President, Prime Minister or Cabinet Minister … and be located in the central planning or policy coordination area of government"[2]. Hence DAW thinks that within a higher level of government, women's agencies can have easier access to funding and policy making. Staudt agrees with this recommendation and states that "gender analysis should be as central to mainstream policies in employment, enterprise, agriculture, criminal/civil justice, and education as mainstream attention should go to once side-lined 'women's' issues such as domestic violence and reproductive health" (2003: 41). As a result, different kinds of high level women's agencies have been installed across the globe such as stand-

[2] UN DAW National Machineries for Gender Equality, Expert Group Meeting, Santiago, Chile, August 31 – September 4, 1998.

alone government ministries (New Zealand in 1984), offices within the head of state's department (Australia in 1977), or quasi-autonomous state agencies such as national commissions (Peru, Venezuela, and the Philippines). Other machineries, for example bureaus or divisions for gender equality within Ministries of Labour, Social Welfare, or National Development are considered as lower-level state agencies (True and Mintrom, 2001).

Hence, women's policy agencies have grown into different kinds of high level women's agencies such as ministries and quasi-autonomous state agencies, and their main focus is on the incorporation of gender mainstreaming into all areas of government policy. The UN conferences caused worldwide consent and acknowledgement of these women's institutions and makes sure that the delegates include women's needs in their policy-making.

1.1.2 State Feminism by McBride and Mazur

State Feminism was quite a new phenomenon when McBride and Mazur started their research. Therefore, the state feminism framework used by McBride and Mazur combines several sections of scholarly and empirical research, such as: institutionalism, social movements, democratization and representation, and policy conflict and framing. The interest in these areas of the social sciences in the early 1990s developed simultaneously with the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS) project and inspired members of the network during the crucial early phases (2010: 6). The RNGS project will be further explained in the next section. The United Nations also contributed to the interest in relationships between women's movements and states by raising awareness on the importance of institutional machineries for gender equality through its International Women's Year (IWY) Policy Conferences[3]. Each conference presented a plan of action for women's rights and gender equality to be pursued by member-states. As mentioned in the previous section, in order to achieve the goals for improving conditions for women, states had to implement government-based women's policy machineries. Consequently, the conferences caused a rapid expansion of agencies throughout the world and this attracted the attention of scholars and activists (McBride and Mazur, 2013: 661). Some of these scholars contributed case studies to the first work on state feminism by McBride and Mazur: the edited volume *Comparative State Feminism* (1995). In this volume, the concept state feminism was understood as women's policy agencies as structures, their origins, resources, relation to women's movements, and effects. These agencies are devoted to incorporating women's policy issues. The writers explain that the term *women's policy machinery* was coined by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) referring to agencies devoted to women's policy issues (1995: 3). The objectives of the book were; to describe state structures formally responsible for promoting women's position and rights; to analyse whether these state offices achieve feminist goals, and; to propose a combination of political and social factors to come to effective state feminist action. Critically looking at their first book, McBride and Mazur observe in 2013 that both the conceptualization and research design for the book were weak, making the comparative analysis less credible. It is also notable that all case studies involved a Western post-industrial country, except for Poland, an emerging democracy, creating a very Western-oriented study on state feminism. Nevertheless, this book marked the beginning of the RNGS, because it was one of the first to research state feminism. As observed by Valiente, "both *Comparative State Feminism* and the RNGS project require women's policy agencies to help women's movement actors gain access to the policymaking process in order to be classified as "state feminist"" (2007: 533). However, Valiente explains that this is not

[3] IWY conferences were held in Mexico City (1975); Copenhagen (1980); Nairobi (1985); and Beijing (1995).

entirely correct because women's units are typified as state feminist when all they do is encourage gender equality reforms without giving access to women's movements in policy arenas. Often women's policy agencies are seen as state feminist even if all they have achieved are symbolic policies instead of implemented policies (2007: 534). Thus, though definitions of state feminist women's policy agencies differ, the edited volume of McBride and Mazur marked the beginning of a new framework and inspired researchers of the RNGS project.

Definitions of state feminism and women's policy agencies

Since their first edited volume on state feminism, McBride and Mazur have continued to research the topic. In order to clarify definitions of state feminist women's policy agencies, the writers use three lessons – assumptions – of RNGS scholars. The first assumption explained by McBride and Mazur is about *state feminism* being a synonym for *women's policy agencies*. However, they argue that one cannot assume that agencies are proof of feminist outcomes. While the concept of *state feminism* and *women's policy agencies* are often used interchangeably, there is a difference. Women's policy agencies are an important player in the process of state feminism. According to Valiente, using the terms interchangeably means that women's policy agencies automatically; "promote policies that benefit all women, undermine gender hierarchies, include the demands of the women's movement in the policy process, and help women's movement actors gain access to policy arenas" (2007: 531). Nevertheless, Valiente explains that policy change should take place before an agency can be considered feminist. Mostly international researchers who have studied agencies in western countries use state feminism as a synonym for women's policy agencies. However, the terms need to be separated in order to research the activities, effectiveness, and impacts of agencies. This way, researchers can study the extent to which women's policy agencies promote the status of women and gender equality (McBride and Mazur, 2013: 657). Furthermore, McBride and Mazur explain in the introduction of *Comparative State Feminism* that the reasons for establishment of agencies vary across the globe; some governments installed women's agencies to win over votes; others were pressured by women within political parties; and other countries established agencies as a response to increased activism from women's movement organizations (1995: 16). Hence, it is incorrect to assume that all women's policy agencies are a result of feminist actions.

The second clarification brought up by McBride and Mazur (2013) is about a *Western Bias in RNGS scholarship.* Historically, the idea of agencies created by governments for women's interests is based on situations in democratic and economically developed societies. Valiente (2007) explains that scientists researching state feminism tend to focus exclusively on academic work from post-industrial countries and do not take into account research that has been done of developing countries and new democracies such as the African and Latin American region. However, societies outside the post-industrial world have women's agencies and institutions as well, thus Valiente believes that there is no reason to disregard them (2007: 531). Nevertheless, in the beginning of the 1970s the United Nations created awareness about women's institutions in lesser developed countries by promoting the establishment of women's policy agencies worldwide. National agencies became very important during the international policy conferences of the UN. Nonetheless, research on state feminism in post-industrial countries does not automatically apply to that of developing countries. Experts in non-western gender politics should decide whether the state feminist theories and findings can be considered outside the West. As well Rai and others (2003) and Valiente (2007) explain that some factors, for example, state capacity or availability of resources helped women's agencies achieve change in developing countries. Perhaps an even

more important factor was whether there was a stable democracy. These factors were not as important, or were a matter of course, in western societies. Hence, more research needs to be done on the development of state feminism in non-western countries in order to break the "Western Bias in RNGS scholarships".

The third assumption clarified by McBride and Mazur (2013) is *Regional Patterns of Women's Policy Agencies.* This assumption is about generalizing regions of the world. Previous assumption of western and non-western countries is an example of generalization as well. Factors that helped achieve policy change in non-western countries do not automatically apply in western countries and vice-versa. The authors explain that the RNGS study of the women's policy agencies in western democracies found out that there are no structural patterns by region, neither geographically nor in terms of state-society relations. "Rather than common trends in state feminism by regional grouping of country, we found that women's policy agencies' impact and influence varied more by the policy context in which they operated within a given country" (2013: 660). Hence, it is incorrect to generalize structures of women's policy agencies in regions, since every country has its own political background. To presume that patterns exist across more than one region is too soon to conclude since not much research has been done on examining state feminism across countries or regions[4].

Theoretical Framework

As mentioned, according to McBride and Mazur, the framework of state feminism arises from four types of theory: institutionalism and state; social movements; democracy and representation; and policy and framing (2013: 663). The interest in women's policy agencies developed simultaneously with the rise of interest in studying the state as an entity. This "return to the state" theory is introduced by Skocpol in the introduction of *Bringing the State Back In* (1985). Skocpol explains that before the 1980's "dominant theories and research agendas of the social sciences rarely spoke of states", and that "the state was considered to be an old-fashioned concept, associated with dry and dusty legal-formalist studies of nationally particular constitutional principles" (1985: 4). However, this changed after the 1980's when researchers who focused on particular public policy decisions, found that government leaders had taken these initiatives. Skocpol has provided two themes in the development of state feminism that were not considered at first, since the state was seen as an individual. The first theme explained that the state has the capacity to have an impact on society in general and the second theme explained that states are able to affect the organization of political groups by interacting with them. Thus, it became clear that state processes and state structures affected interest groups and social movements (Skocpol, 1985). For some scholars, the institutional approach challenged the view of political theorists that state institutions are neutral when in fact the role of state institutions affects the political environment. The approach also moved the attention from the relation between state structures to the relation between state structures and societal groups, such as the link between women's policy agencies and women's movement activists, the topic of this research. The institutional approach, the first theory, therefore deconstructed the image of the monolithic state and recreated the question of its impact on women. These ideas made room for a structured study of state-based agencies that were created to promote women's status and interests and/or gender equality (McBride et al., 2010: 8). The other three theories that, according to McBride and Mazur, form the basis of the framework of state feminism are briefly discussed.

[4] Rai (2003) is one of the few studies that examined state feminism across more than one region.

The social and women's movement theory helped RNGS bring attention to the question about whether specific state actions would help or hurt women. Women's movements have spread across the countries of Europe and North America since the 1960s, followed by women's movements in the rest of the world. No women's movement speaks for all women. However, the demands of women's movement actors come very close to the expectations that women have from the state. Scholars should also keep in mind that feminist movements are just a part of the women's movement (Waylen, 1996). The link between women's and feminist movements will be discussed in the second chapter (2.2). The question is to what extent have movements been effective in achieving their goals? And what is the outcome of the mobilization of women's movements across the world? McBride and Mazur explain that "rather than looking at outcomes, however, most social movement theory have focused on understanding and explaining the formations and development of movements" (2013: 664). Some scholars did study the impacts of social movement organizations on state policies (Gamson, 1975; Giugni, 1995. 1998; Diani, 1997), but they were having difficulties in defining and measuring the outcomes. Hence, few studies exist on the impact of women's movements when it comes to state policymaking. This research is one of the few studies that examines this influence. The case of Costa Rica will be discussed in the last chapter.

The third theory that forms the basis of state feminism is that of *democracy and representation* and describes the effects of state feminism on increasing representativeness and consequently democratization of established western democracies. Based on Hanna Pitkin's (1967) framework, McBride and Mazur (2013) explain that there are two types of representation for women and the state: descriptive and substantive. Descriptive representation is achieved when movements are included in the decision-making process. And "substantive representation refers to advancing the policy preferences of a group, that is, when movement goals are included in policy content" (2013: 665). Hence, when not the movements themselves are included in the process but their demands are included in policymaking. The state feminism framework suggests that both these types increase the representation of women's movements in the state. And "… the more instances of state feminism found, the greater the democratization" (McBride and Mazur, 2013: 665).

The last theory described by the writers is that of policy conflict and framing. The two concepts should be separated, according to McBride and Mazur. The writers explain that framing theory connects parts of the state feminism framework and that policy conflict theory connects frames to policy processes. Issue frames decide who has influence and who therefore is allowed to join the table where policy is created. Thus, women's representatives will join the table if the issue frame is about women or gender. This way they will influence the issue frame and reflect their perspectives (McBride and Mazur, 2013).

In conclusion, according to McBride and Mazur these four theories together form the basis of the state feminism framework. State feminism represents the relation between (women's) institutions and the state on one hand, and between (women's) institutions and (women's) movements on the other hand. Women's movements have played important roles in the process of democratization in many countries and representation of women in governments is rising. Lastly, women's movements are influencing state policy when it comes to gender issues.

1.1.3 Other Studies on State Feminism

While McBride and Mazur have formed the basis for study on state feminism as, many scholars have followed since, mostly focusing on the outcomes of state feminism. According to Franceschet, "most of the existing research on state feminism has been concerned with how effective it is, that is, to what extent state agencies can actually improve women's rights and/or status" (2003: 18). Valiente adds to this by stating that the policy effectiveness of women's agencies "is one of the topics that has received the most attention by scholars studying state feminism all over the world" (2007: 534). Valiente explains that scholars around the world agree on the importance of some factors in explaining the policy impact of women's machineries. Generally, with some exceptions, left or progressive governments tend to open the door for state feminism (such as Costa Rica), whereas conservative governments tend to hinder the effectiveness of women's units (such as Nicaragua). Hence, possibilities for female representation increase when the government party is a leftist party. Many scholars research this lack of female representation and focus on the so called 'gender-gap' when studying women's representation in politics (Del Campo, 2005; Valiente, 2007). Del Campo explains that; "scholars have affirmed three factors that are responsible for the lack of female participation and representation in public positions: the process of political socialization, larger structural issues, and a strong discrimination against women" (2005: 1718). Hence, these three factors are the causes of the gender-gap in politics.

Besides research on the gender-gap in politics, several scholars on state feminism have concluded that feminist leadership and workers facilitate the feminist policy influence of women's units. Rai explains that when a director and part of the employees of a gender equality unit participate in feminists' movements, they will be aware of the priorities of the movement and will be more committed to further feminist goals (2003: 131-132). One of the interviewees for this research is active in a women's movement and works for the Costa Rican national women's institution at the same time. This case will be discussed in the last chapter (3.3). Nevertheless, while some studies argue that this positively influences policy making, other studies claim that feminist leadership is not a necessity for effective women's policy machineries. Agencies tend to be effective as well when lead by women with knowledge of the political world and/or personal ties with members of the government and the elite. "Therefore, perhaps one of the components of the policy success of feminist institutions is what Friedman (2000: 73) calls "dynamic leadership," rather than feminist leadership" (Valiente, 2007: 535). Hence, these scholars indicate that women do not necessarily need to be feminist to be good leaders, but with the right knowledge and personal ties they will come a long way. Chaney adds to the personal ties by stating that "few women have acted on their own; almost all notable women were wives, mistresses, or daughters of notable men involved in the public affairs of their day" (1979: 51). In Latin America, in the 1960s and 1970s for example, most female politicians were related to male politicians (*ibid*). Thus, whether women's agencies are led by feminists or women with dynamic leadership, both scenarios include good leaders that improve the power of women's policy agencies.

1.1.4 State Feminism in Latin America

According to Craske, the development of feminism has had an equal impact on Latin American politics as in the rest of the world (1999). Worldwide, new governments that replaced authoritarian regimes tried to prove their legitimacy by reacting to the needs of marginalized groups, including women. As a consequence, the collapse of authoritarianism has created opportunities to women that were unimaginable in the past (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002). However, as explained by Craske (1999), increased opportunities come with increased obstacles as states re-open political arenas and women are expected to fill the resulting 'welfare gap'. The process of democratization developed simultaneously with economic restructuring of states. As a consequence of the economic adjustment there was an increase in "male unemployment in traditional sectors while inviting greater female employment in the newly expanding low-wage export sectors" (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 440). Thus, women gained more access to the labour market. With this access, feminists began to organize themselves and demanded equal rights for men and women. However, in order to be taken seriously, feminists in Latin America had to overcome their negative perception as "feminists are seen as elite, professional women with few interests in common with 'ordinary' women" (Craske, 1999: 162). This negative image of feminists in Latin America will be further discussed in the following chapters (2.2 and 3.2). Nevertheless, as feminism developed and created a more inclusive discourse, the movement gained more support from women of all classes and ethnicities that strive to achieve similar goals. "As with feminist movements in other regions, the early feminist organizations in Latin America generally were concerned with three main issues: the vote, protective labour laws and education" (Craske, 1999: 163). The development of state feminism in Costa Rica and women's fight to achieve the right to vote and other rights is described in the second chapter.

Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet have studied the process of state feminism and chose two countries, Chile and Nigeria for their comparative exercise. Both these countries have lived through processes of regime change. The military dictatorship of general Augusto Pinochet ended in 1990 and made Chile one of the last countries in Latin America to transition to democracy (2002: 443). The post-colonial history of Nigeria, after its independence in 1960, is marked by a strong military presence with short civilian interventions. There has not been a military regime since 1999, however, the process of democratization is not completed (2002: 448). In order to reach democracy, both of these regimes shifted from authoritarian to (more or less) democratic regimes. Authoritarian regimes have been very common in the Third World since their independence from Western states. Waylen (1996) distinguishes three types of authoritarian regimes: one party states; personal dictatorships; and military regimes. One party states have been most common in Africa, whereas Latin America is known for its military regimes (three quarters of Latin American countries have had a military regime since the 1960s). Personal dictatorships are seen in Nicaragua (Somoza) and Cuba (Batista) (Waylen, 1996: 95). In comparison to African countries, Latin American countries have encountered greater success in democratization and economic restructuring and stability and women have played an important role in this transition. "Processes of political opening and democratization developed which offered a new and more flexible terrain in which women's movements could grow and become stronger" (Nijeholt et al., 1998: 15). Women had the chance to organize themselves and demanded changes in the context of labour and education in the new democratic states. Apart from some exceptions, such as Haiti, Peru and Venezuela, authoritarian regressions have not reoccurred despite the region's history of military intervention. Adding to that, the economies in the region

vary widely but almost all countries have created outward-oriented and pro-market economic policies, except for Cuba and Venezuela, which improved their economic development (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 440). Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet compared the African and Latin American regions to see what factors favour the emergence of state feminism in a way that improves women's citizenship. In doing so they are particularly interested in state-level responses to improve women's status. They also explain that "the outcome of state feminism is related to the strategies and discourses available to organized women during democratization" (2002: 441). Hence, the results of state feminism in the regions depend on the resources and knowledge of women to organize themselves and the responses of the state. In order to influence policy, the writers explain that women need at least the following three factors: "the existence of a coherent and unified women's movement capable of making *political* demands; existing patterns of gender relations which influence women's access to the political arena; and existing gender ideologies, and whether women can creatively deploy these to further their own interests" (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 441). Craske (1999) adds to this that the state has been useful in addressing women's issues, but situations have been different across the Latin American region given the different structures of women's institutions. As mentioned before, there are high level women's agencies/institutions (stand-alone government ministries or quasi-autonomous state agencies) and low-level women's agencies/institutions (bureaus or divisions for gender equality within Ministries) (True and Mintrom, 2001). These institutions were a consequent of the Women's Conferences held by the UN. The leaders of the conferences wanted the signing countries to supervise and evaluate the progress made in the representation and participation of women in their countries (Del Campo, 2005). Although McBride and Mazur in their edited volume *Comparative State Feminism* (1995) only examined industrialized nations, Craske (1999) argues that the conclusion of the book can be applied to Latin American countries as well. All countries in the region have some sort of women's ministry or other state institution, but their impact is affected by their legal status. There are four typologies that explain the influence of women's institutions on policy, and whether they can easily access ministries. The typologies identified by McBride and Mazur (1995) are the following:

- Type A: high influence/high access
- Type B: high influence/low access
- Type C: low influence/high access
- Type D: low influence/low access

Craske argues that Chile is an example of type C, meaning that women's institutions in Chile do have access to the ministries but do not influence policy making. The case of Chile will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter. The Consejo Nacional de la Mujer in Argentina has, according to Craske "no binding role" and is therefore an example of type D. Nicaragua and Cuba are examples of type B, Craske argues, as these revolutionary countries do not allow independent feminist organizations but do consider the urge to put women's needs into policy development (1999: 186). It is clear that one of the biggest challenges of state feminism in Latin America is the state itself. If the state is weak, furthering interests of women will not be a priority. In some countries, for example Mexico, authoritarianism remains a problem and this makes it hard for women's groups to influence policy making (*ibid*). Adding to that, McBride and Mazur (1995) concluded that countries where women's agencies were the strongest, were countries where women participated in (left) political parties. In Latin America, few leftist parties were in power in the 1990s. Hence, considering the typologies outlined by McBride and Mazur, Latin America in the 1990s does not receive a high score as the region has "weak states, a social-political culture

that is not very open to feminism, antipathetic parties on left and right, and a feminist movement which is important but fragmented in many countries" (Craske, 1999: 188). Nevertheless, Latin American women's movements have come a long way since the 1990s.

Women's movements in Latin America have grown since the 1990s and are gaining more and more access to influence state policies. Franceschet argues that the debate between "autonomy" and "integration" in Latin America has shifted from the relationship between women's movements and political parties to the relationship between women's movements and the state. A positive outcome of the collapse of authoritarian regimes was that: "most new democratic governments, following pressure from transnational women's movements and the United Nations, set up women's policy machineries within the state to address gender equality issues"[5] (Franceschet, 2003: 11). As a consequence, Franceschet explains that many women who were formerly active in women's movements chose to work for these state institutions to promote gender equality. However, on the other hand, other women's groups chose to stay independent of the state and transformed themselves into non-governmental organizations (NGO's). Another reason for this transformation was that international funding to these states had stopped and shifted to needier countries after the transition to a democratic state. NGO's are now dependent on donations from their states or other donors. Alvarez explains that at present, "NGOs are most often consulted as experts who can evaluate gender policies and programs rather than as movement organizations that might facilitate citizen input and participation in the formulation and design of such policies" (1999: 192). Hence, instead of protesting against the state, NGO's often work together with governments to fight gender issues. However, Franceschet also explains that the 'institutionalization' of women's movements, now that they work closely with the state, causes negative effects on women's movements since their leaders are 'employed by' the state instead of working as critical individuals (2003: 16). The discussion about whether it is best to stay independent of the state will be further examined in the case study of Costa Rica in the last chapter.

In conclusion, the process of state feminism in Latin America is quite different than that of western countries. Latin American women's movements were often confronted with authoritarian regimes and a lack of leftist parties to form alliances with. Nevertheless, transitions to democracies have improved women's position in political parties and the UN Conferences have contributed to the instalment of women's institutions in almost all countries.

[5] Since 1997, nineteen Latin American countries had some form of state agency to promote gender equality (Valdés, 2000: 101).

1.2 Social Movements in Latin America

As explained in the first section of the chapter, the process of state feminism in Latin America is highly influenced by the rise of the feminist movement. Feminists have pressured governments to install women's agencies to improve the conditions of women. Feminist movements are described as 'new social movements' in the academic literature about social movements, because of their new strategies and their use of new methods to address their concerns, such as mass-media (Slater, 1985; Valdivia, 2019). In order to get a better understanding of the feminist movement in Latin America, the following section will provide information about old and new social movements. It then discusses women's participation in consumer organizations and human rights organizations, followed by information of the feminist movement in Latin America.

1.2.1 New Social Movements in Latin America

The rise of new social movements started around the 1960s and research on these new movements followed rapidly. Bebbington *et al*. explain in their introduction that the academic interest in Latin American non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, increased in the 1980s and 1990s when most Latin American countries returned to democracy. However, NGOs (or social movements) were not a new phenomenon in the region at the time. "In the 1960s and 1970s indigenous non-governmental organizations were already making important contributions to political resistance, social welfare and grassroots action" (1993: 1). Other marginalized groups such as women were starting to organize themselves as well. Although these organizations were present during authoritarian regimes, the return to democracy has created an opportunity to redefine the relationship between the state and civil society (*ibid*). Valdivia adds to this by explaining that most social movements in Latin America have emerged during the authoritarian regimes in order to oppose state repression and to regain democracy. Valdivia also states that, "the recent historical developments set important precedents that explain why the relationship between state and society in Latin America continues to be marked by distrust, tension and hostility" (2019: 4). A hostile relationship between states and civil society often exists because of their experiences with authoritarian regimes repressing social actors in society. This had led to two types of social movements according to Valdivia; "… either, maintaining a certain distance from the state, which allows them to achieve their aims exactly because they stand on the borders of formal politics; or, by enacting collective acting and pressuring the state that seems ever reluctant to deal with their demands" (2019: 19). Hence, whereas some social movements chose to work independent from the state, probably because of the difficult relationship, other movements chose to improve the relationship by working together with the state in order to achieve their goals.

Old and New Social Movements

In the literature about social movements, researchers make a distinction between 'old' social movements and 'new' social movements. The concept of 'new social movements' is described by Slater in the introduction of the book *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America*: "As far as the advanced capitalist societies are concerned the term 'the new social movements' is invariably used to refer to *inter alia* the feminist movement, the ecology movement, the peace movement and the anti-nuclear movement" (1985: 1). According to Valdivia and Slater the concept of 'new social movements' is based on theories developed in Europe and North America. However, they believe that the theory can apply to new social movements in Latin America as well. These types of movements are considered 'new' because they differ from the industrial period's

working-class movements in the ways that they face new forms of struggles in the modern capitalist society; the economy is no longer a determining factor; their use of mass-media increases; and 'democratic' values, such as participation in decision making, are included in their demands (Valdivia, 2019; Stahler-Sholk, 2007; Slater, 1985). According to Stahler-Sholk *et al*. new social movements in Latin America now "contest the region's political and economic systems and challenge traditional definitions of citizenship, democracy, and participation" (2007: 5). Many new social movements in Latin America have had some sort of relationship with "left" parties. With the collapse of most authoritarian regimes, this relation has helped social movements to indirectly influence policy (*ibid*). Almeida and Cordero add that "from northern Mexico to southern Argentina, social movements in the 1990s, and especially in the 2000s, have reached new heights of popular participation" (2015: 3). Feminists movements have become more and more successful in the region as well.

Hence, new social movements differ from the industrial period's working-class movements in terms of obstacles and demands. Obstacles have shifted from economic barriers to inequality issues, and the social movement's demands have shifted from more salary to participation in decision making. The rise of mass-media have strengthened the position of social movements and it has become an important factor in campaigning to achieve their goals.

1.2.2 Consumer Organizations and Human Rights Organizations

Before the rise of feminist movements, women in Latin America were active in other movements. Craske examines the rise of social movements in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s where women played a key role. It was the first time that these movements demonstrated examples of the links between motherhood and political participation in order to make the political debate more inclusive for women. However, not all women were in favour of politicizing motherhood and preferred to keep an apolitical identity. "Nevertheless, participation in social movements has had considerable impact on women's empowerment and has led some to deepen their political participation" (Craske, 1999: 113). Craske explains that the rise of social movements in Latin America can be divided into two categories: consumer organizations and human rights organizations. The former focusses mostly on living standards in terms of goods and services and has not faced a lot of resistance. Human rights organizations, on the other hand, were not always supported by the governments in the 1990s. Craske explains that new governments demobilized anything that challenged their post-military regimes, indirectly affecting women more than men since women are more likely to participate in movements than in political parties (*ibid*). Both types of organizations will be briefly discussed in the paragraphs below.

The consumer organizations, as Craske explained, were a response of the 'ordinary people' as a consequence of "the economic crisis, structural adjustment and past failures of governments to address inequality, despite the years of growth" (1999: 115). In order to overcome poor economic conditions, communities came with collective survival strategies. These projects included setting up communal kitchens. Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet describe these collective kitchens (or *ollas communes*) in Chile where women were the ones to organize themselves in their communities to economically survive the military rule under General Augusto Pinochet. The coming together of women also led to the emerge of a new feminist movement. Franceschet explains the reason for this rise: "under authoritarianism, women mobilize when their capacities to fulfil their social responsibilities are undermined due to state repression and/or economic policies that negatively affect living standards" (2003: 10). Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet notice that "it is rather paradoxical that a broad-based women's movement emerged in Chile under one of the most

repressive dictatorships in Latin America" (2002: 443). However, this can also be the reason why women created the broad-based movement in the first place. They did not see another way out than to mobilize themselves and protest against the authoritarian regime as one movement. Or as Craske puts it: "as austerity measures increased, so too did the demands and protests from these groups" (1999: 115). Several movements formed alliances in order to expand their activities such as strikes and demonstrations. To further expand their capacities, linkages were made with the Catholic Church, (international) NGOs, and local civic associations (*ibid*). Hence, what started with the organization to improve living conditions, grew into a national movement in Chile that protested against the regime.

Where consumer organizations were a response to (economically) survive, human rights organizations were a response to extreme levels of human rights abuse mainly taking place in Argentina, Chile, and most Central American countries. Nevertheless, no country in the region has been immune to these violations. During the authoritarian regimes, many activists in political parties, trade unions and student organizations suddenly disappeared (Craske, 1999: 117). To give another example within Chile: women have played an important role in the road to democracy as they were the first to protest against the human rights violations committed by the military of the authoritarian regime (Franceschet, 2003: 10). Chile and Argentina were known for their tactic of arresting people without actually taking them to the police station. This way, arrests and questionings could not be recorded, and thousands of people were killed in the first days of the regimes. Other countries such as Peru under President Fujimori, and Central American countries used the visible way to warn those that were against the regime and killed thousands of people in the presence of other civilians (Craske, 1999: 117). In Chile, the women's movements re-emerged during the dictatorship in the 1970s. The movement consisted mostly of female political party militants. Political parties were declared illegal after the military coup. As a consequence, women groups were forced to work underground to discuss their gender concerns (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 445). This was only possible because "women's activities in these civil society movements are not always perceived as political, which is exactly why they are often permitted by regimes that otherwise repress political activity" (Franceschet, 2003: 10). However, while men made up the majority of disappearances, feminist activists were also targeted (Craske, 1999). Women began organizing themselves either to resolve their economic issues, or to look for their disappeared relatives and loved ones. Women in Argentina began to recognize themselves in other women who had lost relatives, which led to the emergence of women's movements that presented their lists of disappeared loved ones. The emerging of women's groups led to a more efficient search. Whereas in the beginning the main focus of human rights abuses was on disappearances, it later also included indigenous peoples' rights, police violence and youth issues, and even a women's commission was established in Argentina in 1987 to deal with women's issues such as discrimination and inequality (Craske, 1999: 118). Similarly, in Chile, the National Women's Service (SERNAM) was created in 1991 to propose, design, and implement gender policy by other ministries (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002: 446). "SERNAM has successfully introduced important legislation that criminalizes domestic violence, expands women's rights within the family, and protects women from losing their jobs, and protects pregnant teenagers from being expelled from school" (Franceschet, 2003: 13). Although the women's commission in Argentina and SERNAM in Chile work with women's movements on joint campaigns, most women's movements chose to work independently from these state institutions and looked for other sources of support, often internationally. These are, of course, examples of

social movements that have emerged under authoritarian regimes. The case of social movements in Costa Rica is slightly different and will be discussed in the second and third chapter.

1.2.3 Feminist Movements in Latin America

With the rise of consumer and human rights organizations, came the emerge of feminist organizations in Latin America. Alvarez (1990) describes the effect of women's movements in Latin America as "engendering democracy" and explains that the women's movement in the region has developed significantly since the rise of new social movements in the 1970s. Nijeholt *et al*. add to this that the movement has broadened the social scene, enriched civil society, and opened "new horizons in women's lives" (1998: 16). According to Nijeholt *et al.*, the women's movement can be distinguished in three main streams; the feminist mainstream; the popular women's stream; and women who belong to the formal political sphere. The feminist mainstream is composed of women that have been supporting the political left and women that created autonomous feminist organizations. The popular women's stream are the women who have come from their traditional roles in the private sphere to the public area. These women often come from the rural areas and never participated in movements before. And the third mainstream consists of women who question male legitimacy in the political sphere. Feminists have attempted to set up political proposals. However, feminists can be divided into two categories: "autonomous" feminists and feminists that choose to work within state institutions. The autonomous feminists follow their own way of doing politics, which not always leads to their desired changes. Feminists working within state institutions, on the contrary, have to obey the traditional forms of practicing policy which often does not include a gender view (Nijeholt *et al*., 1998). Franceschet indicates that "women activists are often faced with the choice between (re)joining political parties or maintaining the autonomy of their feminist organizations", and "throughout the region, many feminists have moved into political parties, especially those on the Left, with whom alliances were forged during the anti-dictatorship and/or revolutionary struggles" (2003:11). However, Nijeholt *et al*. explain that this political participation has not led to positive outcomes and indicate that; "in contrast to Europe, a feminist stream has not managed to insert itself into the bureaucracy in Latin America and the Caribbean" (1998: 18). However, this statement can be considered as a generalization of all Latin American states. Del Campo adds that, "regardless of the positive evolution that took place in the nineties, women are still underrepresented in the different spheres of power" (2005: 1719). This underrepresentation of women in politics is not only visible in Latin America, but throughout the world. However, this political underrepresentation is not the only issue feminist movements are dealing with. Gustá and Madera argue that feminist and women's movements in the region have an excessive number of issues on their agendas concerning women's work and the economy: "these issues include the defence of domestic workers' rights, the demand for an increase in poor women's access to credit, the struggle for peasant women's entitlements to land and the protection of female migrant workers" (2015: 42).

Hence, before the rise of feminist movements, women have been active in other organizations in Latin America to demand improvements in living conditions. Most active women lived in countries with authoritarian regimes, such as Chile and Argentina. While new social movements in Latin America, including the feminist movement, have contributed to the instalment of new democracies, they still face many obstacles. The last section of this chapter will make clear that social movements will be more successful with the support of international organizations.

1.3 International Influences on Latin American Policymaking

Latin American women's movements and governments, on the road to gender equality, have been inspired and helped by several international organizations. In order to attract attention of the governments, and to create awareness on social issues among Latin American citizens, social movements and activists were forced to turn to international organizations. These international institutions have worked and are still working together with social movements (and governments in some cases) to address and fight gender inequality in the region. Two of the most important influencers have been The United Nations (UN) and The Organization of American States (OAS). Some of their actions and influences are discussed below.

1.3.1 The United Nations

In the book *The United Nations in Latin America*, Adams explains that Latin American countries have economically grown in the past two decades. Many people are wealthier and enjoy higher incomes than ever before. However, this growth only applies to a minority of Latin Americans and the majority of the people have not benefitted from this transformation. "Urban areas continue to be plagued by immense slums and shanty towns, often places precariously on hillsides or along river basins, and rural communities lack such basic necessities as clean water, adequate nutrition, primary health care, and decent education" (2010: 1). Adams adds that especially women face difficult conditions as they earn less and have fewer resources than men. In order to address and find solutions to the inequality issues, the UN has been active in the region and has worked on the improvement of basic nutrition, preventive health care, and primary education. On top of that, the UN has been sponsoring initiatives to promote gender equality and protect natural environments. In doing so, employees of the UN work together with either governments, by informing them, or they work together with social movements on short and long-term projects. These projects are sponsored by the UN, which takes the financial concern away from the social workers. The UN, through its agencies and initiatives, have made important contributions to the development of Latin America (Adams, 2010). The contributions of the UN in terms of gender equality will be further discussed in the next section and in the following chapters.

Women in Latin America

As mentioned briefly in the beginning of this chapter, the United Nations (UN) has influenced decisions of Latin American governments with regards to women's rights and equality. The UN had its own institutions for women such as: The Commission on the Status of Women[6] (CSW) and later its administrative arm, the Division for the Advancement of Women[7] (DAW). These institutions were examples for many Latin American states and influenced them to install national women's agencies (McBride and Mazur, 1995). According to Adams, the CSW "monitors the economic, social, and political conditions of women worldwide and makes recommendations for reducing global gender disparities" (2010: 60). The CSW has played an important role in the UN's gender-related work, and the commission established universal standards for the advancement of women (*ibid*). Another significant initiative of the UN was the First World Conference on Women in 1975: "The year 1975 was designated International Women's Year and the period 1975-85 the UN Decade for Women" (Adams, 2010: 61). The first conference was held in Mexico City in 1975 and led to a rise of women's agencies in Latin America and in the rest of the world

[6] Established by the Economic and Social Council in 1946.
[7] Established in 1988.

(McBride and Mazur, 2013). True and Mintrom explain that during this conference, delegates decided that all governments should establish these agencies to promote gender equality and to improve the states and conditions of women (2001). The first conference concluded with a *Declaration on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace* and led to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)[8] (Adams, 2010: 61). Three more World Conferences on Women followed that were sponsored by the UN, namely in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and in Beijing (1995). The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) was ratified by the General Assembly in 1979 and marked an important step towards gender equality and women's rights. "CEDAW was the first legally binding international instrument to advance the rights of women" (*ibid*). Gustá and Madera state that, "for Latin America, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing represents a milestone in the history of the feminist and women's movements" (2015: 41). This conference made clear that gender equality represents the key issue for development and welfare of societies. The Beijing Platform for Action, together with the CEDAW and other regional human rights instruments, have advanced debates and interventions concerning gender equality (*ibid*). In Latin America, these UN initiatives have had positive outcomes. In regard to health and reproductive care for women, Adams explains that; "women now enjoy greater access to family planning services, prenatal care, assisted childbirth, and postpartum care than previous generations" (2010: 53). However, the costs and quality of health care remains unequal, especially for poor women (*ibid*). The inequality in health care in the case of Costa Rica will be discussed in the following chapters (2.3.1 and 3.3.1). The position of Latin American women in the labour market has also changed positively due to educational improvements. The gender-gap at the primary, secondary, and even higher education is closed. "In fact, women now average *more* years of schooling than men" (Adams, 2010: 55). Hence, overall, the UN have positively influenced Latin American countries in improving living conditions for women.

1.3.2 The Organization of American States

Besides the positive outcomes of the influence of the UN, another important organization for improving women's conditions in the Latin American countries is The Organization of American States (OAS). Similar to the UN, the OAS worked with governments and social movements to improve living standards in the region.

Human Rights Violations

The OAS often publishes reports of their observations in countries in regard to, for example, human rights violations. Philip explains that Latin American countries, like any other country, operate within an international system. Globally speaking, this would be the UN, however, Latin American states are also part of a regional organization, which is the OAS. As a member of these organizations, Latin American governments have to obey at least some international laws and attend international conventions on human rights. "Officially virtually all democracies, including those in Latin America, accept that human rights should be protected" (2003: 85). In order to address human rights violations in the western hemisphere, an inter-American system of human rights has been set up based on the charter of the Organization of American States[9]. Philip mentions two cases that show the strengthening of international human rights law in the region.

[8] Based in the Dominican Republic.

[9] http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-41_charter_OAS.asp

First is that of former Peruvian president Fujimori. His political position weakened after the OAS reported very negatively on the situation of human rights in Peru in 2000[10]. The second significant development was the arrest of former Chilean president General Pinochet in London in 1998. "The prosecution of military officers and others who were involved in human rights abuses during previous periods of dictatorship has been a very limited affair, but before 1980 nothing of the kind happened in the region at all" (Philip, 2003: 89). Hence, not all people that committed these crimes have been arrested or prosecuted, but the instalment of the OAS Charter together with judicial activism and NGOs such as Amnesty International have led to the prosecution of some of these human rights abusers and, most importantly, have created awareness on the issue (*ibid*).

Inter-American Commission of Women

Besides publishing reports on human rights violations, the OAS also examines women's conditions in the Latin American region. Similar to the United Nations, the Organization of American States also established a commission to ensure recognition of women's human rights, namely the Intern-American Commission of Women (IACW). The commission was established in 1928 and was the first inter-government agency dedicated to women's rights. The IACW has become the most important forum in the Americas to debate and formulate policy on women's rights and gender equality.[11] Meyer explains that nation-states in the Americas have to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against women. "The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women is the latest in a number of inter-American treaties drafted by the Inter-American Commission of Women, a specialized commission of the Organization of American States (OAS) led by women and dedicated to the improvement of the status of women in the Americas" (Meyer, 1998: 136). The IACW finds its origins in suffragist organizations and women activists that turned to international bodies to help them pressure their government for the ability to vote and equal rights for men and women. Since its institutionalization, the IACW has worked with feminist organizations and other women's groups to promote women's education, development, and political equality (*ibid*).

Thus, while new social movements, including feminist movements, have come a long way in pressuring their Latin American governments for equal rights, they would not have come this far without support of both the UN and the OAS. The UN conferences on the status of women together with the published reports on human rights of the OAS have pressured governments to improve living conditions of women by establishing national women's agencies and addressing the issue of gender-equality. The following chapters will describe and analyse the process of state feminism and the road to gender-equality in Costa Rica.

[10] *Second Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Peru* (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights).
[11] http://www.oas.org/en/CIM/about.asp

Chapter 2

Feminism and State Action in Costa Rica

Introduction

This chapter deals with the development of the Costa Rican women's movements and their relationship with the state. It forms the basis for the case study in the last chapter and creates a better understanding of the Costa Rican state, Costa Rican social women's movements, and international influences in the country. Despite the country's comparatively high living standards, women face a great amount of inequality. Since the 1940s, feminist movements, together with the Women's World Conferences of the United Nations have influenced state policies and improved living conditions of women in Costa Rica. Nevertheless, despite the progress that has been made in the acknowledgement of women's rights, women are still victims of discrimination and gender-based violence on a daily basis. The chapter starts with describing the process of State Feminism in Costa Rica from the 1940s until the 1990s/2000s. The development of State Feminism that took place in Costa Rica is quite different than the rest of Latin America. Other than women in authoritarian states, such as Chile and Argentina, Costa Rican women did not have to protest against their regime's injustices. This Central American nation has been a democratic state since 1889. In comparison to the rest of the region, women's movements developed quite late in the country. The first women to actively protest for human rights were the women of the suffragist movement in the 1940s. Costa Rican women did not take the streets as seen in other countries. Instead, they used different tools to create awareness on women's rights and feminism such as organizing seminars and creating campaigns. After obtaining the right to vote in 1949, Costa Rican women realized that gender equality was not reached only through this. Women's movements began to study gender issues and women's struggles. The first two great women's movements that addressed discrimination against women were Ventana and the Women's Liberation Movement (MLM). These organizations have tried to influence state policies to improve women's conditions in the country. During this process, organizations have received help from international organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of the American States. The third and fourth sections of the chapter will focus on the different kinds of discrimination and violence that women still face in Costa Rica despite the advancements in women's rights. It is clear that the country has come a long way in addressing these issues, but more action needs to be taken in order to reach a more desirable level of equality between men and women.

2.1 State Feminism in Costa Rica

Describing the process of state feminism in Costa Rica is not an easy task since little research has been done on the development of this phenomenon in Costa Rica. The main reason for this lack of information is that Costa Rica has been a democratic state since 1889, so women have not been active in protesting against authoritarian regimes which was the case in Chile and Argentina. However, it has not been a democratic state without any conflicts. Though it was not a long-term conflict, the three-month war in 1948 between the Partido Liberación Nacional (PLN, or National Liberation Party) and government forces, concerning fraud in elections, ended with a new constitution. This constitution granted all Costa Ricans the right to vote, including women, and abolished the armed forces. Financial support formerly intended to the military was now invested in public health and education, making the country achieve the highest life expectancy, lowest infant mortality, and highest literacy rates in the region (González, 1994: 176). Though the

country achieved some mayor accomplishments in regard to living conditions, inequality between men and women still remained an important issue.

To create awareness on gender equality in Costa Rica, women have been active in several areas and political organizations within and outside formal government. Thus, women were active both in non-governmental organizations and political institutions. Their goals were to achieve equality with men in all areas and to improve basic living conditions for their families. In order for women to gain access to a government dominated by men, several interventions have been necessary. Nevertheless, Costa Rican women never used violence during these interventions. "Costa Rican women fought their struggle to participate in politics with patience and without blood, meaning that they were more committed to compromise and persuasion than to outright revolution" (González, 1994: 177). This is different than women's protests in, for example, Chile where women's marches were held to express their demands on gender equality. The Chilean military would respond to these protests with violence. Costa Rica on the other hand is known for its nonviolent strategy because it abolished the army in the 1940s (*ibid*).

2.1.1 Costa Rican Feminism

In should be clear that the road to gender equality in Costa Rica has been quite unusual in comparison to other Latin American countries. Women have been less active in protesting against the regime than in other countries. When women did raise their voices, it was to support the rights of men instead of their own rights. Calvo mentions the striking fact that, instead of fighting for their own rights, "during the Nineteenth century and up until the middle of the Twentieth, Costa Rican women supported male citizens' political freedom and their right to vote" (1997: 8). Thus, it seemed like women waited for all men to have equal rights, in order to fight their own battles. According to Calvo, the fight for equal rights between men and women started in the twentieth century. Costa Rican women began with protesting for general civil rights followed by the focus on political rights, and most importantly, the ability to vote. Women had mobilized themselves to gain access to the political field. One of the first initiatives was the foundation of the Costa Rican Liga Feminista (Feminist League) on 12 October 1923, as a subsidiary of the Liga Internacional de Mujeres Ibéricas e Hispanoamericanas (Iberian and Hispano-American Women's International League) in Madrid. The establishment of this organization marked the beginning of the struggle for women's rights in Costa Rica (Calvo, 1997: 8). However, their first accomplishment took about 26 years: the ability for Costa Rican women to vote finally arrived in 1949. With the recognition of the women's right to vote, the chapter of suffragism was closed (Calvo, 1997: 11).

Women were satisfied with their wish being fulfilled, however, after being entitled to vote, new struggles arose. Women did not yet achieve the right to be elected. As a consequence, female representation in the Legislative Assembly, as well as in labour union jobs and municipal positions, has been mostly absent since 1949. The main reason for this female absence was the male opposition. Any law that could possibly improve women's representation in politics was opposed by men. For example, even "when the Proyecto de Ley sobre la Igualdad Real de la Mujer (Bill for Women's True Equality) suggested that in the decade of the 1990s at least 30 percent of high political posts should be occupied by women, the argument was raised that such a measure would be discriminatory against men", which Calvo contradicts by stating that, "very few seem to understand that a Legislative Assembly in which 94 percent of the members are men constitutes solid proof of the discrimination against women" (1997: 11). Adding to that, some opponents even stated that "there was no need for the bill because there was no discrimination against women in Costa Rica" (Badilla, 1997: 119). They hereby ignored the United Nation's definition of the concept

of discrimination against women which contains, "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by women … of human rights and fundamental freedoms" (CEDAW, 1979: 2). By opposing the Bill for Women's True Equality, a lot of women would have been excluded from the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly, causing it to be a discriminatory action. Nevertheless, the Proyecto de Ley sobre la Igualdad Real de la Mujer (Bill for Women's True Equality) was sent to the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica in 1988 and approved in 1990.[12] And while Costa Rican women were comparatively ahead in their fight for gender equality, its neighbouring countries were not quite there yet. "It may come as a surprise that Costa Ricans were discussing women's equality while the rest of Central America was torn by political and military conflicts" (Ansorena, 1997: 111). However, instead of its neighbouring countries, Costa Rica had already reached a stable democracy and quite high living standards, making the process of women's equality a logical step forward. Plus, the process of political stability dates back to the 1940s and several reforms had been achieved such as the nationalization of banks, improvements in social security, the rise of cooperative and community organizations, and general access to primary and secondary education (Ansorena, 1997; Rojas, 1982). Nevertheless, despite these achievements, social inequalities between men and women and cases of discrimination against women are still present in Costa Rica. Even today, women's movements will continue to pressure the government to prioritize gender equality on the social agenda. The final chapter will discuss recent actions of women's movements to pressure reforms in Costa Rica.

2.1.2 Women's Equality and Government Efforts in Costa Rica

The approvement of the Bill for Women's True Equality in 1990 discussed in the previous section, was a positive start for the process of gender equality in Costa Rica. The Law is an important part of Costa Rican daily life. As Leitinger points out, "Costa Ricans' confidence in their nonmilitarized democracy is based on their expectation that the law should and will regulate the interactions of individuals and groups" (1997: 100). However, there has been room for improvement over the years, especially for women. Women's legal status and legal gender equality as part of human rights had to overcome a lot of obstacles in the last decades. Nevertheless, growing public debates initiated by women's movements have influenced and changed government policies and government institutions. One of the positive outcomes of these public debates was that, in 1993, the Office of the Defender of Human Rights (including Women's Rights) was separated from the Justice Department, causing complete independence of decision making and actions. It was renamed and now goes by the Office of the Defender of the Inhabitants (Defensoría de los Habitantes) (*ibid*). This has been a major accomplishment in terms of human rights, and especially women's rights. Soto explains that Costa Rican women have faced many obstacles to come to this acknowledgement. Nevertheless, even now there are several obstacles when it comes to women's rights. According to Soto, the most important obstacles of acknowledging women's rights are: "(1) the inadequacy of the legal framework, in terms of laws and institutions, and the inconsistencies in the administration of the law; (2) women's ignorance about their rights; and (3) a cultural tradition that denies women basic rights" (Soto, 1997: 103). All obstacles will be briefly explained.

Regarding the first obstacle, in comparison to other Latin American countries, one can say that Costa Rica's legal framework for women is quite progressive. However, issues appear in the protection and implementation of women's established rights. These inconsistencies and

[12] Ley de Promoción de la Igualdad Social de la Mujer (1990): http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/cos136292.pdf

inadequate institutional processes result in the weakening of legal codes. On top of that, laws exist that contradict each other. One law may allow women to make their own decisions, where another law states that the husband decides for his wife. As an example, Soto compares the laws of the National Agency for Child Protection (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia) (PANI) and that of the Family Code of 1974. The former allows a woman violated by her husband to leave her home and prohibits the husband from accusing her of abandoning her family. The latter, on the other hand, might decide that the woman loses all of her economic rights (*ibid*). This is an example of an inadequate legal system. Both parties will enhance different laws causing conflicts in court.

The second obstacle of implementing and acknowledging women's rights is according to Soto, caused by Costa Rican women that have failed in exercising their recognized rights. Women in remote areas often do not have access to resources or information to educate them about their recognized rights. In order to create more awareness about women's rights, there have been multiple efforts in providing training and information to Costa Rican women, such as courses offered by universities and seminars given by the Latin American Committee for the Defence of Women's Rights (Soto, 1997: 104). In addition, more and more researchers started to study women's rights. Several scholars have focused on the administration of justice (Molina, 1989) and others focused on the legal mechanisms that failed in protecting female victims of sexual aggression (Peralta, 1986; Soto, 1988). Academic research was not the only way to create awareness on the topic. "Another instance of growing awareness was, of course, the wide public debate over the Proyecto de Ley sobre la Igualdad Real de la Mujer discussed in the Assembly" (Soto, 1997: 104). Hence, the publicity of this debate about the Law created more awareness on women's rights nationally. Even though the law was highly modified before it passed, the new law resulted in advancements for women in some fields. Nevertheless, both this law and most of the efforts to create awareness only reached the highly educated women, whereas the majority of Costa Rican women were left ignorant of their rights under law (*ibid*). Differences in access to information between women in urban and rural areas still exist. Examples of these differences will be discussed in the last chapter (3.4).

The last obstacle mentioned by Soto is the "Cultural Tradition of Denying Basic Rights". Traditionally, and not just in Costa Rica but in the whole region, husbands 'dictated' their households, including their wives. "Countless husbands still dictate even the arrangement of furniture in the home and the style of their wives' hair or dress", and "some also refuse to grant their wives permission to work outside the home, to study, or even to leave the house for shopping or social occasions" (Soto, 1997: 105). Women's fears and weaknesses make it harder for them to enjoy a 'better life' as women are often too afraid to leave their husbands. Hence, women's rights might be advanced under law, but few women can enjoy their recognized rights because of their strict husbands. Women are victims of the traditional rules of their husbands and are often too afraid to denounce their husbands and lose everything they have. Religion also plays a big part in the separation of husbands and wives. "In the case of the divorce code, for example, a long time passed before either women or men claimed their right to divorce, primarily because of the existing religion sanction of excommunication" (Ansorena, 1997: 113). Thus, even when a code is passed and divorce is legal, religion still determines their actions. On top of that, "cases that concern family matters are defined as within the private domain, and in such cases a woman must hire her own legal representative" (Soto, 1997: 106). Thus, a woman without financial resources has no chance in winning such a case from her husband.

Hence, these three obstacles explained by Soto stand in the way of acknowledging and implementing women's rights in Costa Rica. Soto makes clear that the government is not the only one to blame for this neglection. Some women do not have the knowledge or the courage to stand up for themselves and own their rights. Fortunately, government efforts to help and support Costa Rican women have grown. Under president Oscar Arias (1986-1990), the institutionalization of the Centro Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Mujer y La Familia (CMF) took place, and it became part of the Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud y Deportes (CMF, 1990). The CMF was created in 1974 and was in charge of coordinating actions related to the celebration of the United Nations First World Conference on Women in 1975 in Mexico (INAMU[13]). Inspired by the Decade for Women (1975-85), "in 1986, a Centre for Women and the Family (Centro Nacional del Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Familia –CMF) was established as a semi-autonomous body with its own legislative powers, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified" (Chant, 2009: 23). On top of that, president Arias installed the Office of the Women's Defender. Where it first acted as an executive decree, it later became part of the Ministry of Justice, creating a more permanent institution. Women that were victims of violation and aggression could address their complains at the Office. However, women's movements wanted the Office of the Women's Defender to be separated from the Ministry of Justice and their wish became fulfilled: "… in October 1993 it [Office of the Women's Defender] and the parallel offices that protect the interests of consumers, children, the elderly, indigenous people, and other minorities were removed from the Ministry of Justice to allow more independence of action and were placed under the renamed Office of the Defender of the Inhabitants" (Soto, 1997: 106). Hence, demands of minorities were heard and they obtained an independent Office. However, while this is a great accomplishment on the road to equality, this does not automatically mean that all problems have been solved. Many women were still too afraid to denounce their husbands or to sue for sexual harassment because there were hardly any sanctions against violent partners. On top of that, many women that stood up for themselves in the workplace have lost their jobs because there were no rights that protect women from losing their jobs. Nevertheless, Soto explains that it was a hopeful sign that more and more women came to the Office of the Women's Defender with their complaints of for example, sexual harassment. These complaints were used to pressure the government to protect women in all areas (*ibid*). And with success. In 1998, the CMF was replaced by an autonomous and decentralized National Women's Institute (INAMU). In addition, the rank of Minister of the Condition of Women (or Women's Affairs) was created, assuming the role of Executive Presidency of the Institute. The current activities of INAMU and its relationship with women's movements will be discussed in the next chapter.

State Feminism

As already mentioned in chapter 1, the term State Feminism describes the influence of feminist movements on state policy making (Hernes, 1987; McBride and Mazur, 2010). Whereas in the first chapter cases of Latin American countries are described where women actively participated in (violent) protests against authoritarian regimes, the process of State Feminism in Costa Rica happened differently. Costa Rican women's movements have influenced state policymaking in different areas and continue to do so. Until this day, feminist movements have achieved more rights for women such as the right to vote, the institutionalization of the National Women's Institute, and the decentralization of the Office of the Women's Defender. Considering the four typologies identified by McBride and Mazur (1995) in the first chapter, (which explain the

[13] Inamu.go.cr/asi-somos

influence of women's institutions on policy, and whether they can easily access ministries), the case of Costa Rica can be seen as a type B (high influence/low access). Pressure of women's institutions have influenced state policymaking and women can now enjoy greater rights than before. Women's institutions have worked together with feminist movements and international organizations to achieve greater levels of gender equality and to improve the status of women in Costa Rica. However, the access of social groups, and even national women's agencies, to decision making is still low. Nevertheless, the achievements mentioned above demonstrate a positive trend in the progress of gender equality in Costa Rica.

Hence, the process of state feminism in Costa Rica is hard to compare to that of other countries in the region. Women's movements in Costa Rica did not have to mobilize themselves to economically survive military regimes. Instead, women's movements focussed on equality with men. The suffragist movement was the first to accomplish a great step towards gender equality and many women's and feminist movements have followed since to pressure the Costa Rican government.

2.2 Feminist Movements in Costa Rica

As has been clarified, women's movements in Costa Rica have played a key role in the process towards gender equality. Movements have pressured the state for establishing (more) women's rights to improve the status and living conditions of all women in the country. Their fight for equal rights led to the instalment of the autonomous National Women's Institute (INAMU) and the independent Office of the Women's Defender. The next section will describe the development and the rise of women's movements in Costa Rica. It should be noted that feminist movements are not the same as women's movements. In the introduction of the book *The Costa Rican Women's Movement: A Reader*, Leitinger explains why women's movements are not automatically considered feminist in Costa Rica. "The term *women's movement* is not identical with *feminism* in Costa Rica. (…) despite much overlap between the two movements, feminism is more far-reaching in advocating social change by empowering women than is the women's movement, which may strive for more limited economic, social, or political improvements" (1997: xii). Thus, whereas women's movements in Costa Rica might settle for and be satisfied with small improvements, feminists on the other hand strive for complete gender equality and social change and will not be satisfied with a few advancements.

Women's Struggle

As has been explained, Costa Rican women have protested for their rights in different ways in comparison to other Latin American countries. "Costa Ricans are characterized by a pervasive national tendency to avoid conflict and extremes of violent confrontation, preferring instead to get along *sin hacer olas* (without making waves)" (Leitinger, 1997: xii). Or, as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, "with patience and without blood" (González, 1994: 177). Instead of taking the streets to march for their rights, women chose to organize themselves in other ways such as forming alliances with (international) organizations and by having open discussions with the government. However, despite Costa Rica's tranquil reputation in the light of avoiding (armed) conflict, the country is not immune to violence and Costa Rican women are often victims of gender-based violence. As Leitinger puts it; "(…) in a society that is famous for its love of peace and tranquillity, the perturbing record of violence against women is becoming painfully visible and has given rise to an on-going public debate", and adds to this that, "in contradiction to their idealistic commitment to equality, Costa Ricans face the harsh social reality of a growing inequality – largely an economic inequality – which hits women doubly hard" (1997: xiii). Thus, Costa Rican women are often victims of gender-based violence and on top of that, their lack of access to resources, jobs, and power leads to the 'feminization of poverty' (Chant, 2009: 19). Because of the inequality that exists between men and women, poverty has become more concentrated among Costa Rican women over time.

2.2.1 Women's Movements in Costa Rica

Women's and feminist movements have risen over the years to create awareness about issues of inequality in Costa Rica. These organizations had to face some obstacles before they were recognized by society, especially feminist movements. In order to be successful and accepted by society, feminist organizations had to break quite a taboo as "myths about Feminism suggested that the movement attracted only frustrated women – those who are unattractive, hate men, or want to destroy family through some form of licentiousness or sexual deviation" (Camacho *et al*., 1997: 13). One of the first feminist organizations in Costa Rica was Ventana (Window). This organization consisted of a group of university women who first came together in 1981. They

argued that instead of a lack of knowledge about Feminism, it was even worse that a lot of people, including women at university, believed these prejudices and stereotypes about the movement (*ibid*). This was however not the first time that women discussed feminist theory and practice. In 1974, before the establishment of Ventana, a group of women formed the Women's Liberation Movement (Movimiento para la Liberación de la Mujer) (MLM) to discuss and research the feminist perspective in Costa Rica. Most of these women were influenced by women's movements in Europe. Following these 'western' examples, "MLM organized a series of activities that promoted women's productive rights: contraception, abortion, and the banning of forced sterilization" (Carcedo *et al*., 1997: 19). MLM stood up for the women of the poorest parts of San José and they had successfully blocked the instalment of a bill that prohibited the use of intrauterine devices (IUDs). These IUDs were a tool for abortion and women in the poorest parts of San José were the principal users. Women of the movement realized that they could help more women if they found out the concrete problems and struggles of Latin American, and more specifically, Costa Rican women on a daily basis. In 1981, MLM changed its name to the Centro Feminista de Información y Acción (CEFEMINA). The organization still goes by this name today. CEFEMINA started to use theoretical and practical insights to gain more knowledge on Latin American Feminism. CEFEMINA's main focus was and is to improve women's living conditions in Costa Rica (Carcedo et al., 1997: 20). In order to achieve this goal, CEFEMINA has created several projects such as projects of housing self-construction for 'female-head-of-household' families; a loan service for women with small businesses; health clinics for women and children; a women's trade union; support groups; legal advisory; women's equality in sports, and CEFEMINA organized several conferences[14] on the situation of Costa Rican women (*ibid*: 22). Other feminist organizations and their initiatives are discussed in the next chapter.

2.2.2 International Influence

In order to organize projects to help women, the UN Women's Decade was very important to non-political organizations in Costa Rica. New associations of all kinds were formed in the 1980s. Because most of the women's groups consisted of low-income women, they were supported by wealthier women, including professionals. On top of that, many organizations were active in the rural areas which makes it difficult to communicate with them. Women in remote areas often struggle for housing, water, electricity, child-care centres, and healthcare. It is therefore important to form alliances with organizations in the cities (González, 1994; Sagot, 2010). Chant addresses the importance of active organizations in these areas and explains that poverty appears to be 'feminizing' in Costa Rica. Women are the ones most affected by poverty. "While around one-fifth of the population has fallen below the official poverty line since the early-to-mid-1990s, poverty seems to have become more concentrated among women over time" (2009: 19). This may seem somewhat paradoxical given the fact that Costa Rica has introduced several initiatives to promote gender equality. Costa Rica even ranked among the top three developing countries with the highest levels of gender equality and 'women's empowerment' (*ibid*). Nevertheless, statistics show the increasing poverty rates. Thus, Costa Rican feminist movements continue addressing and fighting gender inequality. UN initiatives have helped the movements in creating awareness on the issue.

According to Adams, especially the UN-World Conferences on Women raised awareness on the international discussion of women's issues and was of great importance to the Costa Rican society.

[14] Four national conferences in 1984, 1988, 1990 and in 1991, the Fifth International Congress on Women and Health in 1987, and the First Central American and Caribbean Meeting on Violence Against Women in 1991.

Costa Rica also received some financial support from the UN. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "supported Costa Rica's Social Security Fund in evaluating reproductive health services and improving the quality of those services, especially family planning counselling in hospitals, clinics, and health centres" (Adams, 2010: 66). Moreover, the fund strengthened institutional capacities to create, collect, and analyse information in different areas such as population, reproductive health, and poverty reduction (*ibid*). Another positive outcome of the international influence was that the number of women on ministry posts increased. However, this was not a stable increase. During some presidencies, for example during that of Luis Alberto Monge (1982-86), all cabinet posts were again filled with men (González, 1994: 180). Nevertheless, another positive outcome took place in 1998, when a decentralized National Institute for Women (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres – INAMU) replaced the CMF. The institute has its own legal status and is led by a Minister of Women's Affairs (Chant, 2009: 23).

Hence, feminist movements have come a long way since MLM and Ventana were established in the 1970s and 1980s. As explained, feminist movements are part of the women's movement and are known for their far-reaching demands. They have faced several obstacles and still face barriers today in Costa Rica (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, women's and feminist groups are more and more accepted by society and acknowledged by the government. As a consequence of this acknowledgement, and thanks to the support of the UN-World Conferences on Women, social movements have greater access to influence state policymaking and to improve living conditions of Costa Rican women. Nevertheless, women still have a long way to go to reach total equality with men.

2.3 Discrimination against Costa Rican Women

As already indicated, the goal to reach high levels of gender equality in all areas has not yet been achieved. At present, Costa Rican women face inequality and discrimination on a daily basis. Discrimination could be by race or class, sexual preference, physical disability, and through various forms of domestic violence, including incest (Leitinger, 1997: 138). On top of that, women are more vulnerable to poverty because of their lack of access to resources and jobs. Different types of discrimination will be discussed in this section of the chapter.

Afro-Caribbean Women

López-Casas explains that Costa Rica shows a variety of socioeconomic conditions. In the 1990s only 40 percent of the wage earners earned the minimum salary to provide for a four-person family. "This general impoverishment particularly affects the female populations, and above all women who are heads of households" (1997: 141). To clarify this statement, López-Casas describes the case of the Costa Rican Limón Province, the least populated of the seven provinces. The Caribbean region is full of banana and cacao plantations and Afro-Caribbeans have come to the region to find work. The government prohibited the Afro-Caribbeans to migrate to other regions of the country, which caused considerable economic struggles in the province (Seligson, 1980). The region was politically ignored and left as a marginalized economy. Even when President José Figueres ("Pepe") abolished these discriminatory measures in 1948, nothing really changed until the 1970s. The changes during this period included the construction of roads, expansion of commerce, improvements in health and education services and promotion of tourism. There was even a rise of non-Afro-Caribbean migrants to Limón. Nevertheless, these changes did not quite improve the living standard of the Afro-Caribbeans as, "Afro-Caribbeans have been least favoured economically, and Afro-Caribbean women, especially single heads of household, were among the most seriously affected" (López-Casas, 1997: 142). Afro-Caribbean women in the province often cannot finish school because they have to help their mothers at home and take care of their younger siblings, or they are hired to do household or other work where they are not paid as much as men are. Hence, Afro-Caribbean women are discriminated on the basis of their class, race, and gender. In order to tackle the problems they are facing, women in Limón rely on each other to survive, and have initiated several family networks and organizations in their communities (*ibid*: 144).

Lesbian Women

Similar to Afro-Caribbean women, lesbian women in Costa Rica experience cases of discrimination on a daily basis and have come together to organize themselves and support each other. Lesbian feminists in Costa Rica have started their own group in 1987, Las Entendidas (Those in the Know)[15]. Reason for this was that they did not identify with other feminist groups. Most feminist groups focused on the issues of straight women and did not prioritize the discrimination of lesbian women. While straight feminist activists strive for equality with men in all areas (e.g., labour market, households), lesbian feminists demonstrate that women do not need men to, for example, provide for their families. Cruz explains that, "… belonging to those groups raised in us a feminist consciousness and showed us how our daily independence from men makes us a threat to the domination patriarchy exercises over women" (1997: 147). Their lifestyle proves that women are not dependent on men, and that they can earn their own money and provide for their households

[15] Translated by Paquita Cruz (1997).

without help from men, which is a threat to the stability of patriarchy. However, lesbians are mostly punished because of their sexual preferences, instead of their independency from men. To tackle this discrimination, Las Entendidas has grown into a well-ordered group and even organized the Segundo Encuentro de Lesbianas Feministas de América Latina y el Caribe (Second Encounter of Feminist Lesbians of Latin America and the Caribbean) in 1990 in San José.[16] This Encounter created awareness about discrimination against lesbian women internationally. And although after this, heterofeminists recognized this kind of discrimination, the lesbian feminist group kept being an isolated one within the Costa Rican feminist movement. Nevertheless, the topic of lesbianism is more and more accepted and included by the hetero feminist movements (Cruz, 1990: 147).

Women with Disabilities

Besides discrimination against Afro-Caribbean and lesbian women, another form of discrimination against women in Costa Rica is against women with disabilities. According to Antezana, people with disabilities are either rejected or pitied. Terms to describe these people are quite harsh, such as *handicapped, crippled, disabled,* or *invalid.* Antezana proposes to use the term *individuals with disabilities,* to focus on individuals instead of their physical or mental capacities. She makes clear that 'women with disabilities' are women first and foremost. Disabilities affect men different than women. "A disability weighs more heavily on women in a society in which physical attributes largely determine whether they will be accepted" (1997: 154). Hence, women with disabilities often feel incomplete and this affects their self-worth. Few exact numbers of people with disabilities in Costa Rica exist, but Antezana explains that according to the World Health Organization at least 10 percent of the world population has some disability. This would mean that in 1997, three hundred thousand Costa Ricans lived with a disability. This together with the feminization of poverty (Chant, 2009; Antezana, 1997) presumes that more women than men are affected by a disability.

2.3.1 Women and Health in Costa Rica

The access to health for women has been another point of discussion in Costa Rica that fits in the discussion of discrimination against women. Noonan explains that, in comparison to its neighbouring countries, Costa Rica is the healthiest and the wealthiest country of Central America. However, not without any obstacles. Costa Rica struggles with a growing economic inequality, a large refugee population (mostly from Nicaragua), and there is an increasing problem of violence in both public and private spheres. And while its universal health care is probably further developed than in the rest of the Latin American region, not all citizens are satisfied with this system (2002: 223). According to Noonan, at least 20 different national and international organizations in Costa Rica focus on the topic of women and health. These groups claim that state services do not satisfy many of their needs and are even discriminatory against some women. Women with low incomes, or women that live in remote areas often struggle with receiving the right healthcare. The definition of the right healthcare is another point of discussion. "Women's organizations are currently broadening definitions of health needs by including violence against women on the national health agenda" (2002: 217). Hence, these women do not just refer to illnesses but also to the mental and physical consequences of violations against women. Organizations call this *Salud Integral,* or whole health, meaning that instead of the absence of

[16] The First Encounter took place in Mexico.

disease or illness, it includes the complete mental and social well-being of women. This position is supported by the UN and international health accords (*ibid*: 229).

In short, women's and feminist organizations work hard to address and tackle the issue of discrimination against all women in all areas and pressure the government in prioritizing this issue on the social agenda. Women's organizations work together with international organizations to pressure the government in improving living conditions of Costa Rican women. The cases discussed above are just a minority of all cases of discrimination in the country. Other forms of discrimination exist, for example against indigenous women who live in remote areas and are adjusted to a different lifestyle. Young unwedded mothers are discriminated as well. All these types of discrimination still happen on a daily basis. Results of social pressure from women's groups on state policies to tackle discrimination against women and better access to healthcare will be further discussed in the final chapter. The following part will discuss the issue of gender-based violence in Costa Rica and the fight of women's movements to tackle this problem.

2.4 Violence against Women in Costa Rica

Aside from the serious problem of discrimination against women, Costa Rican women are often victims of (gender-based) violence. Violence against women is not just a problem in Costa Rica but throughout the whole Latin American region.

> "Data on violence against women are only beginning to be compiled in Latin America, and some indications of the extent of the problem are emerging. With regard to wife abuse alone, different studies have found that in Santiago, Chile, and Quito, Ecuador, 60% of adult women sampled had been beaten by a partner. Even in "peaceful" Costa Rica, 54% of women sampled at a child welfare clinic reported being physically abused. Children often witness such violent attacks in the home" (Meyer, 1998: 136).

Sagot adds to this that results of the Costa Rican National Survey on Violence against Women in 2004 demonstrated that 58 percent of women have had experiences with incidents of physical or sexual violence after the age of fifteen. The aggressors were often men close to them (Sagot, 2004). Sagot points out that for women in Costa Rica, "the family is the most violent social group, and the home the most dangerous place" (2010: 222). In fact, more than 80 percent of the incidents of violence, including most murders of women or femicides, take place at home, mainly committed by their partners (Sagot, 2004; Carcedo and Sagot, 2002).

Sexual Violence

In order to tackle the problem of all forms of violence against women, women's and feminist movements initiated several actions. According to Carcedo, the need for collective action to stop violence against women in Costa Rica and to end impunity of perpetrators started in the early 1980s when graffiti quotes such as "Death to Rapists" appeared around San José. No one claimed authorship of the slogans, but this campaign did raise concerns about aggression of individuals and groups in the country (1997). Sagot explains that the women's movement made use of these slogans and campaigns and made sexual violence visible as a social and political problem caused by a hierarchical gender system (2010: 222). The two feminist organizations of that time, CEFEMINA (Carcedo et al., 1997) and Ventana (Camacho et al., 1997) expressed their concerns about inadequate laws and legal procedures. CEFEMINA published two reviews of their magazine *Mujer* (Woman) (1983) in which they explained that victims often are the ones that end up being accused of inventing the story or provoking the man, instead of the rapist being accused and punished for his actions. The magazine also brought to light the increase of rape and the existence of gangs of rapists in the country. On top of that, "CEFEMINA began a campaign, with complaints and action, to bring about changes in legislation, government protection, and women's self-organization for defence in neighbourhoods and communities" (Carcedo, 1997: 160). However, despite CEFEMINA's actions to address sexual violence, rape was still seen as a taboo topic and few people wanted to participate in community groups against rape. Nevertheless, the concern grew, and feminist groups kept on creating awareness and promoting changes in legislation, institutions and perhaps most importantly, influencing the public opinion. The attention also focused on rape within marriage and sexual aggression within the family. This led to the first Seminar on Battered Women, which took place in 1982 in San José and began the debate about dealing with domestic violence against women. Costa Rican women's movements looked at movements in the United States and England who came up with shelters to provide a safe haven for women (and their children). In Costa Rica, during the First University Congress on Women in 1984, participants proposed a women's shelter to help or to shelter battered women and to

include the community in the prevention of violence. CEFEMINA expressed some critique about this proposal because they did not believe that this would help women in the long-term. According to them, only severe action could change the patterns in these women's lives and prevent these situations in the future. However, CEFEMINA did not come up with another solution (*ibid*). After the heated discussions about how to prevent violence and sexual aggression against women with no satisfactory outcomes and no financial support, it resulted in a long silence in 1985. It is notable that it all happened behind the scenes, the discussion never reached public attention. In order to obtain more resources and financial help to tackle the issue, women's movements tried to seek international support. However, "foreign organizations also seemed uninterested in financing projects related to aggression against women in Costa Rica" (Carcedo, 1997: 163). Hence, movements working on this issue had to do so by using their own resources.

Incest

As mentioned, female victims of sexual aggression often know their abuser. Sexual abusers in Costa Rica are in many cases related to the victim. Cases of incest, and especially father-daughter incest in Costa Rica have been reported over a long period, but few cases exist where the abuser is punished for its actions. Batres defines *incest* to be "any form of sexual caresses or sexual gestures shared with a minor to satisfy the sexual needs of an adult whose authority derives from the affective ties that connect him to the child" (1997: 170). Several public institutions and private organizations have expressed their concerns about the increased cases of sexual abuse and incest in the country. The issue has long been hidden from the press, but statistics of the issue have been published since the 1990s (*ibid*). The long history of cases of incest has to do with men's reputation according to Russell. Russell explains that the society expects men to show strength, power, domination, and competitiveness. These forms of masculinity are played out in the form of sex. These expectations, or stereotypes of masculinity, are amplified by media images and pornography (1984: 119). Hence, the image of masculinity needs to change in order to decrease the cases of incest. Simultaneously with the rise of statistics of cases of incest, social organizations initiated projects to help victims of incest. "In 1990, in an effort to institutionalize the treatment of victims of incest, a group of concerned social scientists and health care professionals created the Foundation for Life and Growth (FUNCRESER), a non-profit organization that through its program Amor Sin Agresión offers services to victims of incest, sexual abuse, and other forms of aggression, and to the families of such victims" (Batres, 1997: 178). However, while it is positive that these organizations and protection programs exist, reporting such cases is a difficult process and some victims will never receive the help they need because they do not report the case. The main reason for not reporting a case of incest is that families oftentimes ask their child, daughter in most cases, not to declare since it would rip the family apart. The victims that do not report, often suffer from serious mental health problems, and will lose their self-esteem if they do not seek professional psychological help (*ibid*).

Feminist Actions

The fight against all forms of sexual violence, including incest, has received more and more (international) attention over the years. Costa Rica started with the first activities to confront violence against women at the end of the United Nations' Women's Decade (1975-1985). Similar to other countries, these activities were all initiatives of women's organizations (Sagot, 2010: 225). The public debate on aggression against women in Costa Rica re-emerged when a series of events of brutal assassinations of women in 1986 and 1987 had increased the wish to stop the aggressors' impunity as well among individuals as concerned groups in Costa Rica. CEFEMINA

used these concerns to organize meetings and lectures about women's rights and the prevention of aggression against women. In 1988 they created the National Committee to Prevent Violence Against Women and in the Family to unite previous efforts and promote new activities. The committee worked together with members of the Committee for Battered Children; the National Agency for Child Protection; the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family; the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports; and other participants who wanted to get involved. "The first task this committee assumed was that of celebrating, for the first time in Costa Rica, the Día Internacional de la No Violencia Contra la Mujer (International Day for the Prevention of Violence Against Women), on November 25, 1988" (Carcedo, 1997: 166). The committee introduced the quote "Mujer, No Estás Sola" (Woman, You Are Not Alone; 1988) dedicated to mistreated women. According to Sagot, "a large theoretical and empirical production shows that the inclusion of this problem into the public agenda, together with the subsequent passing of legislation and the development of public policies to confront it, is a direct result of the actions undertaken by the feminist movement" (2010: 222). Hence, without actions undertaken by feminist movements, the issue of violence against women would still be considered a private matter and would remain outside the scope of justice and the state (*ibid*). The influence of feminist movements on public policies (state feminism) will be further discussed in the next chapter. As a consequence of the UN's Women's Decade, feminists in the Latin American region have demanded that their national political institutions "implement a broad notion of social justice to enable the construction of a society that contains the necessary conditions for all its members to develop and exercise their capacities, express their experiences, and participate in determining their living conditions" (Sagot, 2010: 223). Thus, the feminist movement in Latin America, and in Costa Rica, played a key role in broadening democracy and broke the patriarchal system by giving excluded and abused women a voice. In doing so, they have inspired proposals for state policies and legal reforms (*ibid*: 224).

Achievements

Overall, the late 1980s and 1990s marked a period of mayor achievements for the feminist movement as well in Costa Rica as in the rest of the Latin American region. Violence against women became an important topic on the global agenda and the issue was represented into several international declarations. "After several resolutions were issued by the United Nations and the Organization of American States, the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, created an opportunity to crystallize a political consensus on the fact that the various forms of violence against women, whether in the context of armed conflict, other public scenarios, or in private life, should be understood as blatant violation of human rights" (Sagot, 2010: 224). On top of that, the Pan-American Health Organization had declared violence against women a public issue in 1993, and the Organization of American States ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará). In addition to these accomplishments, another result of the proposals by Latin American participants was that violence against women became part of the twelve-point Platform for Action established after the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (*ibid*).

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the process of state feminism described in the first chapter is hard to apply to the case of Costa Rica. Costa Rica does not have a history of military regimes like other countries in Latin America, thus women have not been active in protests against the state. Nevertheless, Costa Rican women's movements have come a long way from the 1940s until the 1990s and have grown into a well-organized social movement. The first mayor achievement has been the right to vote in 1949 and several achievements have followed since. Women's groups, and especially feminist groups have faced many obstacles to reach their goals and to be acknowledged and accepted by society and the state at the same time. The lack of access to state institutions on the one hand, and the amount of impact and influence to change policies on the other hand have made Costa Rica a Type B (high influence/low access) in the typology of McBride and Mazur (1995). However, we cannot speak of a positive trend in women's conditions without mentioning the present-day issues of discrimination and violence against women. As noted by Leitinger on page 31: "(…) in a society that is famous for its love of peace and tranquillity, the perturbing record of violence against women is becoming painfully visible and has given rise to an on-going public debate" (1997: xiii). While women's rights might be advanced under law and acknowledged on paper, the government still fails to protect women from discrimination and violence. Feminist movements have initiated several projects to support women who find themselves in these situations and have given a voice to those who were not allowed to speak. The fight of feminist movements, together with the United Nations World Conferences on Women and the Women's Decade have pressured the Costa Rican government in improving living conditions for women. Until the 1990s/2000s feminist movements acknowledge improvements in equality, however, the fight to tackle discrimination and violence against women is still happening until this day. The next chapter will discuss more recent actions taken by feminist movements and the government to tackle inequality issues. The relationship between women's movements and the National Women's Institute (INAMU) will be examined as well in the form of interviews.

Chapter 3

Women in the San José: confronting the State to fight Gender Inequality

The final chapter aims to find an answer to the research question: have state actions to fight gender equality in Costa Rica been effective according to women's movements? The information given in this chapter is obtained from both primary sources (interviews and documents) as well as secondary sources (academic literature). The interviews were held in January and February of 2020 in and around the capital, San José. Interviewees are constituted by employees of INAMU (National Women's Institute), founders of social movements, and victims of gender-based violence. The chapter starts with a brief overview of some state institutions for women in Costa Rica, focusing on the role of INAMU and the initiatives of the institute such as the Decree of 2018. The second section introduces the women's movements and its founders that have been interviewed for this research. Women's movements in Costa Rica are quite diverse. Most of them work independently from each other and from the state. Cooperation only takes place at big events such as the women's march on the 8th of March or when a terrible event occurs, such as a case of femicide. On these occasions, feminist and other social movements work together to create awareness about gender equality. This section is followed by information about the relationship between the state and social movements. It aims to show that INAMU does not represent the state as a whole but forms the link between the state and women's movements. Examples of greater influences of society on state policies regarding women's conditions, such as the law on therapeutic abortion, visualize the positive development of the state-social movement relationship. However, while women's conditions are improving in Costa Rica, the issue of gender-based violence is still present. The fourth section will describe different forms of violence against women in the city and describes state actions that have been taken to tackle this issue. Women's movements notice a positive change in the legislation; however, they argue that the government should put more effort in protecting women in order to prevent violent situations, or worse, femicides. The final section describes the effectiveness of the actions taken by the state. Since most measures and actions are only recently implemented, future research needs to be done about the outcomes in 5 to 10 years, according to INAMU representatives. Most women's movements are not satisfied with the planned measures and believe that this will not improve women's safety. Another factor that weakens the role of the women's institute is the increasing influence and power of conservative groups that oppose women's rights. The government needs to tackle the rise of violence against women and reduce the power of religious groups.

3.1 State Institutions for Women

According to Chant, Costa Rican women have technically been entitled to the same rights as men since the New Constitution of 1949. However, the promotion of gender equality and the rise of women's organizations did not start until the mid-1980s. As a result of United Nations' initiatives to promote women's rights, The Centre for Women and the Family (Centro Nacional del Desarrollo de la Mujer y la Familia – CMF) was established in 1986 and served as a semi-autonomous body with its own legislative powers. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified that same year by the Costa Rican government. According to Chant, these measures marked the start of "a decade of sustained momentum for gender equality initiatives" (2009: 23). As a result of the initiatives to improve women's conditions during this decade, Act 7801 of 1998 replaced the CMF with a National Institute for Women (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres – INAMU). The Act will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. The National Institute for Women, other than the CMF, gained its own legal status, obtained its own financial resources, and is directed by an appointed Minister for Women's Affairs. Besides the instalment of this institute, Costa Rica even went as far as becoming one of the first signatories to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2001, giving women access to legal action at an international level to defend their rights (ibid; CEDAW, 2003: 27). The aforementioned initiatives, signatories and institutes should, in theory, improve the rights and conditions of women in Costa Rica. The goal of this chapter is to see whether state actions to promote women's rights have been effective.

3.1.1 National Institute for Women – INAMU

The first state institution for women was Costa Rica's National Centre for Women and the Family (CMF), which was established as a result of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1986. As mentioned, the Act 7801 of 1998 replaced the CMF with the National Institute for women – INAMU, an institute that is headed by a Minister for Women's Affairs (Chant, 2009). INAMU represents the separation between Women and Family. Where women used to be associated with family, the institute acknowledges Women as Women and it focusses on gender equality and women's issues such as gender-based violence. The instalment of the women's institute has played an important role in promoting women's rights and gender equality in the country (*ibid*). The Act 7801 that replaced CMF with INAMU describes the leadership of the institute as:

> The Act on the National Institute for Women (Act No. 7801 of 30 April 1998), provides, in article 14, that: "(…) the Executive President may be freely appointed and removed by the Governing Council. He or she shall hold office for a period of four years. In the event of the Executive President's temporary absence, he or she shall be replaced by the vice-president of the Board of Directors. Where the absence is permanent, the Board shall appoint a replacement to serve the remainder of the Executive President's term as stipulated in this Act. Where a ministerial-rank official is appointed with responsibility for women's affairs, that official may also act as Executive President of the Institute (...)". The Act also provides that such official may be granted the rank of a minister without portfolio.[17]

In sum, the national women's institute can be considered as a Ministry for Women given that it is directed by an appointed Minister, however it is not. Even though the Minister for Women's Affairs leads the institute, it still depends on other ministries and state institutions in order to influence state policies and make a difference for women. Nevertheless, on paper INAMU is assigned an

[17] Periodic Report of Costa Rica for the CEDAW, 11 July 2011.

important controlling role. The Periodic Report of Costa Rica for CEDAW in 2011 states that the National Institute for Women is established to manage, formulate, coordinate, and supervise other state agencies' programmes and actions in regard to the status and condition of women. Thus, INAMU advices the ministries on how to include women's affairs. According to Chant, even though INAMU has had its shortcomings over the years, the fourth periodic report of the institute submitted to CEDAW (2003) earned praise for achievements in healthcare, employment, education, political participation, and legal resources. Beyond this, other accomplishments were greater protection and advocacy for the rights of vulnerable women (Chant, 2002).

According to María Ester Serrano[18], who works for INAMU as a coordinator of the department Construcción de Identidades y Projecto de Vida, the institute serves as a connector between social movements and public institutionalism. The principle of INAMU is the equality between women and men. Serrano explains that the main task of INAMU is to inform Costa Rican women about the country's policies, so that women and women's movements can incorporate this into their daily lives. Two important policies that are now implemented to promote women's rights are the policy for equality and the policy against violence. Serrano mentions that current Minister for Women's Affairs, Patricia Mora Castellanos often visits women across the country to listen to their stories. She wants to "take INAMU out of the office and into the streets" (*ibid*, 2020). Serrano's colleague Adina Castro García[19], who works as an advocate at the department of Violencia de Género, adds to this that the minister also meets with social movements every month. On top of that, in order to address discrimination and violence against women, the institute established a Forum for Women (Foro de Mujeres), a Forum for Afro women, and a Forum for Indigenous women. These Forums are financed by the institute and consist of representatives of social movements. There is a strong relation between the institute and women's movements that are members of these forums. Within this forum, members will elect one representative to join the highest-level board of directors of INAMU. Therefore, the board exists of representatives from within and outside the state (Castro, 2020). However, it should be noted that not all social movements are members of these Forums. The Forums consist of about twenty organizations which is only a small percentage of all women's movements in Costa Rica.

3.1.2 Decree of 2018

About 1,5 year prior to this research, in August 2018, the government signed a decree concerning the conditions of women in Costa Rica. This initiative was a result of the cooperation between social movements (members of the Women's Forum) and the women's institute. President Carlos Alvarado Quesada, the Minister of the Presidency Rodolfo Piza Rocafort, and the Minister for Women's Affairs Patricia Mora Castellanos, firmed the decree and directive which declared the prevention of, and attention to violence against women as a national priority. INAMU, together with twenty organizations initiated this decree as a response to the worsening situation of violence against women in Costa Rica. The issue is declared a social problem and with the signed political declaration the government expressed its rejection of femicides, violence, impunity, and discrimination against women. The declaration includes about forty measures that oblige all state entities to incorporate programs to prevent and reject violence against women. These measures are composed into the National Plan for Prevention and Attention of Violence Against Women of all ages (Política Nacional para la Prevención y Atentión de la Violencia contra las Mujeres de todas

[18] Interview, San José, 4 February 2020.
[19] Interview, San José, 27 January 2020.

las edades), namely PLANOVI 2017-2032. The declaration has five main goals that are expected to be achieved by the year 2032.[20] The goals are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Goals PLANOVI 2017-2032.

PANOVI 2017-2032	
1.	The Prevention of Femicide
2.	The Improvement of Women's Access to Care Services
3.	The Strengthening of Institutional Mechanisms for Greater Access to Justice and Protection
4.	The Promotion of the Law on Improper Relationships
5.	The Promotion of a Culture with Gender Equality and Without Gender-Based Violence

Source: INAMU.

Since the PLANOVI is only recently installed and predicts achievements to be made by the year 2032, future research needs to be done on the outcomes of the plan. Hence, whether the initiative of the decree has been effective, is not yet noticeable at time of this research in 2020. Castro (INAMU) explains that not all measures have been implemented immediately as some had to be revised in order to implement properly. The remaining of this chapter will focus on the actions that have been implemented in Costa Rica and have had an impact on gender equality such as the Law on Improper Relations. Serrano (INAMU) explains that there is a positive beginning of the PLANOVI since the Law on Improper Relations is reformed and installed. The reforming of this Law will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Serrano also mentions the system of shelters for women. This is not a new phenomenon. In the previous chapter Carcedo explained that these shelters were first established in the 1980s but turned out to be unsuccessful in the long run (1997). Nevertheless, INAMU improved and amplified these shelters to protect and help battered women. Beyond this, INAMU has continued with police training so that police officers can detect situations of violence and prevent these from becoming worse by taking women out of the violent environments.

[20] https://www.inamu.go.cr/gobierno-de-la-republica-anuncia-frente-comun-para-detener-violencia-contra-las-mujeres

3.2 Women's Movements in San José

According to Piedra, during the 1980s and 1990s, social movements and political participation of women marked a change in the political scene of Latin America, and particularly in Costa Rica. Other than women's movements in Europe and North America, Latin American movements had a strong presence in public spaces and its demands went from 'practical gender needs' to 'strategic gender needs'. Such strong political activity was not seen since the suffrage movement of the 1940s which led to the ability for women to vote in 1949 (Piedra, 2015; Calvo, 1997). There are only few studies on new women's movements in Costa Rica. The next section will deal with the different types of women's movements that are now active in the country.

Most active women movements in Costa Rica can be found in and around the capital city, San José. Beyond organizations that have been around since the 1980s or 1990s such as CEFEMINA (Carcedo, 1997) and Ventana (Camacho *et al*., 1997), new organizations have risen as well such as SEPROJOVEN,[21] which was founded in 2004, and GOLEES,[22] an organization founded in March 2019. Some organizations are relatively small (led by one or two people) and are therefore active in a specific area. The organization GOLEES, for example, is active in the neighbourhood La Carpio, a socially vulnerable section of San José, a 'ghetto' some might say. Ex professional footballer Carme Salleras founded this organization in La Carpio and offers soccer training for free three times a week to girls and women of all ages. These women often find themselves in quite problematic situations; they struggle with low economic resources; are (illegal) immigrants (mostly from Nicaragua); are discriminated because of their sexual preferences; struggle with drug addictions; are forced to work in prostitution, or they are victims of gender-based violence. Apart from soccer training, the organization also provides individual psychological help by listening to the girls' problems. Adding to that, GOLEES creates awareness about women's issues by discussing themes such as self-esteem, human rights, femicide and gender-based violence. The organization SEPROJOVEN also uses soccer training and workshops to train girls and women physically and mentally, and to inform them about their human rights. This organization is not just active in the violent city Alajuela, 30 minutes from San José, but also works a lot with indigenous populations. Most of these populations live in the south of the country. The trainers of SEPROJOVEN will travel to these indigenous communities for the weekend and organize activities with these people. Tilman Menzel,[23] one of the founders of the organization also mentions that they have several projects in Guatemala, Mexico, and El Salvador.

Three other organizations that have been established recently in the country are Poder Ciudadano which started in 2007, organization ACCEDER,[24] initiated in 2015 and Ni Una Menos (NUM) Costa Rica, established in 2017 as part of the Ni Una Menos international movement. These organizations help women by providing information to them about legislative matters, jurisdiction and so on. The organizations are easily accessible for women who are victims of violence and wish to report their cases but do not know how to denounce. Leda Castillo,[25] founder of Poder Ciudadano personally experienced how difficult it is to report a case: she is a victim of domestic violence by her husband, who controlled her accounts so she could not pay the court. During this process, Castillo came in touch with women who faced the same issue. Together with

[21] Servicios de Educación y Promoción Juvenil.
[22] Género, Orgullo, Libertad y Empoderamiento de Ellas en la Sociedad.
[23] Interview, Alajuela, 29 January 2020.
[24] Acciones Estratégicas por los Derechos Humanos.
[25] Interview, San José, 31 January 2020.

two other women she started Poder Ciudadano for women who do not have the financial resources to report their violent husband. These women's organizations are now widely accepted by the Costa Rican society. Nevertheless, feminists are still facing taboos until this day.

Feminism

Camacho *et al*., explained in the previous chapter that feminists had to break quite a taboo in order to be taken seriously. Myths and stereotypes existed that created a negative image of feminists (1997). This negative tone of the term *feminist* still exists in Costa Rica. Ana Laura Araya,[26] cofounder of the organization Soy Niña, explains that the government very rarely uses the term 'feminist movements' because of this negative image. Araya explains that a lot of people still think of feminist movements as organizations that are against men. Especially conservative people see feminists as 'the enemy'. According to Arroyo and Valenciano[27] from ACCEDER, 'feminism' even used to be a synonym for abortion. For this reason, Araya observes that the state often refers to feminist organizations as "organizations that support women or gender equality" (2020). However, both Araya and Arroyo and Valenciano notice that the current government is working on breaking this taboo and the current Minister for Women's Affairs, Patricia Mora, does not avoid the word feminism in her speeches.

Foreign Financial Support

As confirmed by all interviewees, neither INAMU nor other state institutions offer financial support to feminist movements in Costa Rica. The question is whether the organizations are seeking this support from abroad or choose to operate without these financial resources. Salleras (GOLEES)[28] explains that most Costa Rican women's organizations do not receive help or financial support from abroad since the central American country is no longer seen as a country in need of international cooperation. Instead, it is seen as a middle-income country because of its relatively high development index. Neighbouring countries such as Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador where poverty and mortality numbers are greater than in Costa Rica, need it much more. Nevertheless, this does not mean that organizations do not try to obtain international support. Some organizations are still looking for international support such as SEPROJOVEN. Other organizations already receive funds from international organizations like Soy Niña. Araya (Soy Niña) mentions that the organization has received different funds from the United States and that it has good relations with the feminist organizations FRIDA (Canada) and Mama Cash (The Netherlands). Some organizations are part of a bigger international organization such as Ni Una Menos Costa Rica, a movement that started in 2015 in Argentina as a response to femicides. However, this does not mean that they automatically receive international funding. The advantage of an international organization is that they can exchange knowledge, resources, and material, such as slogans, posters, and other propaganda to use as promotion for gender equality.

[26] Interview (Skype), New York, 23 January 2020.
[27] Interview, San José, 22 January 2020.
[28] Interview, La Carpio, 17 January 2020.

3.3 State-Social Movement Relations

The subtitle says 'State-Social Movement Relations', however it must be clarified that the national women's institute does not represent the whole Costa Rican state. INAMU is the link between social movements and the state.

INAMU

María Ester Serrano (coordinator at INAMU) believes that the relation between INAMU and social movements is positive and one of mutual cooperation. She indicates that the Minister for Women and the Director of the institute hold an open policy towards movements and actively listen to their demands. Serrano observes that other Ministries such as the Ministry of Health and that of Treasury could be more active in supporting women's rights and conditions and adds that cooperation between ministries regarding women's issues is lacking. The lack of cooperation between ministries and society is one of the reasons why the Forum for Women is established. INAMU informs the ministries about the discussions held at the Forum. However, Serrano believes that this is not enough. Essential to women's organizations is access to information, which is often hard to obtain for social movements. Thus, the Costa Rican State does not yet offer sufficient support to women, neither politically, nor financially nor on an educational level. According to Arroyo and Valenciano from ACCEDER, in Costa Rica, unlike in other countries, there has never been state funding for civil society. Adina Castro (advocate at INAMU) confirms that neither INAMU nor other institutions support women's movements financially. The only financial support the institute offers is to the Forum for Women, where representatives of social movements come together to discuss issues of women's daily life in Costa Rica. Castro also explains that the relation between INAMU and social movements is more about interaction than financial support. If INAMU pays an organization, it would be because the organization works for INAMU on certain projects. When, for example, INAMU needs statistics on violence against women in a particular area that is difficult to reach (e.g., indigenous populations), they would 'hire' a movement that is active in that area and has connections with the women in that place. Hence, women's movements in Costa Rica work without financial support from the state. However, even without this financial help, Castro explains that the existence of the institute is very important for women's organizations. Few other Latin American states have a national institute for women (e.g., SERNAM in Chile and el Ministerio de las Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad in Argentina). Arroyo and Valenciano explain that Nicaragua, for example, does not have a women's institute or ministry and it is therefore harder for organizations to exist and do their work properly since these organizations do not receive any state support. Especially since organizations are obliged to work without financial resources, it is important that an institute like INAMU exists to represent, acknowledge, protect, and support these movements. However, not all organizations work without any financial support. As mentioned before, some organizations receive financial support from international projects, as is the case in Costa Rica. Nevertheless, Serrano confirms that international support to Costa Rican movements decreased because of the country's high development index, in comparison to the rest of Latin America. Whereas a lot of organizations cooperated with international institutions in the 1980s, after the support shifted to lesser developed countries, many Costa Rican organizations were abolished. Serrano states that the feminist movement is not as strong anymore as it was in the 1980s and believes that INAMU needs to strengthen it because of its importance. As an example of the movements' important influence, she explains that the women's and feminist movements were decisive for the president to firm the law of therapeutic abortion in December 2019. It was not possible for the institute to demand legal abortion since it is part of the state.

Nevertheless, INAMU can discuss these topics with women's movements and support them by giving access to indirectly influence state policies. Hence, the interviews held with INAMU employees reveal that the relation between women's movements and the institute is stable, positive, and one of mutual cooperation and influence. The question is whether the women's movements agree with this idea of a positive relationship.

Women's Movements

As already indicated, INAMU does not represent the state as a whole, but for women's movements the institute is their access to state policies. Arroyo and Valenciano from ACCEDER also make this distinction and explain that, "feminist movements do not have a close relationship with the state, rather the opposite"[29] (*ibid*, 2020). The institute and the state work differently because the priorities of INAMU and state agencies differ. Arroyo and Valenciano point out that an organization can have a good relationship with INAMU and certain institutes or ministries, while at the same time there will be no communication with other state institutions or ministries. It also depends on the person who leads the institution. Current Minister for Women's Affairs Patricia Mora and her predecessor Alejandra Mora both prioritize working closely with civil society. This close cooperation had never occurred before 2014. Thus, there is no structure that ensures joint work between civil society and the state and it really depends on the hierarch of the moment. The institute is now headed by Patricia Mora who is an active feminist, but a new minister will be elected when her term is over. This uncertainty is one of the reasons why some organizations do not enter into a close relation with INAMU. Castillo (Poder Ciudadano) believes that another reason for women's movements to stay independent of INAMU is because they know too little of the 'true work' of the institute. This lack of knowledge even leads to the point that they blame the institute for absolutely everything that happens or does not happen to women. However, Castillo explains that INAMU has not reached all women throughout the country due to its limited resources. Women who live in remote areas are the last to notice changes in legislation and women's rights. This lack of resources to reach all women together with anti-rights organizations (such as religious groups) and their alliances with deputies have managed to weaken the women's institute. However, Castillo explains that INAMU provided great work for the women that do have access to the institute's activities. The organization Poder Ciudadano, initiated by Castillo and partners, is a result of trainings on empowerment of women and lectures on women's rights provided by the institution.

Not all organizations have a close relationship with INAMU like Poder Ciudadano. Though Carme Salleras (GOLEES) does not (yet) have a direct relation with the state or INAMU, because her organization was established a year prior to this research, she believes that most organizations choose to stay independent and autonomous instead of working closely with the state and that this will be her decision as well. Salleras adds that even though a lot of feminists work at INAMU and provide good work for women in the country, the institute will always be part of the state and not of society, like Serrano mentioned. Therefore, Salleras states that it is important for organizations to stay independent and follow their own rules instead of becoming part of the state. Gamboa,[30] who works at INAMU and is an activist from the organization Ni Una Menos, explains that another reason why organizations often decide to not be a part of the Women's Forum of INAMU, is time. Gamboa explains that the Women's Forum expects representatives to be available fulltime. Ni Una Menos (NUM) does not consider a close relation to the state a priority since

[29] All citations have been translated by the author.
[30] Interview, San José, 5 February 2020.

activists all have other jobs and dedicate their free time to their work at NUM. Besides, receiving financial support from INAMU, and therefore from the state, indicates that the organization loses its autonomy. However, some organizations do work together with INAMU, such as SEPROJOVEN. Collaborations between INAMU and social organizations mostly exist of temporary projects. Tilman Menzel explains that INAMU is interested in working with indigenous people and works together with SEPROJOVEN in this area because the organization works closely with indigenous communities. This collaboration does not include financial support but means that they organize activities together. Menzel believes that INAMU is quite active and takes a role as leader of the women's movement. However, Menzel explains that INAMU is more of a technical institution instead of a ministry with resources and must therefore work together with social movements in order to, for example, reach indigenous populations. Thus, the interviewees agree on a positive relation with INAMU, but they are not satisfied with their relationship with the state. And since it is uncertain whether INAMU will be as active as it is today, organizations often choose to stay independent of the institute, or at most work with INAMU on temporary projects. Nevertheless, the cooperation between INAMU and social movements has led to some improvements in the lives of women.

3.3.1 Social Influences on State Policy

Women's movements have influenced Costa Rican state policies in regard to the rights of women. Serrano (coordinator at INAMU) believes that without social movements, there would be no advances in Human Rights. Organizations are fundamental to influence public policy. Castillo (Poder Ciudadano) points out that many rights now enjoyed by women in the country are the product of the struggle of the women's movement. All women contribute to this: indigenous women, afro-Caribbean women, women with disabilities, young women, older women and so on. Some women even lost their lives for raising their voices. Human rights activists often find themselves in unsafe situations. These unsafe environments for human rights activists not just occur in Costa Rica, but throughout the Latin American region (Castillo, 2020; Serrano, 2020). Castro (advocate at INAMU) explains that the influence of women's movements on public policy has been very present in Costa Rica. As an example, she mentions the case of the Law against Domestic Violence, which was approved in 1996.[31] With this law, it was permitted to remove a violent person (a man) from his house. According to Castro this was a very valuable action that was a result of multiple women's groups who addressed this issue. Another example given by Castro is that of the Law against Improper Relationships[32] (between adults and children). The Law already existed, however the organization Paniamor argued for a reform of this penal code. The organization investigated the issue since 2014 and found out that the Law did not include a certain age difference between the adult and younger person to penalize this sexual relationship. The age difference is now incorporated into the penal code and is approved in January 2017. The relation is considered improper when there is a difference of more than 5 years between an adult and an adolescent who is between the age of 13 and 15, or when the difference is more than 7 years between and adult and an adolescent between the age of 15 and 18. Relationships between adults and children under the age of 13 are always illegal and improper. Recommendations of Paniamor together with those of CEDAW eventually led to the reformation of the Law (UNFPA, 2017). This

[31] Ley contra la Violencia Doméstica: http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=27926&nValor3=84069&param2=1&strTipM=TC&lResultado=2&strSim=simp

[32] Ley 9406 para el fortalecimiento de la protección legal de las niñas y las adolescentes mujeres ante situaciones de violencia de género asociadas a relaciones abusivas.

was not the only law influenced by social movements. As mentioned by Serrano, Salleras (GOLEES) explains that the law for therapeutic abortion would not have been approved without pressure from the feminist movement. Current president, Carlos Alvarado noticed the great support for this law and has used it as a political strategy. On top of that, Arroyo and Valenciano (ACCEDER) mention that emergency contraception is now legal and accessible for women as well. These are two examples of installed measures in the last two years (2018-2019) that are results of pressure from the Costa Rican feminist movement.

Menzel (SEPROJOVEN) explains that there has been a change in the last two years (since the elections in 2018) and that the Costa Rican government now communicates more about human rights and gender equality issues than has been done before. It was notable that candidates had listened to the demands of social movements. Menzel mentions that this does not signify a perfect government, but the progress of social influence has been more visible. In addition, Menzel, together with all interviewees, describe current Minister Patricia Mora as a very active and present Minister for Women. Another positive change is noticed by Karla Gamboa (NUM). She is in charge of International Relations and International Cooperation at INAMU and participated in the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in January 2020 in Santiago de Chile. INAMU financed the participation of a representative of the Women's Forum to join this conference. According to Gamboa, this is a clear representation of support to the feminist movement from INAMU. However, the question is whether one person is enough to represent the women's movements. Nevertheless, by allowing the representative to negotiate with the regional institutions, it creates an opening to influence certain policies. Gamboa explains that this was the first time that INAMU worked hand in hand with civil society to define the points that the country wants to promote. Hence, state-social relations are improving, and the state is allowing social movements more and more to influence state policies when it comes to the conditions of women.

Health Care

Arroyo and Valenciano (ACCEDER) also notice positive changes when it comes to women's access to health care. This issue is briefly discussed in the previous chapter. Sexual and reproductive health is normalizing, including for lesbian women and transgender women. This is also a result of the changing LGBTI rights in the country. Besides advances for lesbian and transgender women, Arroyo and Valenciano also notice advances for Afro women in regard to health access. These women were often discriminated because of their race. With the help of social movements demanding equal rights, Afro women now enjoy easier access to health care. However, not all women can enjoy easy access. Notable is that few advances have been made for women with disabilities and immigrant women. Nevertheless, according to Arroyo and Valenciano, overall women are more protected than before as a result of social influence on state policies. Hence, social movements manage to influence state policies and improve women's rights and conditions. Though total gender equality is not reached at this point, living standards of women in Costa Rica improved as a result of pressure from women's organizations.

3.4 Violence Against Women in the City

While feminist movements in Costa Rica have positively influenced state policies to improve conditions of women, violence against women is still an issue. Numbers of gender-based violence and femicide have increased in the last ten years in Costa Rica (INAMU, 2018). According to Adina Castro García[33] (a lawyer at INAMU), the rise of violence against women in the country, and especially femicide has to do with the system of registration. For a long time in Costa Rica femicide[34] was not registered. María Ester Serrano[35] (coordinator at INAMU) explains that there is a worldwide discussion about this topic. The question is whether femicides or the registrations of femicides have increased. Nevertheless, Castro believes that in order to tackle this problem, the state has to work on the cultural origin of the issue. During the interview, Castro explains that the reputation and the cultural idea of violence against women need to be changed. As an example, she mentions that even the 'innocent' jokes and songs about violating women should be looked at critically: "Somehow joking and singing about these crimes is legitimated because no one paid attention to the impact of these actions" (interview, 2020). Castro explains that now is the time to inform people about what is right and wrong. For example, for a long time, women have blamed themselves, or are blamed by others for these behaviours; people believe that women are to blame because of the way they dress or because of where they are walking. This is something that INAMU is working on at the moment, to change the way people look at these issues. Serrano (coordinator at INAMU) agrees with this and adds that society worldwide is becoming more violent against women and social movements. As an example, she mentions that women with spontaneous abortions (or miscarriages) in El Salvador are accused of murdering their unborn child and are sentenced for over 14 years of prison, a proof of the hardening of discrimination against women which also allows and legitimizes violence. Serrano mentions that in Costa Rica, the year (2020) has started with two femicides. According to Serrano this number will rise because more people now report these gender-based murders. El Observador, a newspaper in Costa Rica, states that 11 femicides have occurred in the country until October 26, 2020.[36] Castillo[37] (Poder Ciudadano) also observes the rise of violence in the last 10 years. Castillo blames this on machismo; the need for possession of women, and the hate speech that religious groups have positioned. CEDAW also noticed the opposing role of religious groups in its periodic report of Costa Rica in 2017. It stated that "religious fundamentalism and "el machismo" were major obstacles in the effective realization of women's human rights" (CEDAW, 2017). According to Castillo, 292 femicides have occurred in the last 10 years, which represents an average of 29 murders due to gender violence per year. "The society refuses to accept that our bodies are ours alone", she states.

Normalizing Femicide

The interviewees Salleras (GOLEES), Gamboa (NUM), Arroyo and Valenciano (ACCEDER) and Araya (Soy Niña) all agree that the rise of violence against women has developed simultaneously with the worldwide concern for women and gender equality in the last ten years. Salleras

[33] Interview, San José, 27 January 2020.
[34] The term "femicide" became known thanks to the South African feminist Diana Russell. She used the concept in 1976 at the first International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels to define extreme violence against women. According to Russel, the prevailing definition of femicide is the violent murder of a woman because of the very fact that she is a woman (1992).
[35] Interview, San José, 4 February 2020.
[36] https://observador.cr/costa-rica-registra-11-femicidios-en-lo-que-va-del-2020-38-muertes-violentas-de-mujeres-siguen-en-analisis/
[37] Interview, San José, 31 January 2020.

compares this to the case of Spain where numbers of cases of gender-based violence also increased since it has become 'more normal' to report these crimes. Salleras also believes that the media in Costa Rica played a key role as it has normalized terms such as femicide. Before calling it femicide, these assassinations were referred to as "a crime of passion, he killed her in the name of love, fight between couples, a woman has died", instead of saying "an assassinated woman". Thus, cases of femicides also increased because the media recognized and now actively uses the term 'femicide'. Gamboa mentions another example of normalization. She states that ten years ago, no one spoke about street harassment which is now recognized as violence. Violence in the streets has always been present but it was not seen as a form of violence. Now that there are more tools to report violent issues, women report these cases as well. Organizations like Ni Una Menos also encourage women to report these cases. The first thing you notice when you visit their webpage is the headline that says: "if you are suffering from violence, call 911".[38] This is the first thing women who are victims of gender-based violence will notice when they look for solutions. Gamboa adds to this that the organizations feel the responsibility to help women by providing the right information and by sending these women to the right people to help them in their situations. Although INAMU does a lot of campaigns on the matter, women often approach other organizations with questions on how to report, because information of INAMU does not reach them. Therefore, Gamboa thinks it is important to coordinate information campaigns with the institute in order to inform all women about the institutional mechanisms to report and to get out of the cycles of violence.

Cases in the Rural Zone

Even though all interviewees that participated during this research were mostly active in and around the capital city San José, cases of gender-based violence in the rural area were also a point of discussion. According to Salleras (GOLEES), cases of gender-based violence and femicide more often occur in the rural zones of Costa Rica instead of urban zones. Araya (Soy Niña) adds to this by stating that especially in rural areas the gender equality gap is visible, and women often do not have access to sexual and reproductive health care. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has observed the disadvantaged position of women in rural areas in Costa Rica as well. In their concluding observations in 2011, the Committee states that it reiterates its concern about these women. According to CEDAW, these women "are the most affected by poverty, face difficulties in obtaining access to health and social services and a lack of participation in decision-making processes".[39] On top of that, according to Arroyo and Valenciano (ACCEDER) these areas more often enhance their traditional norms and rules where the man dictates the household, as explained by Soto in the previous chapter. "Countless husbands still dictate even the arrangement of furniture in the home and the style of their wives' hair or dress", and "some also refuse to grant their wives permission to work outside the home, to study, or even to leave the house for shopping or social occasions" (Soto, 1997: 105). Traditionally, gender-based violence is seen as something private instead of a public matter. Women in these areas often do not know how to report their violent partner or they are too afraid to lose everything. Nevertheless, Leda Castillo (Poder Ciudadano) notices a positive change with the current Minster of Women, Patricia Mora, when it comes to women in rural areas. Mora often travels to rural zones to speak with the women and observe the situation there.

[38] https://www.facebook.com/niunamenoscostarica/

[39] Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – Costa Rica, 2 August 2011, https://www.refworld.org/docid/4eeb4e922.html

3.4.1 State Action to Prevent Violence against Women

In order to tackle all forms of violence against women that are mentioned above, INAMU came up with a plan of action, PLANOVI (Plan No Violencia). According to Castro (lawyer at INAMU), the state works hard on the prevention of violence against women and equal rights for men and women. Castro explains that INAMU, in cooperation with other ministries and well-organized organizations, have divided the plan of action into six categories, all surrounding the topic of prevention. The categories can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories of Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Costa Rica.

Categories of Prevention (PLANOVI)	
1.	Cultural Change and the Prevention of Sexist Violence (starting with children)
2.	Domination, Masculinity
3.	Young Mothers, Breaking the Intergenerational Cycle of Violence
4.	Inform and Educate people on addressing Cases of Sexual Violence
5.	The Prevention of Improper Relations between Adults and Children
6.	The Prevention of Femicide and Protection of Women in High Risk Situations

Source: INAMU.

Serrano (coordinator at INAMU) indicates that, as a response to the PLANOVI, the state has put these categories into two important policies: (1) Política nacional para la atención y la prevención de la violencia contra las Mujeres de todas las edades (2017-2032), and (2) Política nacional para la igualdad efectiva entre Mujeres y hombres (2018-2030). The plan and the policies have to make sure that all state entities include the prevention, detection, punishment, and eradication of violence against women. In order to implement this plan of action throughout the country, Carme Salleras (GOLEES) explains that the legislation department of INAMU is replicated in each municipality in Costa Rica. They have installed these offices because women's issues cannot be controlled via the Ministries in San José, and women now have close(r) access to the women's offices. Other important actions initiated by Minister Patricia Mora are campaigns to address violence against women during for example men's soccer. Salleras explains that whenever there is a soccer game in Costa Rica, there is a significant increase in calls to the emergency line from women who are beaten. Mora gave visibility to violence and femicides by initiating the campaign 'Métele un Gol al Machismo' (Score a Goal for Machismo) and used the media to strengthen this campaign. Menzel (SEPROJOVEN) adds to this with the example of the campaign called 'Soy Luz Naranja' to create awareness about the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2019. This campaign was strengthened by social media as well. Another recent action mentioned by Salleras and Araya (Soy Niña) is that INAMU empowers women by providing trainings to women who wish to run their own business to be (financially) independent. According to Araya, INAMU also worked together on a Mesoamerican project financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (BID) to prevent early pregnancies. Hence, INAMU is very active when it comes to creating awareness on women's conditions and participates in a lot of projects.

Implementation of PLANOVI

A disadvantage of INAMU not being a ministry is the lack of resources to properly implement new measures in order to tackle gender-based violence. Arroyo and Valenciano (ACCEDER) explain that although INAMU has initiated actions to prevent violence against women, the institute often

does not have or use the right resources. They clarify that this is not just the fault of the women's institute but of other state institutions as well. As an example, they explain that The Declaration of Human Rights is something that is not being taught to schoolchildren. The Ministry for Education should work together with INAMU when it comes to educating children, and especially girls, about their human rights. This matter is included in the plan of action PLANOVI; to provide better education for children in order to achieve cultural change. In order to achieve cultural change via the education of children, Arroyo and Valenciano state that INAMU and the Ministry of Education have to work together.

The founders of ACCEDER also observe that it is not safe for women nor an easy process to report a case of gender-based violence. According to Arroyo and Valenciano, some femicides can be prevented because these women have oftentimes tried to denounce their aggressors before. Women who report their aggressors often find themselves in unsafe situations and are not protected by the Costa Rican state. The first step has been made as the prevention of femicides is also included in the PLANOVI. Hence, it is not an ignored subject. However, the question is when and how is the state going to prevent femicides? Arroyo and Valenciano do not notice any improvements in protecting these women so far. Another matter mentioned by the director of ACCEDER where the government fails to protect girls and women is cyber violence. This issue is not included in the plan of action. According to Arroyo and Valenciano the government does not consider the issue of violence against women and girls through social media a priority. As an example, they mention that when a sexual and reproductive rights defender is threatened through social media, it is not considered a crime since the name and phone number of this person are often unknown. These women are not protected by the state and often find themselves in unsafe situations. Hence, according to the interviewees, the plan of action is incomplete, and few believe that PLANOVI will improve women's lives.

Opposition of the PLANOVI

Apart from criticizing the (lack of) actions that INAMU and the state provide to fight violence against women on the one hand, criticism on the number of actions to fight gender-based violence also exists. According to Salleras (GOLEES), there is a downside to the amount of help that the Costa Rican government has been providing to women (on paper). People criticize the measures taken by the state to help women and claim that it is hurting the men. Some even argue that women make up their complaints of violence and abuses. Salleras adds to this that when a complaint is considered false, it immediately affects other women who did not invent their denunciation. These complaints will not be taken seriously anymore. The media have played a key role in creating this disunity as well. People against the PLANOVI use their social platforms to express their concerns on the credibility of denunciations made by women. The effectiveness of state actions (and its opposition) will be discussed in the next section.

3.4.2 Effectiveness of state actions

In order to find out whether all the state actions to prevent violence against women and to promote gender equality have been effective, future research is necessary. According to Castro (lawyer at INAMU), in 5 to 10 years results of the state actions on the matter should be noted since most actions are only recently implemented. Predictions of the effectiveness of state actions are discussed with the interviewees. Serrano (coordinator at INAMU) is very critical when it comes to the decree of 2018 and other policies of INAMU and the Government and doubts that anything will change in the near future. She states that Costa Rica has the legislation (women's rights) but

does not apply it: “I can tell you that the decree is very ambitious, but the urgency is great. It is not just about mental consequences, it is about the killing of women, about femicides. These are no jokes, INAMU and the society have to end that culture” (interview, 2020). Gamboa (NUM) even states that the decree does not strengthen the violence prevention system. The system already existed; it just became more visible with the establishment of the decree. Gamboa states that the decree of 2018 is a document initiated by the women’s movements, but once passed through the institutional filter, the document changed to a safe document with little impact on already existing policies. Salleras (GOLEES) adds to this that it is like a political game and that the measures are only written on paper and have not reached the citizens: “It is in the office but not on the streets” (*ibid*, 2020). Salleras adds that in La Carpio, a zone with over 20.000 people, the women’s office only exists of 3 persons, who are not professionals and who have to process all of the complaints. Therefore, INAMU needs to invest in these local women’s offices by providing more personnel. Castillo (Poder Ciudadano) agrees with this and mentions that the institute should put in more effort to help and reach all women, for example by training more personnel and by establishing more local offices. Castillo adds that the institute should also provide more information about human rights and financial support to improve the performance of organized civil groups. Hence, so far, no greater impact is achieved with the instalment of the decree.

Whether greater impact will be achieved with the decree in the future, also depends on the government’s attitude towards INAMU. Menzel (SEPROJOVEN) explains that INAMU is state-owned, and the state apparatus in Costa Rica changes from time to time. The acceptance of the institute and therefore the ability to influence state policies similarly differs. Menzel describes the current government as ‘pro-INAMU’ and explains that previous governments did not have this attitude. The last elections were very important to INAMU because a lot of criticism was expressed towards the women’s institute, especially from the conservative parties. These parties were considering ending INAMU or changing it (back) to an Institute for the Family if they were to win the elections. Nevertheless, according to Menzel, INAMU is working hard to reach gender equality and some changes are already notable. Araya (Soy Niña) explains that, so far, state actions that tackle violence against women have been effective in terms of education about the matter. More people have become aware of the issue as a result of the campaigns and projects organized nationally. However, the problem that still exists is that many laws that protect women are not enforced, and without these laws, women often do not report their violators.

3.5 Final remarks

Another aspect that weakens the institute's position that is not central to this research is the evangelical rise. Several interviewees have mentioned this conservative opposition during their interviews.

Evangelical opposition

The government's attitude towards INAMU is also influenced by conservative leaders in Costa Rica. As mentioned, religious groups strongly oppose equal rights between men and women. Carme Salleras (GOLEES) explains that Costa Rica has always been very religious, and the role of the church is fundamental in decision making. According to Serrano (INAMU), the country is in the middle of highly conservative, neo-Pentecostal and religious discourses, which oppose human rights, and especially women's rights. She believes that the rise of these conservative organizations is one of the causes of the rising femicide rates. According to Arroyo and Valenciano, Christian and evangelical movements have been on the rise in Latin America in recent years and are financed by the United States. By normalizing violence against women, religious groups affect the cultural change that INAMU is trying to achieve in Costa Rica. Menzel (SEPROJOVEN) describes recent years as a renaissance of violence, conservatism, and authoritarianism in Latin America. In Costa Rica, the evangelical churches arose and are interfering on gender issues. Menzel adds that religious groups try to influence certain themes like equal marriage and abortion. This influence has caused a macho and sexist climate that approves violence against those who do not comply with their image of the world. In their opinion, women have to obey men and cannot make their own decisions. According to Castillo (Poder Ciudadano) machismo has been rearticulated and thanks to the positioning of anti-rights groups, almost all with a religious character, machismo culture has been strengthened to such an extent that their ideas have reached the highest institutions such as Judiciary. Castillo explains that these groups are very well organized and have a lot of economic power, unlike women's organizations. Nevertheless, in comparison to other Central American countries, according to Salleras, Costa Rica seems more resistant against this conservatism. However, reason for this is that these countries know an even stronger religious history. Like Castillo, Salleras believes that a very strong movement against women has risen in recent years in the region. As an example of extreme violence against women in Costa Rica, Salleras mentions the case of several assassins of foreign women in 2019, most of these occurred in the coastal areas. This is an example of femicides where the man does not have a relation with the woman. These women are murdered because they are women. Castillo explains that at the moment there is an overwhelming fear about what may happen to women's rights if the advancement of conservative anti-rights groups continues to grow both in Costa Rica and globally.

Conclusion

Have state actions to achieve gender equality in Costa Rica been effective according to women's movements? According to the interviewees, improvements have been made in some areas such as access to healthcare, the implementation of the Law against Improper Relations, and the legalization of therapeutic abortion. However, women's movements want the Costa Rican government to put more effort in protecting women from violent situations. The numbers of gender-based violence are quite significant considering that Costa Rica is a relatively developed country. The interviewees are holding a positive attitude towards INAMU on the one hand but are very critical of state actions on the other hand. Women's movements agree that INAMU has made serious efforts in promoting gender equality, and (most of them) do not blame the women's institute for the slow progress. However, in order to achieve gender equality and reduce gender-based violence, INAMU has to cooperate with other state agencies and ministries and this cooperation is often lacking. Women's movements want the Costa Rican government to prioritize gender issues. Not just on paper, but on the streets.

Recent Developments

Resignation of Costa Rican Women's Minister Patricia Mora

Ten months after the fieldwork research in Costa Rica, on 7 December 2020, current Minister for Women's Affairs, Patricia Mora Castellanos announced her resignation via her social media accounts. The Minister explains that she is outraged and concerned about the way in which matters of national interest have been handled in regard to negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. Reasons for her resignation did not link back to her work at INAMU. The successor of Patricia Mora is not yet known, nor are the consequences this will bring to the organization of INAMU.

Conclusion

This study has sought to answer the question: *Have state actions to achieve gender equality in Costa Rica been effective according to women's movements?* In order to find answers to this question, the research was divided into three chapters. The first chapter formed the basis of the study and introduced the three main conceptual pillars of the study: the state, social women's movements, and international influences. McBride and Mazur's approach of State Feminism was consulted for this section. According to McBride and Mazur four main discussions are at basis of the state feminism framework: institutionalism and state; social movement; democracy and representation; and policy and framing (2013: 663). Arising from these theories, state feminism represents the relation between women's institutions and the state on one hand, and between women's institutions and feminist movements on the other hand. Women's institutions, or women's policy agencies, arose as a result of pressure from both feminist movements and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS). It has become clear that women's movements have played an important role in the process of democratization in many Latin American countries and representation of women in governments is rising since the establishment of women's agencies. Through these agencies, women's movements are influencing state policy when it comes to gender issues. The theory of state feminism is relevant to the research because it focusses on the relation between feminist movements and the state and it can be applied to the case study of this thesis, which is the case of Costa Rica. Examples of the process of state feminism in Latin America in the first chapter have focused on countries that lived through authoritarian regimes. As explained in the following chapters, in Costa Rica, state feminism developed quite differently because this Central American country does not have a history of oppressive regimes.

In order to explore the process of state feminism in Costa Rica, chapter 2 provided information on the development of the Costa Rican women's movement's relationship with the state. Costa Rica is an interesting case because the country abolished its armed forces in the 1940s and has hardly had any conflicts since, which is remarkable considering its neighbouring countries and the region's history of military regimes. This nonviolent strategy is also noticeable when looking at the women's movement. Women have found other ways to pressure the state, such as forming alliances with (international) organizations, open dialogues with government representatives and educating women about their rights. In comparison to its neighbouring countries, Costa Rica is quite ahead in the development of women's rights as feminist movements have achieved more rights for women such as the right to vote, the institutionalization of the National Women's Institute, and the decentralization of the Office of the Women's Defender. These achievements were made possible with help of the UN World Conferences on Women and pressure from the OAS. Hence, until the 1990s, a positive trend towards gender equality is notable in Costa Rica. However, the following sections of the chapter made clear that feminists still face many obstacles as women are often victims of discrimination and (gender-based) violence. Especially Afro-Caribbean women, women with disabilities, lesbian women and poor women are victims of discrimination, and more than 50% of all Costa Rican women have experiences with physical or sexual violence. Thus, while women's rights might be advanced under law and women enjoy greater possibilities on paper, truth is that many women feel unsafe and the state is incapable of protecting these women from discrimination and violence.

Chapter 3 provided information from both primary sources (interviews and documents) as well as secondary sources (academic literature). Interviewees consisted of employees of the National Women's Institute (INAMU), founders of social movements, and victims of gender-based violence. Most organizations consulted during this research have risen since the 2000s and represent a 'new wave' of women's organizations in Costa Rica. These new organizations also use different types of materials to inform and educate women and girls about their rights. Some use soccer, and others use social media. Almost all founders of the organizations interviewed during this research indicate that they work independently from the state or other organizations. It is clarified that the National Women's Institute does not represent the state but acts as the link between social movements and the state. Hence, while positive relationships exist between organizations and INAMU, organizations might feel very neglected by the state as a whole. The women's institute is not a stand-alone ministry and therefore lacks the resources to implement policy changes to improve the status and conditions of women in the country. This lack of resources also causes the institute incapable of reaching all women in the country, which weakens their status. The interviewees agree that INAMU is working hard on fighting gender issues, especially violence against women. Nevertheless, few seem to have confidence in the plans of action initiated by the institute to tackle gender-based violence. Reason for this lack of confidence is the changing attitude of the Costa Rican government towards INAMU. It is clear that since 2014 INAMU has been more active than ever before. Two reasons explain this activism: support from the (left-wing) government parties, and a strong feminist leader. However, interviewees explain that this feminist support can change any moment since the (conservative) opposition is rising. Opposition to the INAMU want to abolish the institute or change it back to the Centre for Women and the Family (CMF).

Limitations

In view of the fact that few studies exist on the process of state feminism in Costa Rica, limitations have risen during the research. Most academic literature on state feminism applies to western democracies or Latin American countries that struggled with authoritarian regimes. Therefore, this study sought to apply the theory to Costa Rica. However, further study is needed to confirm the applicability of this theory to the Costa Rican context. Furthermore, the fieldwork period was during holiday season which limited the number of interviews conducted. Further interviews are key to better understand the relationship between social movements and the state. Lastly, while organizations are content with the hard work of INAMU to fight violence against women, both the Decree of 2018 and the plan of action PLANOVI (2017-2032) are only recently initiated, which makes it impossible to notice changes at time of this research. Further research needs to be done on the numbers of reported cases of violations against women in 5 to 10 years to speak of effective measures. Nevertheless, new (conservative) governments can stand in the way of the implementation and performance of the plans of action, as predicted by several interviewees.

Thus, have state actions to achieve gender equality in Costa Rica been effective according to women's movements? The easiest answer is to say: no, they have not. However, the question is too broad to answer with a simple yes or no. The study made clear that the interviewees are not satisfied with the state on one hand, but they are content with the women's institute and its actions on the other hand. INAMU has proved itself as an active feminist organization since 2014. Reasons for this positive reputation are the current and former Minister for Women's Affairs. Both Patricia Mora Castellanos and her predecessor Alejandra Mora have held an open policy towards

society and prioritized gender issues on their social agendas. All interviewees agree on the great feminist leadership of both of these women. However, INAMU has its limitations since it is not a stand-alone ministry. The institute has an advising and controlling role, but the amount of impact on state policymaking depends on support from the government. Therefore, it is important to separate INAMU from the state when examining its actions.

With the information obtained during this study, one can say that the status and conditions of women in Costa Rica have developed significantly since the 1940s with the help of cooperation within the triangle: the state, social movements, and international influences. Nevertheless, equality between men and women is not yet achieved.

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Appendix. Interviewee List

Name interviewee	Role	Place and date	Approximate duration
Carme Salleras	Founder of the GOLEES Foundation	La Carpio, 17-1-2020	1,5 hours
Larissa Arroyo Navarrete and Laura Valenciano Arrieta	Lawyer / Director and Coordinator of Actions and Political Advocacy	Barrio Escalante, 22-1-2020	1 hour
Ana Laura Araya	Cofounder of the organization Soy Niña	Nueva York (Skype), 23-1-2020	45 minutes
Adina Castro García	Lawyer, Departamento de Violencia de Género, INAMU	INAMU Office, San Pedro, 27-1-2020	1 hour
Tilman Menzel	Cofounder of the organization SEPROJOVEN	Alajuela, 29-1-2020	45 minutes
Leda Castillo	Founder of the organization Poder Ciudadano	Barrio Escalante, 31-1-2020	1,5 hours
Maria Ester Serrano	Coordinator departamento Construcción de Identidades, INAMU	INAMU Office, San Pedro, 4-2-2020	2 hours
Karla Gamboa	Founder of Ni Una Menos (NUM) Costa Rica	INAMU Office, San Pedro, 5-2-2020	1 hour