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DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER EQUITY:
AN UNCOMPLETED TASK

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Introduction

The experience gained in the course of research on women and gender has, over time, come to be a significant aspect of the social sciences and of current development studies. This provides an avenue of approach to the constellation of associated issues which is capable of encompassing their complexity and providing an integrative perspective on the fragmented elements that make up what has thus far been a quite unfavourable relationship between women and development. On that basis, and within the context of Latin America and the Caribbean, this gender-based perspective makes a contribution to the re-interpretation and enrichment of both of these subject areas.

The proposal for changing production patterns with social equity (ECLAC, 1990 and 1992) that has been presented by ECLAC and endorsed by its member countries constitutes both an analysis of the existing situation in Latin America and the Caribbean and an agenda for the region's economic, technological and social modernization and development which calls for the active participation of women. While this proposal does offer a possible means of resolving some of the objective problems faced by, among others, the female population, it does not in itself provide any guarantee that the type of society that will emerge from this process will have surmounted the existing inequalities between men and women. Women's daily lives, and women themselves, are changing in many different ways, but the after-effects of centuries of marginalization and subordination are still with us. Hence the need to introduce the dimension of gender equity into the development process as such (ECLAC 1993b) and to analyse the gender system's regulatory mechanisms as instruments of power and control with a view to establishing new and genuinely equitable means of integrating women into development.

Because the ECLAC proposal is an open-ended, flexible, orientational and continually evolving agenda, it not only permits us to make changes in its core elements (technical progress, productive employment and investment in human resources) but also allows us to incorporate guidelines and courses of action conducive to a modification of the sociocultural dimensions and logic of social relationships that pose fundamental obstacles to gender equity.

The democratization of the development process and the expansion of the concept of citizenship, as necessary conditions for equity, must be coupled with changes in cultural patterns which themselves entail changes in the structures and imagery of society as well as their symbolic representations. Acknowledging the valuable contributions made by women to their societies and the importance of their active participation in the processes now taking place, in combination with an identification of the limitations they face in terms of options and autonomy (thus extending our analysis into the realm of values), lays the groundwork for changes in discriminatory images and stereotypes of women's roles and identities. On this basis, progress can then be made towards a convergence of personal development and national development.

Against this backdrop, a gender-based approach to development constitutes an undeniably significant contribution by incorporating social relationships, the domestic sphere and the linkages between macro-policies and people's daily lives into the analysis of fundamental development issues of ongoing concern. This perspective will thus
increase our chances of achieving our objectives regarding the improvement of people’s quality of life within a framework of political, economic, social, cultural and gender equity. In this respect, there are two unresolved areas of concern that are directly related to women’s quality of life and living conditions which need to be incorporated into overall policy. One of these concerns has to do with access to power and to governmental decision-making, while the other involves changes relating to the regulation of reproductive matters.

Changing the ground rules for the biological, workforce and sociocultural reproduction that sustains society —spheres in which women are clearly the leading actors— is a highly important step in achieving an equitable distribution of space, time, status and power between the sexes. In order to ensure that changes in the sphere of production will be equitable, changes have to be made in the spheres of reproduction and the distribution of power; this statement is founded upon the belief that, otherwise, women would very probably be relegated to the sidelines of this or any other development proposal.

In the first part of this document, the basic theoretical concepts underlying a gender-based perspective and its linkages will be outlined with a view to identifying the analytical categories on which this approach is founded. The historical evolution of concerns about the place occupied by women’s issues in development strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean will then be traced; this will be followed by a systematization of the inputs provided by a gender-based perspective on development as a new means of addressing a dimension of social inequality that has thus far been largely neglected, i.e., gender inequality. The potential of this strategy in terms of its application to the design, implementation and evaluation of the countries’ development policies and actions will also be analysed.

In an effort to help redefine the concept of development, the second part of this study will discuss the necessary connection between development and the reinforcement of a type of democracy which provides for the participation of women in the exercise of governmental power and decision-making and for their assertion of their citizenship. Finally, the discussion turns to the importance of providing for changes in the existing cultural model so that development and equity may become a reality for women, with emphasis on the need to redefine the gender-based division of labour and social roles so that changes may be made in the sphere of reproduction that will have far-reaching implications in all areas of economic, political and social endeavour.
I. A GENDER-BASED PERSPECTIVE AS A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT REALITY

When the inequality existing between men and women in our societies was first recognized, the chief response of women scholars and activists in the feminist movement was to engage in a process of reflection in an attempt to understand and account for the subordination of women in general solely by reason of their sex. The resulting studies showed that differences in social modes of behaviour were greater than biological differences and that not all cultures defined what was masculine and what was feminine in the same way. These findings gave rise to the proposition that biological differences did not justify the subordination and discrimination against women practised in our societies and that the underlying factors which perpetuated these phenomena had to be studied so that they might be changed.

As the next step in this process, the existence of a patriarchal system of social organization was found to be both the cause and the basis for the subordination of women, and this concept was then incorporated into academic and political thinking. Although it was clearly a step forward, this construct was neither analytically nor operationally sufficient to describe and explain the processes and mechanisms within the social structure and cultural model that determined the nature of women’s positions and roles in specific historical contexts.

This brought to light the need for an in-depth analysis not only of the status of women and their unfavourable living conditions in a variety of different settings, but also of their thus far unrecognized contributions to the development and evolution of society and culture. As a parallel avenue of inquiry, a need was seen to investigate and study the various societies and their different organizational and operational modalities, since those were the mechanisms for the production and reproduction of women’s subordination.

Thanks to these efforts, a step forward was taken in the mid-1970s with the development of what became known as a gender-based perspective. Using this approach, an attempt was made to answer the theoretical and methodological questions raised by the asymmetries and inequalities existing between men and women as a function of their sex. According to some authors, this was the greatest epistemological breakthrough to be made in the social sciences in 20 years (Fraser, 1989).

Scientific and political concern about the social status of women is nothing new. Indeed, such concerns date back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the rights attendant upon citizenship in the modern-day world were first set forth; the formulation of those rights—which has continued, albeit with ups and downs, to the present day—has received contributions from two different quarters: the social sciences and the women’s movement. Those writings permit us to trace the history of our thinking in respect of gender issues.¹

Traditional sociology, however, whether based on the theory of classes or of social stratification, did not satisfactorily systematize what was already known, and thus failed to characterize the specific forms of subordination and discrimination applied to women as opposed to men. Moreover, historians and anthropologists either did not describe the origin or development of male domination and predominance in society or treated them
as no more than marginal aspects of more general processes. By the same token, political scientists did not discuss the particular facets of the power structure existing between the sexes but were instead preoccupied with other types of power relations and power plays that they felt were more important.

The realization that the social sciences, too, had—as a product of society—been dominated by androcentrism demonstrated the urgency of devising a new way of thinking about the situation of women and about a dimension of social inequality which had not yet been grasped in all its complexity or with the necessary specificity and which primarily took the form of gender inequality. The gender-based perspective is not, however, totally divorced from the tradition of the social sciences, since it makes use—although generally in an eclectic manner—of established concepts and theoretical frames of reference which are useful in such analyses. Nevertheless, it also questions underlying ideas and values and incorporates new elements—products of women’s studies and feminist thinking—thereby demonstrating that mainstream schools of thought are still capable of formulating new questions and thus enriching the development of existing disciplines and paradigms.

To date, at our current level of knowledge, the gender-based approach is a set of defensible, fairly consistent hypotheses, but neither existing research nor current thinking on the subject have developed to the point where we might talk about a full-blown theory (De Barbieri, 1991). None the less, as an interpretive framework it provides a functional conceptual tool which may in future be fashioned into an effective methodological and operational instrument.

1. A gender-based approach: some concepts and basic linkages

The first reason for incorporating the concept of gender into current discourse and analysis is that it has greater explanatory power than the concept of sex.² This term implies a distinction between the anatomical and physiological traits that determine an individual’s sex (along with the resulting physical differences between men and women) and the social or gender characteristics relating to socially-defined roles, behaviour patterns, attitudes and values which are internalized via the socialization process.

Whereas sexual differences are biological, gender differences are cultural and may change depending on each society’s specific form of development. The socially-constructed sex/gender relationship can therefore be modified with the help of new forms of social organization and new means of legitimizing value systems and interpretive frameworks based on new ways of perceiving and representing human beings, whether they be men or women.

Gender is therefore defined as a cultural, social and historical construct which, on the biological basis of sex, determines what society regards as being masculine and feminine as well as the nature of subjective and collective identities. Gender also governs the asymmetrical social value assigned to men and to women and the power relationships established between them.³

Although gender as a relational category theoretically includes three possible variations (male domination, female domination, male/female equality), in practice it has been formulated and developed in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of male domination of women in today’s societies (De Barbieri, 1990). Gender is defined as the result of a hierarchized historico-cultural structure which places women in a position of inferiority and subordination and men in one of superiority and domination.
The concept of gender also refers to the ways in which man-woman relationships are socially structured, restructured and, through that process, transformed (Young, 1991). This serves as the basis for the postulate that gender relations are determined by dynamic processes of adaptation and re-adaptation, as well as by a process of negotiation between men and women, in keeping with the changes that society undergoes through its history.

As these changes take place, some things remain the same while other are altered at varying speeds and intensities. Some hegemonic cultural elements relating to traditional concepts of what is feminine and what is masculine overlap with new, alternative perceptions of women and their role in society and with new consensuses regarding interpersonal and intra-family conduct according to which, for example, sexual harassment in the workplace and domestic violence against women are regarded with increasingly vehement condemnation.

The concept of gender is not confined to the relationship between the sexes, however. It is a comprehensive concept that refers to much broader, diffuse and unstable processes that are expressed through a network of institutions, symbols, values, cognitive representations, identities and economic and political systems which, although highly complex, need to be identified and addressed none the less.

Gender relations also cut across by, and are involved in, other social relationships: production, ethnicity, nationality, religion and other generational relationships; this engenders a variety of subjective perceptions and interests, and ultimately makes it possible to generate a range of different discourses. The gender system as such is not, therefore, an isolated element but is instead linked to other systems of distancing or asymmetrical relationships. Thus, in Latin America, class-gender and/or gender-ethnic cross-correlations have an enormous explanatory relevance to women's social reality. The overrepresentation of women in groups suffering from extreme poverty in all the countries and the marked vulnerability of displaced or refugee indigenous women in Central America are examples that illustrate the importance of taking these interrelationships into consideration.

In fact, the relevant determinants and influential variables are separated out at the theoretical and conceptual levels only because of the need to clarify the analysis and identify the structural elements affecting the social status and gender-related position of women in the region. At given points in time, emphasis may be placed on one system of social distancing over another, after which—in the light of the extremely marked interrelationships that exist—reality in its full complexity is then interpreted. In the case of interest to us here, attention is focused primarily on evaluating the ways in which gender is linked and interrelated with other influential factors in shaping specific situations: young women, indigenous women, poor women, women heads of household, women professionals, women refugees and displaced women, black women, urban women, housewives, peasant women, female manual workers, old women, mothers, immigrant women, etc.4

In the theoretical context postulated here, the gender system is regarded as a power structure. The core of this structure lies in the control men exert over women, masculine elements' control over feminine elements, based on a multi-power system (Foucault, 1981) which operates in the various social spheres at both the macro-social and micro-social levels.

In direct connection with the foregoing, it is important to underscore the fact that the gender system is a system that, rather than seeking to eliminate women's capabilities, affords control over them. It is thus under a continual threat of transgression, which prompts it to adjust itself in order to maintain its homeostatic state and retain its control
function. This power/control system interpretation is valuable in that it enables us to understand the inequality between men and women in cases such as those found in Latin America as well as, in a broader sense, the inequalities of other sorts existing within our societies (class inequalities, ethnic inequalities, etc.) (De Barbieri, 1991).

Gender relations are not experienced by all women in the same way, nor do they have just one type of manifestation. The heterogeneity to be observed among the broad category of women in our countries today demands that we gain a fuller understanding of the context of our societies and histories and that we identify the different social and cultural practices of women and men in order to lay the groundwork for an approach that takes that diversity into account without, however, turning a blind eye to gender identity.

The specific features of women’s lives reflect the multiplicity of factors that differentiate them and cause them to draw distinctions among themselves; nevertheless, gender—as a socially objectivized characteristic—groups them together in qualitative terms. Gender identity refers to the way in which a man’s or woman’s identity is socially dictated by the status/role combination attributed to a person as a function of their sex and to the way in which the gender system, through the socialization process, is integrated into the psyche.

Because it is more comprehensive, the concept of gender identity is more serviceable both for purposes of analysis and in practical applications than are the concepts of sexual role and sexual identity. The latter do not enable us to comprehend the structural mechanisms through which women are considered inferior—even by themselves, in many cases—and are treated as limited or second-class human beings. Nor do they help account for the interaction between the two genders, the ways in which established roles influence one another, or the way in which identities shift as part of a dichotomic dynamic of contradiction and complementarity.6

An exploration of the gender system and gender identity leads us to analyse certain institutions and social structures whose foundations are clearly identifiable and in which the inequalities generated by the prevailing cultural model stand out particularly sharply. These institutions and structures include the sexual and social division of labour, the organization of family and domestic life, the kinship system, the regulation of sexuality and reproduction, economic and political systems, the definition of citizenship, and the rights and duties of the individual.

Thus, the aim is to attempt, from a gender-based perspective, to describe, analyse, interpret and systematize that set of practices, symbols, representations, values and social norms which orient and give meaning to action in the political, economic, legal, social and cultural spheres and which determine the status of women in society. One of the chief reasons for doing so is to help find ways of putting an end to the discrimination to which women are subject.

The determinants associated with the problems faced by women are numerous and find expression in all spheres of activity in a variety of ways. None the less, for the sake of clarity, gender discrimination may be said to manifest itself in our societies in three main ways:

i) The gender-based division of labour and its corollary (i.e., the assignment of responsibility for child care and housework entirely to women);

ii) Unequal access for men and women to productive resources and their benefits; and

iii) Limitations placed upon public participation and/or the exclusion of women from decision-making and the exercise of power.
The existing literature regarding the gender-based perspective attests to the fact that this focus is currently being applied to a very wide spectrum of subjects and areas of knowledge, ranging from sociology, history, anthropology, psychology and political science to economics. It is also being applied, albeit not always in the same way or with the same emphasis, in development planning and has brought up new questions, new linkages and new challenges — arising out of actual circumstances in the countries and out of the collective imagery — which remain to be elucidated.
II. THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN AND FOR DEVELOPMENT

In the past few decades the changes that have occurred in Latin American and Caribbean societies have brought to light the existence of a number of latent problems, one of which is discrimination against women. In view of the limitations and restrictions which the gender system places upon women—who, under that system, are regarded only in terms of their reproductive role, are denied access to better job opportunities, production resources, decision-making circles and the benefits of development, and whose important contributions are ignored or downplayed—the gender system’s regulatory mechanisms constitute a problem that demands our attention.

The proposal of certain directions for the development of the countries and of women as individuals (with such development being understood as the opportunity to maximize all their potentials, increase their participation and expand the scope of their autonomy and options) focuses the current gender/development debate on the repercussions of the various projects and programmes implemented in the region and the options and opportunities that have been, and continue to be, offered to women for their development within an equitable framework.

Since the 1950s, women have become involved in development programme and project activities of the widest possible variety of policy lines and strategic orientations. These actions have been defined without consulting them and, in many cases, have subordinated the initiatives’ raison d’être (i.e., the elimination of gender discrimination) to welfare-based, developmentalist, efficiency-oriented goals relating to the reduction of poverty and steps to make the production system more functional by using previously unemployed labour. As a result of these types of initiatives, women have ended up with greater responsibilities, have been more exhausted than ever and have had fewer options and opportunities for changing their disadvantaged position.

Initially, women were thought of as the beneficiaries of economic and social efforts and emphasis was placed on their performance in the domestic sphere and in their reproductive role; this attitude was succeeded by an emphasis on the integration of women into development as an unused or "idle" resource (a view that also ignored or downplayed the importance of women’s contributions to and participation in the countries’ economic and social development processes). Later, with the advent of the initiative known as Women in Development (WID), an effort was made to endow women with the legal, educational and reproductive health resources required to permit their incorporation into production and to enable them to perform as active agents of development; this effort did not, however, free them from their responsibilities in the areas of housework, child-rearing and child care and thus failed to resolve their situation, despite the step forward that it represented.

It should also be noted that the projects executed in Latin America and the Caribbean have been, for the most part, limited and isolated in nature because they have been inadequately funded and staffed, have tried to achieve ambitious objectives and produce significant results in short periods of time and, basically, have been peripheral
to the main thrust of planning processes. These limitations should be considered as attenuating factors in the short-term evaluations of such efforts.

Be all that as it may, the actions taken have had a positive influence on the social status of many Latin American women. We should not underestimate their effectiveness in helping to change the way in which women’s issues are perceived, to foster a greater awareness of the problems specifically affecting women, and to amass a larger pool of knowledge, data and studies on women, thereby placing them in a more visible position in the context of social discourse. Nevertheless, although the objective of improving the status of women clearly has become a part of that discourse, the actual, practical efforts made to overcome women’s subordination and the role assigned to them in the societal power structure—both causal factors of discrimination against women—have been limited in number and inefficient.

Furthermore, many of the changes that have occurred in women’s lives have not been a direct consequence of the initiatives and activities designed specifically to benefit them but have instead been brought about by changes in the countries’ economic and socio-political structures (e.g., the crisis of the 1980s, structural adjustment policies, the actions of authoritarian governments and many countries’ transitions to democracy).

For example, women’s entry into and increased participation in the labour market in Latin America and the Caribbean have not been the outcome or the direct result of explicit policies concerning these matters but have instead been produced by other factors. These exogenous forces have been of various sorts: urbanization and the resulting migration of women to the cities; the expansion of education; technological change, which has made it possible for domestic tasks to be performed within a market setting; the need for households to have more than one income; the new organizational patterns characterizing the family; birth control; and, finally, a greater dissemination of contraceptive methods (Berger and Buvinic, 1988). Since all these events have not been accompanied by any substantial change in the inequalities experienced by women, their subordinate position within the household and society has been carried over into the labour market. Obviously, entry into that market in and of itself does not automatically or necessarily bring an improvement in status.

The approaches focusing on well-being, poverty reduction, equality and efficiency (the last three being integrated into the approach known as the "integration of women into development" or simply "women in development" (WID)) were prompted by political and economic changes and were forged in international and governmental circles. They gradually emerged, although the process was neither linear nor substitutive, as progress was made in understanding women’s issues, in altering development models, and in building a conceptual bridge between women and development.

Concurrently, women’s movements and the experiences of grassroots organizations in developing countries led to the formulation of an approach oriented towards the sharing of power on an equal basis. This school of thought questions the belief that development benefits all people equally and the idea that women want to become integrated into mainstream development, where at present they have no opportunity to decide what kind of society they want. In this approach, the concept of autonomy—defined as the power that people (both as individuals and as members of a group) have over their own lives and the right for people to determine their own options and to have a say in determining the direction of social change—is of pivotal importance (Lycklama, 1987; Pronk, 1991).

Although some of these perspectives are evident in the initiatives currently being conducted, the limitations of such approaches and existing development programme’s record of partial, unsatisfactory achievements as regards the problems, needs, interests
and priorities of the women of the region have pointed up the urgency of introducing an efficient policy approach to ensure the integral development of women.

In response to this need, and on the basis of an evaluation of existing models and the results of their application, a gender-based approach to development referred to as "gender in development" (GID) emerged in the mid-1980s. This approach "emerges as the product of an overall analysis and critique of development theory and practice which has brought about a change in the concept itself and has given rise to a new agenda in which development is a vehicle for change" (Portocarrero, 1993, p. 37).

This perspective acknowledges the existence of gender-based subordination and recognizes the place that this phenomenon occupies in society's power structure. It also focuses on the need to consider the differing and unequal effects and impacts on men and women of development policies and strategies and asserts that, because different social roles of unequal status are assigned to men and women in our societies, the two sexes have different problems, interests, needs and priorities which should not be confused or amalgamated when development projects are designed.

It is also understood that gender roles are projected onto and permeate economic, social, political and cultural affairs and that gender is a key variable in any analysis or action to be undertaken. It is also felt that in order to do away with the subordination of women, there must be an express political determination to do so.

1. The incorporation of elements of the gender approach into development planning

As one of the basic pillars of the analysis of development praxis, the study of gender relations also serves to shed light upon how the concept of development itself and the relationship between development and women have changed; in so doing, we must bear in mind the fact that by redefining and re-working the meaning of the concept, we are also influencing its practical application.

Molyneux (1985) has said that, in addition to the differences that exist between the interests of men and women, there are also major and quite basic differences between the interests of women as individuals, their practical gender-based interests and their strategic gender-based interests (collective interests). Practical gender-based interests refer to women's needs that call for fast-acting solutions in the short term (in the fields of health, housing, education, nutrition, employment, etc.). Such needs tend to be shared by all poor sectors of the population, but in this case they have certain gender-specific characteristics in that they are associated with women's need to fulfil the reproduction-related roles assigned to them as part of the sexual division of labour (Young, 1991). Strategic interests, for their part, arise out of women's relative position vis-à-vis men and thus encompass all women on the basis of their gender identity (without, however, negating their heterogeneity).

Moser and Levy (1986) equate interests with needs that should be taken into account in development planning. They see strategic gender-based needs in reference to the essential elements that make up gender-based discrimination and, therefore, as the basis for the proposal of options for rectifying women's position of inequality through the promotion of more egalitarian and equitable relations between men and women.

Practical gender-based needs are oriented towards changing women's status or quality of life in accordance with their most immediate requirements in relation to their reproductive role. The point should be made that these needs are not exclusive to women but are instead needs of the entire family; nevertheless, planners and technical experts
often regard them as such, thereby, in effect, forcing women to shoulder the community's responsibility to ensure their access to basic services. Hence, they equate women's specific needs with the needs of the community. This has an enormous impact when the time comes to identify the needs and demands of women within the context of development programmes since, although activities specifically targeting women have been devised in response to an awareness of the gender-based discrimination against them, when women's needs are equated with those of the community, then strategic gender-based needs are ignored. The result is the perpetuation and even reinforcement of the original causes of gender-related problems. In the words of Mones (1990), "the achievement of equity cannot be based on the perpetuation of the circumstances that have led to inequity".

The distinction between practical and strategic gender-based needs provides categories of analysis that contribute to our understanding of the problem, since they reflect the different interests and needs of the various groups or collectivities of women. The distinction is also useful in the practical aspects of development planning, provided that these categories are not seen as being mutually exclusive or thought of in a linear sense as successive steps in a process, but are instead linked so as to promote change both in women's objective living conditions and in the gender relations that govern their subordination and social marginalization.

However, authors such as Jeanine Anderson (1992) contend that one of the major problems with the paradigm of practical and strategic needs is that planning exercises based on this approach are simplified and schematized, whereas reality is complex, heterogeneous and often diffuse.

If we are to place ourselves in a hypothetical situation in which women could truly choose different ways of life and types of personal relationships, consideration would have to be given to the immediate costs of moving towards greater equity in terms of the life strategies traditionally developed by women living under circumstances of inequality. These costs must be taken into account when planning and assessing women's own level of awareness of their subordination and/or the resistance they might put up —independently of the opposition offered by men— to the exposition of their strategic gender-based needs.

It would therefore be helpful to weigh the costs and benefits (and not only from an economic standpoint) of establishing lines of policy and planning. This would also bring planners and their target groups closer together, and the interests of both groups would thus become the subject of a debate in which the following questions might be posed: What do women want for themselves and what do politicians and technical specialists want for them? Who is to define the (practical or strategic) needs of women?

Using these elements as a framework for interpretation and action, the gender-based perspective would find practical expression in development policies, programmes and projects —initially— on the basis of the following operations:

i) *Ex-ante* and *ex-post* analyses and assessments of the gender-based inequalities —as opposed to simply sexually-determined differences— in the impacts of all development initiatives and activities carried out in the countries, including those targeting the society as a whole as well as those directed towards men and women;

ii) The explicit formulation of objectives that take into consideration strategic gender-based needs rather than solely practical gender-related needs; and

iii) The incorporation of analyses and assessments of the costs and benefits for women of the negotiations and compromises, in terms of the extent of power held, which women will inevitably have to undertake with men in order to achieve equity.
Past experience demonstrates that the continuation of neutral, non-critical attitudes towards gender-based differences and inequalities would mean that activities with the potential to further development and promote change would be doomed to failure from the very start.

Although the gender-in-development perspective is as yet a "proposition in the making" as work along these lines proceeds, some of its elements can already make a contribution to the analysis of women and development, as is illustrated by the following summary list of some of those aspects:

i) It affords an integral picture of social, economic and political systems of organization in their totality, as well as of the cultural model, in an effort to arrive at an understanding of the formation of particular aspects of society;

ii) It does not refer to women as such, from a biological standpoint, but rather to the social construct of women and to the position they occupy within existing power structures;

iii) It retains the individual characteristics of social actors, their many different identities and the different ways human beings may act based on an understanding of the fact that class, generation, ethnic identity and occupation are factors that foster the formation of a variety of groups within the general categories of "men" and "women";

iv) It "deconstructs" the assignment of specific roles and of the corresponding responsibilities to men and women;

v) It analyses the nature of women's contribution to their countries' development through the work they perform in and outside the home, thereby moving beyond the public/private dichotomy and seeking to determine how the two sectors are linked in daily life;

vi) It regards women as agents of change rather than as passive targets of development efforts;

vii) It encompasses the potential contribution of men who share its ethical principles and are committed to social equity and justice;

viii) It places special emphasis on the role of the State and other institutions in the advancement of women; and

ix) It postulates that development programmes should have an impact at two different levels — the individual and society — thereby working a change in the more traditional values that help to perpetuate gender inequality.

A strategy that provides qualitative encouragement for equitable participation by men and women in development should therefore be directed towards altering the power relationships generated by the gender system, i.e., towards doing away with the subordination of women as a prerequisite for democracy and development. Incorporating this principle into development plans calls for a consideration of the specific needs and priorities involved in remedying this situation and entails making changes in at least three spheres:

i) In the scheme of male and female roles in public and private life and in the distance separating the spheres of production and reproduction;

ii) In the socialization, cultural concepts and stereotypes on which male and female identities and subjectivities are based; and

iii) In the parts played by men and women in decision-making, leadership and the guidance of society or, in other words, in the distribution of power.

The scant degree of integration characterizing issues relating to the sexes and the gender system, as attested to by the way in which development has been conceptualized and the way in which sectoral policies and government expenditure have been analysed, stems, inter alia, from a failure to consider the process of human, social and labour-force
reproduction as being of a high priority. The gender-in-development perspective paves the way for the inclusion and consideration, as a necessary condition, of changes in the definition of development models, not only in the sphere of production but also in that of reproduction, where women are the central actors.

Talking about gender in development implies not only the implementation of specific strategies designed for women but also a structural coverage for all State policies so as to ensure that government programmes reach the whole of the population equally. When based on a gender perspective, planning may take place at a number of practical levels within the following spheres:

i) National government economic and social policies;
ii) Sectoral policies;
iii) Policies directed specifically towards women; and
iv) Specifically-targeted short-run programmes and projects.

These levels should, however, be linked in such a way that they give consistent expression to a policy of the State, based on a gender perspective, that takes into account the overall picture, particular scenarios and situations, and the actors involved (women and men), as well as any determinations arising out of the modernization and decentralization processes initiated in the region and the expansion of women's roles as citizens. To this end, planning policies should also be tied in with the major issues currently being explored throughout the region. This would provide an avenue for action to ensure, for example, that rural women are afforded the same access to land as is enjoyed by men;\(^{11}\) that the content of education does not give rise to discriminatory behaviour against either gender; that men and women receive equal pay for equal work; that the discrepancy between citizens' *de jure* and *de facto* equality is reduced; and that activities performed by women are assigned the same social value—in the sense of allocating to them the same material, symbolic, social and cultural resources—as those traditionally performed by men.

Incorporating a gender-based perspective into development policies will not only involve integrating those dimensions which differentiate the two sexes (interests and needs specific to men and women) and including disaggregations by sex in the statistics produced by the countries; it will also require an exploration of the meaning of those figures in terms of how power is distributed between men and women in society. This will endow development measures with a sense of direction that reflects those interests and needs and paves the way for the establishment of more egalitarian gender relations and development with social equity.

Using this approach, the analysis is not confined to problems affecting women,\(^ {12}\) nor does it regard them as separate from the rest of society; instead, it focuses on the relationships between men and women in actual cultural and historical situations. The proposition here is not one of exclusion but rather one of inclusion. Gender issues are not simply women's issues that women could resolve by making changes only in themselves. They are social and political issues involving a certain form and logic in the way the population is structured and in the ways that labour and power are distributed; they have implications for everyone, regardless of their social class, ethnic group, age, religion or nationality, and in order to resolve those issues, the nature of social relations will have to change.

The notion of gender in development merges with and enriches a concept of development that highlights the complexity and multi-dimensionality of each society and of each context in which development actions may be taken (Portocarrero, 1993), thereby opening the door to diversity and heterogeneity and consequently engendering respect for otherness and for differences. This might lead us to think in terms of having
a number of different development models or projects — rather than just one such model or project — so that our strategy for achieving equity may provide for the specific features of the various sectors of the population.

2. The gender perspective and the ECLAC development proposal

In order to incorporate the perspective afforded by the concept of gender in development in Latin America and the Caribbean, we must determine how that perspective ties in with the region’s current development agenda, i.e., changing production patterns with social equity (ECLAC, 1990 and 1992), and must seek to point out its existing limitations and to make available all the necessary elements to ensure that the concept of social equity will include that of gender equity.

It would appear to be possible, at least from a conceptual standpoint, to link gender-based analysis to the proposition of changing production patterns with social equity — never forgetting, however, that both of these bodies of thought are still in the process of being formulated and are continually evolving — based on those points within areas of common interest at which they intersect and the extent to which they both are open to the reality of women and can thus shed light on women’s status and position within Latin America’s societies and cultures.

Although the process of establishing how these two propositions tie in with one another has only just begun and although not enough thought has yet been devoted to this question, some significant efforts have already been made (ECLAC, 1991a and 1991b); these writings underscore the importance of three factors which may prove to be key elements in future analyses: education, human resources training and decentralization.

To summarize, according to the proposed analysis, the types of discrimination against women that pose an obstacle to the achievement of gender equity are basically, but not exclusively, manifested in the culturally-sustained sexual division of labour which governs the reproduction/production relationship and in the limitations imposed upon participation by women and their exclusion from decision-making and the exercise of power. In the following sections both of these subject areas will be examined in an effort to shed light upon factors that need to be considered as we seek ways of increasing the equity of the processes by which people are integrated into the production apparatus and into the sphere of citizen participation as a means of furthering the development of Latin America and the Caribbean.
III. DEVELOPMENT WITH DEMOCRACY AND GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

One of the major areas in which women are conspicuous by their absence—an absence that has limited their potential and has yet to be remedied by the development process—has to do with power and its use and the exercise of socially-legitimized authority. The transitions to and consolidation of democracy seen in recent years in Latin America have, however, prompted people to reflect upon the questions of power, the public domain, social movements and the political party system, and women have indeed made their presence felt in these areas. In fact, in many cases women have been the ones who have mounted public opposition movements to authoritarian regimes and to crisis situations, thereby providing a foundation for these debates. Nevertheless, the female population of our countries must still overcome a long history of the exclusion of their interests and needs from public affairs and political decision-making processes before the principles of equity can be reflected in this sphere as well.

Some of the collective actions led by women in the 1970s and 1980s involved public movements in which they championed the cause of human rights and thereby brought ethical considerations into the political arena. Women also exhibited their creativity in the daily search for means to ensure the survival of their families in the midst of the crisis and in their drive to participate in development activities at the local and community levels. In other instances their efforts were devoted to organizing themselves, by novel and independent means, as part of the feminist movement and, based on their gender identity, to seeking societal recognition of their subordinate position and legitimation of their interests or joining non-governmental organizations through which they could provide the technical content required for the proper presentation of their demands and proposals and add to the pool of information regarding their situation within the region.

By these means women gradually came to occupy certain niches in the public sphere; this was a painful process spurred on by necessity, but through it women also came to acknowledge themselves as people, to move in circles traditionally thought of as reserved for men and to make their views heard. They also became directly involved in social and political processes, making their presence felt in those realms and giving tangible form, on the basis of their experiences, to what this analysis permits us to define as practical and strategic gender-based needs. Women thus developed critical perspectives on society and the social relations in which they normally take part and formed groups through which they worked to improve the quality of their and their families’ daily lives.

All of these factors have done their part to help alter the prevailing cultural representations of what is "feminine" in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a result, women themselves have changed and have helped to shape a different identity, one in which the relationship between women and power no longer necessarily seems like a contradiction in terms.

The struggles pursued by women, whether in response to immediate circumstances or long-standing situations (Casas, 1985), may well have run counter to the dominant system and may have politically objectivized private and personal dimen-
sions that had not previously been considered, but their aim has not been to gain power per se but rather to question its institutional, bureaucratic and personal facets.

This wide and varied range of collective actions attests to a great diversity of objectives, forms of organization, interpretations and types of participants, as well as an unequal presence on the social scene; it also, however, brings to light the fact that such actions have a certain specificity borne of the prevailing gender system. Women take to the streets and town squares essentially as a function of their traditional roles (i.e., their reproductive roles as mothers and housewives), the eruption of public affairs in their daily lives, their traditional exclusion from power and from public representation, and a recognition of the political profile of private affairs.

It is generally agreed that the significance of women’s movements within the context of what have come to be known as "new social movements" (Jelin, 1987) lies in the fact that their mere presence calls into question the logic underlying our societies’ structures and gives expression to the existence and demands of social sectors and categories that have traditionally been excluded from political institutions’ discourse and actions (Vargas, 1988). This, in turn, illustrates the multi-dimensional, hierarchical nature of social relations, the concentration of power in the hands of a few and, ultimately, the heterogeneity of areas of conflict —one of which is gender. It also brings issues into the public debate which have previously not been seen as legitimate subjects of political thought and action, such as those relating to daily life and inequalities between the sexes. Although these questions were already a part of women’s lives, they had not given rise to debate or to any set of interpretations shared on an inter-subjective basis and therefore did not elicit any show of support that would have transcended the personal interests of the people directly involved.

Although women’s demands are not sufficiently unified or systematized to be coalesced into a single movement, women are none the less, in their role as emerging social actors, the bearers of a countercultural proposal that sets forth alternative paths for social relations, organization, politics and development and that provides input for cultural and societal change. Women’s participation on such a large scale in recent years has not, however, necessarily given them more influence over decision-making or increased their control over resources or institutions. These dimensions of power have been quite removed from women’s participation in society; indeed, women may be said to have redefined the social sphere, but not the political sphere. This gives rise to a major contradiction between their presence in new areas —in conjunction with the changed ideological and political identity of women and re-definition of femininity— and the objective fact that neither legitimate powers nor contexts in which to exercise such powers have been established. Women’s institutions remain focused on reproduction and on action within the sphere of civil society, while political society still does not count them among its leading actors.

In order for women’s demands, lessons, experiences, subjectivities and contributions to become truly articulated with decision-making processes, women will have to become true political actors that are interrelated with the State and political parties and thus form part of the process of change in their countries and societies. Current trends indicate that Latin America and the Caribbean are moving towards a new type of institutional structure with, without or in spite of women; the question that arises for discussion and analysis is then: What kind of part will women play in this redefinition of the region? The answer will depend on women themselves and on the spheres of action that emerge out of current processes in the region directed towards social equity and fuller citizenship.
1. Women and the democratization of society

The development of collectivities capable of autonomously formulating their own agenda and functioning as active agents of economic, political and social advancement requires, on the hand, that the democratization of society be endowed with more content and be further consolidated and, on the other, that women surmount their introjected cultural limitations so that they can voice their strategic needs and translate them into gender-based demands for inclusion in the public agenda. The formation of stronger links between women and the State, support for the reinforcement of their organizations and the assertion of the need for them to take part in decision-making in regard to processes of current significance in the region —such as decentralization and modernization— brings us to a broader view of democracy. However, in the course of the consolidation of women’s organizations and of their participation in the State, it is also important for women to consolidate their autonomy without losing their identity and for them to demand that their experiences and their perception and interpretation of the world should be valued and incorporated into political affairs.

The countries’ evolutionary path demonstrates that women’s organizations open up an essential channel for women’s public lives and the advancement of their interests and concerns. However, although the work done by women’s organizations has served as a stepping stone for the entry of some women into traditional politics, their experience and capabilities have, for the most part, been ignored by the decision-makers responsible for filling government posts. As a result, although they play leadership roles at the grassroots and community levels, they rarely occupy elective posts or senior positions in government, political parties, trade unions or business firms. The small number of women in decision-making positions —although the figures may vary somewhat from one country to the next— is the most compelling proof of the fact that women have not been regarded as participants of equal rank and ability. Women’s participation in political institutions, rather than solely in social movements or informally-constituted interest groups, is necessary in order to have a truly democratic system and to build an equitable society.

Moreover, from a gender-based perspective it becomes evident that the challenge of broadening the scope of participation so that all social sectors may take part in development processes and the exercise of power does not —contrary to what has so often been maintained— concern only those groups that are poor, that lack certain types of assets or that are unable to join fully in today’s consumer society, but rather, more specifically, those who have been deprived of the opportunity to influence the decisions that govern their lives, countries and societies. Hence, in order to be effective, participation need not necessarily lead to the expansion of the market but rather to a redistribution of power. De facto discrimination against women as it relates to their right to full participation may be considered within the broader concept of women’s as yet unrecognized basic human rights whose assertion calls for specific types of actions to permit the achievement of a genuine form of development within a framework of gender equity.

It is therefore important to start from the premise that politics —seen as an area of endeavour in which cultural elements are necessarily involved and in which the common social goals arising out of public and private spheres of activity are determined— cannot do without women, who have a great deal to say, contribute and, in that area, decide. Women heads of household and women workers in need of child-care facilities, teenage mothers who need help and opportunities that will give them a future, battered women who need advice and legal protection, women who need to have their reproductive rights upheld, women who want flexible working hours unaccompanied by any consequent drop in their living standards —these women and others know about unmet social needs and
should be consulted. What better way to strengthen democracy and redefine development than to permit them to state their opinions, enter into debate, take decisions about all the things in which they are directly involved? Giving women a chance to play a part in solving the problems that affect them on a daily basis and yet concern society as a whole entails the direct modification of public policies to allow the transference to women of the exercise of full decision-making authority regarding questions within their purview and the opportunity to take decisions regarding the future of their societies as a whole on the basis of macro-policies.

The combination of development and social equity proposed by ECLAC is founded upon and requires a democratic, pluralistic, participatory environment (ECLAC, 1990). On the other hand, the prevailing gender system sets up criteria for the exclusion from and inclusion in the power structure. It thus appears to be essential to strengthen women's social leadership roles and to ensure power-sharing by men and women on an equal footing, along with the corresponding exercise of that power on an equitable basis. This implies endowing citizenship and participation with a new meaning and incorporating them into the operational centres of planning and development.

2. The gender-based perspective in the reconceptualization of citizenship

For women, the proposition of venturing forth into politics —with entry into that arena being understood as a collective commitment and as participation by citizens in the resolution of issues confronting the community (neighbourhood, city, state, region, nation)— means that the fulfilment of specific economic, social and cultural interests will be achieved only through their active integration as citizens into public affairs under circumstances in which the involvement of citizens takes on the character of a value and its revitalization therefore becomes an imperative (Dietz, 1990). The expansion of women’s citizenship in the region has its historical roots in the suffragettes’ struggle to win the vote, in the defence of civil rights and, more recently, in what Linhares (1988) has called "the struggle for the legitimation of women’s issues".

The extension of political and civil rights to women as individuals enabled them to become a part of public life in ways that did not, however, alter either the structure or the ethos of politics (Jones, 1988). If sex is regarded as irrelevant in terms of the status of citizenship, then the activities of citizenship (defined without reference to gender) ought to give rise to the same forms of political representation for women and men; this has not been the case, however. Citizens’ rights have not, moreover, functioned as meditative criteria for social and political relations but have instead been supplanted by other formulas of mediation (clientage, paternalism) (Massolo, 1992); this has occurred not only in the case of women, but also in that of other unempowered groups.

The genuine exercise of women’s rights as citizens —aside from their right to vote and other legally-mandated rights— is limited by certain factors imposed upon them by the gender system, which is an effective power system involving complex mechanisms and particular features specific to each set of circumstances; this system also blocks them from reaping the benefits of economic progress and development. The gender-based approach shows up, on the one hand, the contradictions that exist between the principles of citizenship and the inequalities found between men and women in practice and, on the other, the presence of a form of political activity that is based on a restrictive, exclusionary concept of citizenship which ignores the private facets of life, i.e., what goes on inside the home and within the family (Astelarrra, 1992). A consideration of democracy
and citizenship also entails taking a critical look at these constructs, inasmuch as the universalistic, leveling assumption upon which "the equality of man" is founded does not allow for the differences between men and women and ends up serving as a tool for the perpetuation of inequality and the negation of "the female Other". A great deal of ground has yet to be covered before female alterity is accepted and incorporated into political and cultural processes.

The recognition and legitimation of the differences brought out by a gender-based perspective play a substantive part in the establishment of women as valid social actors and interlocutors in the debate on development. Although on rare occasions the immediate interests of all groups of women may coincide, at other times their interests may be contradictory and conflict with one another; however, the diversity of women’s situations can find political expression if their citizenship is defined in a way that also implies an acknowledgement and acceptance of the differences existing among women and the identities they entail. The dilemmas and questions relating to the meanings of equality, equity, individual differences and the construction of collective identities cast doubt upon the neutrality and universality of a concept of citizenship that seeks to include everyone on an impartial basis but ignores the ways in which gender—as a socially-constructed historical reality—reflects different ways of being and knowing that in their turn have a fundamental influence on the practice and significance of civic duties and responsibilities and the way in which civil rights are exercised (Jones, 1988, p. 287).

When development efforts are oriented in such a way that the women for whom they are intended exhibit growth in terms of their sense of responsibility, initiative, coordination and autonomy, then these women’s participation will also engender personal growth and the exercise of a type of power conducive to their own development along with that of the entire society. Within the context of a participatory form of citizenship grounded in a gender-based perspective, the issues of women's integration into politics and decision-making should not be considered solely in reference to male-defined parameters; new categories should also be developed that reflect the specific ways in which women have wielded power, have occupied positions of authority, have engaged in politics and have understood liberty and civil rights using what Gilligan has called "a different voice".

Generally speaking, the activities of women's groups and organizations do not deal with policies as such, although they do have great political value and directly influence public affairs, (especially at the local and community levels), because these activities address needs that go unnoticed by the participants and leaders of traditional party politics. The people who set and judge priorities are usually guided by male-defined criteria and abide by norms of citizenship oriented towards uniformity. This is why it is a question not only of expanding women's participation and citizenship along existing lines but also of broadening the meanings of those concepts to encompass the paths that women have already travelled, as builders and questioners, along the fringes of the established power structure. The task that remains to be completed is that of creating channels for women's genuine incorporation into public life and into the redefinition of democracy.

Women tend to play an active, fundamental role in community initiatives, and this is being facilitated by the prevailing tendency to decentralize social services through the municipalities.¹⁶ The usual preference is to cast them in the role of social and community managers who articulate and express the complexity that derives from the gender system and political culture. This has had the effect of directing attention specifically to the relationship between women and local development, which is seen as a viable setting for active involvement in dialogue, participation and decision-making, although Anderson
(1992) has warned that being "confined to the community level is dangerously similar to being confined to the home". Although the local level certainly does provide women with an opportunity for self-affirmation and participation, we should ask ourselves to what extent it also provides an access route to broader forms of participation and just how permeable the local setting needs to be so that women may move beyond the immediate objectives of local action and open up new opportunities for elevating their needs and demands to the level of national public policy.

As a consequence of the reappraisal of democracy — in a political and ethical sense — and the reconceptualization of the relationship between the State and civil society which have begun to be undertaken in recent years in all the countries of the region, new organizational and leadership styles have emerged and new types of arrangements are being made within the framework of pacts, alliances and negotiations. Women are beginning to take on the character of social subjects, as proper subjects in relation to pacts (Amorós, 1990a and 1990b) and consensus-building. Discrimination against women is embodied in the ground rules for decision-making processes, and it is therefore particularly important to look at the types of procedures used to reach agreements regarding the definition of development policies so that women may be assured of a position from which they can actually negotiate for a share of power (Anderson, 1992). This proposition is based on the belief that adequate procedures and channels for participation actually give shape to social and political actors. Promoting the use of bargaining mechanisms through which women can define their real interests and needs (both practical and strategic), translate them into demands, take decisions as they seek solutions for their problems, and be truly influential are all factors that enable them to exercise productive power (Foucault, 1981) as well as to consolidate their position as citizens.

An analysis of the gender/development/power relationship raises the question of how to go about establishing an interrelationship between the need to reinforce existing democratic processes and the democratization of personal relationships, political praxis and the status of women — tasks which must be accomplished by the State, civil society and each individual. Defined thusly, democracy is not merely the exercise by citizens of political rights; it is a fundamental principle which involves relations among human beings along the entire continuum from the private to the public sphere. The proposal of changes for the short, medium and long terms refers to changes that will bring the discourse of modernity more closely into alignment with the reality experienced by women, inasmuch as the discrepancy between the two is obvious. The idea of broadening the concept of citizenship does not refer simply to the recognition of women’s rights; it also entails the institutionalization of that recognition so as to vouchsafe women representation in the decision-making process and include the dimension of gender in the public agenda and public debate.

The status of women can truly be transformed if the necessary changes are put into effect within the context of a new development style that alters authority and power structures as well as economic structures and includes women as active agents of that process. Gender-based planning will permit the reorientation of programmes and projects, and the cultural analysis of the symbolic contents underlying the paradigms of power and of the presence/absence of female and male elements in the various areas may afford unique avenues for the achievement of equity.
IV. CULTURAL CHANGE AS A BASIS FOR GENUINE DEVELOPMENT

Planners and politicians have become concerned with the need to expand upon the human aspects of development because they have realized that such aspects have been neglected in the definition of action strategies or, in those cases where they have been considered in a strategy's design, have been left out during its practical application. The cultural content of the countries' economic and political dynamics has, for the most part, not been given due consideration during the design of projects and programmes because it has been regarded as being impossible to cover fully and difficult to delimit owing to the subject matter's complexity and breadth. Moreover, the cultural dimension has been perceived as being far removed from the logic of planning and as having mechanisms of its own that could be influenced only at a substantial cost and at the risk of sparking conflict. In addition, the difficulty of quantifying and controlling the pace of cultural changes and the fact that they do not keep step with technological, economic and political changes, in combination with the lack of appropriate methodologies for addressing the question of cultural change, have all worked against the incorporation of cultural variables into development processes.

In recent years, however, interest in this area has been growing because it is felt that economic strategies should no longer ignore the social and cultural aspects of development. Events have demonstrated that the use of appropriate economic means or tools alone will not necessarily lead to the achievement of social objectives (ECLAC, 1992). Accordingly, despite the formidable challenge represented by the need to confront the issue of culture and build an infrastructure of values oriented towards the abolition of inequalities between men and women (the distribution of power and decision-making authority, the sexual division of labour, relationships of subordination, sexist images and stereotypes), today this is an imperative that can no longer be sidestepped without systematically negating one of the true mainstays of development and social change.

Because of the special role played by values as elements of resistance or of the definition of alternative forms of change for society, attempts are being made to identify and describe those values with a view to influencing them in a way that will contribute to the establishment of a new societal model based on equity. The challenge posed by the cultural dimension is to conceive of development as a vehicle not only for political, economic and social change but also for personal change as it relates to people's daily lives and interpersonal relations. Thus, the transformation of private social pacts should be included as an element in policies aimed at doing away with discrimination against women and their subordination; we must, however, also start from the assumption that any type of intervention in the form of development projects will—for better or for worse—affect people's private lives and that decisions taken at the macro level will have implications at the level of the individual. Historically, the modernization process has involved a progressive incorporation of certain aspects of people's private lives into the realm of public affairs, and this is a phenomenon that must not be overlooked.

The concept of culture is an integrative concept of social practices that have been built up over time and is a key component in comprehending the interwoven web of
gender-, class- and ethnically-based subordinative relationships existing in Latin American and Caribbean societies. Culture—in the anthropological sense of the term—takes in a people's shared systems for representing and encoding reality and thus encompasses the symbolic universes and cognitive systems which permit social reproduction and adaptation. Consequently, when addressing and coming to grips with the contents of the dominant cultural model for the reproduction of the gender system, it becomes necessary to recognize the fact that relationships are not only the immediate result of individual intentions or decisions (of men and/or women) but are also structurally conditioned by society's prevailing androcentrism and should be regarded as such.

Our examination of these issues is based on two assumptions. One is that male domination of women is a social relationship that is not confined to the material plane; it relates to cultural configurations as well. These configurations are, for example, what hinders the achievement of de facto equality between men and women—despite all the efforts made to attain legal equality— or what might make it appear reasonable for women to receive less pay than men for equal work.

The second assumption is that social constructs (including the gender system), as cultural outputs, can be changed in the long run and can be modified and endowed with different shades of meaning in the short and medium terms. Obviously, the fact that cultural change is not an immediate result of development initiatives and that its "lead time" exceeds governmental terms of office and the lifetimes of specific policies is no reason why it should not be explicitly addressed, for its influence on overall change is undeniable.

All cultures have space/time and text/context (Latin America/today) frames of reference which shape them, and the cultural dimension must therefore be analysed on the basis of each specific situation, including all the traditions, advances and setbacks, reconstructions and changes experienced by the population in each country. The wide range of different situations found in the region, inasmuch as one of Latin America's hallmarks is precisely its pluri-cultural character, is a product of the cross-combinations within the social order of three main variables: gender, class and ethnic group. Specifically, the cultural construct of gender causes each society or ethos to define what is feminine and what is masculine in a particular way in accordance with the historical processes experienced by that society. Hence, a great deal of theoretical and methodological work is required in order to elucidate the wealth of elements that come to light when we seek to describe that heterogeneity.

1. The cultural dimension and gender as requirements for equity

The gender-based perspective on development and on women's issues points up the importance of determining how the various levels of reality link up with one another and of dealing with the cultural dimension in more specific terms, since it is in this dimension that gender relations sustain one another. This approach involves analysing the cultural values attributed to women's position within society rather than the specific roles they play, because women's social status is not a result of their practices but rather of the meaning and value that those practices take on in the course of social, political and cultural interactions. In order to analyse the relationship between the concepts of gender and change, we must explore the individual and group identities of women and men (which is where existing power relations, norms and symbols are processed), as well as the relations set up by citizens with the State, since the requisite political will and a major
collective and historical effort are needed in order for change and development to become a reality.

Changes in the status of women also influence the male sphere of society, which acts as an interactive counterpart that helps to redefine the way women are perceived and the values attributed to them. Such changes also influence their identities, which are in part a speculative product of the masculine identity and of the concept of women's "otherness". It is therefore important that an effort be made to alter those gender relations which limit both women's and men's realization of their potentials as human beings so that they may then begin to work towards expanding their capabilities and the range of options open to them in terms of their lives within society.

The proposition of increasing women's options has a number of implications. First, it implies the possibility of choice, which means that women would have a larger number of employment options and of socially accepted ways of leading their lives and establishing personal relationships. Second, it means that women would have a greater ability to choose and would have more self-confidence as a result of more assertive, non-sexist education, training and socialization. And finally, it would mean that women would truly be able to make use of those options as a result of the elimination of all the legal, symbolic, temporal and spatial obstacles that hinder them from moving into new areas of endeavour.

In Latin America, the cultural specificity of the gender (man/woman) relationship is yet to be determined, but this line of inquiry has already been opened up by a number of thought-provoking —although as yet only piecemeal— attempts to explore the subject. The prevailing cultural models in our countries need to be studied in a systematic manner so that an understanding may be gained of such social mechanisms as the dichotomization between public/private, reproductive/productive and "feminine"/"masculine" aspects —all of which hold back the genuine development not only of women, but of these societies as a whole. It must not be forgotten, however, that this binary type of perspective is no longer a useful basis for an analysis of such issues because these divisions have become blurred in practice and in the social reality of our countries and/or, in certain cases, were never very clear-cut or evident in the first place. Studies conducted on roles in transition within contemporary society also help to shed light on the complexity and diversity of circumstances and of possible combinations of elements situated somewhere between the two ends of the spectrum.

The modernization process being experienced by the region as a result of technological progress, birth control, access to gainful employment and education, and the growth of mass media has altered women's image and spheres of action. The cultural and value system of today is paving the way for what is often referred to as the "ideology of modernity", which brings with it new models for the organization of social relations, new aspirations and —why not?— new utopias. Nevertheless, despite some token movement, the gap between society's collective imagery and the reality in which women live seems to be widening.

Latin American and Caribbean women often appear to be modern women in a context of underdevelopment; they exhibit originality, have remarkable organizational resources, display bravery in their defense and protection of human rights, are resolute in their search for ways to support their households and are innovative in terms of family patterns and structures, and all of these aspects have little to do with the values traditionally ascribed to women. What is more, a growing number of women have internalized the demand for acknowledgement of the contributions they make to society and to the family.
Along these same lines, research in a number of different countries in the region has shown that men are no longer the sole providers for their families and in some cases do not contribute even a portion of household income, inasmuch as women heads of household are constantly growing in number. Be that as it may, women continue to perform domestic chores and to take care of the children, and in spite of their economic independence, are usually not regarded as heads of household. Meanwhile, even those men who, viewed objectively, have lost that status continue to wield power within the family, to take decisions and to consider themselves, at least subjectively, to be the heads of their households. Thus, within the social imagery, the patriarchal family structure still prevails even though, in reality, it has been called into question and some signs of greater balance between the status of men and women are to be seen.

This gap creates a cultural problem because daily practices and situations are constantly being interpreted in contradictory ways depending on whether that interpretation is based on society’s imagery or reality, and this generates tension and raises questions that are hard to answer. Because of the appearance of such contradictions, both the cultural model and individuals have had to make a determined effort to adapt to the situation, and even though the results of those efforts have not always been satisfactory, the emotional cost has indeed been enormous.

In order to think of development as a genuine possibility for women, we must analyse the degree of consistency or the extent of mutual negation that characterizes a society’s imagery and its objective reality, since the latter often engenders feelings of guilt, internal contradictions and external conflicts. We must think of ways to minimize the differences between women and men or, rather, to help construct —as a collective effort— an imagery that merges into the experience of daily life; an imagery which, through a process of symbolic redefinition, depicts women as free, creative, independent, secure people who are capable of establishing more balanced relationships with men in the home, the workplace and the political arena and who are moving towards a future in which gender equity is a reality.

Nevertheless, it is not merely a question of including new analytical variables, such as culture and gender, in development strategies, but rather of visualising the cultural factors that clearly underlie all social structures. We are living in an era of thorough-going cultural changes —de-territorialization, decentralization, modernization, transculturation (García Canclini, 1990; Calderón, Hoppenhayn and Ottone, 1993; Valdés, 1992)— and thus must ask ourselves a number of questions: What type of reality or society will take shape as a consequence of these changes? In what direction are they leading us? How can we have an influence on them?

Although it is an acknowledged fact that the cultural sphere is very broad and complex, specific components can none the less be identified which can be influenced and incorporated into development policies designed from a gender perspective. One such component which is a factor in discrimination against women is the gender-based division of labour and of social responsibilities. Within the framework of this division, women are primarily assigned biological, social and material reproductive functions, from which men are consequently exempted. These functions are associated with a certain spatial sphere (mainly the domestic sphere) but they also tie in with a certain distribution of power and with the exercise of freedom and control over one’s own life. In the area of reproduction, gender inequity is manifested in subordination within the context of daily life, where obvious tensions are generated by the incongruity of what is, what should be, and what is desired; action in line with new types of development strategies is called for in this area as well.
An analysis of women's role in development requires a full understanding of their role in reproduction and the implications which that role has for their participation in other areas of life. Women's status in the home, which derives from our societies' ideological concepts and value judgements of women, permeates the labour market and is expressed in that market through occupational segregation, wage discrimination and restricted access to training. In the political arena, it is reflected in women's limited participation in decision-making and their still unlegitimized authority to wield power.

2. Increased equity: changes in the sphere of reproduction

There is a dialectic through which culture and praxis in the formation and assignment of meaning to social events and individuals are mutually reinforced. Cultural components promote and sanction certain forms of behaviour and these, in their turn, strengthen the culture which fosters them; it is therefore clear that steps need to be taken to influence the mechanisms of reproduction and the main power sources for cultural change: socialization and re-socialization.

The consequences of the imprint left by the socialization process upon the women of upcoming generations, the significance of motherhood, and women's contributions to the day-to-day reproduction of the labour force and to unremunerated production should be addressed in the same way as their absence or "invisibility" in other sectors is. Studies are also needed on the cultural implications of men's absence from spheres and roles traditionally assigned to women, which "entails the development of a relationship between the sexes that is entirely asymmetrical and leads to loneliness for both men and women" (Montecino, 1991).

Despite all the efforts that have been made, one of the pivotal components of equity —i.e., equal opportunities for men and women to take part in the attainment of a state of well-being and development— has yet to be realized. One of the reasons for this failure is that the importance of reproduction is not duly reflected in the social agenda and that such efforts have not had an impact on the distribution of power between men and women or, in other words, on the relative position of women in society. A recognition of the special character of women's contributions to society would lead to the modification of existing strategies and would rank the reproductive role as a policy concern and a priority area for action; in that event, the fact would have to be borne in mind that this is a conflictive area and that it is here that the greatest resistance would be found, since it is founded upon cultural values and the idea of motherhood as a social event and a component of identity.

To paraphrase the proposal for changing production patterns with social equity, the challenge is therefore to change reproduction patterns with social equity, since this is the area in which women make their greatest contribution to society and in which subordination is manifested in its most blatant form. Domestic violence,\textsuperscript{20} the asymmetry and discrimination to be observed in legal provisions,\textsuperscript{21} the existence of economic dependency and the concomitant fact that women are continually at the service of others all indicate that the domestic realm is where the power relationships generated by the gender system are experienced privately and individually, and this is a fact that must not be forgotten. This is why gender equity must be attained not only in the social sphere but in the household and in our day-to-day existence as well;\textsuperscript{22} furthermore, the situation in these spheres should also reflect the new social pact or newly-established foundations for the expansion of human rights.
The reproductive responsibilities assigned to women fall into three categories: i) the biological reproduction of the species or, in other words, gestation, childbirth and the care of small children, family health care, particularly in connection with sexuality, birth control and motherhood; ii) economic and material reproduction, which encompasses housework as such (including meal preparation, upkeek of the home, the cleaning and repair of clothing); and iii) reproduction of the cultural model and of existing social relations by means of the transmission of behavioural guidelines and mainstream values through the socialization of younger generations. The net result of these roles has been to reduce women's mobility and to concentrate and confine them in the home. These role assignments are not in and of themselves detrimental either for women or for men; however, the present model of an "ideal" role distribution acts as a constraint on the female population because, as it stands now, it hinders women's entry into the production sector on an equitable footing, serves to legitimize the sexual division of labour and women's exclusion from the circles that actually wield power and acts as a mechanism for continued discrimination against women in the area of social affairs.

Despite the differences and specific traits that are reflected in the formulation of a reproductive role in keeping with the prevailing conditions in specific settings (rural or urban, lower, middle or upper class, indigenous, mestizo, black or Europeanized groups) and with the particular histories of each country and subregion, the meanings and symbolic content attributed to this role in societies conforming to the mainstream patriarchal system do bear some similarities which may not blend all such roles together, but do none the less function as a common substratum. The complementary distribution of roles has clearly exerted a stabilizing influence on culture in the past. Today, however, it no longer performs that function in many cases; hence the need to work towards bringing about changes that will help to strike a new balance.

With regard to the biological reproduction of the species, one of the changes in the situation of Latin American women which is brought out most clearly by the statistics is reflected in demographic trends and, more specifically, in a decline in fertility rates. This situation has to do with the greater freedom enjoyed by women in deciding whether or not to have children — and, if so, when — and with the fact that women take what amounts to virtually full responsibility for generational reproduction (ECLAC, 1993a). Men are not usually called upon to play a part in birth control, since family planning is a practice overseen by women and most contraceptive methods are designed for use by women.23 Teenage pregnancy, abortion and single motherhood pose social problems that endanger the physical and mental health of women and restrict their future options, and responsibility for these matters is also assigned to women, while men remain uninvolved.

The stereotypes, symbols and values that centre around sexuality and biological reproduction embody a large part of the cultural subordination and mechanisms of control which affect women in our societies and restrict their independence in terms of their autonomy as it relates to their own bodies. Furthermore, despite the existence of modern reproductive technologies and the implementation of population policies that have encouraged birth control and "responsible parenthood" as means of attaining a higher level of development in the countries of the region, the stereotypical roles of motherhood and fatherhood, their symbolic contents and underlying social imagery have not been questioned (De Barbieri, 1991).

In view of its enormous importance in the lives of Latin American women, motherhood — as a biological and cultural phenomenon — needs to be explored, not only in terms of individual decisions or circumstances but also as a social phenomenon24 and as a traditional source of prestige and self-affirmation for women by virtue of the important
role it plays in their identities and gender relationships. The social definitions of motherhood and fatherhood should be addressed with a view to fostering greater gender equity in relation to the responsibilities associated with procreation and sexuality.

The dearth of genuine options with regard to child care for preschool children is obviously an obstacle to professional endeavours, employment and political activity for women with children. Because of women’s entry into the labour market and their need for education and training, substantial progress needs to be made in providing means of reconciling family and employment responsibilities and establishing an equitable distribution of the responsibility for the care of small children between the two parents.26

By virtue of the function they perform as agents of socialization, women/mothers of all social classes and ethnic groups play a fundamental role in reproducing the cultural model and in teaching standards of behaviour and values to young generations, as well as in preserving a certain way of life and transmitting ways of perceiving and understanding the world and social relationships. The family, as a mediating institution situated between a given point in time and the future of society, needs to transmit a non-sexist type of socialization that will prepare young girls and boys for cultural change and for a society marked by greater equity between the sexes. This process will require not only a greater commitment on the part of men, but also changes in women’s consciousness and support from the State, the formal educational system and the media. Moreover, if education and the acquisition of knowledge are seen as pivotal factors in the achievement of technical progress (ECLAC/OREALC, 1992), then the socializational role played by women—which is very closely linked to the development of the human resources needed to deal with technological change—should be recognized and provided for in development policies as a process in which values and standards of gender equity should be promoted.

As for material and labour-force reproduction, concerns regarding housework are nothing new, having arisen as a result of the analyses made and the agreements concluded in connection with the United Nations Decade for Women as well as feminist studies. Some authors have written on the subject within the context of political economy, while others have emphasized the need to socialize housework as a means of lightening women’s workloads, especially with regard to what has come to be known as the “double shift” performed by working women, or have highlighted the contribution to a country’s GDP made by women who work as housewives. A more recent development has been the prevailing concern about the need to alter society’s attitude towards housework and to encourage the participation of all the members of the household, especially men, in household chores.26

One of the biggest problems encountered in addressing the subject of housework is the tendency to regard only those activities that involve mercantile exchange (and that are, therefore, remunerated) as work, which leaves out all the activities involved in the reproduction of human capital. The housework performed by a housewife for her family—being thought of as being done “for love”, without pay—is not considered to be “work”,27 is not assessed at its true value by society and places the women who perform it in a position of economic dependency and of subordination in terms of the power relations at work within the family and society. Furthermore, despite the almost continual introduction of new labour-saving technologies for the performance of housework, thereby giving women some free time for other activities, no substantial modification has been made in the organization of that work, which has instead remained virtually unchanged and is highly resistant to external modification. Although acceptance of women’s involvement in social, public and labour affairs is growing, men’s involvement in the daily chores that must be done in the home continues to
be extremely limited, and cultural representations appear to support these behaviour patterns.

The various cross-combinations of class and gender variables and the relationships established among women become quite interesting when housework is converted into a paid domestic service. A relevant factor for consideration in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean is the fact that most domestics are Indian, black, mulatto or mestizo women, who hold an extremely low status and whose cultural identity is not respected.

It is important to note that, in some environments within the region, changing the organizational system of the family and of reproductive functions would involve a considerable reshaping or modification of the traditional production system upon which the survival and continuation of some sectors of the population depend; one such case is the Andean peasant population. The balance between production and reproduction in each social setting is different, and cultural specificity is therefore a factor that should be taken into account and evaluated on an ongoing basis, even in the context of considerations of equity.

Studies focusing on reproduction should also include analyses of the family structures and kinship systems found in the region and of how existing gender relations fit in with these social structures. In responding to the need to improve the population's quality of life and in deciding what resources to allocate for that purpose, a modern State must not overlook the different patterns of family organization, the hierarchies that govern the way they operate, and the generational and gender asymmetries they entail.

3. The modernization of reproduction

It is now evident that women are involved in their countries' development and socio-economic processes by virtue of their high rate of participation in the labour market and their traditional contributions in terms of the reproduction of the family unit; consequently, solutions to present problems cannot be based solely on economic analyses and changes in the production sector as a whole. Meanwhile, cultural factors have been put on hold and await a serious, rigorous consideration before the way can truly be paved for change. Despite the ground that has been gained, the changes made and the opportunities that have been opened up, the gender-based power structure has not been altered in any substantial way; the relationships formed within the home, behind closed doors, are the ones that have been the least touched by change. The integration of women into "masculine" spheres of public affairs has not prompted a counterbalancing shift of men into domestic ("feminine") activities, nor have the Governments formulated a political agenda that sets forth the contradictions between production and reproduction as a key issue. The fact that movements and shifts among individuals (men and women) are not in step with those taking place in the realms of politics, culture and the economy is now a question that must be tackled. The modernization process and democracy both owe a debt to women, and modifying the ground rules in the sphere of reproduction is a way of beginning to repay that debt.

The failure to acknowledge the role of reproductive activities and their transformations within the context of the modernization process in the Latin American and Caribbean countries places an obstacle in the way of the development and independence of women at the personal, social and political levels in terms of the expansion of their rights, their citizenship and their share of power. Recognizing and integrating the reproductive dimension into policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation would provide a master key for the doors that lead to greater gender equity. In order to under-
mine the mechanisms of the patriarchy’s cultural perpetuation, men must be brought into the private sphere of life so that, within that context, they can perform what have traditionally been regarded as typically feminine roles. This would make it possible to bring about a real change in gender relations that would sap the foundations of the sexual division of labour and of the social subordination and political discrimination to which women are subject.

If the aim is truly to transform society, then the wall between the public and private spheres must be broken down. The reproductive dimension of life and its core conflicts should become the object of public concern, and possible solutions should be a part of planning policies. Women’s position and roles in development are heavily influenced by their reproductive responsibilities; this highly influential factor, together with its symbolic and cultural components, should be taken into account in practical policies and projects on the understanding that a concept of development that considers the needs of all should address the process of human reproduction as well as the production of merchandise and should explicitly reflect the way in which the two are integrated (Elson, 1991).

The consideration of social processes from a woman’s vantage point serves to introduce the major changes occurring in our societies into the realm of the concerns addressed by development studies; these include changes in reproductive behaviour, in family structure, in forms of community and social organization, in the constitution of social actors, and in entirely new aspects of economic activity (all bearing the imprint of modernity) which do not figure in traditional approaches but are, none the less, a very real part of today’s world. In addition, the sexual division of labour, as seen from this standpoint, has already changed since, through unilateral action, women now maintain a presence in both the sphere of reproduction and the sphere of production.

From a gender-based perspective on development, a need is seen to organize a production system that does not sacrifice “all else”; in other words, a system that balances economic progress with family activities, cultural expression, individual identities, an expanded scope of citizenship and the redistribution of power. Recapturing women’s identity and experience (both those originating in their daily lives and those derived from their collective struggles within the context of social movements) is also a development imperative. The problems and challenges confronting Latin America and the Caribbean today warrant and demand consideration from a cultural perspective; some of the most important of these challenges are posed by modernization, decentralization, economic development, the deterioration of the environment, the impact of the media, the quality of life and democratization. As we shape the societies of tomorrow, gender relations will play a role in determining their structure. The sense and the meanings given to the practices of social actors will call for new ways of thinking about femininity and masculinity, as well as new ways of understanding the market, politics and social relations.

The dimension of culture should be acknowledged as playing the leading role which it does, in reality, perform as a source, support and determinant of opportunities for supplanting existing social relationships with ones based on equity and development.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

An analysis of how the social status of women in Latin America and the Caribbean has changed points up those factors that have limited their participation on an equal footing in our societies. A gender-based perspective on development enables us to identify the areas in which action needs to be taken to surmount the factors that put women at a disadvantage; on that basis, action strategies could then be plotted out within a new interpretive and operational framework to improve the status of the region’s female population.

The incorporation of a gender-based approach implies acceptance of the fact that a sectoral focus does not speak to the needs of women as a group and that it is at the macro-political and macroeconomic levels that efforts to incorporate women’s strategic demands and conditions should be concentrated on an integral, long-term basis in order for gender equity to become a reality. The questions of how inequality is perpetuated, in what spheres it is found and how it ties in with other elements must all be asked at each step in the effort to promote development. Development projects should consciously incorporate the gender dimension in each of their stages, including everything from the design phase to their implementation and evaluation, if they are to make a positive contribution to the type of development being proposed for the region.

Furthermore, in future, policies specifically targeting women need to be based on a more systemic perspective; rather than being thought of simply as activities aimed at altering the behaviour of one or more variables, they need to be seen as initiatives designed to meet the demands of social and cultural change. The heterogeneity exhibited by the female population and the differences to be observed between women and men show us that the development process ought not to be a single, unifying process but rather an assemblage of many different economic, social, political, ethical and cultural measures and agendas that reflect the enormous diversity of this continent and its inhabitants—a diversity which can lead to the establishment of pluralistic democracies in the broadest sense of the term.

The design of future anti-poverty policies and strategies—a fundamental development issue—cannot do without input from women for three main reasons. First, because women are in the majority among the most depressed sectors that have suffered the most from the crisis. Second, because women have demonstrated their capacity for action and dialogue in the way in which they have set forth their demands regarding the improvement of their education, health and housing conditions, and because the experience they have gained at the micro-social level in dealing with the existing institutional structure constitutes a powerful development tool. Third, because women should take decisions regarding any and all actions aimed at solving problems directly affecting them. The necessity of viewing the issues relating to the status of women in their proper context means that, in the specific case of Latin America and the Caribbean, gender equity must be linked with social equity in general. Under these circumstances, the elimination of poverty and the elimination of the inequalities affecting women are seen as parallel objectives.
In order to formulate and implement a policy concerning gender issues, baseline analyses, indicators and statistics are needed as a foundation for decision-making and the design of coherent plans; special attention should therefore be devoted to the development and creation of methodologies and procedures for the generation of information broken down by gender, as well as guidelines for the interpretation, using a gender-based approach, of the essential significance of those figures.

Social actors also need to become sensitized, become more aware and make a commitment to redefining the organizational structure of society in a way that will promote greater equity between men and women. Even if this is done, however, the necessary political will must exist to break down the legal, administrative and other barriers that stop women from reaping the benefits of social and economic development. The policies implemented thus far have not had enough of an impact to bring about changes in the key variables determining women’s positions within the family and society. Women’s potential for coordinating the tasks associated with production and reproduction and managing the interfaces between the domestic sphere and the sphere of neighbourhood and municipal affairs permits a more detailed examination of the dichotomous models underlying the sexual division of labour, the distinction between private and public spheres of activity, and the feminine-versus-masculine construct. This also points up the need to find more equitable ways of improving women’s positions within the labour market and of seeing to it that society as a whole shoulders its share of responsibility with regard to reproduction.

Thus, although the objective of gender equity entails the integration of women into development through a more equal form of participation in such important areas as employment, education and health, this does not suffice. Areas related to the distribution of power, decision-making, a broader definition of citizenship and participation in democratization processes, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the necessary cultural changes to "deconstruct" the prevailing sexual division of labour are of fundamental importance because it is precisely in these areas that the greatest resistance to change has been shown.

A determined effort needs to be made to win greater representation for women at all levels of the power structure and thereby spur forward the formalization of their participation, which will further the modernization of the societies in question. Once this increase in women’s participation is accomplished, a new and more democratic political culture will take shape in which the rights and duties of citizenship will be exercised more fully. This extension of the status of citizenship to women and these changes in the cultural dimension will help to pave the way for a social imagery that reflects diversity rather than inequality. A dialogue needs to be established that will provide a bridge between people’s day-to-day lives and the world of public affairs and will draw upon women’s life experiences, thereby forging new ways of understanding such concepts as power, community, participation, democracy and citizenship.

Attention must also be devoted to social pacts and negotiations in both the private and public spheres, inasmuch as the integration of women will call for a new concept of citizenship involving a reappraisal of day-to-day affairs, reproduction, motherhood, reproductive rights and differences, as well as greater autonomy for women. The relationship between gender and development also entails an exploration of the individual and collective identities of both women and men, bearing in mind that these identities are in a constant state of flux owing to the influence of subjective interpretations and of dominant and emerging representations of gender, class, ethnic group and age.

The modernization of the reproductive dimension is a need that runs parallel to the modernization of the production apparatus, as well as being a condition for equity.
Cultural change in norms, values, symbolizations and representations regarding femininity and the domestic sphere has in fact already begun, but its main driving force has been provided by women, who, through their role as agents of socialization and the attribution of meaning to actual praxis, are important contributors to that change. However, in order for these changes to actually lead to an increase in the options, freedoms and independence of women, thus helping them to attain a state of development, men will have to become wholeheartedly involved in reproductive activities within a framework of gender equity.

The complexity and difficulties associated with the cultural and political realities of Latin America and the Caribbean often transcend the realm of institutionalized discussion and analysis. It is therefore also necessary to investigate and reflect upon the status and position of women so that we may then go back over what we already know and broaden our perspective to take in the particular aspects and contents of the heterogeneity characterizing women’s reality and thereby increase the effectiveness of our actions.

Notes

1 The foundational literature authored by women includes the following writings: in 1622, a treatise on “The equality of men and women” by Marie de Gournay in the spirit of the French Revolution and the “Declaration of women’s rights and citizenship” by Olympe de Gouges; and in 1792, “Vindication of women’s rights” by Mary Wollstonecraft. For an effort to delineate the various stages of thought about gender and women’s issues, see “Los estudios de género y sus fuentes epistemológicas: periodización y perspectivas” by Enrique Gomáriz (1992).

2 The use of the Spanish and French equivalents of the term “gender” to refer to differences and inequalities, as well as relations between the sexes, entails difficulties not posed by the English term. These problems arise because the Spanish and French terms have both biological and grammatical connotations. Sometimes, they designate a universal concept (e.g., “el género humano” [the human race]) referring to the unity of men and women as members of the same species; at other times, they make a distinction (“el género feminino” or “el género masculino” [the female or male gender]) not only in respect of human beings, but as regards things and their characteristics as well. They are also used to designate a way, form or mode of being (“género literario” [literary genre], “género de vida” [way of life]). Be that as it may, the manner in which the term is used in this document has been coming into general use in the social sciences as this already polysemous word has taken on the new meaning assigned to it within the context of feminist thought.

3 The first person to draw a distinction between gender and sex was Robert Stoller, who did so in the late 1960s in his studies in the fields of biology and genetics. Because the concept of gender has only fairly recently come into use in the social sciences, it is not given the same meaning by different authors but is instead used to signal a wide range of meanings and approaches. At times, the term designates the variable of sex; in other cases, it is used as a synonym for women; for some, it is a system of social status and prestige while, for others, it is a reflection of the social hierarchies associated with the social division of labour (for a summary of the concept from an anthropological vantage point, see Marta Lamas (1986)).

4 A considerable number of research projects carried out in different countries of the region provide an account of the specific features of women’s subordination based on various cross-matched characteristics. Consequently, a significant stock of analyses of the particular features of different women’s situations are currently available which represent a wealth of as yet unexplored resources.

5 Anthropological studies, including the well-known works of Margaret Mead, have demonstrated that sexual roles and identities do not always match — and may in fact run counter to — the gender identities assigned to men and women in our societies. Moreover, these dualistic concepts
in symbolic thought conform to a logic of opposition. Human beings are, according to their sex, included in one of the two possible categories and each trait is regarded as inherent in one or the other. Thus, in Western society, women are characterized, *inter alia*, as dependent, irrational, subjective and passive, whereas men are thought to be independent, rational, objective and active. Nevertheless, one or another link or identity trait may be emphasized more than another as a function of the person’s class, ethnic group or age.

6 The United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) led to the implementation of many initiatives by prompting numerous development agencies (United Nations bodies, national Governments and private, non-governmental organizations) to undertake projects and programmes designed to improve the economic and social status of women in the region.

7 According to the International Labour Organisation (1980), women’s entry into the labour market has been an event of enormous significance which has far outstripped entry-rate projections based on known historical trends. The participation of Latin American and Caribbean women in the labour market has jumped by 120.2%, which is far higher than the recorded increase in the number of working women worldwide (cited in López, Pollack and Villarreal, 1993).

8 Peggy Antrobus (1989) and Gita Sen and Karen Grown (1988), among others, maintain that, since the conclusion of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), the status of women has worsened in some respects—especially in third-world countries—despite all efforts to the contrary. These authors contend that, with few exceptions, women’s access to economic resources, income and employment has decreased in relative terms, their workloads have grown heavier, and, again in relative terms, their health and their nutritional status have worsened considerably. Furthermore, the lead women have gained in the area of education does not jibe with the difficulties they have encountered in simply surviving as a result of structural adjustment policies or with women’s over-representation in the informal sector and in the lowest-paying jobs. The limited success of these strategies is evident in traditional cultural attitudes, prejudices against women’s participation in economic and social affairs, and the nature of the development process into which women would need to integrate themselves.

9 Women have paid a price for the headway they have made towards achieving conditions that are more closely on a par to those enjoyed by men; those costs or sacrifices have included, for example, the loss of the assured protection afforded them as economic dependents and of the emotional rewards of a concept of motherhood as being sacred (Anderson, 1992).

10 These points have been taken from the analysis proposed by various authors listed in the bibliography.

11 The distribution of capital and access to natural resources (including land) are indicative of the degree of equity existing in a society (ECLAC, 1990 and 1992). According to Deere (1986), the percentages of women benefiting from agrarian reforms in some of the countries in the region are as follows: 3.8% in Honduras, 4.8% in the Dominican Republic, 6.0% in Nicaragua, 5.0% in Peru, 11.2% in Colombia and 25% in Cuba. One of the direct consequences of women’s severely limited access to land has been their restricted access to institutional agricultural loans, which clearly poses an obstacle to the modernization and increased productivity of peasant farming.

12 Advocacy of the incorporation of the gender dimension into development does not refer solely to the incorporation of women. Although the result of including a gender-based perspective is to heighten women’s visibility within the relationships of which they are a part, this approach does not stop there but goes on to establish the position of men within those same relationships and, essentially, to point out the inequalities and asymmetries affecting both sexes.

13 Jürgen Habermas (1989b) asserts that a web of communicationally-mediated cooperative interpersonal interactions give rise to a set of inter-subjectively shared interpretations which, as such, are presupposed to constitute background knowledge that gives meaning to the relevant actors’ and participants’ lives.

14 Even though women’s issues are beginning to receive governmental attention, as demonstrated by the pioneering work of the State Women’s Council of Brazil in integrating feminists’ demands with the struggle for democracy, the figures for Latin America and the Caribbean continue to indicate that, notwithstanding this qualitative progress, a great deal remains to be done. In eight countries, women are entirely absent from decision-making posts at the four highest levels of government, but the Bahamas, Barbados and Dominica are on a par with Finland
and Norway in having a sufficient number of women in official decision-making positions to exert a strong influence. In 1987 and 1988, 24 of the countries in the region had no woman in ministerial posts at all and, of the remaining countries, women held more than 10% of such posts in only three (Guatemala with 12%, Uruguay with 13% and Dominica with 22%). These posts were, for the most part, in the ministries of education, culture, social welfare and women’s affairs and, in a smaller number of cases, in the ministries of justice and foreign relations, but women were almost entirely absent from the ministries of defence, economic affairs and the interior. Although two of the countries (Nicaragua and Dominica) had women heads of government in the late 1980s, the number of women holding seats in the parliaments of the other countries was negligible (United Nations, 1992).

The municipalities are the level of government at which women hold the most senior posts. Indeed, leadership positions in local government are increasingly in the hands of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in some cases new forms of policy management and implementation as well as innovative programmes are being undertaken in order to deal with important social problems. Women’s mounting involvement in community administration has led to the introduction of new topics (e.g., environmental, cultural and psycho-social issues) in which people are showing a growing interest. For example, before the Brazilian municipality of Santos elected a women mayor, it had just one day-care centre; now it has 10. Furthermore, this city, which used to have the highest rate of AIDS in Brazil, now has an AIDS referral centre and a combination shelter/centre devoted to providing support and assistance for AIDS patients; in addition, its mental health programme has set itself the goal of making Santos the first city in Brazil to close its insane asylums (IULA/CELCADEL, 1993).

An interesting theoretical and epistemological debate is currently going on which cuts across the entire history of anthropology, from its very beginnings to the present day, and revolves around the concept of culture and the scope of that term. There is, however, a consensus in the literature that the notion of culture refers to the elements that determine cultural repertoires or patterns and modalities of action and operation in specific contexts.

A highly interesting proposal was made by the women’s section of the Italian Communist Party in this connection in 1990, when it section presented a bill entitled "Women change the times" consisting of 33 articles dealing with the life cycle, working hours and time in the cities which drew upon women’s experiences and proposed a new pact between women and the State and between the sexes.

The reference to spatial factors includes not only the notions of the public and domestic spheres but also those of their elements associated with urban planning and the territorial distribution of the citizenry’s functions, which place restrictions on women’s activities and the disposition of rural lands as a consequence of modernization and the advent of agribusiness.

Collective imagery is understood as a society’s set of symbolic images and mythical/ideological representations. This set of images is what enables society to specify the initial direction in which the culture will move. This does not mean that all members of the group are equally aware of all such representations or of the way in which they were constructed, however. Collective imagery is an essential yet ambivalent element of culture because it both drives forward and holds back social dynamics (Vega-Centeno, 1992).

For a consideration of the problem of domestic violence against women within the context of reproduction, see Rico (1992).

Analyses of existing laws in Latin America and the Caribbean indicate that despite the enormous efforts made by the countries in recent years, the worst examples of legislative discrimination against women continue to be found in the civil codes applying to reproduction (the status of married women, administration of family assets, legitimacy of children).

Thanks to criticisms of the social sciences made by some schools of thought and to the influence of feminism, there has been a reappraisal in recent years of the significance of daily life and of the domestic and private spheres as prime areas of human existence in which rational elements associated with the organization and allotment of time, the division of labour and technologies come together with non-rational cultural elements such as myths, traditions, emotions and rituals.
According to the Pan American Health Organization (1990), in Latin America and the Caribbean women are the ones who take responsibility for contraception in 80% of all cases; based on more recent data drawn from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), however, ECLAC (1993a) has found that this responsibility is shouldered by women 90% of the time in such countries as Bolivia, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador.

In the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 1979), emphasis is placed, in point of fact, on the social importance of motherhood. This represents a departure from the traditional view, according to which motherhood is regarded as an activity that should be confined to the private sphere of life. Some authors are also beginning to make a conceptual differentiation between "motherhood", which refers to biological aspects (gestation, birth, nursing and puerperium) and "mothering", which refers to the emotional and physical work of child-rearing and child care. For a discussion of this linguistic differentiation in the Spanish language, see Lamas (1987).

Some women's organizations have inspired initiatives aimed in this direction. One example is the Campaña Continental por el Derecho a Guarderías [continent-wide campaign for the right to day care], which undertook its first pilot project in 1992. In Mexico, this campaign is coordinated by the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

In the Dominican Republic, the Solidarity Centre for Women's Development launched an innovative communication strategy based on a 30-second television spot and the production of t-shirts, stickers and signs bearing the slogan: "Housework: everyone's job" ("oficios domésticos: trabajo de todos"). Rather than denouncing the existing situation, this strategy focuses on the proposal that household responsibilities be shared among all family members, regardless of their sex or age (FEMPRESS, June 1993).

It is important to note that housewives are classified as inactive in statistical tallies and are therefore not counted as part of the economically active population (EAP), as is also the case of children, students, retirees and persons who have lost their jobs. Moreover, their work is not covered by the labour laws or codes in effect in any country.
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