

Governance Models of Gender Policy Machineries under Left and Right Governments in Latin America

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In Latin America, the last fifteen years of left-wing government provide an opportunity to examine whether government ideology matters for the institutional design of gender policy machineries. We conduct a cross-national comparison of gender policy machinery governance models, taking three well-established models—bureaucratic, participatory, and transformative—as empirical guidance. We find that no one clear model is associated with government ideology. By studying four cases in-depth—Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela—we provide a more nuanced interpretation of how governance models are influenced by an interaction between party type, broader state capacities, and participatory structures.

Introduction

In 1995, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing consecrated the state as a major actor in bringing about gender justice (Molyneux and Razavi 2005). With the Beijing process, Latin American feminists gained more leverage to institutionalize gender policy machineries—specialized women’s policy agencies committed to gender equality policies and women’s rights (Guzman 2001; Valdes 2000).¹ Feminists expected these machineries to be well-equipped with personnel and procedures, and socially embedded in the women’s movements. As such, the design of these state structures should be simultaneously bureaucratically robust as well as participatory.

Empirical research reveals that, in the region, gender policy machineries differed from this expected design. Many of them faced strains in personnel and procedures, thus affecting their policymaking endeavors, whereas others

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eventually developed some capacities (for regional overviews see Fernós 2010; García Prince and PNUD 2015; Guzmán and Montaña 2012; Matos and Paradis 2013). Conversely, while some agencies lacked enough (or any) roots within women's movements, others reconfigured these ties in specific political conjunctures (Ewig 1999; Flores Salazar 2016; Franceschet 2003; Lopreite 2013; Richards 2004). Given these heterogeneous findings, the final verdict on whether the machineries in the region are both resourceful and able to maintain dense social ties is not yet in.

In understanding the shape of gender policy machineries, the larger political milieu is an important matter. In principle, we could expect a link between left governments and consolidated gender machineries. Given that leftist parties governed over half of Latin America between 1999 and 2016—a period known as “pink tide”—the region provides a strategic empirical terrain to reassess the more recent fate of these machineries.

While the comparative literature shows nonlinear links between left governments and effective women's policy agencies (McBride Stetson and Mazur 2010), in Latin America, at least in principle, some positive associations could be expected. Discursively, Latin American left parties of the “pink tide” period aimed to construct a more democratic state, one accountable to social organizations, more responsive to citizens' needs, and capable of providing better social services. In contrast to right-wing parties, the left put social and economic inclusion at the core of their agendas and reinstated a political dimension to social inequality. These goals offered friendlier grounds for feminists' cultural and political battles. Rhetorically, some left leaders even appeared feminist. In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez declared himself “feminist,” and, in his first campaign, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa claimed that the “Citizen Revolution” had a “woman's face” (Lind 2012). In other cases like Bolivia, constitutional reform expanded women's rights (Rousseau 2011). Similarly, feminists called the Venezuelan Constitution “truly revolutionary” for its advanced provisions (Fisher-Hoffman 2008, 38). Feminists were involved in these transformations, as they had close ties to the parties, or supported the electoral processes as social movements.

We ask whether Latin American left governments' ideas about democracy and social redistribution during the pink tide impacted, if at all, the governance model of gender policy machineries. Did Latin American gender policy machineries become more robust and democratic under left governments? Did pink tide governments have any effect on their bureaucratic capacities? Did they expand how these agencies relate to women's organizations and promote their participation?

We begin by framing the discussion of gender policy machineries within the debate on women's policy agencies and gender mainstreaming. We then turn to a brief empirical characterization of what gender machineries looked like in the region by 2016. We show that gender policy machineries present very different bureaucratic capacities, as well as links to the broader social

milieu. At least linearly, there is no clear association between government ideology and governance models. To better understand the factors that lead to our diverse array of gender policy machinery types, distinguished by both their capacities and participatory structures, we select for closer examination four cases based on the type of party in government—Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and a non-pink country, Mexico.

We argue that understanding the complexity of machineries' forms of governance requires a framework that combines ideology, party type, as well as institutional processes and structural conditions as *interacting determinants* on their designs. In particular, the available institutional procedures for bureaucratic consolidation play a key role, along with the country's participatory framework, in furthering social ties.

Theoretical Debates

Research on gender policy machineries in Latin America is profuse. Yet, while there are many cases studies (mainly on Chile), overarching regional analyses are scarce (for exceptions see [Díaz García 2016a](#); [Guzmán and Montaña 2012](#)).² From this literature, we know that gender policy machineries adopted diverse institutional forms, contingent on feminist activism, the presence of conservative actors, the type of party in government, and the conjunctures of democratization, among other factors ([Baldez 2001](#); [Franceschet 2007](#); [Friedman 2000](#); [Waylen 1996](#); [Zaremborg 2004](#)). Also, leadership matters, if not for the organizational form of women's agencies, at least for their policy influence ([Baldez 2001](#); [Caldeira 1998](#); [Franceschet 2003](#)). Nevertheless, systematic reflections on the institutional design of gender policy machineries under left-wing governments are relatively rare (for an exception see [Friedman, forthcoming](#)), and cross-national overviews of them remain scarce.

Previous cross-national studies examined the structural features of gender machineries, as a condition of their influence on equality policies. [Rai \(2003\)](#) explored the relevance of accountability to multiple constituencies as part of the success of women's policy machineries, in tandem with hierarchical location, clarity of mandate and functional responsibility, and leadership. Nonetheless, women's agencies' hierarchical location does not directly translate into policy effectiveness, at least in developing countries ([Goetz 2003](#)). In the more specific arena of violence against women, [Weldon \(2002\)](#) demonstrated that it is the interaction between women's movements and institutional structures that matters for policy responsiveness.

In postindustrial countries, the "state feminism" literature focuses on the policy effectiveness of women's policy agencies ([McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995, 2010](#)). In this corpus, the central concern is whether, how, and why women's policy agencies are *effective partners* for women's movements in

gaining access to policymaking arenas, influencing policy outcomes, and even changing democracy itself. The key proposition is that women's policy agencies, by forming alliances with women's movements, can gender the terms of the policy debate and provide procedural access to social actors. When this occurs, women's policy agencies are "insiders." The comparative study of the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State of thirteen postindustrial democracies revealed that these agencies do lead to positive state responses to women's movement demands (McBride Stetson and Mazur 2010). Nonetheless, there is no one best way to structure a women's policy agency when seeking to attain policy effectiveness. Overall, comparative work found that agencies' institutionalized communications with women's movements proved pivotal to their effectiveness (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995).

We seek to examine the institutional design of the gender machineries during Latin America's pink tide. To do so, we utilize the notion of "form of governance" (Walby 2005). This refers to the legitimacy of the authority in charge of gender equality compliance and promotion, as well as the organizational structures, procedures, and interactions regulating decision making. This concept allows us to address how gender policy machineries are organized relative to the rest of the state *vis-à-vis* civil society.

In characterizing the gender policy machineries of the region, we build on the gender mainstreaming literature. The wider perspective on agencies' structural and relational attributes brought by this literature—which highlights a variety of coordination procedures, tools for gender analysis at different stages of the policy cycle, issue territory and connectivity, information generation, among others—is key to comprehending the machineries' institutional designs. In fact, research on women's policy agencies in the developing world reveals that state capacities and bureaucratic resources, broadly conceived, are significant factors affecting how they work. These are important issues, but so far only partially addressed in studies of state feminism (Valiente 2007). By contrast, when examining variations in gender mainstreaming, several authors focus on the structural and functional dynamics of gender policy machineries, seeking patterns in the shape of these agencies—such as bureaucratic, participatory, or transformative (e.g., Beveridge, Nott, and Stephen 2000; Jahan 1995; Lombardo 2003; Rees 2005; Squires and Wickham-Jones 2004; Squires 2005; Verloo 2005).

Drawing on Beveridge, Nott, and Stephen (2000), machineries that adopt a *bureaucratic model* rely on a team of experts and specialists who activate sophisticated procedural tools to integrate a gender perspective across the state apparatus. The effectiveness of this governance model depends on how well regular policymakers utilize gender budgeting, gender impact assessments, and gender-disaggregated statistics (Rees 2005). The equality dynamics are, basically, a function of well-developed state capacities to manage daily policy work. Consequently, robust gender policy machineries, in this model, are those with reinforced coordinating procedures, trained staff, gender focal

points, and effective toolkits for developing equality actions throughout the state. The intersectoral mandate is institutionalized by means of committees and councils for cross-cutting work within the heterogeneous state structure. Additionally, monitoring systems for ensuring the compliance of equality goals are fundamental pieces of the workings of the model. Gender expertise is consolidated among bureaucratic actors by different forms of employee training. In turn, these actors promote social change indirectly, by introducing a gender perspective into policy interventions. An important criticism raised against this model is that it may privilege technical rationality over the political and organizational processes that changing the gender order entails, thus hindering women's empowerment (Verloo 2005).

By contrast, according to Jahan (1995), a *participatory governance model* privileges the presence and empowerment of diverse groups of women by means of ongoing consultations between the state and civil society. The presence and voice of women as decision makers in key policy issues is the distinguishing feature, for which reason political organizing and mobilization are working conditions for gender policy machineries that opt for this form of governance. In turn, their presence changes the existing policy outlook or, in Jahan's terms, "existing development paradigms." This model of governance is sometimes referred to as agenda-setting due to its strategy of including women in defining their own political priorities, allowing them to steer the transformation (Verloo 2005). The equality dynamics are determined by the quality of state-society interfaces. Consequently, the participatory model is a function of well-developed state capacities to elicit women's widespread participation, with an emphasis on plural and heterogeneous audiences. The participation of women's groups takes place under a variety of deliberative formats, councils with civil society representation, and other forms of state-society interactions. These interactions are on substantive matters and leave room for civil society initiative and decision making. Joint spaces for designing gender equality plans are, for example, central to the organizational repertoire of participatory gender policy machineries (Lombardo 2003), as well as participatory budget experiences with a gender component.

Lastly, gender policy machineries that adopt a *transformative governance model* combine bureaucratic capacities and participatory dynamics. Strong institutional capacities are essential for gender equality to escape "marginal policy ghettos" (Woodward 2003). In gendered structures such as the state, policy actors may be committed to gender equality but reproduce inequalities if organizational procedures remain biased. For this reason, adequate structural management instruments help change the androcentric cultural underpinnings of policy arenas. Additionally, gender asymmetric relations are sustained upon social closure, by which (some) men and policy experts exert power without being responsive to citizens' needs. To overcome such barriers, gathering multiple audiences and fostering inclusive deliberation becomes

central in transformative governance practices (Squires 2005). In this model, the mechanisms by which gender machineries become accountable to their social constituencies are also a major factor (Kantola and Outshoorn 2007). The full adoption of a transformative model is not devoid of challenges. After all, the construction of gender policy machineries is essentially difficult. These are structures constituted in the tension between state and society, and immersed in social and institutional processes that seem contradictory—making structures flexible enough for participation and debate and, concomitantly, strengthening their bureaucratizing potential for effective policy implementation.

Of course, governments may also install women's policy machineries that are only symbolic in value (Meyer and Rowan 1977), with no tools to implement policies or promote women's rights in practice. This is the entire "watering down" (Woodward 2003) of the gender policy machinery that we call the *ceremonial model*.

To a large extent, these models are ideal types that guide empirical research. These represent larger templates upon which gender policy machineries organize. They also depart from them because daily policy practices may require more eclectic solutions, or because the necessary conditions to crystallize a specific institutional design are absent. Therefore, in concrete experiences of organizational development and institutional change, we may find hybrids (understood as a combination of partially bureaucratic and partially participatory traits) as well as incomplete translations of these ideal models (or quasi models).

We expect gender policy machineries under left governments to adopt a transformative model, or, given that the conditions for adoption and development of a transformative model may be demanding, a close approximation. Left governments had the following favorable conditions. When they came to power, some women's policy agencies were already in place, providing a foundation upon which to build. Also, these governments stayed in power for more than one administration, thus having popular support and time to overcome legacies affecting the state bureaucracy. The left also ruled during a cycle of unprecedented economic growth. This provided them with resources to introduce redistribution policies and to minimize political costs associated with social and economic reforms. Additionally, as all Latin American countries ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), these international standards on women's rights posed normative incentives to defy institutional drawbacks (Shirley 2016).

By contrast, we expect right-wing governments, because they have little interest in promoting feminist causes per se, to only implement the ceremonial model.

Research Methods

The empirical basis of this article comes from a cross-national project that examines the governance models of the gender policy machineries in seventeen countries. While we analyzed their institutional development between 1999 and 2016, in this article we focus on the extant models by the end of this period. We assume that any institutional change promoted by left-wing governments should have matured after several years of left government, especially when these encompassed more than one presidential term.

The cross-national overview serves two purposes. First, by comparing gender policy machineries under left versus right-wing governments, we explore whether a specific model of governance is associated with government ideology. Second, by mapping several countries, we maximize the empirical variation of governance models. This information provided a rationale to select cases based upon empirical combinations of bureaucratic development and participation for further comparison.

We draw on [Beveridge, Nott, and Stephen \(2000\)](#) to organize the qualitative information regarding bureaucratic capacities and participation.³ Our empirical data combined different sources. We reviewed legal regulations on the gender policy machineries, about thirty-seven national equal opportunity plans, and a total of fifty official reports presented at the four Women's Conferences on Latin America and the Caribbean held between 2007 and 2016. Additional sources were the official and shadow reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee and the Committee's responses between 2000 and 2016. Lastly, we gathered original data from seventy-five interviews in all seventeen countries with policy actors, feminists, and international development officers, conducted between 2014 and 2017.

Diverse Models of Governance

At the end of 2015, both left and non-left Latin American governments had improved the hierarchical location of their gender policy machineries, compared to the beginning of the decade. A hierarchical location in the state and a transformative institutional design, however, do not go hand in hand. As shown in [table 1](#), gender policy machineries adopted very different governance models, even when they had a similar formal status. Most of the gender policy machineries in the region are hybrids: by 2015, out of seventeen, eight of them had neither strengthened procedures nor developed full-fledged deliberative spaces with civil society, but combined at least incipient tools and some form of interaction with women's organizations. Many of the machineries had joint committees, networks, and focal points with other state agencies. Hence, the machineries incorporated some bureaucratic instruments, and they also had some sort of formal interface with women's movements, particularly around the formulation of national equality plans, or their

Table 1. Gender policy machineries' models of governance in Latin America

Left party type	Country	Years of left-wing government 1999–2016	World Bank classification by income December 2016	Gender policy machinery	Hierarchical location (a) December 2015	Social participation	Bureaucratic capacities	Model
Populist machine left	Argentina	13	Upper middle income	Women's National Council	Low	Scarce interactions	No significant tools or procedures	CEREMONIAL
Populist left	Ecuador	9	Upper middle income	National Council on Gender Equality	Medium	Scarce interactions	No significant tools or procedures	CEREMONIAL (Transition Committee)
Populist machine left	Nicaragua	9	Lower middle income	Women's Ministry	High	Divide between state and women's movements	No significant tools or procedures	CEREMONIAL
Institutionalized partisan left	Brazil	13	Upper middle income	Secretariat for Women's Policies	High	Women's mobilization around policies and programs	Strong planning procedures	QUASI-TRANSFORMATIVE
Movement left	Bolivia	10	Lower middle income	Vice Ministry of Justice	Low	Channels for institutional participation and mobilization	Dispersed institutional platform	PARTICIPATORY

Continued

Table 1. *Continued*

Left party type	Country	Years of left-wing government 1999–2016	World Bank classification by income December 2016	Gender policy machinery	Hierarchical location (a) December 2015	Social participation	Bureaucratic capacities	Model
Populist left	Venezuela	17	Upper middle income	Ministry of Popular Power on Women and Gender Equality	High	State-led and segmented participation	No significant tools or procedures	SEGMENTED PARTICIPATORY
Institutionalized partisan left	El Salvador	7	Lower middle income	Salvadorian Institute for Woman Development National Women's Institute	Low	Women's organizations tie with ISDEMU Civil society connections with INMUJERES (Council)	Presence of tools with uneven development Presence of tools with uneven development	HYBRID
Institutionalized partisan left	Uruguay	11	High income	National Women's Institute	Low	Civil society connections with INMUJERES (Council)	Presence of tools with uneven development	HYBRID
Institutionalized partisan left	Chile	13	High income	Ministry on Women and Gender Equity National Women's Institute	High	No participatory spaces Institutionalized participation but absence of substantive political debate	Strong developments across the state Strong streaming instruments	BUREAUCRATIC
Institutionalized partisan left	Mexico		Upper middle income	National Women's Institute	High	Institutionalized participation but absence of substantive political debate	Strong streaming instruments	BUREAUCRATIC

Continued

Table 1. *Continued*

Left party type	Country	Years of left-wing government 1999–2016	World Bank classification by income December 2016	Gender policy machinery	Hierarchical location (a) December 2015	Social participation	Bureaucratic capacities	Model
	Colombia	–	Upper middle income	Presidential Counsel for Women's Equity	Medium	Informal interactions, with ups and downs	Some instruments but lacking institutional scope	HYBRID
	Costa Rica	–	Upper middle income	National Women's Institute	High	Active consultation bodies at the National Women's Institute	Some consolidated mechanisms but no overarching planning instrument	HYBRID
	Peru	–	Upper middle income	Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations	High	Some consultations and interactions	Medium	HYBRID
	Honduras	–	Lower middle income	National Women's Institute	High	Divide between organized civil society and the state	No significant tools identified	CEREMONIAL

Continued

Table 1. *Continued*

Left party type	Country	Years of left-wing government 1999–2016	World Bank classification by income December 2016	Gender policy machinery	Hierarchical location (a) December 2015	Social participation	Bureaucratic capacities	Model
	Guatemala	–	Lower middle income	Presidential Secretariat for Women	High	Scarce interaction between state and women's movements	Some emerging tools	HYBRID
	Panama	–	Upper middle income	National Women's Institute	Low	Some ties between civil society and the state	Ongoing developments	HYBRID
	Dominican Republic	–	Upper middle income	Ministry of Women	High	Some consultations and interactions	Procedures and tools with uneven development	HYBRID

Source: (a) Based on ECLAC (<http://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/nivel-jerarquico-mecanismos-adelanto-la-mujer-mam>).

participation in advisory councils. Often, these were sites for information exchange rather than policy influence (even in small and centralized countries such as Uruguay, where one would expect greater influence).

Contrary to our expectations, gender policy machineries under left-wing governments depart from the transformative governance model significantly and vary greatly in their ultimate model. Among them, only one is quasi-transformative (Brazil), another one participatory (Bolivia), two are hybrids (El Salvador and Uruguay), and three are ceremonial (Argentina, Ecuador, and Nicaragua). Venezuela is even challenging to classify; we call it segmented participation because the policy machinery mobilized popular women supportive of the regime, though was not necessarily responsive to more autonomous women's organizing or to critical voices. By contrast, non-left governments show gender policy machineries that are, for the most part, hybrids.

In terms of bureaucratic developments, irrespective of government ideology, national gross domestic product (GDP) is a relevant factor. In nine out of the twelve economies considered at least upper middle income, gender policy machineries did introduce a minimum of toolkits for policy development. Interestingly, the three exceptions are the left governments of Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela, which, despite their GDP levels, have bureaucratically weak machineries.

Regarding the participatory quality of the machineries, in some cases, women's organizations had a say in the appointment of authorities, or were represented in institutional advisory councils (Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Mexico), but in others, the divides between feminist movements and the gender machinery were extreme (Honduras and Nicaragua). The national GDP does not explain these variations. Other social, political, and institutional dynamics may account for these differences. The two cases with more autonomous social participation correspond to left-wing governments, namely, Brazil and Bolivia. Consequently, a possible association between left governments and participatory machineries should not be discarded and, if anything, the conditions for these participatory developments should be closely scrutinized.

Four Different Models of Governance

Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela are the four cases selected for comparison, based on the contrasting shape of their gender policy machineries, as well as on their differences on government ideology and party type, as [table 2](#) shows.

Succinctly, in 1999, Venezuela inaugurated the pink tide in the region, when Commander Hugo Chávez became president and the leader of Party *V República*. Chávez initiated a process of political and social transformation

Table 2. Case attributes

Quasi-transformative model	Segmented participatory model
Brazil	Venezuela
Strong planning procedures	No major bureaucratic instruments
Active and regular mobilization of women's collectives, substantive political debate	State-led and segmented women's participation
<i>Institutionalized partisan left</i>	<i>Populist left</i>
Bureaucratic model	Ceremonial model
Mexico	Argentina
Mainstreaming instruments	No bureaucratic instruments
Institutionalized participation, but absence of substantive political debate	Scarce interactions with women's groups
<i>Right and center-right</i>	<i>Populist machine left</i>

called the “Bolivarian Revolution.” After his death in 2013, Vice President Nicolás Maduro succeeded him in government. In Brazil, the left-wing Workers’ Party (PT) won the national elections with Ignacio (Lula) da Silva in 2002, later reelected in 2006. Dilma Rousseff followed as president, from 2011 to 2016, but her mandate ended abruptly with her impeachment. In Argentina, Peronist Néstor Kirchner—leader of the Peronist faction Victory Front—won the presidency in 2003, following a major socioeconomic crisis in 2001. In 2007, he was succeeded by his wife, Cristina Fernández, who was reelected in 2011 and governed until 2015. By contrast, in this period, Mexico had three different presidents, but none of them left-wing. From 2000 to 2012, there were two consecutive governments of the right-wing *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN). It came to power after Mexico’s first truly competitive elections in 2000, with Vicente Fox as president. This put an end to the political hegemony of the centrist *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). In 2006, the PAN won again with Felipe Calderón Hinojosa. In 2012, the PRI won the presidential elections with Enrique Peña Nieto.

For Levitsky and Roberts (2011), Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela represent three left party types. These authors consider *Kirchnerism* as an example of a populist machine left, while the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT) and Chávez in Venezuela represent, respectively, an institutionalized partisan left and a populist left. We add Mexico, a non-left country, to the comparison because restricting the explanatory effort to pink tide governments would bias our interpretations on the political processes behind the empirical variation among governance models. All four cases are also upper middle-income economies and federal states, thus relatively similar in key structural characteristics.

In terms of their gender policy machineries, the cases offer contrasting governance models. Briefly, in Brazil, the Secretariat for Women's Policies (SPM), created by Lula in 2003, substituted the State Secretariat on Women's Rights (SEDIM). The SPM was granted a direct link to the Office of the President. Gradually, its institutional conditions improved: in 2010 the SPM Director gained ministerial rank, and in 2012 and 2013 the staff expanded notably. By contrast, in Argentina, the National Council on Women (CNM) had virtually no instruments for gender mainstreaming or significant connections to women's organizations. Created by a presidential decree in 1992, the CNM had a convoluted institutional trajectory, and, after successive changes, it lost hierarchy and was finally housed at the National Council for Social Policy Coordination in the Ministry of Social Development in 2002 (Weathers 2007). In 2010, the Council's name was changed by presidential decree from "Woman" to "Women" in a symbolic attempt to capture women's diverse conditions, but without additional material resources. The CNM remained ceremonial under *Kirchnerismo*, lacking political visibility, autonomy, and resources—in contrast to the SPM under the PT in Brazil. In Venezuela, as soon as Chávez became president, he curtailed the National Women's Council's (CONAMU) budget, though reversed this decision after intense feminist mobilizations. By the end of 1999, he created the National Institute on Women (INAMujer), which in 2009 became the Ministry of Popular Power on Women and Gender Equality (MPPMIG). The MPPMIG was instrumental in mobilizing popular women supportive of the regime.⁴ In Mexico, in 2001, the PAN government supported the creation of the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES) that replaced the National Women's Commission (CONMUJER). A deconcentrated entity with a technical secretariat and two councils with government and civil society representatives, its budget exceeded that of CONMUJER (Cerva 2006). As a decentralized body, it is not part of the Executive Cabinet but its Director is called to Cabinet meetings depending on the agenda. After 2012, when the PRI returned to power, it threatened to downgrade INMUJERES' position, but ultimately did not act (personal interview, National Legislator). INMUJERES developed significant bureaucratic capacities, resembling the SPM in Brazil in this respect, but sharply differing from it in that participation was confined to few formal consultations.

Brazil and Argentina are opposite cases, with a quasi-transformative and a ceremonial gender policy machinery, respectively. In the larger Latin American context, Venezuela's gender policy machinery is one-of-a-kind. It developed scarce bureaucratic capacities but activated social participation and mobilized popular women. This participation was dynamic but state-led and, as such, remained confined to those women's organizations supportive of *Chavism*. Mexico contrasts with the three cases because it offers a bureaucratic model.

Given these differences, we track the political and institutional dynamics (party type, larger state capacities, and existing participatory institutions) behind the observed shape of the gender policy machineries, organized by the

two relevant dimensions of governance models: bureaucratic developments and state ties with the women's movements and organizations.

Bureaucratic Capacities

Overarching planning capacities, specific procedures, and institutional actors willing to engage in cross-sectional coordination are fundamental ingredients of the bureaucratic dimension of governance. Our partisan left case of Brazil's SPM and the right-wing case of Mexico's INMUJERES, in relative terms, show progress along these lines, in contrast to the situation of the two populist cases, CNM in Argentina and the MPPMIG in Venezuela.

We attribute much of the institutional progress in Brazil to its exceptionally well-established planning and budgeting processes (World Bank 2002). The main fiscal and public expenditure management instrument—the Multi-Year Plan (PPA for its Portuguese acronym)—combines the formal rationality of budgetary projections with the substantive rationality of planning. Under the PT government, the PPA became an instrument for gender mainstreaming, though it took some policy learning and more than one planning cycle to take full advantage of its potential. Indeed, it was not until the 2013–2015 PPA, “More Brazil,” that gender equality was finally included as a cross-cutting agenda item, thus translated into thirty-four specific programs involving thirty-three ministries (Gobierno de Brasil 2014). Additionally, the SPM created an institutional network of twelve gender units (by 2013) within the Federal Public Administration. These units allowed the establishment of organizational-level gender policy commitments that feminists of the PT executive staff could monitor (Abers and Tatagiba 2014). In a nutshell, the presence of feminists in the state, the cross-sectoral network, and the country's institutionalized procedures to monitor the PPA gender goals (namely, the Integrated Federal Monitoring System), provided the SPM with capacities to comply with its mandate. Certainly, a remaining challenge was the coordination with subnational governments, an essential piece in a federal state.

In Argentina, by contrast, the CNM played neither an articulating role nor developed policy networks similar to its Brazilian counterpart, the SPM. It lacked coordinating procedures with other Ministries, as well as focal points in the state structure. The CNM did not have a National Equal Opportunity Plan for Men and Women, contrasting with the rest of the region. While it worked regularly with the Federal Council of Women, gathering representatives from the provincial women's policy agencies, the CNM did not introduce institutional procedures for coordination and joint work for gender mainstreaming. Given the GDP levels of Argentina, the presence of feminists in the state, and the country's medium levels of state capacity (Iacoviello and Zuvanic 2006a), the CNM's scarce institutional capacities are due to a multiplicity of factors. First, the fact that the Ministry of Social Development—where the CNM was housed—had priorities centered on class-based social

redistribution with little regard to other forms of discrimination (such as gender or race) helps explain why CNM's bureaucratic capacities and actions remained restricted. The Ministry held a *maternalistic* policy approach (Lopreite 2013) with scarce room for women's rights, which would have demanded different procedures and work arrangements. Second, despite Argentina's relative maturity in some of its state capacities, the country is weak in overarching planning instruments, and lacks national development plans, all necessary for gender mainstreaming efforts.

Like Argentina, in Venezuela the INAMujer and later the MPPMIG had few institutional procedures that would sustain its work across the policy spectrum, a weakness also contrasting with the country's GDP, and more clearly, with its favorable legal framework toward gender equality. In fact, the 1999 Constitution incorporated non-sexist language, recognized some reproductive rights, and valued social reproduction (López Caldera 2015). In this same year, the Equal Opportunities for Women Act deepened the normative basis for gender equality interventions. Such favorable conditions, however, did not translate into policy procedures, tools, and state networking structures (personal interview, women's NGO). Specifically, the MPPMIG's network of gender units and focal points never consolidated (Pérez-Bravo 2013; personal interview, women's NGO). Actions with the rest of the state apparatus were fragmented, an issue of concern among *Chavista* feminists (Araña Feminista 2011). Instead, the MPPMIG implemented sector-specific programs, and gender policies were ghettoized.

Weak state capacity partially explains why the MPPMIG remained confined. When Chávez came to power, state capacity was already very feeble (Iacoviello and Zuvanic 2006b) and deeply affected by the deinstitutionalization of the party system (Levitsky and Roberts 2011). Yet, the gains from impressive economic growth due to the oil boom during *Chavism* were not used strategically to overcome inherited pitfalls. The planning instruments in the civil service remained weak and affected by politicized appointments and significant losses of technical personnel (Weyland 2011). At the end of the period, the deterioration of the economic and fiscal situation curtailed any possibility for bureaucratic consolidation.

In Mexico, the bureaucratic strength of INMUJERES relates to the quality of its institutional framework for designing and implementing gender-sensitive policies system-wide (OECD 2017). The 2006 General Act for Equality between Women and Men set forth the institutions and mechanisms that favored INMUJERES' cross-cutting work. INMUJERES assisted the emerging gender units at line ministries by collaborating in establishing teams of specialists to design gender-sensitive actions (Tepichin Valle 2010). Training sessions, general advice, and the provision of tools were pivotal in earlier times. In 2008, INMUJERES deepened this network with the Program for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming. By 2016, gender units existed in

almost all secretariats of the Federal Public Administration, headed by senior managers (OECD 2017).

INMUJERES formulated and implemented three consecutive national plans that, by law, elicited the commitment of line ministries to specific actions. The second two of these equality plans, PROIGUALDAD 2008–2012 and 2013–2018, came with incentives that facilitated compliance. In 2008–2012, the gender equality plan had earmarked funds, thus positively affecting programs at the federal level. In 2013–2018, it benefited from the fact that gender equality was one of three overarching objectives of the National Development Plan (Díaz García 2016b). This innovation in the national planning scheme made PROIGUALDAD mandatory for all sectoral plans between 2013 and 2018.

INMUJERES exerted a coordinating role within the National System for Equality between Women and Men, which comprises the institutional network of state structures committed to advancing gender equality. This System is a significant “governance tool for ensuring a system-wide approach to gender equality in Mexico” (OECD 2017, 230) and allowed the INMUJERES to have a macro vision of policies and programs. In 2015, the PRI president granted ministerial status to the System, thus giving more political significance to the coordinating role of the INMUJERES.

The INMUJERES benefited as well from the gender budgeting processes required at the federal level. Championed by female legislators committed to a gender agenda, gender budgeting practices started in 2004 for selected social programs. In 2008, the Federal Congress introduced gender-sensitive budgeting (under the form of earmarked funds), and in 2012, the Federal Budget and Fiscal Law legally safeguarded these innovations. Based on the federal agencies’ expenditures, INMUJERES prepared and submitted detailed quarterly reports for Congressional oversight. This process constituted an important incentive for line ministers to introduce gender-sensitive programs.

However, INMUJERES’ capacities to institutionalize a gender perspective had loopholes, especially in the coordination with subnational governments, despite its program of competitive funds (Fund for Gender Mainstreaming in 2008, later called the Program to Strengthen Gender Mainstreaming in 2010). There was a lack of specificity in gender policy assessment (OECD 2017), captured in the phrase “we have done a lot but we need to evaluate what we have done” (personal interview, policy maker). In short, under the PAN and PRI governments, while gender innovations occurred, actual policy content and orientations remained ambiguous.

State Social Embeddedness

In addressing the social interactions between gender machineries and women’s groups, we examine consultative spaces with social constituencies and state–society dialogues around gender equality plans.

In Brazil, the interaction between the SPM and women's organizations benefited from the country's larger participatory environment. The 1988 Constitution established participatory democracy, organized as councils and conferences, upon which Brazil constructed one of the most expansive and institutionalized participatory policymaking processes in the world (Mayka 2013). The PT deepened it: by 2010, there were fifty-four national participatory councils relative to twenty-nine in 2002 (Mayka 2013). Also, the PT started the National Conferences for Women held in 2004, 2007, 2011, and 2016. The Conferences consisted of public deliberation between the state and social groups. This massive process of social mobilization, reaching about 200,000 women, with a peak of 2,800 delegates (Gobierno de Brasil 2014), served as a platform for discussing and designing three National Equality Policies (Matos and Paradis 2013). Certainly, the vibrant Brazilian women's movement made these participatory processes meaningful (Carneiro 2016). However, whereas the feminist leaders interviewed valued the Conferences, they admitted that, at some point, "some of the big issues" were no longer addressed (personal interview, women's NGO). Also, ideological affinity sometimes made it difficult to be critical of the PT's policies (especially those related to economic and production issues) and posed challenges for deepening participation on selected topics (personal interview, women's NGO).

The PT renewed the National Council on Women's Rights (CNDM), created in 1985 but virtually dismantled in 1989. In addition to revitalizing it, Lula's government entitled women's movements to propose their own representatives. The CNDM supported the SPM's work with federal agencies and civil society and took part in the specialized committee monitoring of the three National Equality Policies of the period. A structure with such a wide scope was without precedent in Brazilian history (Machado 2016) and is unlike the other three national cases.

Brazil's SPM participatory channels were not devoid of challenges. The constituencies of the SPM were supportive but nonetheless critical of its actions, and women's organizations felt it needed reinforcement. Also, for social actors, the joint work with government, at times, had some inertia and filtered out more conflictive issues (personal interview, women's NGO).

In sharp contrast with the Brazilian experience, in Argentina, the CNM had no formal or informal channels for developing substantive dialogues with women's organizations. Until 2006, the CNM had some ties with a few grassroots organizations, during the duration of an antipoverty program funded by the World Bank (Loprete 2013). Eventually, the CNM opened links to popular feminism at the grassroots level, by offering training workshops called *Escuela Popular* (Popular School). While intended to promote women's rights, they did not institutionalize consultation spaces. The absence of a national equality plan also hindered policy dialogues.

Women's organizations, however, still connected with other gender state structures that developed under *Kirchnerism*. Non-governmental

organizations and middle-class women's organizations focused on those state areas with more political leverage than the CNM, such as selected ministries, where significant gender policy innovations took place, many of them involving dialogue with social organizations. As women's organizations turned to them for lobbying, they avoided direct confrontation about the lack of hierarchy of the CNM. Given these more receptive state structures, feminists did not need to demand participation within the CNM. On the other hand, women from popular sectors channeled their demands through social organizations of the informal sector called *Piqueteros*. They were part of the coalition supporting *Kirchnerism*, through policy inducements and leaders' appointments to state positions (Etchemendy and Garay 2011). In contrast with the Venezuelan case, where the MPPMIG mobilized women as part of its political support base, in Argentina women were already organized and advocating for their rights. Even further, popular women created their own spaces within the *Piquetero* movement, and they did so in an autonomous manner, inspired by their participation in the national women's encounters (Di Marco 2012). As such, the CNM had no institutional or political value for the government, in terms of aggregating women's interests and organizing them as collective actors for political support. Eventually, the CNM's ceremonial value showed its limits, as the massive rallies against gender violence (*Ni una Menos* starting in June 2015) put into question its capacities for incorporating women in policy dialogues, or even championing or supporting such mobilization.

In Venezuela, INAMujer and MPPMIG developed segmented social ties, reaching out to some women but excluding others. The country's increased polarization made the organization of popular women instrumental in expanding the social bases of *Chavismo*. During the 2002 coup attempt against Chávez, and in the 2004 referendum, women mobilized massively in support of the government (Fernandes 2007). In this context, the gender machinery incorporated women's voices, but in a state-led, largely top-down manner instrumental to the government's electoral purposes. This development occurred within the larger phenomenon of "state-sponsored associationalism" (Handlin and Collier 2011), related to the government's initiative of communal councils at local levels.

Until 2013, the two national equality plans lacked mechanisms to allow women's social collectives to monitor MPPMIG policies. In 2013, the Third Plan for Gender Equality 2013–2019 created an informal advisory body. This group, called the Patriotic Council of Women, was composed of female officials, activists of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, and feminist leaders. Its direct connection to Chávez' successor, President Maduro, however, hindered its critical role. Even women's organizations that supported *Chavismo* expressed that dialogue with MPPMIG was limited (personal interview, women's NGO). In turn, the relationship between the MPPMIG and feminist middle-class organizations opposing *Chavismo* was tense. These

organizations denounced their “almost total exclusion” from any public intervention impacting women (Observatorio Venezolano de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres 2009). Despite efforts to organize a “Widespread Movement of Women” (Rakowski and Espina 2006), in a highly divided political milieu, women’s organizations also split along the cleavage *Chavism* versus anti-*Chavism*. As such, the women’s movement as a whole did not demand engagement with MPPMIG.

To a large extent, MPPMIG’s grassroots work with popular women aimed at solving practical needs (Friedman 2009), though some experiences of empowerment occurred (Carosio 2012; García and Valdivieso 2009; Fernandes 2007). MPPMIG had “Meeting Points” (*Puntos de Encuentro*)—small groups of local women that promoted grassroots links with MPPMIG—but these engaged women in party-related practices including electoral campaigns (Espina and Rakowski 2010; Pérez-Bravo 2013). The MPPMIG practices thus fell short from the expected role of the state as supporter of autonomous women’s organizing.

In Mexico, INMUJERES was created in the heat of the process of democratization, when feminists’ demands from the Beijing process were still fresh (personal interview, women’s NGO). In 2000, right before the election, more than 120 women’s organizations and 319 female candidates signed the “Agreement among Women for a Legislative Agenda and Government Rule in Favor of Equity” (Ortiz-Ortega and Barquet 2010). With it, feminists sought to influence the new government’s agenda, particularly any initiative related to state reform (personal interview, national legislator). For this reason, some feminists saw in INMUJERES a real possibility to have a voice in policymaking (Cerva 2006). The Institute had two collegial bodies with members from civil society: the Consultative Council with an advisory role and the Social Council with monitoring prerogatives. Delegates from these Councils, in turn, integrated the Board of INMUJERES.

Despite expectations, the Councils eventually experienced numerous difficulties. These formal participatory spaces had dubious substantive meaning, a significant difference with the CNDM in Brazil. As one former member commented: “the Councils are stagnated, with a bureaucratic dynamic that delays the capacity for action. They are a straitjacket” (personal interview, former council member). At some point, the women’s movement did not consider INMUJERES to be an attractive structure and turned, more actively, to the state-level women’s policy agencies—particularly Mexico City’s agency, as the left-wing PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*) governed the district (personal interview, women’s NGO). As a result, women’s participation in formulating the national gender equality plans waned. In 2001, when making the first national plan (PROEQUIDAD 2001–2006), participatory dynamics with civil society organizations took place. Later, however, social ties around the two subsequent equality plans weakened (in 2009 and 2013).

Overall, women's participation remained marginal to INMUJERES' institutional life despite the formal design including them.

In these four cases, party type and the governance model adopted by the gender policy machineries appear to relate linearly. *Prima facie*, it could seem that Brazil, an institutionalized left, took the transformative model as a yardstick, the populist left of Venezuela utilized the gender policy machinery as part of its armchair politics, and the populist machinery of the Victory Front of Argentina did not put any value on the machinery. Mexico, as expected, is not participatory, but surprisingly, it also exhibits not just ceremonial. While attractive, this first-order association conflates the factors behind the final shape of gender policy machineries. Ideology matters, as does left party type, but these interact with institutional dynamics and structural factors. Ideology and party type, as we related above, must be seen in combination with broader state capacities (e.g., the weak capacity of Venezuela compared to that of Argentina led to very different outcomes), larger participatory institutions (which influenced Brazil's participatory model), and the democratic quality of the political system and its extent of polarization (as in Venezuela), in order to fully comprehend the governance models of gender policy machineries.

Conclusions

This article examined the governance model of gender policy machineries during the pink tide in Latin America, drawing on cross-national data and illustrated by four cases selected from among four party types; three left variants and a right government. We expected left-wing governments to promote gender policy machineries with transformative designs and for party type to play a role. True to facts, some of them improved the design of their machineries relative to the late 1990s—Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, and Uruguay—at least by upgrading their formal hierarchy, promoting gender equality plans, and establishing coordinating mechanisms and councils, with varying degrees of social embeddedness.

Contrary to expectations, however, left-wing governments' aims for more egalitarian and democratic societies did not linearly translate into transformative gender policy machineries. Left-wing governments show contrasting results, which reveals that these governments did not *uniformly* decide that strengthening gender policy machineries was a priority. Hence, as a linear association, the relation between governments of left ideology and the design of gender machineries is inconclusive. Conversely, we identified that among non-left governments, gender policy agencies are, for the most part, hybrids, which contradicted the expectation of finding only ceremonial machineries. Given the variation within this form of governance, however, we cannot assert, as a general rule, that gender machineries achieved better policy designs

under governments with these ideologies. This finding calls for future research with more fine-grained analysis under right-wing parties.

For the literature on state feminism, the absence of a direct association between the left and women's policy agencies is no news (McBride Stetson and Mazur 2010). Left-wing rule is critical for some feminist policy outcomes but clearly not others (McBride Stetson and Mazur 2010; Weldon 2002). Also, the most effective national machineries are associated with social democratic governments that put gender issues *high on their agendas* (Norway, Denmark, Australia, and the Netherlands), but not with the left in general (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995).

Acknowledging that in Latin America left governments are also very diverse, we analyzed whether the type of left party accounted for variations in the machineries' institutional designs. Restricting our findings to the case studies, we see that institutionalist partisan lefts, represented by Brazil's PT, engaged in fostering a transformative gender policy machinery, whereas the populist left of Venezuela's *Chavism* turned the agency into an instrument for party reproduction. And populist machines such as the Peronist Victory Front of Argentina did not put any value on the women's national agency, thus leaving its inherited ceremonial status unaltered.

Yet, analyzing only party type is misleading when it comes to account for variations in governance models. Understanding the complexity of machineries' forms of governance requires a framework that combines party type, institutional processes, and structural conditions as *interacting determinants* on their designs. Certainly, the PT's more programmatic stance utilized available institutional procedures for bureaucratic consolidation and the country's participatory framework for furthering social ties. But both types of structures—state planning and participatory policymaking—existed well before the PT got to power. Without these two simultaneous institutional conditions, the quasi-transformative nature of the SPM would have been unlikely. In the case of Venezuela, the segmented participatory model fits well with a populist left, a type of party that uses state structures as means for party mobilization. Yet, this is also a function of Venezuela's sharply divided political milieu, its convoluted political system, and weak state capacities, a singular configuration not necessarily found in the rest of the region. By contrast, in Argentina, under *Kirchnerism*, the CNM was already weak and was left unattended. Given such singular combination of factors in Venezuela, and the lack of parallel to Argentina, we make no general claims about the design of more specific gender machineries under other populist lefts.

However, we can say that none of the populist expressions of left governments led to consolidated gender policy agencies. Populist regimes affected the strength of the state capacities as well as the autonomous institutions of social participation, and, in turn, these conditions refracted on the institutional design of gender machineries.

Overall, the case analysis reveals two different factors that influence policy design, in interaction with party type: larger state capacities—i.e., planning and budgeting—and the quality of democratic policymaking. Following Valiente (2007), state capacities have been, to some extent, overlooked among studies on state feminism, for which reason we hope to call attention to its heuristic potential.

In addition, institutionalized participatory dynamics positively affected the social embeddedness of gender policy machineries. Bringing into the discussion, more explicitly, how left governments consolidate participatory institutions and practices is a key theoretical issue to account for the shape of the gender policy machineries and their ties with women's movements.

As feminist institutional theorists point out (e.g., Kantola and Outshoorn 2007; Krizsan, Skjeie, and Squires 2012), gender transformations in the state involve the study of women's policy agencies, the broader gender equality architecture of the state apparatus, political processes of institutional representation (gender quotas and parity), and gender mainstreaming as a policy practice. This broader analytic outlook is relevant in light of the findings. This multidimensional lens may serve to sort out differences between left governments in future research.

Notes

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1. Following the Beijing Platform for Action, we employ the term “gender policy machinery.” It is also a close translation of *mecanismo para el avance de las mujeres*, the official term of the Latin American and the Caribbean Regional Conferences on Women.
2. Some examples are Alvarez (1990a, b), Baldez (2001), Bohn (2009), Díaz García (2016a), Flores Salazar (2016), Franceschet (2003) and (2007), Friedman (2000), Guzmán and Montaña (2012), Kampwirth (2011), Lind (2005), López Estarda and Maier (2014), Tarrés and Zarembeg (2014), Waylen (1996), Weathers (2007), and Zarembeg and Subiñas (2014).
3. For bureaucratic capacities, we examined: (i) presence of national equality plans and formal gender policies; (ii) gender sensitive budgets with the involvement of the gender policy machinery; (iii) gender impact assessment tools; (iv) gender equality programs at the organizational level; (v) gender statistical systems with policy indicators for planning and monitoring; (vi) intersectoral structures for mainstreaming (committees, networks, focal points); and (vii) monitoring bodies on gender plans. For participation, we examined: (i) presence of women's organizations in the ruling body; (ii) formal participation of women's organizations in appointing policy machineries' authorities; (iii) existence of consultative/advisory bodies with civil society members; (iv) consultative processes for equality plans and policies; and (v) presence of women's organizations in monitoring bodies of gender equality plans.
4. The MPPMIG grouped two preexisting institutional structures: the Women's Development Bank (BanMujer) and the social program *Misión Madres del Barrio*.

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