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Inhaltsübersicht

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**The Empowerment Approach and
the Women and Development Discourse**

1. Introduction

This paper presents the most recent approach in the Women and Development discourse, the Empowerment Approach, and discusses it within the context of historical developments of the discourse. The Women and Development discourse has been experiencing a continuous shift in its policy approaches from the 1950s onwards. The Welfare Approach, which can be identified as the earliest approach, was most popular during the period between 1950 and 1970. This approach was followed by the Women in Development (WID) approach which took over the field in the 1970s and the 1980s with its three sub-approaches: the Equity, the Anti-Poverty, and the Efficiency Approach. Starting from the late 1970s and early 1980s, a third approach, namely the Gender and Development (GAD), began to emerge. And finally, in the mid 1980s, soon after the GAD, the Empowerment Approach came out as a new approach in the discourse. The Empowerment Approach, which was developed mainly by the Third World women, is a critical response to the earlier approaches in the Women and Development discourse. Thus, before moving to our discussion of the Empowerment Approach, it would be useful to have a quick look at the development of these earlier approaches.

1.1 The Welfare Approach

The Welfare Approach emerged from the social welfare model of the colonial administrations and the post-war development agencies. It addresses women solely in their roles as wives and mothers, and its policies are restricted to simple welfare concerns such as nutritional education and home economics. Here, women are passive recipients of the development process rather than being its active participants (Razavi/Miller 1995: 6-7). The main instrument of this approach is the delivery of free goods and services in form of food aid, relief aid, mother-child health programs, family planning programs, etc. The Welfare Approach remains still popular since it is a »politically safe« approach which does not attempt to change the traditional role of women (Moser 1993: 58-61).

1.2 The Women in Development (WID) Approach

The Women in Development Approach: The WID has its origins in the influential work *Woman's Role in Economic Development* by the Danish economist Ester Boserup (1970). Boserup (1970: 174) argues that economic development is accompanied by two major movements: first, the movement of population from the village to town, and, second, the movement from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. In examining the impacts of these two movements on the sexual division of labor, Boserup concludes that economic development effects women's position and situation within the sexual division of labor in an adverse manner, and deteriorates their status. As Eva Rathgeber (1990: 490) states, Boserup's work is significant for the reason that it was the first to use gender as a variable in analysis of data and evidence which had long been available.

The term WID was initially used by the Washington-based network of female development professionals (Society for International Development, Women's Committee of the Washington, D.C. chapter) who criticized the existing development theories and practices on the basis of the new evidence provided by Boserup as well as their own experiences. They argued that 'modernization' was impacting women in an unfavorable manner, and demanded as a solution the better integration of women into the economic system. This demand coincided with the rise of American liberal feminist movement which seeks »to integrate women into the mainstream of economic, political and social life« with necessary reforms in laws and institutions, as well as in attitudes (Young 1993: 129).

The term WID became popular during the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) which started following the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975. During this period, the WID became institutionalized in the United Nations system as well as in governments, development agencies, and NGOs. The popularity of the approach encouraged new discussions and research allowing the women to become visible in development theory and practice.

1.2.1 The Equity Approach

The first WID approach is the Equity Approach. Based on the assumption that economic growth has a negative impact on women, this approach advocates equal distribution of the benefits of development between men and women. It supports women's integration into the development process through access to employment and marketplace. The concerns of the Equity Approach are not limited to economic inequality only. As Mayra Buvinic (1986: 659) points out, »the equity model [...] is concerned with the inequality between women and men, both in private and public spheres of life and across socio-economic groups.« The Equity demands economic and political autonomy for women through top-down intervention of the state. However, as Caroline Moser (1993: 65) states, »recognition of equity

[…] did not guarantee its implementation in practice«. Buvinic (1986: 660) explains the resistance against the Equity Approach due to its potential to redistribute resources from men to women, and to change the balance of power.

1.2.2 The Anti-Poverty Approach

The second WID approach is the Anti-Poverty Approach, which is considered to be a milder form of the earlier Equity Approach. The Anti-Poverty shifts the emphasis from reducing inequality between women and men to reducing income inequality (Moser 1993: 67). Buvinic (1983, quoted in Razavi/Miller 1995: 10) argues that the emphasis on poor women (and by implication on poor men) made the feminist agenda less threatening to male bureaucrats and program implementers. It focuses mainly on the low-income women with the principal goal of poverty reduction. As a result, two overlapping anti-poverty strategies emerged. The first strategy was the creation of employment for increasing the income of the poor. The second strategy was the so-called Basic Needs Strategy. According to this strategy, the main aim of the development effort is to meet the basic human needs, including physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, as well as social needs such as education and human rights (Razavi/Miller 1995: 9). Buvinic (1986: 653) also argues that a large number of projects designed during this period had »misbehaved« since their economic objectives were subverted into welfare action during their implementation.

1.2.3 The Efficiency Approach

The Efficiency is the third WID approach. It has been very popular since the 1980s. Its emergence coincided with the rising popularity of neo-classical economic model. This approach regards women as an underutilized asset for development. Thus, it seeks to ensure that development is made more 'efficient' and 'effective' through women's economic contribution. According to the main assumption of this approach, increased economic participation automatically leads to increased equity. As Moser (1993: 70) argues, this approach shifted the focus away from 'women' to 'development'. The practical implications of the efficiency approach are inter-linked with those of the so-called 'Structural Adjustment Programs' (SAPs) which are also an outcome of the neo-classical economic model. According to Moser (1993: 71), the Efficiency Approach and the SAPs define economies only in terms of marketed goods and services, and focus only on women's productive role. Women's reproductive role, which is not a part of the paid economy, is not taken into account. The result was an increase of women's unpaid work burden: "What is regarded by economists as 'increased efficiency' may instead be a shifting of costs from the paid economy to the unpaid economy. For instance, a reduction in the time patients spend in hospital may seem to be an in-

crease in the efficiency of the hospital [...] the money costs of the hospital per patient fall but the unpaid work of women in the household rises" (Elson 1989, quoted in Sparr 1994: 17).

Rathgeber (1990: 491-492) summarizes the criticism of the WID in the following three points. First, the WID is »solidly grounded in traditional modernization theory« which considered development simply identical with industrialization. Second, it is »nonconfrontational« and puts its main emphasis on the question »how women could be better 'integrated' into ongoing development initiatives« without challenging the existing structures. And third, the WID focuses only on the productive aspects of women's work, and ignores other aspects of their lives.

1.3 The Gender and Development (GAD) Approach

The GAD Approach emerged in the 1980s from the criticism of the earlier WID, and has its roots in social feminism: "Socialist feminists have identified the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women's oppression and have focused attention on the social relations of gender, questioning the validity of roles that have been ascribed to both women and men in different societies" (Rathgeber 1990: 494).

The root-concept of this approach is the term 'gender'. While the term 'sex' refers to the province of biology, i.e. fixed and unchangeable qualities, the term 'gender' is the province of social science, i.e. qualities which are shaped through the history of social relations and interactions (Whitehead, quoted in Østergaard 1992: 6). In other words, 'gender' is a social and cultural construct which refers to the »relative position of men and women« within the family as well as society (Razavi/Miller 1995: 13). The GAD shifts the focus from 'women' to 'social relations of gender'. As a 'holistic' approach, the GAD considers the gender relations in the complex environment of socio-economic and political structures. It regards women as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development efforts, and puts a strong emphasis on women's emancipation.

The most fundamental instrument of the GAD is the so-called 'gender mainstreaming' which aims to increase gender awareness and bring about an institutional change in all areas and levels of public life: "[Gender mainstreaming] is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality" (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations 1997, quoted in United Nations 1999: ix).

The Gender Mainstreaming implies a »gender-sensitive institutional change« (Goetz 1997: 2). The relevant institutions include all possible institutions of the

state, the market, and the community, beside the primary institution of the family. The institutional change is supposed to come from above through 'top-down strategies' which require support and political will of the state. According to Kate Young (1997: 53), the state has an important function here due to its dual role as major employer and allocater of social capital.

One problem with the Gender Mainstreaming is that it is an extremely demanding task which is rather difficult to implement. Furthermore, hoping for the state to support for the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming seems to be contradictory due to women's poor representation and lack of decision-making power in the state apparatus: "It might be more useful to realize that feminist visions regarding mainstreaming as a tool for changing gender power relations, do not match the reality of governments and development institutions. [...] Feminists have to realise that states are institutions where male privileges are deeply embeddded" (Arnfred 2001: 82-83).

Another point of criticism raised by Signe Arnfred (2001: 75) is that »the term 'gender' is used as a neutral term, referring to both women and men.« The Author states that despite its good intentions of politicizing women's issues in development, the GAD seems to have had an opposite effect: "In the context of development discourse gender has become an issue of checklists, planning and 'political correctness'. Through the terminology of gender women's issues have become depoliticized" (Arnfred 2001: 76).

Moreover, Arnfred (2001: 79-82) argues that the GAD loses its critical itch and moves from margin to center during its implementation by governments or major development institutions such as World Bank. The author argues that there is a general risk that the Gender Mainstreaming is simply understood as integration into the existing agendas.

2. The Empowerment Approach

The Empowerment Approach which is the most recent approach in the Women and Development discourse developed in the mid 1980s. It differs from the earlier approaches in some fundamental points. First of all, in contrast to the earlier approaches, »the origins of the empowerment approach are derived less from the research of the First World women, and more from the emergent feminist writings and grassroots organizational experience of Third World women« (Moser 1993: 74). In this sense, the Empowerment Approach is a critical response of the Third World women to the practices of the earlier approaches of the discourse. Second, the Empowerment Approach emphasizes the need to change structures instead of trying to integrate women into these structures. Instead of top-down strategies, it relies on bottom-up strategies, in particular on grass-roots organization of women.

Third, the Empowerment defines itself as a political movement not only against gender discrimination, but also against all forms of discrimination.

The Empowerment which sees the sources of women's subordination in existing structures puts a strong emphasis on challenging them at all levels. The structures of inequity begin within the family, and include all socio-economic and political structures. These structures are strengthened by socio-cultural norms. As DAWN (1987: 26) puts it, »gender-based subordination is deeply ingrained in the consciousness of both men and women […] and reinforced through religious beliefs, cultural practices, and educational systems.«

According to the Empowerment, women's experiences in socio-economic and political structures are determined, in addition to gender, by other factors such as class, nation, ethnicity, and "race". As Kamla Bhasin (1995, quoted in Townsend et al. 1999: 19) argues, »the goal of women's empowerment is not just to change hierarchical gender relations but to change all hierarchical relations in society, class, caste, race, ethnic, North-South relations.« DAWN (*ibid.*: 19) refers to this as 'Third World feminism' which calls for the »deepest and broadest development of society and human beings free of all systems of domination.«

While accepting that women share a common experience of subordination, the Empowerment emphasizes that there must be a »diversity of feminisms« (*ibid.*: 18). The idea of diversity suggests that feminism can be defined differently by different women in accordance with their particular needs, concerns, and experiences. The Empowerment understands feminism as a 'political movement', and suggests that feminism, like all political movements, can be diverse in its issues, goals, and methods. Such a diversity gives feminism a dynamic, flexible and sensitive character making it more powerful to challenge the status quo (*ibid.*: 79). Similarly, Chandra Mohanty (1997: 83) warns against regarding women as a homogeneous group with a historical and universal unity which is based on the generalized notion of subordination. According to Mohanty, such a generalized mode of thought ignores other dimensions of the matter such as social, class and ethnic identities.

2.1 Defining Power

Because »equality for women is impossible within the existing economic, political and cultural processes that reserve resources, power and control for small groups of people« (DAWN 1987: 20), women must increase their 'power' in order to challenge the structures from outside. 'Power', the root-concept of empowerment, is defined less in terms of domination over others, and more in terms of capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength (Moser 1993: 74). In order to clarify this point, it is necessary to look at different meanings of

the term 'power'. Jo Rowlands (1997: 11) distinguishes between 'power over', 'power to', 'power with', and 'power from within'.

2.1.1 Power-Over

This type of power refers to a relationship of domination and subordination: "If power is defined as 'power over', a gender analysis shows that power is wielded predominantly by men over other men, and by men over women. Extending this analysis to other forms of social differentiation, power is exercised by dominant social, political, economic, or cultural groups over those who are marginalised" (Rowlands 1995: 101-102).

Power-over is a »zero-sum« (Oxaal/Baden 1997) meaning that groups or persons cannot increase their power without leading to loss of power for others.

2.1.2 Power-To

Power-to is a »generative and productive power [...] which creates new possibilities and actions without domination« (Rowlands 1997: 13). It »relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling« (Oxaal/Baden 1997). Power-to is not a 'zero-sum'. Here, persons or groups can increase their power without diminishing the power of others. Power-to is achieved by increasing one's ability to resist and challenge power-over (Rowlands 1997: 12). Practical implications of power-to are: capacity-building; supporting individual decision-making; and leadership (Oxaal/Baden 1997: 3).

2.1.3 Power-With

Power-with is exercised commonly with others, for instance in a social group. As Zoe Oxaal and Sally Baden (*ibid.*) put it, it »involves people organizing with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals«, and relates closely to the concept of 'collective empowerment': "Collectively, people feel empowered through being organized and united by a common purpose or common understanding. Power-with involves a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together" (Williams *et al.*1994: 233). The practical implications of power-with are social mobilization; and building alliances (Oxaal/Baden 1997: 3).

2.1.4 Power-From-Within

Power-from-within refers to the power stemming from the inner deepness of an individual: "[…] the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self acceptance and self-respect which extend, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals" (Williams et al. 1994: 233).

An important quality of this power is that »[it] cannot be given; it has to be self-generated« (Kabeer 1994: 229). Its practical implications include increased self-esteem; increased consciousness; and confidence building (Oxaal/Baden 1997: 3).

2.2 Defining Empowerment

The definition of 'empowerment' depends on how its root-concept 'power' is defined. Empowerment in terms of power-over is limited to increasing women's participation in political and economic structures (Rowlands 1997: 13). Empowerment as such seeks to integrate women into the existing structures without challenging these structures. For Rowlands (1998: 12-13), empowerment as such represents the particular view of 'development-as-Westernization': "[W]omen should somehow be 'brought into development' and become 'empowered' to participate within the economic and political structures of the society. They should be given the chance to occupy positions of 'power', in terms of political and economic decision-making. This view of empowerment is consistent with the dictionary definition of the term, which focuses on delegation, i.e. on power as something which can be bestowed by one person upon another. The difficulty with this view of 'empowerment' is that if it can be bestowed, it can just as easily be withdrawn: in other words, it does not involve a structural change in power relations. [...] Women's 'empowerment' is, in this sense, an instrumentalist approach to achieving the economic growth of the developmentalist discourse […]" (*ibid.*).

The genuine empowerment which is based on other forms of power includes the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions. It involves the full range of human abilities and potential, and implies »undoing negative social constructions, so that the people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence« (Rowlands 1995: 102-103): "Empowerment is […] a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with others in development of activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly. In its course people become enabled to govern themselves effectively. This process involves the use of power, but not 'power over' others or power as dominance as is traditionally the case; rather, power is seen as 'power to' or power as competence which is generated and shared by the disenfranchised as they begin to shape the content and structure of their daily existence and so participate in a movement for social change" (Bystydzienski 1992: 3, quoted in Yuval-Davis 1994: 179-180).

In order to explain the concept of empowerment, Naila Kabeer (2001: 18-19) uses the term 'disempowered'. According Kabeer to be disempowered implies to be denied choice: "[E]mpowerment […] is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the process by which those who have been denied

the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other words, empowerment entails a process of change. People who exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be very powerful, but they are not empowered in the sense in which I am using the word, because they were never disempowered in the first place" (*ibid.*).

In this definition, the term 'choice' has an important place. According to Kabeer, some choices have greater significance in people's life such as choice of livelihood, where to live, whether to marry, who to marry, whether to have children, how many children to have, freedom of movement, etc. She refers to these critical choices as 'strategic life choices', and considers empowerment as »the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them« (*ibid.*).

Moser (1989: 1815) underlines the ability to make choices as well as control over material and non-material resources. She defines the Empowerment as: "the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength. This is identified as the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change, through the ability to gain control over material and non-material resources."

The multitude of definitions shows that there is not a commonly agreed meaning of the Empowerment. Some regard this abstractness as a positive feature; others emphasize the necessity of giving a concrete meaning to empowerment. Kabeer (2001: 18), for instance, argues that the value of the concept lies precisely in its 'fuzziness': "I like the term empowerment because no one has defined it clearly yet; so it gives us a breathing space to work it out in action terms before we have to pin ourselves down to what it means" (An NGO activist, quoted in Kabeer 2001: 18)

Rowlands (1997: 8), on the other hand, argues that the failure to define empowerment weakens the concept's value.

2.3 Processes of Empowerment

Rowlands distinguishes between 'personal empowerment', 'collective empowerment' and 'empowerment in close relationships'. She finds this distinction »a necessary and helpful one in thinking further about processes of empowerment and how to approach conceptualization which might serve a practical purpose in organizational and planning terms« (1998: 22).

2.3.1 Personal Empowerment

Personal empowerment of the individual woman which is an unique experience involves particularly »developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression« (Rowlands 1995: 103). It furthermore implies a sense of agency through which a woman can interact with her surroundings and cause things to happen (Rowlands 1997: 111-112).

Rowlands provides also a catalogue of 'core values' which are considered to be products of empowerment processes. Their increase is an evidence that the empowerment has been taking place. The core values for personal empowerment are: self-confidence; self-esteem; sense of agency; 'self' in a wider context; and dignity (*ibid.*).

2.3.2 Collective Empowerment
Collective empowerment refers to women's achievements resulting from collective group action. Here, »individuals work together in order to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone« (Rowlands 1995: 103). The core values include: sense of collective agency; self organization and management; group identity; and group dignity (Rowlands 1997: 115-116 and 1998: 23).

2.3.3 Empowerment in Close Relationships
Empowerment in close relationships relates to women's experiences with their immediate family members, in particular with their husbands and children, but also with their parents, parents-in-law, etc. It is about »developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of the relationship and decisions made within it« (Rowlands 1995: 103). Empowerment in close relationships is the hardest to achieve since the individual woman is here »up against it on her own« (Rowlands 1998: 23). It demands a certain degree of personal empowerment, and »could be seen as an area of change arising from personal empowerment processes« (*ibid.*: 24). Here, the core values include: ability to negotiate; ability to communicate; ability to get support; self-organization and management; ability to defend self/rights; sense of 'self' in the relationship; and dignity (Rowlands 1997: 119 and Rowlands 1998: 24).

The distinction between the empowerment processes does not imply that these processes take place independently. As Rowlands (1997: 127) states, »the three dimensions of empowerment […] are closely linked [and] positives changes in one dimension can encourage changes in either the same dimension or in another.« There exists a strong link particularly between individual and collective empowerment. Personal empowerment can be regarded as a precondition for collective empowerment, because »without empowerment at a personal level it is very hard for the individual to be active collectively« (*ibid.*: 115). This is true also the other way around: women need to empower themselves collectively in order to defend their individual achievements: "[W]hile individual women may play an important role in challenging [the structures of] constraints, structural inequalities cannot be addressed by individuals alone. Individual women can, and do, act against the norm, but they may have to pay a high price for exercising such autonomy and their impact on the situation of women in general remains limited. […] individu-

al empowerment is a fragile gain if it cannot be mobilised in the interests of collective empowerment" (Kabeer 2001: 47-48).

Srilatha Batliwala (1994: 132) argues that »radical changes are not sustainable if limited to a few individual women, because traditional power structures will seek to isolate and ostracize them.« Young (1993: 158-159) warns against equating individual empowerment simply to »individual advancement«, and states that empowerment includes both individual change and collective action. She criticizes the mainstream development discourse which focuses mainly on the individual dimensions of the empowerment: "[This] is closely allied to the current emphasis on the individualistic values; people 'empowering themselves' by pulling themselves up by the their bootstraps; in other words self-reliance in its most narrow interpretation. With the emphasis on individualism, co-operation becomes submerged, and there is no mention of the need to alter existing social structures" (Young 1993: 159).

In this sense, individual empowerment and collective empowerment - as well as empowerment in close relationships - are integral and complementary to each other, and the process of empowerment is sustainable only as a whole.

2.4 Empowerment as a Political Process

The empowerment underlines the need for radical changes in socio-economic and political structures, and this at all levels from the household to the state. This ambitious goal which demands awareness and support of the masses has strong political connotations. According to Batliwala (1994: 134), in order to be able to transform the structures, the empowerment approach must become a political force in form of an organized mass movement. Women's political empowerment can take place within and outside formal politics. For formal politics the main issue is women's limited access to institutional power in terms of key positions in the state bureaucracy, representation in legislative bodies at local, national, and international levels, participation in political parties, etc. Oxaal/Baden (1997: 12-13) give a list of measures for increasing women's participation in formal politics, which include reform of political parties; quotas; training for developing political skills; development of political organizations; etc. However, measures for increasing the number of women in formal politics are not sufficient. The struggle within the formal politics must be supported from outside: "Women in politics may be elites, in positions due to their personal connections with male politicians and be unable or unwilling to represent grassroots women's interests. […] it is important to 'feminise' the power spaces, so that there are increasing number of women in the spaces where decisions are taken nationally and internationally, but that it is also necessary to simultaneously strengthen women's movement as a political lobbying force that can establish dialogue with those very power structures" (Herrera quoted in Oxaal/Baden 1997: 13).

Women's »collective public action« outside the formal politics aims at »gaining a voice, having mobility and establishing a public presence« (Johnson quoted in Rowlands 1997: 18). Collective public action enables women to exert pressure on formal politics in favor of their practical and strategic gender needs, and gains importance particularly where women have limited access to formal politics.

2.5 Empowerment as a Bottom-Up Process

In contrast to the earlier approaches which use top-down strategies, the Empowerment Approach relies on bottom-up strategies. Being 'bottom-up' implies that empowerment is not something that can be planned and implemented from the top by outsiders. As Oxaal/Baden (1997: 4) put it, the external agencies and bodies cannot claim to 'empower women'; women empower themselves. The external bodies can only act as 'enablers', and »provide women with enabling resources which allow them to take greater control over their own lives, to determine what kinds of gender-relations they would want to live within, and to devise the strategies and alliances to help them get there« (Kabeer 1994: 97).

And, being a 'process' implies that empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results (Oxaal/Baden 1997: 4). It is a long-term dynamic process which determines its own route: "[E]mpowerment process will take a form which arises out of a particular cultural, ethnic, historical, economic, geographic, political, and social location; out of an individual's place in the life cycle, specific life experience, and out of the interaction of all the above with gender relations prevailing in society" (Rowlands 1997: 129-130).

Instruments of the empowerment approach include: consciousness raising, organization, mobilization, and networking. The consciousness raising asserts that women's empowerment requires awareness of the complex factors causing their subordination (Batliwala 1994: 136). In this connection, 'popular education' has a major role to play. Organization, mobilization, and networking relate closely to the collective dimension of the empowerment, and aim at gathering grassroots women around economic, social, and political goals.

3. Conclusion

The Empowerment Approach sees the failure of earlier approaches partly in their top-down strategies. A structural change which is supposed to come from the top requires the political will of the state. However, women's inferior position in socioeconomic and political structures, and of course in state institutions, constitutes a serious obstacle for top-down strategies. Pointing to this dilemma, the empowerment approach urges for bottom-up strategies which should start at grass-roots levels. At this point, the Women and Development discourse is confronted with a critical question: does utilization of bottom-up strategies imply that top-down

strategies and the struggle at the state level need to be abandoned? Razavi/Miller (1995: 33), for instance, argue that there are convergence points between top-down and bottom-up strategies which need to be explored. DAWN (2000: 16, quoted in Arnfred 2001: 82.83), a strong defender of the Empowerment Approach, acknowledges that »despite the formidable obstacles …] to abandon the project of institutionalizing gender is not an option.« Bottom-up and top-down strategies can be implemented simultaneously in order to put pressure on structures from both directions. And, as regards the role of the state, as John Friedman (1992: 7) argues, local empowering action requires a strong state, and an alternative development which begins locally cannot end there. The Empowerment can integrate strategies and tools of the earlier approaches which proved to be useful in women's struggle.

Another point of criticism accuses the earlier approaches of the discourse for becoming easily mainstream. The GAD, for instance, is criticized for losing its critical itch, and moving from margin to center during its implementation (Arnfred 2001: 79). Similarly, the Equity Approach of the WID was forced to ease its rhetoric and get rid of its critical elements. As a result, the milder and less threatening Anti-Poverty was developed. This point should however be considered as a general risk – rather than a condemnation? - which also concerns the Empowerment Approach. As Kabeer (2001: 28) states, although the Empowerment is a process of social change, which is not easily captured by quantitative data, major development institutions are interested in quick, concrete, and quantifiable results. This problem becomes visible, for instance, in the case of micro-credit programs where the Empowerment has been reduced to a formal goal. As Brooke Ackerly (1997: 150-151) argues, the competition among the development organizations for donor funds created the competing goal of repayment rates which are easy to measure and compare. Pointing to the same problem, Goetz and Sen Gupta (1996: 47) argue that »women's high demand for loans and regular payment rates are commmonly taken as proxy indicators for empowerment.« The Empowerment is confronted with the risk of becoming a buzzword where its perspectives lose their sharpness and become diluted (Batiwala 1994: 129).

Summing up, those who want to work within the framework of the Empowerment Approach should keep in mind that the genuine Empowerment is a long-term process with socio-economic, political, and cultural aspects. They should, on one hand, be open to employ the instruments of earlier approaches – especially those of the GAD; on the other hand, however, be aware against the risks mentioned above. The success of Empowerment depends on how they tackle with these challenges.

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Abstracts

The Women and Development discourse has been experiencing a continuous shift in its policy approaches from the 1950s onwards. The Empowerment, which is the most recent approach, can be considered as a critical response to the earlier ones. Experiences with the earlier approaches, particularly those of the Third World women, contributed significantly to the development of the Empowerment. A discussion that starts with the evaluation of the earlier approaches would help to better understand the rationales of the Empowerment. In the case of past failures, this would help to avoid repeating them. And, in the case of past achievements, we can seek convergence points between the Empowerment and the earlier approaches, which would be useful when working in the framework of the Empowerment.

Seit Anfang der 1950er Jahren können immer wieder Veränderungen in den Ansätzen des Frauen-und-Entwicklung-Diskurses beobachtet werden. Der neueste Ansatz des Diskurses, nämlich der Empowerment-Ansatz, kann als eine Kritik an den früheren Ansätze betrachtet werden. Bei der Entwicklung dieses Ansatzes haben Erfahrungen mit den früheren Ansätzen, besonders Erfahrungen von Dritte-Welt-Frauen, eine wichtige Rolle gespielt. Eine Diskussion über Empowerment, die eine Evaluation der früheren Ansätze einbezieht, kann ein besseres Verständnis dieses Ansatzes liefern. Eine solche Diskussion könnte auch dazu beitragen, dass die Fehler der Vergangenheit nicht wiederholt werden. Und, im Hinblick auf jenes, was auch früher gelungen war, könnte man Überscheidungen zwischen Empowerment und den früheren Ansätzen suchen, die sehr nützlich sein können, wenn man im Rahmen des Empowerment-Ansatzes arbeitet.

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