

VIRGINIA GARCÍA BEAUDOUX

DANCING BACKWARDS IN HIGH HEELS

WOMEN, LEADERSHIP
AND POWER

Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy

Dancing Backwards in High Heels

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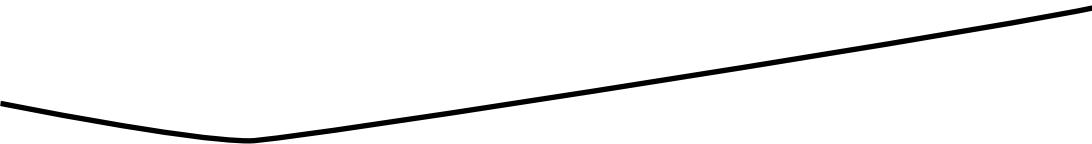
Women, Leadership and Power

To my mother Dora Beaudoux, who imagined me independent
and encouraged me strongly to be so.

To Marisa Lorda, the joy and spice of life,
the better of my mother's two daughters.

To my grandmothers "Memé" Carmen Romero and Elsa Greve,
two brave women who challenged
the gender stereotypes of their time.

Virginia García Beaudoux



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Once in the Netherlands, the experts' voices bore the names of Ingrid van Biezen of the University of Leiden and Corine van Egten who worked at the time of the interview, for the Knowledge Centre for Women History and Emancipation (Atria). Both of them enlightened me, in a deep and didactic way, on the unknown aspects of the complex fabric of the social, political and historical processes which account for the "debit and credit" of women's current situation in the Netherlands. I am very grateful to them for having shared their knowledge with me.

Ten women who have devoted, and are still devoting, their lives to politics are the undisputed protagonists of this book. In the order in which the interviews were carried out, these women are: Sophie in 't Veld, Tamara van Ark, Nel van Dijk, Hanja Maij-Weggen, Katha-

lijne Buitenweg, Kathleen Ferrier, Tineke Huizinga, Esther de Lange, Tineke Netelenbos and Winnie Sorgdrager. Their stories, experiences, learnings, insights, thoughts and recommendations form the basis of this work, which wouldn't exist had it not been for them. I thank them for the courage and sincerity with which they spoke, for their time and patience during the interviews, and for the lucidity and clarity with which they introduced me to their world and the situation of women in the Netherlands.

Since gender issues are human problems and change must involve everyone, otherwise it will not materialise; I would like to give a special mention to two men who have taken part in and formed part of this project. They are Tom Böhler, Professor of Human Ecology at the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg; and Adrián Groglopo, sociologist, President of the Antiracist Academy of Sweden and Senior Lecturer at the Department of Social Work at the University of Gothenburg. Not only have they contributed with their opinions but they also have shown their commitment to gender issues. The same applies to Miguel Cálix, representative of NIMD in Honduras, whom I also mentioned in a previous paragraph.

I don't want to end without mentioning two bright and lucid men, who were the most influential in my life. Roberto García taught me how to have fun by challenging the gravity of ideas. I have been challenging them with Orlando D'Adamo for three decades. This book is no exception and you will find many of his ideas in its pages. These ideas were, as always, given to me as a gift without expecting anything in return. For this reason and many others, I am grateful to him.

Foreword

When the first female Member of Parliament in the Netherlands gave her maiden speech in 1918, this is what she said: "On this historic occasion, I feel the full weight of the heavy responsibility I bear to prove that women are not at all unfit to be politicians." Much has changed since MP Suze Groeneweg of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) gave that maiden speech almost a century ago. However, we still have a long way to go and to this very day her words ring true.

In politics, in business, in the media, in sports and in family life, the fight goes on to prove that men and women are equal in every way. Women still occupy fewer than half of the top positions in politics and in business, most talk show guests are still men, women's finals are usually viewed as the opening act to the men's finals in sports, and the parent collecting their kids from school is usually still the mother.

These examples prove that the fight for emancipation is never over. As long as there is inequality, we must keep trying to effect change. First and foremost because inequality is unfair and unjust. But also because discrimination in any shape or form is counterproduc-

tive and essentially irrational – which is precisely why it is so difficult to eradicate.

Research continues to show that organizations perform better, even thrive, when they embrace diversity. By bringing in a variety of different perspectives, you add to your organization’s creative force and eliminate the risk of blind spots. Then why is unequal treatment still prevalent in so many businesses? Is it solely the result of men in suits only hiring other men in suits? Or is it because, as some say, female executives are hard to find?

Emancipation is an ongoing process in schools, at work, in the public arena and behind closed doors. It is impossible to pinpoint the moments in time when emancipation happens – it’s not something that can be turned on and off by flicking a switch, but it can definitely be encouraged.

I would like to give you a few practical examples that I have come across in my years as Minister of Emancipation in the Netherlands. Starting with those elusive female executives. “If I could find one, she would get the job, but I don’t know any,” is an excuse I have heard many times. No matter how powerful they are, men at the top claim to be unable to shatter the glass walls surrounding their old boys’ club.

So we went ahead and did it for them. Together with employers’ organization VNO/NCW, we set up a database of top-level female executives that can be used by recruiting companies. Does this solve the problem of inequality? No, but the suits can no longer claim to not know of any top-level female executives.

The Netherlands is leading the way in many areas, but not in terms of its number of female professors. With a share of only 17%, the Netherlands lags shamefully behind – particularly considering the

fact that over half of all students at Dutch universities are female. Universities are doing their best. They are developing special mentoring programmes and have announced that they will appoint 200 additional female professors in the coming years. I have offered an incentive to further drive the numbers up: We will provide the necessary means to help appoint another 100 professors. These measures will not get us anywhere near the 50 percent mark, but they will demonstrate that we intend to reward good behaviour.

This publication shows that the situation is different everywhere. A Dutch politician would never be allowed to get away with belittling or making sexist comments to his female opponent in a debate. At the same time, the Netherlands is hopelessly lagging behind other countries in the distribution of the number of hours worked by men and women. Even within one country, the differences can be significant.

Structural inequality however, is the same everywhere. And that should get all the attention and research it deserves – in countries where female emancipation is still in its infancy, but also in countries such as the Netherlands that appear to be leading the way. There is still plenty of work to be done here too.

Emancipation requires constant maintenance. This publication deserves a permanent place in the toolbox used in combating inequality. Not only here in the Netherlands, but all over the world.

Jet Bussemaker

Netherlands Minister of Education, Culture and Science

It's men who wear the trousers

One morning, at a working breakfast in the run-up to an electoral campaign, I asked a candidate if the fact that she was a woman was a disadvantage that would lose her votes, an obstacle that we should be ready to overcome. She replied that she didn't believe that her gender identity would prejudice her chances because she was perceived as a strong woman, so much so that people in the street would tell her that they trusted her and they would vote for her because she was as bold as "a man who wears the trousers". It is not rare to praise female leaders by telling them that, because of their energy, daring, character, dynamism, self-confidence, strength of character, persuasion, vigor, power, willingness, resistance, bravery, boldness, soundness, fearlessness or ability, they are "like men"; or even that they have some male primary sexual characteristics, literally. In other words, that they are good leaders because their behavior doesn't match the expectations, demands and assumptions that are placed on women. Culturally, the above-mentioned qualities are not conceived of as belonging to all humans; instead, they are regarded as uniquely male. The prevail-

ling ideas, beliefs and definitions indicate that leadership is masculine. Despite all the real progress, politics and decision-making positions are still a more hostile ground for women than men. If this film were produced by the Coen brothers, it would be called “No country for women”.

In recent years, I have worked many times as an independent professional consultant, and many other times for international organizations such as NIMD or the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This gave me the priceless opportunity of getting to know almost a thousand women from different countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, and train and advise them in communication and leadership skills. Thanks to them, I learned a lot and started to notice the enormous difficulties that women are faced with daily as candidates, practicing politicians, ministers, businesses managers, congresswomen, mayors, governors, social and community leaders, judges, parliamentary commission members, and leaders in general. I am a woman and I have known for a long time that inequality exists and is very serious. But I now admit to have been suffering from a certain level of gender blindness. These women are the reason I am now aware of the real scale of the problem and I have understood that it is not going to be solved without human intervention. And it's not just a matter of time until things change, unless we are ready to accept that centuries are the unit of measurement for these changes. Initiatives are required so that injustice can be made visible and a level playing field can be possible.

While I was working with all of these women, I started wondering: Why? Why are leadership positions so begrudgingly given to

women? Why do political and economic scenarios work in such an unequal fashion for men and women? Why was it necessary, not only in Latin America but also in the European Union countries, to pass equality laws like in Spain or quota laws in Portugal? Why is political activity fairer and more egalitarian in other countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands, without imposing compulsory quotas, despite the remaining challenges these countries need to confront? Why have countries like Spain, France, Italy, Belgium and even the Netherlands decided to penalize by law those companies which don't fill a certain minimum quota of women in their directive boards or positions?

Why do women as a minority group – considering all the years they have spent demonstrating, fighting intensely and making legitimate claims – enjoy less success relative to other social collectives who have also had to fight for their equal rights? Why is it considered acceptable on occasion to ask women with whom I work questions during their TV and radio interviews such as: How do you balance your political and personal life? Are you on a diet? Do you have children? How many? How does your political activity affect your partner and family? Would you undergo plastic surgery? Is your husband romantic? Why are male politicians and leaders seldom asked personal questions? Why are they asked about their work, positions and proposals instead? And most important of all: What can we do to put everybody on an equal footing no matter their gender?

These are some of the questions that we will try to answer in this book. But before considering possible solutions, it is necessary to delve into the origins and causes of the problem as well as its social and cultural roots. We also need to understand where these beliefs that associate passivity with femininity and leadership with masculinity

come from. In addition, we need to comprehend how these beliefs affect our behaviour and daily interactions. Therefore, first of all, we need to come up with the right questions.

Where are we?

It is said that curiosity kills the cat but I believe it is the other way round. Curiosity, our thirst for knowledge and ability to ask ourselves questions, is a great human gift which allows us to identify problems, investigate, diagnose, comprehend, and find different possible solutions. In this case the first question we must ask ourselves is: Where are we?

The world is inhabited by almost the same number of women and men. However, these figures bear little resemblance to reality when it comes to the political representation and women. In 1791, Olympe de Gouges wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Female Citizen* demanding that women should have the same freedoms and rights as those recognized for men in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* passed in 1789 by the French National Constituent Assembly. However, it was not until more than a century later that a right as fundamental as the right to vote was first granted to women in Latin America, in Ecuador in 1929. Brazil followed in 1932. That same year Uruguay approved the right to vote in Congress. Later, Argentina included this right in its legislation in 1947. In Europe, Austria and Germany were the first countries to grant women's suffrage in 1848, followed by Sweden in 1866.

Despite the many decades that have gone by and the valuable pro-

gress that has been made towards – among other things – affirmative action initiatives with a view to guaranteeing the egalitarian presence and participation of women in politics, we are far from achieving equality. The increase in the number of Congresswomen worldwide has been slow: In 1995, women made up 11% and 20 years later, in August 2015, they accounted for only 22% of Members of Parliament in the world. Making matters worse, in 37 countries women did not even make up 10% of Lower Chamber members.¹

In the case of Latin America, women held just 24% of the seats in the Senate on the same date. Likewise, a meager 17% of ministerial positions were held by women in departments which, as we will see later, are associated with classical stereotypes, such as education, health and social welfare. In 2012, barely 11% of the mayors elected in Latin America and the Caribbean were women. Similarly, 24% of the judges in the High Courts of Justice were women, and they accounted for 25% of the councillors.² In 2016, the average number of women in the lower chambers or unicameral parliaments in Latin America reached 26%, a percentage slightly above the world average of 22% mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, this increment has been uneven.³ Despite all progress made, a joint study conducted by the International Development Bank (IDB) and International IDEA revealed, in a publication by Beatriz Llanos and Vivian Rosa, that women are still under-represented in both elected positions and appointed ministerial posts.⁴ Although women make up half of the population, they are unable to account for a quarter of elected positions in politics at a regional level. However, the authors of the study admit that some progress has been made, given that the percentage of women in cabinet was just 9% in 1990.

Although the general outlook is better in Europe, the progress of women in power towards inclusion and representation is not always linear. In the so-called developed world, only 30% of ministries are headed by women, and the female ministers in charge of the Ministries of Economy, Defense, Treasury, Foreign Affairs and Home Office comprise only 16.5%.⁵ In Spain, for instance, political parties themselves imposed voluntary quotas, and legal quotas were established later so that women's presence in positions of political responsibility could be equal to that of men.⁶ Despite the passing of this law, advances fluctuate and we encounter regrettable setbacks.⁷ The percentage of women in Spain's government oscillated between 50% and 43.7% between 2008 and 2011. Then, from December 2014 to June 2016, the oscillation was between 35.7% and 28.5%, showing a considerable decrease in women's participation. The number of Spanish women ambassadors accredited to foreign State governments between 2004 and 2016 did not surpass 15.5% and, in 2016, only reached 7.2%. In 2015, the proportion of women magistrates in the Constitutional Courts of this country was 11%.⁸

The same applies to the business world. While the recruitment of women in the labour market has increased rapidly since the seventies, some inequalities persist across the world, not only in women's access to jobs but also in the quality of positions they can fill. In Latin America, for example, the presence of women in managerial positions of multinational companies is very low. In 2015, only 4.2% of 71 companies analyzed had a female president or a female general manager; women made up 8% of members of the board of directors; and 9.5% of members of the governing bodies or committees.⁹ The fact that Argentina's average is rather superior to the region's average

shows how serious the situation is: in 2014, only 28% of the country's decision-making positions were held by women. Although 60% of university students are women, the average total income gap is still significant. Women who completed primary school earn 30.2% less than men, whereas those who completed secondary school and finished university earn 24.3% and 18.6% less than men, respectively.¹⁰ The salary gap - which takes into account average salaries - between men and women in Spain is roughly € 5000 annually.¹¹

In Europe as a whole, the outlook is not so good. Out of 2500 financial, political and business leaders who attended the Economic Forum in Davos in 2014, 85% were men and 15% were women. In 2003, Norway was the first country to impose sanctions on companies whose percentage of women in decision-making positions did not reach 40%, to the degree that they threatened to dissolve companies that did not stick to this rule. The United Kingdom opted to impose the same type of sanctions. Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden would follow suit with regulations somewhat different but with the same objective. In 2007, Spain introduced the Equality Law, which recommended that women should reach a percentage of 40% by 2015. However, this percentage had not reached 14% in the companies listed in the Stock Exchange by 2015.¹²

When analyzing data and global trends, we see not only that the proportion of women who are on the higher rung of the ladder is still negligible, but also that the bigger the company or organization, the less likely it is to be run by a woman. Women make up 19% of the positions in governing councils, and less than 5% of General Manager positions in the biggest companies in the world.¹³ However, 50% of jobs belong to women and they are also responsible for 70% of con-

sumption-related decisions. After analyzing the situation of women in 39 countries and 1200 business companies, the International Labor Organization (ILO) came to the conclusion that it will take between 100 and 200 years to achieve gender equality in the managerial positions of business companies.

Why are we where we are?

This is where we stand. This is the way things are. In light of these figures, we must ask a second crucial question: Why doesn't a group that accounts for half of human society hold half of all positions of power, and economic and political influence? This defies all common sense and logic. They make up half of the global population, so why do women find it so difficult to reach positions of popular representation and leading positions in companies? In the case of political activity, for example, this cannot be accounted for by a lack of women party members; in Latin America, for example, we know that women account for 50% of membership of political parties. And it cannot be accounted for by a lack of interest among women in standing as candidates. Nor are women worse political candidates than men. Instead, it is about the existence of a set of barriers and obstacles that make it difficult for women to reach each of these goals. As women, we encounter psychosocial, institutional, political, economic and socio-cultural obstacles.

Despite the crucial importance of each and every one of these types of obstacles, I will only refer in this book to the cultural, social and psychological ones. As we will see, they are all reflected in cer-

tain communication practices. These obstacles also result in exclusion, which materializes in phenomena such as "glass walls" or "glass ceilings", both of which are organizational barriers. The first is of a vertical nature; glass walls hinder women from reaching senior posts. Glass ceilings, on the other hand, are horizontal and prevent women from leading in certain areas – even if they do break barriers – such as public works, science and technology. Other obstacles include "sticky floors" – cultural barriers that "glue" or stick women to certain traditional caregiving tasks – and self-exclusion, which very often takes the form of "cement ceilings" – psychological barriers that lead women themselves to reject leadership positions for fear of not being able to "balance" their personal life with their work life. Then there is the belittling of those women who do reach positions of influence and power. I repeat: I will refer to only these forms of obstacle, not because political and institutional barriers are less important, but rather because, frankly, they don't form part of my field of expertise.

My work focuses on another type of obstacle. I have collaborated with gender equality committees and national parliaments to design communication strategies with a view to making citizens and the mass media aware of the importance of voting for women and including them in politics; raising awareness of the issue; and applying indirect pressure on politicians to ensure that gender equality and the political participation of women remain on the agenda. The fact that it is necessary to run these communication campaigns in the first place, conclusively shows that there are still societies in which, for cultural reasons, women are neither elected nor supported. That's why we design public campaigns to change mentalities with regards to cultural gender stereotypes. One of the segments at which those

campaigns have to be aimed is women themselves, who are sometimes more reluctant to vote for their fellow women than men are. Cultural resistance to female leadership is not a men's issue, rather it is an issue belonging to society as a whole.

In my professional career, I have been witness to certain extreme situations which can only be explained by the existence of a set of social beliefs and cultural patterns which allow them to occur and be accepted as "normal" (or at least as not "so abnormal"). How is it possible that, well into the 21st century, certain news stories about a former journalist and anchor now dedicated to politics still put "the beautiful" before her name in the media coverage of her activities? How does it come to pass that a young Congresswoman should have to consult me about a strategy to help her to face a Congressman who, whenever they shared a TV set, would call her "*chiquita*" (little girl/sweetheart) instead of using her name, and talk down to her in a patronizing and dismissive tone. It was not that she did not know exactly how she really wanted to reply. Her concern was rather with finding the suitable tone for her reply since, in a conservative and chauvinistic society such as hers, an answer that went beyond the parameters of what is considered "correct" for a woman was more likely to be penalized than a man who addressed her that way. Was it acceptable that a woman who held a cabinet rank should have to express her concern about the negative impact on her career being systematically demeaned and talked down to in front of the president of her country by her peers in meetings in which she was always the only woman? There was also another concern: if we opted to increase the media coverage of her work to solve the problem and turn this situation around, she would probably pay the price in the form

of comments and malicious rumours from her colleagues about just how she had gained that visibility.

Newspapers can also bear witness to the belittlement that women politicians suffer: Victoria Donda is an Argentinian Congresswoman who filed an appeal urging the government to disclose the national poverty rates. The reply of the Minister of Economy at the time, given live on the radio, was: "If she wants to appear in the newspapers, she should speak French ... or dress up as a showgirl".¹⁴ Although some hours later he stated on Twitter that he did not intend to offend women, he never apologized for his words in spite of the fact that Victoria Donda asked him to do so in a Chamber Session.

The range of situations with which women are faced extends from bold and overt chauvinism to more subtle forms of almost imperceptible micro-chauvinism, but all are instances of chauvinism, however you look at it. Similarly, I have found manifestations of chauvinism coming from right-wingers and left-wingers, because chauvinism is ambidextrous.

We will see that, on many occasions, media coverage results in the "depoliticization of women" because it pushes their public image towards the private world, bringing them closer to associations with family and domestic issues.¹⁵ Frequently we witness instances of double-standards in the media whereby politicians are evaluated, judged and treated based on their gender. Although journalists themselves are often not even aware of these double-standards, they do have consequences. The type of questions women are asked do nothing but remind viewers and listeners that we are dealing with women, and the gender issue comes into play without any need to utter the word "woman". These are not often topics on which male politicians and

candidates seek advice. Although these also face difficulties, they are of a different kind.

Likewise, on more occasions than I would desire, women who have reached positions of popular representation in countries that have achieved parity, have confided in me, mortified, that politicians from their political parties demanded that they should do what they were told. They are told that they are indebted to them, that they are where they are because they “put them” on the ticket, as if their legitimacy did not come from the delegation of votes. As Spanish scholar Amelia Valcarcel explains, women are expected to govern on the condition that they show the qualities of religious people: poverty, chastity and obedience.¹⁶ On many occasions they suffer from physical, verbal and symbolic violence. As is clearly indicated in the study by Pilar Tello and Carla Cuevas, in parallel to women’s increased inclusion in terms of gender, a higher incidence of harassment and political violence against female politicians and leaders has become evident.¹⁷

As regards the political and institutional obstacles that I will not discuss in this book, I will simply say in this introduction that the barriers that hinder women’s competitiveness and access to power are so big that it becomes necessary, for instance, to implement affirmative action mechanisms and to take special temporal measures, such as quota laws. In 1991, Argentina was the first country in Latin America to establish that at least 30% of the candidates had to be of a different gender. Later, other countries, instead of appealing to temporal laws such as quotas, opted for other permanent and definite laws, such as parity. It is argued that, since women make up half of the population it would be fair to them to be given the opportunity to hold 50% of positions of power.¹⁸ Parity is the term used to designate the quantita-

tively homogeneous participation of men and women in all the fields relating to political participation and decision-making. Professor and scholar Flavia Freidenberg indicates that, although a “normative revolution” has started in Latin America with an eye to improving women’s participation and representation, gender inequality cannot be changed by laws alone.¹⁹

Although affirmative action mechanisms and parity have allowed women better access, there are still institutional and political obstacles which keep them out of positions of influence and power. We can highlight among them: the type of electoral lists, the lack of sanctions when quotas are not filled and the type of electoral system. One of the reasons that accounts for the minority female representation in political positions, is the type of opportunities with which women are provided: they are encouraged to compete or lead in critical positions that involve a higher risk of failure. This phenomenon is known as “glass cliff”. For example, in the Conservative Party of Great Britain many women were competing for seats in Congress which they had a much lower probability of winning than the ones the male candidates of the same political party were running for.²⁰ Another example is the case of Beatriz Corredor, who was appointed Minister of Housing in Spain in 2008 at a time of economic crisis. When the newspaper “El País” reported the news, the challenge she faced was described as standing on the edge of a cliff: “She has been appointed Head of the Ministry of Housing at a critical moment for the sector ... when deceleration is even sharper than expected ... She reached the zenith of the Ministry and she will have to deal with a sector going into free-fall because of the real estate crisis, as well as with one of the main problems for the Spaniards: access to housing”.²¹

There are also obstacles related to procedures and to the opening-up to gender equality within political parties themselves. The leit-motif of the political parties seems often to be: “more power, fewer women”. As we mentioned before, while there is a strong presence of women in political parties, this is not the case for the presidencies and general secretariats. Similarly, when more women candidates are included in political parties, they are not always in visible positions nor are they at the top of the electoral tickets. In conclusion: political parties are political spaces still dominated by men.

Adding insult to injury, money is also a problem and this is a matter of some importance. In everyday life, women earn lower salaries for carrying out the same tasks as men. In politics, the loans and financial support they receive for their political campaigns are nothing like as high as those of men. What's more, they have to go through much difficulty to obtain them. This is the result of a lack of confidence in female leadership. Also, because they have been in politics for less time, women have fewer contacts, social networks and support than men.

Dancing backwards in high heels

The phrase “Dancing backwards in high heels” became popular thanks to Bob Thave's cartoon in 1982, in which a woman explained to the protagonists of the strip – Frank and Ernest – that although Fred Astaire had been a great dancer, Ginger Rogers could do the same, backwards and in high heels. This image is used to describe women's situation as regards leadership and the current world politics.

They play in the same soccer field and share the same spaces as men but with different rules, less favourable conditions and with all the odds against them.

I am deeply convinced that if we want things to change, we not only have to work at the above-mentioned political and institutional levels but, fundamentally, we also have to understand and change the psychosocial and socio-cultural obstacles that will be addressed in this book. Obstacles such as gender stereotypes, learned in infancy and during socialization, which describe and prescribe the way men and women are expected to behave. Obstacles such as prejudice when it comes to female leadership. Obstacles such as prevailing standpoints and contents in the mass media, which tend to reproduce gender stereotypes in programmes ranging from animated cartoons on children's TV, to news reports and movies. Obstacles like the acceptance of sexist language as the norm in advertising. Obstacles such as biased media coverage when it comes to female candidates, female politicians or female leaders. Similarly, certain social and cultural constructs which nourish, for instance, beliefs related to the division of work by gender, with domestic chores and caregiving applying to women “by nature”.

We will cover all these subjects and give concrete examples throughout this book. In Chapter 2, we will define gender stereotypes and explain their crucial importance. In Chapter 3, we will discuss where the idea that leadership is “masculine” comes from and define the elements that reinforce and nourish that idea. In Chapter 4, we will discuss the organizational, psychological and cultural barriers encountered by women when trying to make themselves visible in influential positions. In Chapter 5, we will analyze the type of images

of women we receive from the mass media, how women are often made invisible in the media, and the way they are portrayed when they become visible.

Why do systems work and how well do they work?

As we are looking into social constructs and not natural events, the situation of women is different and considerably better in some corners of the world. This led me to ask myself: Why do the systems that work well work well, and how well do they really work? How do we account for the fact that, in nations like Sweden and the Netherlands, women have been able to take 40% of popularly elected positions without the compulsory implementation of measures such as affirmative action initiatives, quota laws or parity laws in the political system or within the political parties? What do academics in these countries believe were the main variables that played a role in the voluntary process towards? And, at least as importantly: What do women themselves, who have dedicated their lives to becoming politicians or female leaders in these countries, have to say about this?

Fortunately, the answer to these questions aroused a deep interest in NIMD, who backed and financed the research of this book. As a result, I was able to travel to the Netherlands, where I had the privilege of interviewing a group of female politicians from across the political spectrum, from a wide age range and different backgrounds. They were born between 1943 and 1975. Some of them were retired; others were in full exercise of their functions. They included Members of the European Parliament, Congresswomen at the Nati-

onal Parliament, ministers, jurists, secretaries of State, political party leaders, presidents of parliamentary commissions, and spokespersons. These women have witnessed everything. They have been, and still are, protagonists in the fight and in the changes we have seen. They are the incarnation of history. They all share with great generosity and openness their experiences, achievements, frustrations, hopes, fears and insecurities, impressions, convictions and recommendations. And, the most valuable of all, as far as I'm concerned: They tell us to never lose heart. They also say that there is still a lot of progress to be made in their country, that quantity does not mean power, and that it is not only a question of numbers but also a question of the positions from which you can exert influence. Their advice is more than valid. As an example, let me present another case of "men wearing the trousers": According to recent data, Argentine women hold only 22% of the political positions in the Executive branch, while 50% of the workforce are women. This overall egalitarian composition is not reflected at the highest echelons or in the decision-making positions. The same applies to political leadership at a ministerial level, where only 14% of the Ministries are headed by women.²² In Chapter 6 we will share the female politicians' opinions. We will try to assess their experiences and learn from them, as well as from female and male academics from Sweden and the Netherlands, who have made contributions for this book.

What is being done and what else can be done?

We have already asked ourselves where we stand, why things work badly in some places, and why what works badly in some places

works better in other regions of the world. In Chapters 6 and 7, the last of the questions behind the concept for this book is asked: What is being done and what else can be done to achieve substantive gender equality?

Among the measures to make the populations of the different countries in the world aware of the necessity to allow women to participate in spaces of political power as well as generating a critical mass to demand that participation, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommends that actions should be taken to transform gender cultural constructs.²³ To this end, it is advisable that awareness-raising campaigns and training programs be implemented, as well as working with the mass media so that female and male gender stereotypes can be changed. It is indicated that women should receive technical advice and undergo training programmes on leadership and negotiation, among other subjects, to strengthen them for their political participation.²⁴ These and other recommendations are very seriously examined.

Despite all kinds of difficulties encountered in many regions of our planet, many actions and programmes are being carried out with an eye to reverting the unequal current situation. In Chapter 7, a few of these initiatives implemented by NIMD and UNDP in countries such as Honduras, The Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Guatemala, are explored. I had the privilege of being invited to participate in many of these initiatives. This is why I can bear witness first-hand to how much has been done. The programmes described are just a small sample, the tip of the iceberg which sometimes moves quietly –and at other times not so quietly– across the length and breadth of the five continents.

To those who are still asking why equality is important, let me answer in only a few words. After the victory that led him to become the Prime Minister of Canada, the day Justin Trudeau introduced his cabinet – 15 men and 15 women – a reporter asked why it was important for him to have a gender-equal cabinet. Trudeau answered “Because it’s 2015.”²⁵ We are at the dawn of the twenty-first century. There is nothing to explain or account for.

Many decades ago, women and men learned, once and for all, that as regards equality and rights issues, the personal is political. I hope that readers will forgive me the passion with which I have written this book; but after all I have lived through, heard and seen over all these years of experience as a professional consultant, for me the political has become personal.

2

Damned stereotypes

Why what we believe to be “natural” is not “natural”

The first line of the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of 1776 states that all men are created equal. However, it was not until 2000 that Alabama removed from its legislation the law that banned interracial marriage, through a referendum in which 40% of the citizens voted against the abolition of said law. In that same State, Martin Luther King had started the fight for Afro-American civil rights. And in that same State, injustice became evident when the dignified Rosa Parks was detained and fined for refusing to give her seat to a white bus passenger. That very same State was the last to remove a racist law. Although the Supreme Court of Justice had declared the laws that banned interracial marriage unconstitutional in 1967, social resistance, public opinion and stance remained unchanged following this event. Progress towards social change was slow. According to Gallup polls, 29% of the population still opposed interracial unions in 2002, and it was not until 2013 that

those figures fell to 11%.¹ This shows that the roots of discrimination are deep and socially ingrained, so much so that the written word, even if it is carved in stone, cannot eliminate these discriminatory roots. Although laws and affirmative action initiatives are essential in the fight for equality, they don't guarantee that prejudices and social stereotypes will no longer result in discriminatory behaviour towards others based on traits such as gender or skin colour. That is why it is essential to fight these stereotypes in the early stages of socialization.

We can find cultural and psychosocial dimensions at the core of the problem. A society cannot change by decree. It is actually social meanings and values which, once modified, prompt change. If it becomes absolutely necessary to resort to unpopular laws, quotas and measures, it is because – among other reasons – social constructs, which manifest themselves in the form of beliefs about each gender's “distinctive” features, have become second nature to us. This includes the belief that care giving is the duty of women, whereas the public sphere belongs to men. We internalize beliefs about what is feminine and what is masculine. These concepts guide our behaviors, choices and tastes. They shape our gender identity, with feelings and ideas. Gender refers to the behaviour of men and women as defined by cultural codes, the specific roles attributed to each sex in a given culture and at a given time. Nature doesn't provide us with any clue to that. It is, in fact, socialization processes that account for masculine and feminine social constructs.

It is worth making it clear that sexual and biological differences are undeniable. We are all equal as human beings but we are different as regards sex. For example, women have the biological capacity for pregnancy whereas men tend to have more physical strength. Howe-

ver, how relevant is an attribute such as physical strength or average height to being appointed Minister of Defense, ambassador or manager of a company?

Over the centuries, the supposed weaknesses and lack of strength in women – nicknamed the “weaker sex” – have made them suffer from all kinds of inequalities, economic disadvantages, exclusion and costly prohibitions. Throughout history, women have been denied the right to education, to go to university, to vote and to be elected, to drive, to wear trousers, to dress the way they want, to work as judges and magistrates, to apply for a passport, to work without their parent’s authorization, to have bank accounts in their name, and to take out loans – without their husband’s consent. They were not allowed to manage the property they acquired along with their husband and they were not given custody of their children. Nowadays, two thirds of all work in the world is carried out by women and girls; they also produce half of all food, but women earn only 10% of the world’s income and own 1% of assets.²

What are gender stereotypes and why do they matter?

Gender stereotypes are beliefs, generalized images and ideas shared socially about the traits attributed to men and women, which tend to remain stable and be resistant to change. But they do much more than just describe, they prescribe behavioural expectations that in turn become the blueprint for the description of each gender as a group, and they also determine which type of behaviour fulfills those behavioral expectations.³ For example, if the typical female stereo-

type involves taking care of others, the social prescription that derives from that deems it “natural” that a woman should look after family members. In this social construct, femininity is associated with passivity, fragility, reproduction, prudence, discretion, emotion, spirituality, family orientation, and the private and domestic world; whereas masculinity includes traits such as competition, strength, boldness, bravery, rationality, ambition, and aggressiveness.

Regarding work and career, we often find beliefs that support the idea that competences differ according to sex; that women tend to perform better in jobs that involve taking care of people and social services while men are more adept at electronics, construction and IT tasks. In a recent survey, 96% of respondents said that they would trust a male engineer more than a woman engineer, 76% preferred male police officers to women police officers, and 98% stated that they would hire a woman instead of a man to look after their children.⁴ When tasks involve calculation or are about enforcing law and order, men are preferred over women. When it comes to education and care, women are preferred.

In the same survey, 90% of respondents declared that they would prefer to travel on a plane with a male pilot rather than a female pilot. This is not an isolated response found just in the place where the survey was conducted: I run training workshops in many countries and every time this subject arises I notice embarrassment among the attendees since they feel the same without having ever been aware of it. On occasions, before we start to discuss the issue, I ask the people in the room to close their eyes and to imagine an airplane pilot. After a few seconds, I ask those who imagined a female pilot to put up their hands. The number stays the same: nobody, zero, not even a single hand

is raised. What's more, on one occasion, a woman blushing admitted that she had never thought about the possibility of a female pilot. It is worth highlighting that these stereotypes are not only maintained by men but also by women: in the above-mentioned survey, 83% of the women also indicated that they would prefer a male pilot.

For those who believe that this is just one of those cases in which the prejudice derived from stereotypes will never become a concrete instance of discrimination, let me tell you that as we approach the third decade of the 21st century we woke up one day to the news that seven passengers on a Miami-Buenos Aires flight got off an American Airlines plane after learning that both the pilot and copilot were women. This fact led the flight to take off one and a half hours late, which badly affected the rest of the passengers.⁵ In a recent article, one of the pilots interviewed confirmed that on occasions, it is women who refuse to fly: "I was welcoming the passengers when two women asked me in panic if I was in charge of the plane. Later, they asked me not to take offense but, since they had never flown on a plane piloted by a woman, they would rather board another plane."⁶

Argentina's flagship airline, Aerolineas Argentinas, issued an important symbolic message in 2016 when, for the first time, it made customized uniforms for women that weren't a mere adaptation of male uniforms to fit the size of a woman. The designs were based on the women's working experience to be user-friendly and allow them to perform technical tasks. This is a positive sign that shows that culture-wise some stereotypes have started to be broken. The issue of the inclusion of women regarded as equal rather than individuals who have to imitate men if they want to do "a man's job" (an outlook which leads them to be considered an oddity and to be treated as if

they should behave like guests in somebody else's house (or company) thus fulfilling "the guest's culture" expectations) has been raised.

Similarly, in the aforementioned survey, 85% of women said that they favour male police officers over female police officers. This percentage is by far higher than the percentage of men who shared the same opinion (67%). These preferences are not accidental. They are supported by written or tacit norms and commands that rule our society. Recently, the Police Union of Andalusia, Spain, made public a case in which two women from the City of Seville police force were discriminated against and forbidden to patrol together. The argument raised to justify this was that it is common practice for a female police officer to be accompanied by a member of the "opposite sex".⁷ These types of norms strengthen the belief across society that women are fragile and lack strength. That is why, as we mentioned in Chapter 1, when we work on communication campaigns with a view to changing public opinion on the inclusion of women in political life, we focus specifically on women as a segment of the population. The authorities in the legal chain should reflect society. In Sweden, over the last decade, the proportion of women police officers has increased from 19% to 29%. Among chiefs of police, the proportion of women has more than doubled and currently stands at 25%.⁸

There are other barriers to overcome and even those women who manage to reach influential positions find it hard to banish stereotypes. It is noteworthy that there are hardly any women in the Ministries of Economy, Public Works, Housing, Science or Technology. However, in the ministries that deal with social subjects such as Social Development, Education or Health, female participation tends to be higher.

Stereotyped beliefs not only establish a sharp distinction in what is expected of each gender, but they also attribute the most cherished values in our culture to men while the least valued ones are assigned to women. They don't just establish a simplistic binary differentiation but they also develop a hierarchy by means of which one gender is much better or more cherished than the other. Among the main consequences, we find a disproportionate number of men in positions of power. In other words, women enjoy fewer opportunities than men even when they come from similar academic backgrounds or their track records are equivalent to (or even better than) those of men. This disparity is further shown by the salary gap between both genders. All these factors become fully evident when we observed the dynamics of a well-known boys' club: leadership.

3

Leadership, that old boys' club

Mirrored Stereotypes: Leadership and Masculinity

Leadership is about men, or at least that's what many people believe. Where does this erroneous belief come from? It originates in a game that could be called "mirrored stereotypes"; since our stereotyped conceptions of leadership and masculinity match one another, they reinforce each other. As J. Francisco Morales and Isabel Cuadrado put it: if we were asked to mention the traits of a good leader, we would probably refer to concepts such as competence, ambition, strength, independence, rationality, self-sufficiency, decision-making and proactive capacity. All these qualities are associated with leadership and – as we saw in the previous chapter – and are part of the male stereotype and not the female one.¹ As a result, there is a perfect overlap and equivalence between male stereotypes and leadership. That is the way implicit theories are built, which account for how leaders should behave in order to be considered as such and what it is expected of them. In other words, in accordance with social scripts, a good leader is a man.

“Think manager, think male”. This notion refers to a global phenomenon which researchers found across countries as wide ranging as India, the United Kingdom, Spain, Turkey, Australia, Germany, the United States, China and Japan. According to this phenomenon, the traits and behaviours with which we describe leaders match the descriptions we give about men, but they don't match the descriptions we give about women.² The male standardization of the managerial positions and the social belief that there is incongruence between leadership and the traits of the female stereotypes, are conducive to two typical prejudices against women. If women adopt a more “masculine” approach and show that they are competent and successful in leading positions as well, they may be rejected by society for not conforming to the social mandate prescribed for their gender. If their behaviour stays within the limits deemed typically female by culture, they won't be rejected by the society; however, their evaluation as leaders will be worse than that of men because their traits do not fit preconceptions that are conducive to success in these positions.³

For those who have reservations about the power of the stereotypes to guide social behaviour and for those who believe this to be an exaggeration, let me tell you a short story. In 2003, the Harvard Business School carried out an experiment with a view to assessing the way in which women and men are perceived in the work environment.⁴ The participants were presented with a text based on a real life case: Heidi Roizen, a female entrepreneur. In the text, her personal characteristics, such as proactivity and her ability to socialize and build social networks, were described as instrumental to her success. Two different groups read the same story, except for the fact that one group was presented with Heidi Roizen's story and the other with

Howard Roizen's story. The participants' assignment was the same, and it consisted in evaluating them against a number of criteria.

What happened? Both groups found Heidi and Howard equally competent. However, Howard was evaluated as a colleague with whom it would be enjoyable to work, whereas Heidi was deemed to be a selfish coworker with whom they would prefer not to work. While they did not want Heidi to be their boss, they didn't object to Howard being their boss. Although the information was the same for both genders, the evaluations made by the groups turned out to be markedly different. Howard could be a successful man and a nice person, whereas success made Heidi an unpleasant person.

A decade later, in 2013 the research was conducted again. The participants were given the same instructions, and the study took place under the same conditions, at the New York University's Business School. On this occasion, the protagonists were “Martin” and “Catherine”. Unlike the original experiment, the female executive was described as a pleasant person with whom it would be desirable to work. However, as regards the “trustworthiness” criterion, she was rated as less trustworthy than the man was. The perception that successful men are more sincere and genuine than women in the same situation, is related to the belief that women are more interested in the private world. As a result, those who have political or public ambitions are perceived as strange since they deviate from the prescribed the stereotype. This leads us to mistrust them and to question their “real” and “hidden” motivations.

Although some favourable changes have taken place regarding perceptions towards female leaders, the trustworthiness issue associated with successful women has not been solved yet. In the opinion

poll mentioned in the previous chapter, 64% of those surveyed believe that women in positions of power are less trustworthy than men. This belief is held by 83% of men as well as 45% of women. What's more, 85% of the total participants think that when women exercise leadership they are more authoritarian than their male counterparts.⁵ This belief is linked to the idea that what is viewed as the typical attitude of a leader in a man, is regarded as "bossy" in a woman. According to a Gallup poll, in 1953, 66% of Americans preferred a male boss. In spite of the fact that this figure has substantially dropped, 35% of the national population still feels the same. The same poll also found the highest percentage in history of people who revealed their preference for a female boss (23%).⁶ However, the fact remains that, as a whole, Americans of both sexes express a preference for male bosses.

The preference for certain more "relationship-oriented" styles of leadership, which encourage group members to partake in decision-making, has increased all over the world. It is tempting to think that this should be good news for women, given that this style better fits the description of stereotypically attributed female traits such as cooperation, consensus seeking and appreciation of others, thus supposedly paving women's way for leading positions. That would be the case, for instance, for what it is called "post-heroic leadership", a leadership style in which the leader doesn't work alone as the only visible hero for the organization. On the contrary, the emphasis is placed on collaboration, relationships and the empowerment of the whole group through the work dynamics.⁷ This, however, doesn't represent good news for women since there is a new hidden trap for them. If a man displays a pattern of behaviour associated with that type of leadership, such as sharing power and helping the people's development,

he is liable to be perceived as a generous person to whom we are indebted. However, when the same pattern of behavior is exhibited by a woman, she runs the risk of being perceived as generous and as a person who doesn't expect anything in return. That is to say: while in the first case the reciprocity norm is activated, this doesn't apply to the second case. Why? Women's behavior is associated with the maternity stereotype, which involves abnegation and devotion, without expecting anything in return.

And how are we doing in the science world?

Sometimes it is because they are viewed as "male" and challenging, at other times it is because they are considered to be feminine and less competent in the exercise of leadership, or deemed as generous mothers. One way or the other, stereotypes limit women's access to leadership positions. The saying "think manager, think male" rules not only the corporate world, but also politics and science. Universities boast a large number of female professors in their staff. However, most heads of faculty, presidents, rectors and deans are men. In 2015, the University of Oxford appointed its first female Dean for the first time in its history, after more than 800 years.⁸ This trend extends to the structures of student university organizations. The University Federation of Argentina (FUA), the main body of Argentine university student representation - 60% of which is currently made up of women - is now presided by a woman for the first time in its history, after 98 years of existence.⁹

Marja Sklodowska, better known as Marie Curie, was the first

woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize, and the only woman to have won two Nobel Prizes in hard sciences such as physics and chemistry. She was the first woman to obtain a Bachelor degree in science from the Sorbonne University; the first women to receive a PhD in sciences in France and the first to hold a professorship in the same country. Marie and her husband were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1903. This would not have been the case if her husband had not told the organizers that he would accept it only on the condition that Marie was also given the Nobel Prize.

To start with, he was told he was the only member of the couple to have been awarded the Nobel Prize. He reacted by telling them that Marie had played a crucial role in the discovery and he would not take it if she didn't receive one. A touch of colour: according to tradition, each president of France has the right to move the remains of any person he considers a source of inspiration for the French citizens to the Pantheon in Paris. In 1995, Françoise Mitterrand chose Marie Curie, to whom he paid a heartfelt homage. He put emphasis on the fact that she was a woman who had been unlucky to live in a society and at a time in which only men received the acknowledgment they deserved for their intellectual gifts and public responsibilities they assumed.

Although there is an initiative to put at least two other women in the Pantheon, Marie Curie is still the only woman among 73 people who rest there as a result of their merits, in a Pantheon which was built centuries ago in 1790, and whose façade reads "dedicated to the great men to whom the nation is grateful".¹⁰ It is worth remembering that, despite having been awarded two Nobel Prizes, Curie was not admitted to the French Academy, which not only refused her

request but also denied women access until 1979. Oddly enough, she was also denied access to Princeton and Harvard University.

Similarly to Marie Curie, many women make important contributions to the sciences, but those who receive the prize are the directors and chiefs of departments and laboratories. Of course, these are mostly men. Between 1901 and 2012, 21 organizations and 835 people were awarded the Nobel Prize. Out of 825 people, 792 were men and only 43 were women. Only 16 women won the prize in the Nobel categories of science (physics, 191 men and 2 women; chemistry, 158 men and 4 women; physiology or medicine, 191 men and 10 women). The rest won the prize in other disciplines such as literature, economics and the Nobel Peace Prize. The state of affairs has not changed significantly. As of 2016, 836 men had been awarded the prize whereas only 49 women had received it.

Only 8 of those 49 women were invited to give a speech at the Nobel Banquet. One of them, Rosalyn Yallow, who won the Nobel Prize in 1977 in the category of medicine or physiology, took advantage of the situation to call for women's rights in society and science. She said women were under-represented in scientific circles because they were, for the most part, discriminated against socially and professionally. She also mentioned women's upbringing at home and how much they were discouraged by their families from undertaking degrees in sciences and research. Before concluding her speech, she advocated for changing these patterns of behavior with a view to creating a more egalitarian society, and encouraged women to join together and believe in what they do, since all human beings have to fight together for a better world. The fact that hardly any women receive these prizes, especially in natural science, shows two things: their

limited access to science, and all the difficulties they are faced with to gain recognition for the contributions they make.

The prevailing conceptions of leadership detailed in this chapter are not without consequences. In the following chapter we will see the real and detrimental effect that they have on women's lives, their job opportunities, and their professional, political and economic development.

4

Ceilings, walls, labyrinths and floors

Cultural, psychological and organizational barriers

According to the European Commission, only 3% of businesses in Europe are headed by a woman.¹ Stereotypes raise doubts about women's capacity to be on a par with the challenges that leadership positions involve, and also question the degree of commitment they show in their workplaces. Stereotypes are the root of the problem. They are not inconsequential: they manifest themselves in the form of prejudices and discriminatory actions. Four barriers bear clear testimony to this. We mentioned them briefly in the first chapter. Now it is time for us to analyze them in detail.

The best known of these barriers is called the "glass ceiling". It refers to obstacles faced by women who aspire to hold high positions under equal pay and working conditions in governmental, educational, corporate and political organizations. It is an organizational barrier, transparent but effective, which causes women to reach a career plateau no matter their experience and education, and prevents them

from making any progress beyond the middle of the hierarchical scale of the organization. The concept was introduced for the first time by two journalists, Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt, in the United States in 1986, in an article in the *Wall Street Journal*.² Later, it was used by researchers in social sciences interested in studying the gender gap in the fields of educational, political, governmental and business leadership, among others.

It is not about the visible walls or “cement walls” which once prevented women from sharing the same rights as men, such as the right to vote, study or do a degree at university. It is about an invisible upper surface. It is invisible because there are no explicit laws or codes of exclusion, but rather norms and implicit prejudices. These are not written and, as a result, they are difficult to spot. The ceilings have a detrimental impact not only on the recognition of women’s work but also on their salaries. Data provided by the UN in 2015 show that globally women’s salaries are 24% lower than those of men.

Glass ceilings are a product of a wide range of factors. For example, work environment choices are often based on trust and friendship. In these cases, it is not surprising that men tend to choose other men. Their contact networks are normally male since there are hardly any female mentors, and male mentors prefer mentoring other men rather than women. Women also tend to be excluded from informal communication circles in which important information is made available. At other times, men build relationships and networks outside of the work environment by organizing events in which women tend not to take part, such as soccer games or any other sporting event.

The metaphor “glass labyrinth” is currently posited by some authors, because they think it describes where women stand in relation

to leadership better than “glass ceiling”.³ The proposed idea is that nowadays women don’t encounter many impossible barriers to cross in order to reach senior and top positions. But, even though they are not denied access to hierarchical positions, the fact remains that they have to overcome more obstacles than men to reach those positions. For example, promotions and progress take women longer than men. Women are faced with longer and more complex roads to promotion than men, even if both come from similar education backgrounds and their work experience is similar.

The glass ceiling and glass labyrinth are accompanied by a second barrier: the “glass wall”.⁴ This concept makes reference to horizontal segregation by means of which women are either relegated to minor roles or denied access to certain fields. For example, the case we mentioned before whereby even if women break the glass ceiling and become Ministers, they are faced with a wall which hinders their access to other Ministries such as Science, Public Works, Defense, Technology and Finances.

The third barrier is known as the “cement ceiling”.⁵ It refers to women’s refusal to accept leadership positions in the belief that they will find it difficult to balance personal and work life. It is an internal limitation, associated with the construction of subjectivity and the female gender identity. It is a psychological and cognitive barrier, and a product of social learning and socialization in the family and through the mass media. It consists of a ceiling erected by women themselves and self-imposed due to fear of the consequences and the price they believe they would have to pay in their personal and family lives if they were to work in certain fields or move up in the corporate ladder of businesses, governments or political parties. Maternity, the

lack of role models and networks, the feeling of loneliness in a male-dominated world, their personal life, and a certain way of decoding and understanding leadership and public ambition, are all influential factors.

Finally we encounter the fourth barrier: the “sticky floor”.⁶ It is not an organizational barrier like the above-mentioned barriers, nor is it a psychological barrier like the third one. It is a cultural barrier, related to concrete practices connected with domestic life. Private space becomes “naturally” imbued with female qualities and “sticks” women to traditional caregiving chores, hampering their development and keeping them at the base of the economy pyramid since they are required to perform a “balancing act” between their work inside and outside the domestic sphere.

Instead of thinking of dividing the tasks between both genders, which would be reasonable, the tendency is often to ask women to find ways of dealing with domestic chores and work responsibilities, balancing a family and a career. These double shifts hinder their career advancement. The way women must juggle the multiple roles they have been assigned, their domestic chores and work duties, lays a strong foundation for the glass ceilings. Managerial positions require availability, presence and geographical mobility and, since family responsibility and parenting are duties mostly assigned to women during socialization, men find it easier to meet those requirements. Political timetables, which may prolong well into the night, pose more problems for women than men.

According to UN Women, in 2015, 3 out of 4 men of working age were part of the active population, against 50% in the case of women. The fact that women are expected to be responsible for children

and other dependent relatives doesn't help them. We are still culturally attached to the division of work by gender, whereby men are in charge of provision and defense, whereas women are responsible for taking care of not only children, the sick, the elderly and the vulnerable people in their families, but also the healthy adult men as their partners.

A report from the ILO states it clearly: Due to gender stereotypes, women still bear the burden of household chores and family responsibilities with children, the aged and disabled people; which either excludes them from paid work, or leaves them relegated to part-time jobs with meager salaries.⁷ In the European Union, for example, women spend an average of 26 hours a week on caregiving or domestic chores whereas men spend 9 hours.⁸ In the case of Spain, the salary gap between women and men increases from the age of 35 onwards, due to family responsibilities and the presence of children.⁹ Women aged between 35 and 44 earn almost €1000 less per year than their male colleagues of the same age.

The current regulatory frameworks are gender-biased and favour the traditional conceptions that portray women as caregivers and men as workers. In the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, maternity leave lasts an average of 12–15 weeks, whereas paternity leave lasts an average of 2–5 days. Apart from the leave of absence, no other measures of conciliation between family and work responsibilities have been implemented, such as the fathers' right to take care of their children after maternity leave. More than 50% of boys and girls in the region are left neither in daycare centres nor in kindergartens, and they are looked after by their mothers, relatives or another member of the community. For example, in Mexico 84% of children are under

the care of their mothers, 9% under the care of other relatives, and only 2% attend a public or private daycare centre. In 14 Latin American countries, 51% of women and 3.2% of men belong to the group of inactive workers who declare caregiving chores and domestic tasks as the reason for their inactivity.¹⁰

The solutions suggested by the ILO include a series of measures such as better protection coverage of maternity and paternity, flexible working conditions, flextime, leave of absence in the case of a family emergency, services for old people and disabled people, daycare centres, time-management courses aimed at strengthening the role of fathers, better distribution of family responsibility, and easy access to child care.¹¹

The Invisible Woman

On many occasions, during political parties' internal debates, Congress debates or TV confrontations, whenever a woman expresses her point of view she tends to be ignored by her colleagues who continue talking without listening to her, or raise their voices until she shuts up. Maria Clara Medina explored "master suppression techniques" during in-depth interviews carried out with women politicians in ten Latin American countries, between 2007 and 2015.¹² The phrase "master suppression techniques" was coined at the end of the seventies by the Norwegian Congresswoman and social psychologist Berit As. In the political arena, for example, one of the techniques, named the "Making Invisible" tactic, causes women to become invisible in an environment that is hostile. It occurs when women are forgotten,

overlooked or ignored in decision-making processes.

Another recurrent technique which excludes women from the scene is "Ridiculing". It occurs when a woman's effort is scorned, made fun of, or especially when women are portrayed as being emotional. For example, when a woman raises her voice to prevent herself from being made invisible, puts up a fight, or expresses passion during a politics discussion, she is often labeled (or disparaged) as "hormonal", "bipolar", "mad", "hysterical" or "hypersensitive". On the other hand, if she doesn't express passion she is labeled as cold and calculating.¹³

"Withholding information" is another way of marginalizing women from political decision-making. It occurs when men take up matters only with other men, denying women access to information about important issues in politics. At formal or informal gatherings, people can reach agreements and make preliminary decisions without involving their women colleagues. These decisions then go through quickly and easily on the nod at working groups, without the women present being able to do much about it. As we will see in the next chapter, in the testimonies given by the female politicians interviewed, they complained repeatedly about undisclosed information, after-hours meetings, or exceptional routines from which they are excluded, and where important information is shared and decisions are made. For example, they are often not included in social and sporting events. As a result, when the time comes to debate at the parliamentary committees, there is no discussion whatsoever since general consensus has already been reached among the men.

Similarly, women in politics are either counted out or feel under pressure. The technique applied is known as "Double Punishment"

or “Damned if You Do, Damned if you Don’t”. If women work with care, they are slow and inefficient; whereas if they work with haste, they are careless. If they devote a lot of time to their families, they are not serious politicians; if they prioritize their work, they are bad mothers. If they don’t take care about their image and female appearance, they are criticized; but if they look “extremely feminine” or worried about their personal appearance, they are reminded that physically attractive politicians are not good at politics.

“Blame and Shame” or “Heaping Blame and Putting to Shame” is another technique intended to silence women. It occurs when women are told that they are not good enough. This happens, for instance, when they are interrupted only to underline their mistakes and correct them until they feel or look incompetent; or when their appearance and clothing are mentioned to question their seriousness, proposals or publicly embarrass them. What female politicians have to say is often minimized by the “objectification” they are submitted to; by suggesting that they are where they are, not due to their capacity but thanks to a man; or by making comments about their bodies (either critical or complimentary), or about their sexuality, which make them feel as if they have to apologize for their physical appearance. During his electoral campaign, Donald Trump posted on Twitter: “If Hillary Clinton cannot satisfy her husband, what makes her think she can satisfy America?”¹⁴ At other times, when women politicians try to be listened to or be taken seriously before, during and after electoral campaigns, they are reduced to silence through verbal and physical “intimidation”.

In conclusion, violence is also inflicted through stereotypes, and one may try to silence, make invisible or exclude women. This is

often done in a subtle and patronizing way, implying that women have less technical and professional competence than men, “they are not prepared yet”, “they are inexpert”, “they need training”, “they lack emotional stability” and they will become emotionally involved during decision-making. In Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero sent out a signal about the importance of gender parity when he appointed 8 female ministers during his first Government. After being reelected in 2008, he appointed 9 and the Government of Spain had more female ministers than male ministers for the first time. As a result, Berlusconi criticized him for having created “too pink a government”¹⁵ and declared: “Nine Women! He brought it upon himself. It will be hard for him to dominate them”.¹⁶ When the Spanish press made reference to the three youngest of them, Carmé Chacon, Bibiana Aído and Cristina Garmendia, there were lots of paragraphs among the main newspapers in Spain that made reference to their lack of experience. Carmé Chacón, was even viewed more suspiciously because she was pregnant and she would become the Minister of Defense. What’s more, in some cases the media even made comments such as “they have a screw loose”, in an article which was headlined in that newspaper as follows “Zapatero entrusted two female rookies with his call for Innovation and Equality”.¹⁷ Nothing of the sort was said in the press about the men appointed, such as Angel Gabilondo Pujol, Miguel Sebastián and Ramón Jáuregui, despite the fact they were also in charge of ministerial departments for the first time in their political careers.

It was not until 2016, more than 2700 years after its foundation, that a woman became for Mayor of a European capital city like Rome. As we saw in chapter 1, women are far from achieving the

equality to assume influential positions despite the importance that this implies for democracy. In the following chapter, we will analyze how mass media communication and other products of culture such as publicity, television series and movies, play a pivotal role in the process of construction, feeding and maintenance of gender stereotypes which exert such a detrimental daily impact on women who dedicate themselves to political activities and other areas of public and social affairs. In anticipation of the role played by the media in the reproduction of gender stereotypes, I will go back to Virginia Raggi's appointment as Mayor of Rome: "A beautiful and young female lawyer could become the first female mayor in Rome"¹⁸ and "Virginia Raggi, the pretty lawyer who will be the first female mayor in Rome".¹⁹ These were two of the numerous gender-biased headlines by means of which her victory was announced.

5

"Are you going to take make-up with you into space?"

Women in the media

Women hold only 27% of senior positions in media organizations around the world. Only 1 in 4 people in the news and stories we read or hear about in the media are women. When it comes to experts, 71% of those consulted as journalistic sources and invited to give their opinions in the media are men, in spite of the fact that, in many countries, women account for the majority of university graduates. As regards fiction and dialogue, 31% of characters are played by women and only 23% of movies and TV programmes boast a female leading character.² The salary gap between actors and actresses is considerable; there were only 2 women among the 100 best paid Hollywood actors in 2015.³

A large number of series and films fail the "Bechdel Test", which is one of my favorites because of its simplicity, economy and power.⁴ A movie needs to meet three simple requirements in order to pass this test: 1. It has to have at least two named women characters, 2.

who talk to each other, 3. about something other than a man. What is interesting about this test is that it is not necessary for movies to include female leading characters nor is it necessary that they should take centre stage. In order to pass it, a movie has to have two named women which might well be two secondary characters performing completely stereotyped roles such as “the pretty one”, “the mother” or “the work subordinate” of a powerful leading character, who apart from talking about men (fathers, lovers, husbands, bosses, sons) can hold a conversation for a few seconds about any other subject, such as the weather. That’s why it is so frustrating that many movies do not pass it. Five out of nine Oscar nominees for best movie category in 2014 failed it.⁵ And 50% of the nominees for the same category failed in 2016. What’s more: one nominee, “Spotlight”, passed the test thanks to one line of dialogue which lasted a few seconds, in which a woman called – according to the script – “Nana, Sacha’s Grandmother” asks the journalist of the Boston Globe: “Can I have a glass of water?”⁶

A recent study analyzed gender roles across three media released between 2006 and 2011: family films, prime-time programmes, and children’s TV shows. It focused on scrutinizing three specific types of information. First, the prevalence of male and female speaking characters in popular media was assessed. Second, the nature of those portrayals was examined by measuring media stereotypes associated with male and female speaking characters. Third, the occupational pursuits of characters and the degree to which males and females are shown working in a variety of prestigious industries and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers were evaluated.⁷ For example, in family films only 28.3% of the speaking cha-

acters are female. In other words, 71.7% are male.

Taken together, these results show an unfavourable state of affairs, which can be summarized in five key findings. First, females are not as prevalent as males on screen in popular media. Few stories are “gender-balanced” (this would require females to hold 45.1–55% of all speaking roles). Only 11% of family films, 19% of children’s shows and 22% of prime-time programmes feature girls and women in roughly half of all speaking parts. Second, females are still stereotyped and sexualized in popular entertainment. Traditional domestic roles are still gender-linked in entertainment. Females are more likely than males to be portrayed as parents and depicted in a committed romantic relationship. Sexiness is gendered across the media. Females are far more likely than males to be depicted wearing sexy attire, showing exposed skin, and referenced by another character as physically attractive or desirable. Third, females still suffer from unemployment imbalance. Given that women comprised 47% of the U.S. labour force in 2011, it is surprising that they only hold 20.3% of the total on-screen occupations in family films, 34.4% of all jobs in primetime programmes and represent only 25.3% of those employed in children’s shows. Fourth, females still slam into a glass ceiling. Not one speaking character plays a powerful American female political figure across 5,839 speaking characters in 129 family films. Men, however, hold over 45 different prestigious U.S. political positions (i.e., President, Vice President, Chief of Staff, Advisors, Senators, Representatives, Mayors, governors). Prime time is doing a much better job portraying powerful women, with females shown in leadership positions. Prime-time females are portrayed as 14% of corporate executives, 42.9% of characters with financial clout (e.g., investors, economic officials), 27.8%

of high level politicians, 29.6% of doctors/hospital managers/CMOs, 38.5% of academic administrators, 27.3% of media content creators and the only "editor in chief" in journalism. However, prime-time females are still not on par with prime-time males in the number of clout positions held across industries. Fifth, few females find work in scientific fields and STEM careers. In family films STEM males outnumber STEM females by a ratio of over 5 to 1.

These types of studies reveal the inherent bias in the world view with which television presents us through fiction, news reports and even commercials. The idea of conducting such studies was initiated by George Gerbner and his research team as part of the "Cultural Indicators Project" at the end of the sixties. It continued steadily for a quarter of a century in "The Annenberg School for Communication" at Pennsylvania University.⁸ Between 1967 and 1971, they managed to spot and document all the variations in American television programming content in prime time on an annual basis. Time and time again, the findings diverged from reality and, in doing so, followed certain stable and recurring patterns. For example, there are nearly the same number of women and men in the world, but during prime time there is one woman for every three male leading characters. The tendency remains unchanged in animated cartoons, and even among the animal characters included in the cartoons.⁹

In addition, the roles played by each gender are strikingly conventional. While we know whether 50% of women are married or not, the marital status of two thirds of men remains unknown. Moreover, television is highly moralizing in this respect: men are more likely to achieve their objectives in the plots when they are single, whereas women do likewise when they are married. According to TV, a suc-

cessful woman is a married woman. On average, 32 out of 100 single men fail whereas 45 out of 100 married men fail. Conversely, 29 out of 100 married women fail and 42 out of 100 single women fail.¹⁰

Hardly any woman reaches leadership positions in TV series, movies and shows. When the roles they perform are related to public life rather than their private lives, that is to say, when they perform professional and managerial roles, statistics convincingly show that the plot portrays them as unscrupulous, merciless women and social-climbers. In other words, they are infamous, the bad women of the movies, especially if they are over 40. In fact, when we search for "female leaders", "female entrepreneurs", "successful women", "female bosses" on the internet we often get images like women climbing stairs, women wearing boxing gloves or wearing stilettos and crushing men's shoes and ties.

When women reach the middle age, they perform more malevolent characters than benevolent ones: the ratio is 6 to 1 compared with young women and old men.¹¹ Although in the last few years, television has shown more women in work environments, it is not portraying men at domestic or home environments in a similar proportion.¹² Similarly, in TV we see men holding more hierarchical positions and women working as their subordinates. When women are depicted in their workplaces the emphasis is placed on the love affairs they have with their colleagues rather than their work performance.

But why is all this important? Why should we worry about what we watch on television? One of the most important lessons that we have learnt thanks to the Cultural Indicators Project is that people who are systematically exposed and watch TV for more than four hours a day, hold the same prejudices and stereotypes as those projec-

ted on TV screens. These views are not held by people of the same age, sex, education level and socioeconomic status who watch TV for less than four hours a day. Regular viewers believe that women have a more limited range of interests than men; they are born with less ambition, and that they prefer staying at home looking after their children to going to work.

How do Princesses Lead?

Models about what is expected from each gender are learnt and communicated to us during early childhood. A recent study conducted by the University of Granada, Spain, analyzed 621 characters of both sexes in 163 series of animated cartoons. The researchers came to the conclusion that women are relegated to secondary roles. They are girlfriends, mothers or just the ones who accompany the starring male actor or villains. They hardly ever become leading characters and find it hard to avoid stereotypes. The fact that they are not leading characters also means that they do not take important decisions and that their stories are less complex in the script. According to the investigators, most animated women are materialistic, jealous and superficial. They are also obsessed with their bodies and try to please other people.¹³

Superheroes are for boys, princesses for girls. Superheroes are powerful and have extraordinary gifts that they use to do good for society. Instead, princesses tend to be portrayed as more focused on their private issues than public service. Princesses also do not work to set an example so that we may outline better leadership profiles for girls. In

the particular case of the multimillionaire franchise "Disney Princesses", although the profiles have become less passive than "Cinderella" and "Snow White" with the passing of time and some female leaders have appeared among the characters, the message conveyed as regards female leadership is along the same lines as the most conventional and traditional stereotype.

Mulan is a well-respected bold Chinese female warrior, who was followed by the people. However, she deceives everybody by disguising herself as a man and getting her hair cut to become a leader. The message encloses the idea that to become a good leader a woman has to resemble a man and not be feminine. Pocahontas incarnates another stereotype which, unlike male characters, shows that women can't have everything and they are forced to choose between success in their public labour and a happy romantic life. In *Frozen* we see two sisters that don't need to be rescued by a man and save each other through their mutual love instead of a prince's romantic love at the end of the movie. However, Elsa, the female protagonist, cannot exercise her leadership skills well. She is responsible for governing but when she gets nervous she cannot control her emotions. She doesn't know how to wield power despite her good intentions. As a result, she freezes her realm and withdraws into a solitary world. In other words, she lacks emotional intelligence. Even among the new age characters, when the leading characters hold leadership positions the oldest stereotypes are repeated:

1. Leadership is male.
2. Women are good leaders when they behave like men
3. A successful public life interferes with women's private life.
4. Unlike men, women do not have emotional intelligence and

when they become emotionally involved they lose rational thought and their good leadership capacity.

While I was watching the movies I couldn't avoid asking myself what some women, real life princesses or queens, would think about how biased Disney's perspective given of their roles, tasks and allegedly characteristic activities is.

To crown it all, Ariel, the princess better known as "The Little Mermaid", faced with the choice decides to lose her voice and be struck dumb forever in exchange for being with a man. In all the princess movies produced by Disney between 1989 and 1999, men have three times as many lines of dialogue as women. Male characters speak 68% of the time in "The little Mermaid", 71% in "The Beauty and the Beast", 90% in "Aladdin", 76% in "Pocahontas" and 77% in "Mulan" (in this case, Mulan herself was considered a woman in spite of the fact that she impersonates a man).

Little girls don't naturally play or speak a certain way. They're not born liking pink dresses. At some point, we teach them to like pink. So an important question is "where do girls get their ideas about being girls. In the movies, there are no women bonding in the tavern together and singing drinking songs, and there are no women inventing things. Everybody who's doing anything other than finding a husband in the movies, pretty much, is a male."¹⁴

Again, why should it be negative for girls to consume and identify themselves with the princess movies and play with products created by that Disney franchise, given the fact that it is just entertainment, fiction and playful activities? Academics from Brigham Young University conducted a research on the subject through interviews

and the observation of 198 boys and girls who attend preschool and kindergarten. They found that the more the girls identify with the "princess culture", the more the patterns of behaviour they exhibit in their daily interaction correspond to the female stereotype suggesting that beauty, sweetness and obedience are the most valuable things in a woman and a girl. This study empirically validates preoccupations that have been discussed in social psychology for a long time. The idea is not to prevent these girls from being exposed to these products but rather to provide them with a wider range of contents and programmes, talk with them about the meaning of what they see and, last but not least, ensure that we do not reinforce these messages in our daily lives by making girls feel that they are most valuable when they are like beautiful princesses.¹⁵

The Pink Tax

Women pay more than men for the same products. This is what is popularly called the "pink tax". It is estimated that American women annually spend around \$1400 more than men on similar products. The differences in production cannot account for the surcharge. Shampoo, deodorants and disposable razors are some of the products whose value increases when the packaging reads "for her". But that's not all: the marketing of these products used by both men and women - for example, for their personal hygiene - tends to be sexist and reinforce absurd stereotypes. For instance, one line of a deodorant of a well-known and easy-to-spot brand (as white as snow) boasts one version for men and another for women. The "for him" version is called Po-

wer and its container is steel grey and marine blue. The “for her” version is called Sensitive and Pure and its colors are white and lilac. The TV commercial is even more sexist: we can see a man stressed out on the screen, who is taking part in a television quiz show final. When he passes the highly demanding test and emerges as a successful winner, he raises his arms – a clear signal of victory – and, much to our surprise, not even a single sweat mark is visible. The commercial for the female version of the same product shows the same man in the centre of the TV set, and his female companion – also under a lot of stress – watches him anxiously ... from the steps of the stand. When he wins the contest, she jumps full of joy, raises her arms showing a shirt without a trace of sweat. The message leaves us with an important social teaching: men get stressed and sweat when they think, whereas women get stressed and sweat when they accompany and support men who think.

In the case of disposable razors, the pink version not only tends to be more expensive but it also has, on occasion a message on the back of the packaging stating that the handle has been “designed to fit a woman’s hand”. Oddly enough when compared with the blue razor, the handles are the same. This leads one to question whether they are selling men razors designed for women’s hands, whether it is women who are being swindled, or whether it is nothing but an imaginary difference.

Research into gender stereotypes in advertising analyzed 390 advertisements and only 39% starred women. Significant differences were found among the public at which the products were aimed. Advertisements on hygiene and cleaning are aimed mostly at the female public, whereas everything that implies an important in-

vestment or money such as banks, credits, cars or housing are aimed at men.¹⁶ Recently a leading brand in the household and cleaning products market, with no trace of embarrassment, aired a commercial that explained how a cleaning product “had made Sleeping Beauty shine”. The prince was approaching the house “and the floors were a disaster”. Thanks to the magic liquid, the floors were not only left shining but the protagonist also had time to make herself beautiful to welcome the prince. One can only ask whether the woman does the cleaning only because the prince will evaluate the condition of the house, or why the prince – who, to make it clear, has no physical impairment whatsoever – doesn’t do it himself, if neatness matters so much to him. This advertisement shows that women are assigned the responsibility for domestic chores as well as looking good, in the sense that they are expected to look impeccable even if they have just finished mopping the floors. It is hardly surprising that there are a large number of commercials featuring cleaning products for either the house or clothes, in which a man or male “superhero” shows a woman the best product and then evaluates the result of the woman’s performance, verifying how white the socks or t-shirts are once they have been washed following his recommendations.

In advertising, examples which remind us that leadership is about men are abound. In 2015, on the celebration of National Women’s Day in South Africa, Bic – the ballpoint pen company – paid homage to women with an advertisement reading “Look like a girl, act like a lady, think like a man, work like a boss”. In spite of the fact that Bic later issued a public apology, this message makes the weight of gender stereotypes in our cultural conceptions evident. Before that, on another occasion, the company had launched a line of pens called “Bic

for her", which were more expensive than other products made by the firm because they were pink. In a memorable monologue, the comedian Ellen de Generes read over the phrases, word-for-word, which Bic had used to present differential and advantageous arguments to sell the product. She appealed to the absurd to reframe the message so that the stereotypical situation might become evident. After telling the audience that the company had just launched new pens called "Bic for her" she satirized "This is totally real; they are pens just for ladies. I know what you are thinking; it's about damn time! Where have our pens been? Can you believe we've been using man pens all these years! They come in both lady colors, pink and purple". Then she adds that "the worst part is they don't come with any instructions, so how do they expect us to learn how to write with them, you know? I was reading the back of the package, well, I asked a man to read the back of the package to me, and it said it is designed to fit a woman's hand". The comedian then reframed the idea, rounding off her speech with the phrase "what does that mean? That when we are taking down dictation from our bosses we'll feel comfortable and forget we are not getting paid as much?"¹⁷ Reframing is a communication tactic that consists in altering the meaning of a fact or situation by changing the setting or context in order to present and interpret it.¹⁸ The human mind has an associative architecture. Once established in our memory, associations tend to be long-lasting and it becomes very difficult to either erase or modify them in spite of the fact that we are presented with evidence that disproves this assertion. In order to make the change of meaning more effective, new associations need to be established so that the meaning can be replaced or played down. If one cannot alter erroneous associations such as "Muslim-terrorist" or

"Women-bad-at-mathematics" this has consequences because it affects judgment, the way we interpret things, as well as the way we act when faced with these groups in social reality.¹⁹ It is important that information be reframed. In other words, when faced with stereotypical version, we have to show the same information in a new light and from a different perspective. We have to link it to situations or associations that give another meaning to it, as Ellen de Generes did in her monologue. Thanks to this tactic those associations that cannot disappear or be erased because they are installed in the labyrinths of our minds, at least acquire another meaning.

In 2006, the European Parliament enacted a resolution to achieve equality between women and men in advertising. This was conducive to studies aiming to identify the scope of sexist advertisement. As a result, a document entitled "Report about the marketing and advertising impact on women and men equality" was released in 2008.²⁰ The study reveals that, in numerous advertisements, the presence of women is not related to the product since women are used as objects. They adopt passive attitudes towards men, and they are in an inferior position to men in the workplace, or are performing jobs just to please them. It is necessary not only for advertising contents to change, but also for media literacy in socialization and spaces of reflection to be included in schools. We need to critically evaluate the large number of contents and stereotypical images we view daily in the media about gender-related subjects, which reinforce prejudices. If we do this, at the end of the road, the world will be a better and much more democratic place.

"Are you going to take make-up with you into space?"

Let me introduce you to Yelena Serova. She is a highly qualified cosmonaut. She made history: She is the first Russian woman to go to the International Space Station (ISS). She is only the fourth Russian woman to enter space. She holds two degrees, one in space engineering and another one in economics. She has undergone seven years of extensive training. At the NASA pre-launch press conference she gave with her two male space station colleagues, she was faced with a number of sexist questions. She was the only one asked about her decision to leave her 11-year-old daughter and how would she cope in her absence, though her fellow male astronauts also had children. Then, another journalist inquired "You are the first woman cosmonaut in 17 years, so what are you expecting from that flight? Are you going to take make-up with you?"²¹ Serova managed to answer gracefully without making any reference to the make-up issue: "Answering to the first part of your question about women cosmonauts, I would like to make a correction. I will be the first Russian woman cosmonaut on the ISS". But her patience wore thin when other of the journalists returned to the fray with the subject of her physical appearance. He asked "How are you planning to do your hair?" Visibly frustrated she challenged the journalist: "And I have a question for you too, aren't you interested in the hairstyles of my colleagues?"²¹

Not only do women lack a strong presence in the news, when they are included in news coverage they tend to be portrayed in a stereotypical fashion. The news can make use of different types of sexist frames to reinforce stereotypes. Framing provides a subject with a structure of meaning.²² A typical sexist frame would be, for example,

when a journalist instead of highlighting women's activities, emphasizes qualities related to their beauty or their physical appearance. When the late Formula 1 driver, María de Villota, was in talks with a Spanish Formula 1 team to become the second driver, a newspaper headlined "Beautiful Spaniard could join the Formula 1".²³ Similarly, when she was hospitalized due to a serious accident during Formula 1 tests in the UK, another headline announced: "Beautiful driver suffers dramatic accident".²⁴ When Schumacher was involved in an accident, his physical appearance wasn't mentioned in the news headlines.

In 2011, the first Aerolíneas Argentina flight completely crewed by women took place. Media coverage of the event wasn't lacking in stereotypes. One of the channels decided to set the piece to the song "Pretty Woman", which became popular in the movie starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts, in which Roberts plays a young woman who earns a living by selling her body on the streets. This Cinderella of our times is finally rescued by a powerful, rich and handsome entrepreneur. During the interview, the journalist praised the female commander for having the nerve to "break the stereotype" and interrogated her about her job in aviation. Later, the journalist commented that this female pilot "is married to a man who also happens to be an international airline pilot. That seems to be the formula for a successful marriage". I wonder how many times a journalist would have dared to make remarks about the stability or instability of a male pilot's marriage. I would bet never. As we saw in the case of the Russian cosmonaut, when news revolves around women who stand out in any area of public activity, they are asked about the impact of their jobs on their personal lives, the care of their children and the state of their romantic relations. But this does not occur in the same

proportion when men are interviewed. Returning to our “female crew issue”, the journalist made a closing statement not lacking in clichés: He concluded that it had been a flight with a “scent of women” in which women had changed skirts to “tight pants” and had “forgotten about their make-up”. He said they had made such sacrifices to pursue their passion for flying.²⁵

The Armed Forces of the Argentine Republic currently have 14% women in the Army, 18% in the Navy and 24% in the Air Force. Mariela Santamaria is one of the four female pilots in the Air Force, and the first and only woman to pilot the biggest plane in the Argentine Armed Forces, the “Hercules”. During a filmed interview, she shared that her enthusiasm for airplanes started when she was attending elementary school. She remembered with amusement that when she announced that she was going to get into the aviation school her father asked her “Wouldn’t it be better for you to be a flight attendant? I don’t think that women fly planes” She told him she believed “that women did fly planes, but we started making enquires all the same”. The journalistic framing given to that piece of news was the most interesting thing of all. It again reveals that women’s personal lives are always a subject of conversation in the media even if the reason for the interview is about professional life. Once the video had been released, two journalists talked for a few minutes about what the interviewee had said. The male journalist asked his female colleague – who had conducted the interview – if Mariela had a “close-knit family” of her own. The journalist replied negatively, but added that she was dating a male pilot. Later on, both of them ended up saying that “that fact makes life simpler for her, since they understand each other and share the same tasks and work, which makes everything easier for

her”. The title of the interview announced that “a female pilot had managed to pilot an 80-tonne-mole plane”, as if physical strength were relevant to flying a plane.²⁶

In 2012, an airplane completely crewed by women which, on this occasion, belonged to Austral Airlines, landed in the province of Salta, Argentina. The local media in charge of the coverage chose “Girls just wanna have fun” as background music. The journalist who had interviewed the female commander and the co-pilot told them that many of his colleagues, when watching the landing, commented: “she landed the plane, now let’s see if she can park it”. Then he asked the female co-pilot if they had been talking about boyfriends and husbands during the flight. The pilot in question opted to show her sense of humor in order to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the question. Nonetheless, she was unable to make the journalist laugh since he did not understand the irony. She said to him: “We were talking about very important subjects, such as sculpted nails.”²⁷

As we have previously mentioned, it is sexist to highlight women’s private issues in the news, as well as playing down any kind of sexual harassment, physical, verbal or symbolic violence, by portraying it as good fun, natural, or a matter of little importance. An Argentine newspaper headlined “Berlusconi’s cheeky look at Cristina”. The article explained that Berlusconi “cannot avoid his handsome ways”. According to the newspaper, that is why he was caught looking at the posterior of the former Argentine President Cristina Fernández, just one week after provoking a similar incident with the Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt.²⁸ Although the media cannot prevent Berlusconi from behaving in such an utterly inappropriate manner, they should be able to choose the tone and framing to cover this

news, which are liable to be commented on by society as a whole. What's more, when we see the degree of tolerance towards these reprehensible actions shown by the media and a large section of society, one can only ask what would have happened if those reprehensible actions had been carried out by a female Prime Minister. Would she have been judged with the same social tolerance?

The portrayal of female politicians in the media

What actually happens when we look closely at the media coverage of female candidates and female politicians' activities? We find a strong presence of stereotypes. Among the classic feminine clichés by which our societies define what it is "a good woman", ten stereotypes can be highlighted.

1. Good women put other people's needs first, because above all they are mothers.
2. They feel responsible for the happiness and welfare of the people around them, and they make sacrifices for them.
3. They are modest and they neither self-promote nor show off what they achieve.
4. They are neither assertive nor bossy.
5. They wait to be asked, because initiative is male.
6. They don't do money, since ambition is male.
7. They are not into power since power is about men.
8. They are feminine.
9. They are unattractive if they hold power.

10. They feel more comfortable and happier in the private than in the public space.

With regards to female politicians, more often than not we find allusions in the news reminding us that women are mothers above all, who should be attentive to the needs and welfare of others, and relegate their personal wishes to their partners, children... and political party colleagues as well. It is often suggested that they will have to demonstrate that they are skilled enough to juggle their political role with their family and domestic life. During the 2008 electoral campaign, both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin were criticized by the media for being bad mothers, authoritarian, dependent on their bosses and husbands or, on the contrary, for being independent.²⁹

All this reaffirms the other stereotype mentioned at the beginning of the book: leadership is male and women are "not made for" politics. When Chelsea Clinton announced that she would become a mother for the first time, headlines like this appeared in the media "Can a grandmother become the President of the United States?", "President or Grandmother?", "Grandma President???", "Grandmother-in-Chief?", "Could Hillary's smile cost her the election? Twitter mocks Clinton's 'creepy grandma' grin" or "It's unclear how Chelsea's pregnancy will affect Hillary Clinton, who is considering a race for president in 2016".³⁰ However, these questions weren't asked by the media when Mitt Romney was proudly photographed with his 18 grandchildren during his electoral presidential campaign, or when John McCain presented his four grandchildren. Does this mean that Hillary, unlike them, has to leave aside her political ambitions owing to her age and gender and help her daughter to look after her grandson?

Other frames put an emphasis on the leverage that women need in order to place themselves favourably in politics, such as quotas or the help of a man, especially when that man is their husband. Gerardo Zamora, Governor of Santiago del Estero, a province of Argentina, was unable to modify the law to aspire to a third consecutive mandate in the 2013 elections. Claudia Ledesma, who happened to be his wife and a member of the same political party, ran as candidate to succeed him as governor. While the results were being awaited: the headline of an important newspaper wasn't "Santiago del Estero: Claudia Ledesma is waiting for a clear victory." Not even "Santiago del Estero: Gerardo Zamora is waiting for a clear victory for Claudia Ledesma". It was, instead: "Santiago del Estero: Gerardo Zamora waits for a clear victory for his wife".³¹

At other times, female politicians' power is portrayed as a delegation made by experienced male politicians to an inexperienced women. During one of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's terms in office in Spain, Bibiana Aído was appointed. She was the youngest Minister to have ever been appointed in the country. In order to announce her designation, the newspaper headlined: "Dad, I am going to be appointed Minister". The introductory paragraph of the piece of news read "The Head of Equality, the youngest in the democracy, arrives endorsed by Rubalcaba and Felipe Gonzalez".³²

Moreover, more often than not, the media questions female politicians' emotional intelligence, stability and their ability to cope with emotions. We already know that, according to the stereotype, women are "emotional creatures" and it is desirable for them to be docile, quiet and self-sacrificing. The New York Post headlined: "No wonder Bill's afraid" above an illustrative photo covering the whole front

page, which showed Hillary Clinton visibly angry and shouting.³³ The New Republic also covered the front page of the magazine with Hillary Clinton in an exclamatory attitude raising her arm, and the title of the article is: "The Voices in Her Head".³⁴ A host of MSNBC's cable television network interrupted Hillary Clinton's speech to complain about her voice. He told his co-host "one of the trickier things to teach people about public speaking is that the microphone works, you don't have to actually yell". Fox News' Geraldo Rivera called her raised voice "unpleasant" and wondered if she had a hearing problem. Sean Hannity said he found her voice to be "angry, bitter, screaming". "Cristina's emotional default" was plastered, in a variety of fonts, across the front page of a political analysis magazine, making reference to a series of conflicts and errors of judgment with which the then Argentine President, Cristina Fernandez, was faced. According to the publication, situations like her Vice-President's involvement and prosecution in two judicial processes, the important economic pressure on her country from foreign creditors and disagreements between members of her own party accounted for the "emotional breakdown" behind her errors of judgment.³⁵

Conversely, when women keep their emotions in check and are reserved about their work, they are also criticized by the press for being cold, distant and calculating. The examining magistrate Mercedes Ayala, in charge of one of the biggest fraud and corruption cases in the Board of Andalusia, Spain, was described by one newspaper as a woman who "doesn't relate to her colleagues, doesn't trust anybody at Courts and never goes out to have a cup of coffee. She only talks with the rector judge – who often accompanies her to take a taxi – or with a small number of lawyers". The same newspaper devotes a paragraph

to explain that she “wears dresses in very flashy colors –the last one was a vivid red. [...] But, apart from the fashion parade implied by the fact that she chooses every dress and pair of shoes she wears carefully to avoid repeating an outfit, her temperament is without a doubt the most remarkable feature of her personality.”³⁶

Politicians are often judged by the way they dress and their physical appearance. Angela Merkel and Hillary Clinton are only two of the female politicians whose physical appearance, makeup and hairstyle attract obsessive media attention. The cleavage-revealing dress which Merkel wore to the inauguration of the new Oslo Opera caused an incomprehensible stir. The photograph was printed in newspapers all over the world and was accompanied by headlines such as “Merkel’s weapons of mass distraction”.³⁷ On another occasion the media filled their pages with pictures of Merkel wearing a light coloured dress in which sweat marks could be seen. Hillary Clinton went through similar situations. After she had lost the presidential election, when she made her first public appearance, a headline read: “What happened to the campaign trail’s cuddly Granny Clinton? Hillary drops the glam hair and make-up following her crushing election defeat”.³⁸ Even prestigious mass media outlets, like The Washington Post or The New York Times, have scrutinized her physical appearance and trouser suits more than once. What’s more, her weight and hairstyle have been criticized in the newspapers headlines many times. It was Clinton herself who, in an ironic tone, stated that if she wants to knock a story off the front page, she just changes her hairstyle.³⁹

During her 2015 political campaign, one of the subjects discussed in the media was how many pounds María Eugenia Vidal, the now Governor of the Buenos Aires province in Argentina, had lost. Female

politician’s bodies are used frequently as fodder for a piece of news. “The Minister was photographed topless”. That was the headline of a newspaper when the Italian Education minister, Stefania Giannini, had been photographed by a paparazzi topless while she was sunbathing during her holidays.⁴⁰ The article was, of course, placed alongside the corresponding picture. The same newspaper devoted a complete journalistic article to explaining how the Argentine Congresswoman Victoria Donda, had managed to become the “Dipusex” – sexy deputy. It published, with a photo gallery included, her “amazing transformation” from her “party member look” to becoming the “sexiest congresswoman”. The article reads “Victoria Donda is without a doubt the sexiest female politician in Argentina”. Later, the article states that she exudes sex appeal in the halls of the Congress and, thanks to her rebel attitude, her cleavage and her generous curves, she had become one of the most attractive figure in politics.⁴¹ As we said before, the beauty of the female Mayor of Rome also made a great deal of headlines. Apart from the above-mentioned headlines there are others: “Get to know the pretty girl who wants to become the mayor of Rome”⁴² or “Virginia Raggi, the beautiful new female mayor of Rome”.⁴³

Media comments about the outfits of female politicians or women involved in a political activity go beyond praising or criticizing their choice of clothes. They also comment on how much money they spend on them. The press has wondered “First Lady’s fabulous clothes. Who pays the bills?”⁴⁴ One would think, that this type of framing would be more favourable towards female politicians who spend a small amount of money on clothes. However, Glamour magazine dedicated a whole article to “Power dressing: Clothes as a stra-

tegy to public image” explaining how politicians like Hillary Clinton and Margaret Thatcher repeat the same outfit over and over again to reinforce the image of austerity by means of which they expect to exert more power.⁴⁵

However, despite multiple searches, I have not found a similar opinion about the reasons that led the former Uruguayan president, José “Pepe” Mujica, to buy only one suit. He wore it for the first time when visiting his peer Ignacio “Lula” Da Silva from Brazil, and ended up wearing it in all public appearances in which protocol was required. The headline news was “Mujica bought a suit to see Lula”. The fact was plainly reported, without any second meaning.⁴⁶

The demand imposed on women as regards clothing and appearance bears no comparison to the way men’s clothing and appearance are assessed by the media. The co-presenter of an Australian television program, Karl Stefanovic conducted an experiment to show that, while his colleague was judged and lambasted for her clothing, nobody would notice that he dressed in the same suit every day. In 2014, he wore the same blue suit each day on camera, and he only allowed himself to change his ties.

During this period, no comment was made either by the viewers or fashion experts about his clothing. No one even noticed. It was then that he decided to reveal it. He took advantage of the opportunity to make a public reflection about the media and viewers behaviour, in which he expressed that while he was judged based on his work and interviews, women were judged based on their hairstyle and clothing.

Beatriz Llanos explains this phenomenon clearly in the investigation report “(Still) Unseeing Eyes”:⁴⁷ Media are important; they

are essential in the political arena and there are many reasons for this. They matter because they are a fundamental component of political campaigns. They matter because they set the agenda for public opinion, directing attention to certain subjects or candidates. They matter because they frame the information that the public is presented with in terms of causes, responsibilities, solutions and consequences. They are also important because they are the main source of political information for the citizens. As a result, they have the power to become agents of change or merely reproduce discriminatory conceptions.

The aforementioned report also shows that during political campaigns in Latin America, there is a lack of proposals referring to gender equality either in the candidates’ agenda or in the media’s agenda. This has a detrimental effect – according to Llanos – since, when there has been no discussion on this during the electoral campaign, it is more difficult to add the topic to the government agenda once elected. These subjects are not only little discussed during campaigns, but they are also mainly brought up by the same actors: women. This means that the prevailing point of view adopted regarding gender issues is that they are a “matter for women”. Therefore, women equality and women rights, issues of vital importance for democracy, end up confined to a “female ghetto”.

Another question clearly revealed by the data in the report is that media coverage given to female and male candidates is uneven and favors men. And this is not just in terms of quantity; it is also the sort of coverage that differs for both genders. The media provides the male candidates with more space, deeper interviews and more visibility since more pictures of them are published in the journalistic articles.

The mass media can be extraordinary allies if they deliver messa-

ges that convey an egalitarian society. However, they can just as easily become agents that perpetuate unequal relations. It is up to them what kind of world they want to help build.

6

Equality, women and power in Sweden and the Netherlands

Sweden, much more than IKEA

Gender mainstreaming, a term coined by the United Nations in 1997, describes the incorporation of the gender equality perspective into the work of government agencies at all levels. It refers to the idea that gender equality is not a separate, isolated issue but a continual process. To create equality, gender mainstreaming must be taken into account as a concept when resources are distributed, norms are created and decisions are taken. Gender mainstreaming is about integrating a gender equality perspective into all areas of policy. In Sweden, it is seen as the main strategy for achieving targets within the equality policy.

Sweden is one of the most gender-equal countries in the World. The annual Global Gender Gap Report introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006, measures equality in the areas of economics, politics, education and health. Since the report's inception, Sweden has never finished lower than fourth in the Gender Gap rankings.

Gender equality is strongly emphasized in the Education Act, the law that governs all education in Sweden. It states that gender equality should reach and guide all levels of the Swedish educational system. The principles of gender equality are increasingly being incorporated into education from pre-school level onwards, with the aim of giving children the same opportunities in life and the same rights to support themselves, regardless of their gender, by using teaching methods that counteract traditional gender patterns and gender roles. While a few decades ago, the university realm was dominated by men, today nearly two-thirds of all university degrees in Sweden are awarded to women. Equal numbers of women and men now take part in postgraduate and doctoral studies. Concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights, abortion was legalized in 1974. With regards to stopping violence against women perpetrated by men, Sweden's current Act on Violence against Women came into force in 1998. The law states that the violence and abuse to which a woman is subjected, for instance by a man in a close relationship, is assessed cumulatively. Since 1960, free access to daycare centers for children and homes for the elderly, have become public policies. They have facilitated women's inclusion in the formal work market since they freed them – at least partially – from the sticky floors phenomenon which we explored previously.

In Sweden, regulations and structures have been put in place to make it easier to combine work with starting a family. Among the public policies aimed at achieving equality, parental leave stands out. Parents are entitled to share 480 days, or around 16 months, of paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted. This leave can be taken by the month, week, day, or even by the hour. Women still use the majority of the days, with men taking around one quarter of the

parental leave on average. For 390 days, parents are entitled to nearly 80% of their pay. The remaining 90 days are paid at a flat daily rate. Those who are not in employment are also entitled to paid parental leave. Ninety days, or around three months, of leave are allocated specifically to each parent, and cannot be transferred to the other. Parents who share the transferable leave allowance equally get a tax-free daily bonus for a maximum of 270 days.¹ Although the implementation of these policies requires States to have the economic resources to support them, it would be a mistake to think that it is all about the disposition of funds. It is also about the political will required to build an egalitarian scenario. A country may be rich and perpetuate through its policies (or the absence of them) a much deeper situation of gender inequality.

In Sweden, Central Government is the sector with the most even gender distribution in the labour market: in 2012 the proportion of women was 51.6%. Today, 46.5% of all agency heads, such as General Directors, Vice-Chancellors and museum directors, are women. That is an increase of 14 percentage points since 2007. Of the members of boards and advisory councils appointed by the Government, 48% are women. In the position of Chair, 41% are women. Inequality in key positions in the private sector persists and has led to legal strategies being drawn up. However, in the political arena, despite the absence of quota laws as well as the implementation of voluntary quotas in the political parties, Sweden has one of the highest representations of women in parliament. In 1921, women were given the right to vote and allowed to run for elections. During that year, five managed to hold positions in the Government. After the 2014 election, 43.6% (152) of the 349 seats were held by women. Nevertheless, this was lower than

the 45% in the 2010 elections. At present, 12 of the 24 government ministers are women.

According to International IDEA statistics, today all the parties acknowledge the importance of involving women in politics and have well defined goals for women's participation in politics. But it has not always been this way: it is a long and ongoing process. The turning point came in 1972 when the Liberal Party and the Social Democrats recognized the importance of involving women in politics and the importance women's votes can play in politics. The Liberal Party was the first Swedish party to set the minimum level of women's representation at 40% in 1972. During the 1980s and 1990s, the other Swedish parties represented in the Parliament also set numerical goals for women's participation. The Social Democratic Party quota is set at 50%. The Moderate Party and the Centre Party opt for a "softer" strategy and do not use quotas or strict regulations, but rather recommendations and targets. The Swedish quota system is not regulated in constitutional laws. The quotas are decided by the political parties and are normally set in the parties' own regulations. This means that the parties themselves set a minimum or maximum level for women candidates on the party list. And the political parties also decide the composition of the party list with the candidates. For example, the Social Democratic Party uses a "zipper system" which means alternating positions are reserved for male and female candidates.²

This is the general overview. What would experts think about Sweden as a case study? What variables have driven this country to become a more egalitarian society than others? What issues have yet to be solved as regards gender equality when it comes to the inclusion of women in leadership, power and political decision-making positions?

Starting out the journey: the first interview in Stockholm

Angelica Broman

Angelica Broman³ is a development analyst who has worked many years with the UN and the Swedish Government in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). We had exchanged many emails to coordinate the organization of a seminar in the Sida headquarters in Stockholm in which I was invited to lecture on the importance of women's political participation. When the day of the event came, in June 2015, we finally got to know each other in person. Conversing with her was really enlightening. From the first comment she made I understood that, although women's situation in Sweden is much better than in other places on the planet, it is not the perfect paradise that my imagination had led me to believe. The first thing Angelica highlighted is that, in spite of the fact that "women got the vote in 1921, to this day there has not been a female Prime Minister in Sweden."⁴

According to Broman, education is a key variable. In the beginning, the fact that women did not have equal chances to study was an important problem. "In the 1970s more women started to work and gain political access, since more women received a higher education in the 1960s." Although women started to hold more visible public positions in the 1980s, according to this analyst, they were regarded more as "flowers or decorations". In her view, the real change became visible "in the 1990s, when some strong women started to emerge

in the political scene in Sweden. These were mostly the women who had been promoted and groomed within the Social Democratic Party, groomed by the men of the party. However, very few women got into leading political positions until after the Feminist Initiative Party (Fi) was launched on 9 September 2005 to run for the 2006 elections. After Fi was launched, other parties really started to promote women within their parties. Fi did not take any seats in either the Swedish Parliament or the EU until the European elections of 2014 when the party attracted 5.3% of the Swedish vote, with Ms Soraya Post taking one seat in the European Parliament. In the 2014 general election, Fi received a record 3.1% of the vote but not enough for the 4% needed.”

In spite of all the positive data that we have seen, Angelica Broman believes that “Still today, it is hard to establish if we have real inclusion of women in public life and political decision making yet in Sweden. Young women are often promoted, but after child bearing many women step down, since it is still too cumbersome to be a wife, a mother and a politician”. Cement ceilings and sticky floors do not seem to be far from many Swedish women’s reality when they reach power. She adds that “Today, we do have many women leading political parties, but I am not sure that these women do promote women’s rights – sometimes it feels like they have been so well groomed by men that they actually promote conservative male dominant structures”.

As regards the main variables that might have led to the increase in women’s participation in decision-making and political activity, Broman believes that “a combination of factors led to change. First and foremost, access to free education and higher education for all which empowers women as well as men. Legislation was vital in or-



der to give women rights, but also hamper violence against women. Another important factor was granting men time to take care of their children, assuring that men became more engaged with their households.” In her opinion, although everything was accomplished without the passing of one, “a quota law might have made this process faster and more coherent.” The expert believes that there still remain significant steps to be taken: “a lot of education for men on gender

issues, and also for men to accept more tasks in the household, to take more responsibility for their own children, cleaning and washing as well as planning family life. Women are quite aware of gender issues but we still need a push for men to become more inclusive and gender sensitive.” She states that in Sweden “we still have a long way to go, and role models are largely influenced by Hollywood movies and media images worldwide.” Similarly, it is of utmost importance “[to work] with young boys and girls in order to make them aware of gender stereotypes at an early age. We must also work to make teachers at preschools and schools aware of gender issues, since they often reinforce stereotypes. Ending violence against women and working with both sexes for gender equality is also very important”, she says. “Strengthening the economic empowerment of women is also vital.”

Second stop: The Gothenburg interviews

Once I had finished the seminar at Sida, I said goodbye to the participative and enthusiastic assistants and to Angelica Broman, my host. I immediately went to the central train station of Stockholm, where I embarked on a journey to Gothenburg to carry out a series of interviews. I arrived at sunset and I slept at a “ship hotel”. The following day after breakfast, the first thing I did was to get on a tram. I followed the very precise instructions given to me by Maria Clara Medina to get to the University. When I got off, she was waiting for me ready to share her close friendship, the warmest welcome and a series of interviews she had scheduled for me throughout the day so that I could make the most of my stay there.

María Clara Medina

María Clara Medina⁵ has a Doctorate in History. She is a Senior Lecturer in Global Studies and Director of the Masters in Human Rights at the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg. My first interview was with Maria Clara herself, who also shares Angelica Broman’s opinion that the real inclusion of women – not a merely formal one – in the Swedish political arena became evident in the nineties, with the emergence of women leading political parties. She affirms that “although women’s participation in political parties in Sweden had been fairly active since 1930, especially in the left-wing parties, it was not until 1980 that women started becoming involved in real decision-making situations”. She believes that it was a gradual process, which gathered momentum in the seventies, when they fought for social laws in favour of maternity and the legalization of abortion among others. Later, the project took off thanks to other debates related to electoral processes.

When I asked her about the similarities and differences between the dynamics; the reasons that led to the inclusion of women in political life; and the dynamics by means of which other minority sectors such as ethnic and religious minorities were included in Sweden, she argued that “the case of gender was different since it was directly and explicitly included as a political variable.” To date, this has not happened in Sweden with the religious and economic sectors.

As regards the lack of quota laws she drew attention to a very interesting aspect: “The quota law was discussed at a social and parliamentary level in Sweden but was struck down as a bill. All the political



parties that were in parliament at that time voted against the law. The idea that it was discriminatory and humiliating for women to hold political positions just because they were women and not on merit, gained ground in political and media debates. It was not debated, however, how women could earn the right to compete with men under equal conditions when there were previous circumstances that did not pave the way for them.” In her opinion, it still remains to be seen

in Sweden if they “can guarantee women’s permanence and access to positions of power by resolving all the difficulties that prevent women from reaching these positions as well as facilitating the exercise of power by women without it being restricted to the idea that being a woman equals being a white Swedish woman.” She believes that it is wrong to idealize Sweden as a feminist paradise. When examining the situation, we need to identify the large number of good choices but also the failed attempts so we do not reproduce them. In her opinion, if we want to move towards the road to inclusion, “discussions about policies of equality have to be held in a cross and intersectional perspective so that gender identities can be seen intersecting with ethnic, class, religion or age differences.” She affirms that it is important that societies should assume responsibility and pressure the political class into including gender on the official agenda.

Adrián Groglopo

It was time for lunch, which I shared with Adrián Groglopo.⁶ He amiably shared with me his time, opinions and knowledge. He is a Sociologist, the President of the Antiracist Academy of Sweden, and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Work at the University of Gothenburg. He believes that the Women’s Movement has been very important in Sweden since 1970. However, he states that it was not until the 1990s, when it became a feminist political movement, that it started to have a higher impact. It was at that time – he explains – “that political parties, especially left-wing parties such as the Social Democrats, also started including the issue of women’s dif-

ficulties in society.” He also believes that, at a political and state level, policies were not as established as they are now and what brought about change was the fact that cultural, relationships and work market parameters were modified in society. All these things exerted pressure on the political agenda.

However, Groglo points out that in Sweden “there are differences between the discursive aspirations about how things should be at the political level, and what really happens in everyday life, where gender segregation is still a fact of life.” These differences are not as large in the political arena - where the percentage of women in parliament, as we saw, shows that female participation is coming closer to matching men’s participation - as in the social sphere. According to the researcher, political and parliamentary equality only reflects the changes undergone by certain types of women and social groups. “Women are making progress as a body and a symbol in politics as well as in gender policies. But this impacts mainly on the lives of middleclass white Swedish women. These policies are meant to be universal in the sense that they are for everybody but, owing to economic reasons and the persistence of social racism, the repercussions of these gender policies are less significant in the lower classes.” He believes that the reason for this is that citizens’ mental representation and stereotypical imaginary of Sweden as a nation doesn’t take either gender or sexuality into consideration. However, this does occur when a variable such as ethnicity intervenes. Feminists and sexual identity movements have made progress in comparison with other minority groups. Moreover, their access to politics has been more successful because “the Swedish national identity, which is conceived as white, Christian and European, is less challenged by them.” He



believes that although some progress has been made with regards to racism, the fight for equality and inclusion has always been even harder in that domain. Significant doors have been opened for women as regards achievements. But those doors were not opened equally for women regardless of their social class. They were mainly opened for white women of the middle and upper classes. For this reason, according to him, gender policies should not rule out migration, ethnic,

social and economic discrimination policies.

He shares Broman's view that, to achieve the equal inclusion of women in political life, power structures and decision-making, it is essential "that children should be educated with a gender perspective from their early childhood. They should also learn cultural values such as respect and equality." Similarly, he believes that it is crucial that States should be involved in developing public policies to free women from socioeconomic inequalities, "especially in those countries in which abortion is illegal."

Tom Böhler

In the afternoon, Tom Böhler⁷ welcomed me into his office. He is a Professor in Human Ecology in the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg. He is a person with very affable and accessible manners. He believes that women's movements became more important in Norway – where he was born – and in Sweden – where he has lived for several decades – at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies. He remembers that when he was young and his mother started to work, problems arose since his father believed he was supposed to be the only bread-winner of the family. He also says that such deep-rooted and widespread cultural conceptions have changed nowadays. It was a gradual process that took time. For example, when he became a father he decided to take paternity leave. Although it was provided for by the law, it was very unusual for men to exercise that right. He remembers that, in the building where he lived, there was a communal space, where all the people who had



children used to meet up. He was always the only man there and women looked at him strangely when they met him. This shows, once again, that gender stereotypes are held not only by men but also by society as a whole. The public policy that allowed him to exercise that right was effective. But as discussed in Chapter 2 of this book, when we referred the need to change cultural dimensions as well as the public policies and legislation, – what he experienced in his social

interaction showed that the change of perception that would lead to his actions being viewed as something habitual, had not taken place yet. As Bölher pointed out “this is the typical case in which the policy came first but cultural process of adaptation took much more time.”

According to his understanding, in Sweden “the discussion about gender issues took place at the same time as other equality and global justice issues were raised”. However, he thinks that gender issues were the first to be brought to the political agenda and all the others were included later in the debate. Some of them, which refer to the inclusion of other minorities, are still being discussed. However, he believes that “even in Sweden, where the need to achieve gender equality is considered to be evident, participating in politics is still much harder for women than men because stereotypes and instances of double standards persist. They lead to both genders being judged differently.” For this reason, he affirms that, as a society, it is important to address the cultural dimension of the problem. According to him, “it is fundamental that discussions among men to problematize the old way of understanding gender issues should start, so that they can ask themselves how they relate with the rest of the world and how their behaviour and morals affect society.” He points out that there are still many stereotypes, which exert influence especially on the division of domestic tasks. That is why it is essential that we should focus on that dimension of the problem.

The Netherlands, where equality is not “life through rose-colored glasses” (yet) but more like “life through orange-colored glasses”

In the Netherlands, women were granted the right to vote in 1919 and the right to stand for election in 1917. The first woman won a

seat in Parliament in 1918. Women debuted in Government when Marga Klompé became Minister of Social Affairs during the period 1956–1963. In 1974, the organization ManVrouw Maatschappij (Man Woman Society) sent letters to the then Prime Minister Den Uyl stating that it was time to design a public policy for women. As a result, in 1975 the Minister of Culture, Leisure and Social Work with the Department of Emancipation Policy created committees with a view to approving emancipation policies including gender mainstreaming. In 1980 the proposal for a public policy for women’s emancipation was adopted by the Lower House. One of its objectives was to increase the number of women in political decision-making positions.

The Netherlands has direct elections with a system of pure proportional representation for the Lower House or Second Chamber. In the case of the First Chamber or Senate, members are indirectly elected. The country has many political parties. Although they are not bound to any legal measurements on how to compose their electoral lists, most parties tend to have equal representation for women and men. They don’t want to risk being portrayed as unfriendly to women by not putting women on their lists.

There is no legal framework for the promotion of women in political decision-making in the Netherlands. The Government did not take an official position on this matter before they had to due to the ratification of the European regulation on discrimination against women. The Dutch Government says it cannot force or even ask political parties to increase their proportion of women. Dualism, the clear division between Government and Parliament, is very important in Dutch politics. Because the political parties differ widely in their opinions on how to reach equal representation, there has not

been an initiative from the Lower House either. In 1992, the Government signed a policy to increase the number of women in politics, consisting of recommendations to the political parties on how to increase women's representation. The only legal framework whatsoever on women in politics, is the First Article of the Constitution that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender. However, even in the absence of affirmative action mechanisms, by 2015 women held 38.7% of the seats in the Lower House, 36% in the First Chamber, and headed 5 of the country's 13 Ministries.

The Academic View

Ingrid van Biezen

Ingrid van Biezen⁸ was kind enough to open the doors of her office at Leiden University to welcome me on a sunny Spring morning. She is a Professor of Comparative Politics at the University, and a woman of solid opinions and fluent conversation. Her ideas interested me from the outset. She has an impressive academic track record; she worked at the University of Birmingham and has been a visiting professor at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore and a Research Fellow at Yale University and the University of California, Irvine. Her research interests lie primarily in the field of comparative politics, political parties, party systems, democratization, and institutional development.

She places the start of demands for the better inclusion of women



in the Netherlands in the sixties and seventies “with the inclusion of gender issues in the political agenda alongside other non-materialistic issues.” In terms of formal rights of representation, active voting rights date back to the early 20th Century, and the first female Minister was appointed in 1956. Ingrid van Biezen points out that “the big impetus for change came with the demands for democratization that characterized that period, in the wake of the student revolts in Paris,

and other movements of the kind. Within that realm and atmosphere, things started to change, and that also included the notion of gender and women's inclusion in the public domain and in political life. It was a gradual change, gradual independence for women, as part of a cultural change towards inclusion and democratization." She believes this also relates to changes in socio-demographic patterns, including higher levels of education.

She explains that "the inclusion of other minority groups, such as ethnic groups, economically underprivileged groups, working class groups, etc., happened much earlier. The real change and the inclusion of women happened much later, in part because of cultural presumptions, and in part because many legal barriers continued to be an obstacle." Moreover, she thinks an important factor is that "women didn't tend to be as mobilized or mobilize in the same way as other excluded groups. The socioeconomically excluded and underprivileged groups were typically members of labour movements and trade unions, and these kinds of organizations pushed further for their economic positions. Women didn't have organizations and separate movements or political parties; what they had was women's sections within political parties. In fact, with very few exceptions, political parties didn't and don't have female party leaders, they have female Chairs, but not female party leaders."

I asked her if, in her opinion, there were still obstacles for female politicians of her country to surmount. She replied that, although female representation in the Parliament nowadays is almost 40%, it is still hard for women to get to the very top positions, the ones that really matter. She explains, "We have never had a woman Prime Minister for instance. The top level positions in politics, academia, or

business, are mostly taken by men. And I think this has to do with the legacy of legal restraints and frameworks. Also with cultural dimensions that are in part a consequence of the way the Netherlands was run, of the long predominance of Christians Democrats in power, and they are not the most prone to promote women's rights."

In terms of what remains to be done she was extremely clear: "it is dangerous, this discourse stating that we are done with emancipation because everything is all right. That is currently and factually mistaken. Maybe in terms of parliamentary representation we are just about getting there, but we are not when it comes to representation in the Government and Ministries." She affirms that "there is still a tendency to resort to the familiar old boys' club structures, arguing that they can't really find women." She considers it important to raise awareness not only in politics, but also in academia: "We know that although many women do make it, this is not about individuals, it is about structural tendencies. We know people look differently at women. We know women are judged differently, women have to meet double standards."

She is convinced that "there is a need to raise the issue and that gender equality is not a women's thing, men have to get involved too." She is worried about the depoliticization of the discussion: "Statistics underscore that women are still underpaid, that they are treated and judged differently, they still have a hard time reaching the top of organizations. The discussion tends to be portrayed or formulated in an oversimplified way. And it is a combination of factors which make it difficult for women to reach those levels. Gender should not be under-politicized. Awareness is very important. Things and objects are not supposed to be gendered, and neither is politics. From an early

age we treat boys and girls differently, and we value different things in boys and girls. That is an indicator that we are not done with gender issues. And it is not a women's thing; it is not a men against women thing. Women also value men and women differently, so it really concerns us all."

Is there anything that makes her feel optimistic? She answers that "despite imperfections and persisting bias, there have been cultural changes. It is more accepted now for men to skip a meeting because they have to pick up their children at school. It is very imbalanced, but now it happens. I am hoping these kinds of things are the first steps towards change because, for example, they are making it more acceptable for women to seek a career."

Corine van Egten

Once the interview in Leiden was over and while I was on my way back to The Hague by train, I felt curious about my next interviewee's opinions on the same subject. That midday, I got to know Corine van Egten⁹ who is a senior researcher for the Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History (ATRIA). She has been involved in research projects on diverse themes such as emancipation policy and gender mainstreaming in EU countries. She also conducted research regarding women's representation in Dutch politics. As I mentioned, we met that same midday at NIMD's office in The Hague, and she brought with her not only her valuable experience but also some interesting data and documents.

According to her, the presence of women started to improve in



the seventies and eighties. In the first place, she attributes the change to the women's movement. She explains: "We had a very active women's movement in the Netherlands, that led to female participation arising from the women of the movement, and eventually also to policy-making, and governmental service." The other reason for the change is cultural: "The change in the traditional roles of women as mother or housekeeper, women taking part of the labour market,

which also affected the participation of women in politics. But in the Netherlands the traditional roles are still relatively strong, placing the priority on the kids. I think the Netherlands is among the top three countries where women work part-time.”

As regards women and politics, she warns about one fact in particular: “in the study we are conducting now in the local councils, it is very difficult to find women from ethnic minority groups, there are some, but not many and it is far easier to find male politicians from minorities.” That is to say, as we saw in the case of Sweden, the problem is even bigger for women when gender is combined with ethnicity. As we will see, one of our female politicians interviewed later in this chapter gives a first-hand account of her experience with this issue.

What are her recommendations? She thinks that “in the Netherlands the women’s movement, the women’s organizations, did a lot of good work. So promoting women’s organizations would help other countries as well.” And also, of course, education for women and participation in the labour market. Similarly, she believes that role models and coaching for women are fundamental: “For new politicians, it is very important to look for a coach or a mentor who comes from a similar background.” Finally, she points out that it is important to find a more inclusive way of working, and a more transparent method of decision-making.

What do female politicians from the Netherlands say?

Sophie in ’t Veld

Monday. The first of my interviewees was Sophie in ’t Veld,¹⁰ who had been a member of the European Parliament since 2004. She was the party leader of the European branch of her party, D66 (Democrats ’66), in the elections of 2009 and 2014. She is the Vice-Chair of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and a substitute member of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality.

It was a telephone conversation. That Monday morning, she had not only to find time to answer my call, but she also had to pull over in a safe place since she was driving on a highway in Brussels, the city in which she was serving as a Member of the European Parliament. She was clear and upfront and did not beat about the bush: “Women in politics are facing different challenges than men in politics, because politics is about power, and the combination of women and power is not perceived in a very positive way. Women are supposed to seek harmony and consensus. They are not supposed to be authoritative or even pursue power. So the combination of women and politics is a difficult one, and society has to get used to the fact that women can be authoritative and have power as well.”

When she speaks her mind about the few women who had (or had had in the past) real power such as Angela Merkel or Margaret Thatcher, she says that “it is not that they are trying to look like men, but they are trying not to be too feminine; because the combination of being feminine and tough, some people don’t get that.” On the



other hand she now sees many women being very charming, “because everybody likes you, and also when you act like a little vulnerable or charming woman, it becomes much harder for your male opponent to attack you, so it is a tactic.” But she also makes a sharp comment: “The fact that women have to resort to this option shows the disparity of the situations faced by both genders. It is a choice, it is a choice that women have to make, and men do not.”

She believes that an indirect indicator that the situation of women has improved a lot (although it is far from being egalitarian) is, for instance, the recent launching of a women’s network within her political party. In her opinion, there is still a lot to be done “because the stereotypes and the fact that the behaviour of women in politics is judged very differently from the behaviour of men are very difficult problems to overcome. It will take a lot of time, and you can’t legislate against that, there needs to be more equal representation so that the stereotypes will fade.”

Before finishing the interview she emphasized that “something that I want to say to women in particular is, you know, yes, politics is tough, and you have to fight, and you need to have the will to fight the battle and to win. So sometimes you make it, sometimes you don’t, but you’ll live, you know? So women have to get a bit more competitive and not to be afraid of the fight. You can enter the competition, and sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, and it is not the end of the world. I mean, if you are not willing to enter competition, you can’t win.” Ambition and competition should be part of women’s imagery.

Tamara van Ark

That very same morning, the second interview took place. Although she was really busy, Tamara van Ark,¹¹ a dynamic person with a big smile, gave me a very cordial welcome in her office in the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. She has been Member of Parlia-

ment since 2010 and has served as Vice-Chair of her party, the VVD (People's party for Freedom and Democracy), since 2012. She is also her party's spokesperson on emancipation, homosexual emancipation policy, and the law on equal treatment and preventative health care.

She remembers that her mother “was a stay-at-home mom, my father worked, so it was kind of a traditional family. This makes me realize that there was a time, not so long ago, when it was normal for women like my mother to quit their jobs when they got married and pregnant. It was quite normal at the time, and it is not so long ago.” She points out that “back in the seventies, it was a time when a lot of discussions in society on several issues took place, there was a big discussion on women issues; and you see nowadays that a lot of women who are active in politics are not hardcore feminists, but they do profit from what was then discussed. Therefore, you see in the discussion of quotas or representation that senior women politicians are often much harder and more passionate in their opinions, than women my age who think it is normal.”

In the interview, she aims directly at a controversial subject: “Almost 75% of Dutch woman who work, work part time, so we have a big discussion: What is your own choice, and what is the choice society has made for you?” She thinks that the Netherlands is very particular in that respect because it is a culturally accepted practice for women to quit their jobs and stay home for a few years when they become mothers. What is her standpoint on this? “I think that is good to have a choice, but I also think you should face the consequences of choices. So if you want a job at the top of an organization or at the top of society, you can't have it all. You have to choose.”

She believes that it is important that gender equality should stop



being a women's issue because political diversity is good. It is necessary for women and men to interact and discuss the subject. She is the person in the VVD party in parliament who assigns people their subjects. When she came to gender equality she thought “I will give this to a man, just to make a statement. I think it is a threat to the discussion if it is only held by women.” In Parliament, there still is a traditional difference in the subjects people talk about. For example,

healthcare is an issue mostly spoken about by women. According to her this situation must change: “If I make a parallel with people with disabilities, if I think what my dream of equality is, it would be that a person in a wheelchair is the spokesperson of housing policy and not about healthcare issues because she is in a wheelchair.”

She is convinced that this issue concerns society as a whole. There is work to be done on the side of women too. For example, “in general, when a man has his yearly conversation as an employee with his employer, he describes what he did during the year, what he plans to do the next year, and what he needs from his employer. Put in the same situation, a woman will say something like she learned a lot during the last year, but that she is still a little uncertain about her qualifications and that she wants to practice more, etc. Or, for example, if a man is asked for a job, he will say “OK, I will do it”; and a woman will think for a week and when she thinks “well, maybe I can do it”, the job is taken. We need to work more in a cultural dimension, than in the legal dimension.”

What’s her advice? “Women are not known for having a sisterhood. You know, there is a brotherhood, or a boys’ network, but there is no such thing for women. Instead women don’t tend to help each other, and sometimes you see it in the debates in parliament. In corporations it is called the “crab bucket principle”: if you have a bucket of crabs, and there is one crab that can climb out, then the other ones will pull it back down. I think we should change that and it is also my responsibility to show that you can become bigger, or grow, or get a great job, without making other people smaller. We can all grow.”

Nel van Dijk

I finalized my first round of interviews that Monday afternoon when I had the pleasure to meet and talk at great length with Nel van Dijk,¹² former member of the Communist Party of the Netherlands and former Member of the European Parliament for the Green party, a position she held for eleven years, between 1987 and 1998. During her term, she was active in the fields of women’s rights, transport, and the environment. For instance, she introduced stronger rules regarding the transportation of animals, and made a strong contribution to the legalization of abortion. She also became known within and beyond the parliament for her fight against fraud and luxury arrangements and provisions for parliamentarians.

She is an extraordinary and very amusing conversationalist. She remembers that “everything started with a big movement in society, the Feminist Movement, fighting for the right to abortion and other rights. We had a lot of discussions, starting in the sixties, but mostly in the seventies and eighties. At that time, in the Netherlands, there was no political party taking into account that women should have prominent places in their electoral lists”. After those discussions, almost all political parties tried to make sure that they had as many men and women in their electoral lists; and not only the second half of the list, but really on the first places too. She affirms, with conviction “that would never have taken place without a Feminist Movement fighting in such a tough way for rights”. She recalls that there were “very difficult discussions, but women knew they had to take their place, and even have discussions at the kitchen table with husbands and



boyfriends, for something to change”. Until the seventies the place of women in the labour market in the Netherlands was very bad, “like in Ireland and Spain, or other countries with a Catholic tradition. Women had no place at all.” For example, “we had legislation that said that women working as public servants had to be fired when they had children. It wasn’t easy, but the left wing parties started the change, and then it became mainstream for all the parties that women and

men had to be treated equally.”

In 1979, the first elected European Parliament started, and five years later the women’s movements formed a big committee to investigate the position of women, “and that was at least a formal important start on the issue.” That committee pointed out that legislation for women was needed, and that State members had to implement it. And even long before: “in the sixties already, the Italians and the French disagreed because Italians wanted to have free movement for workers in that ‘Europe of the six countries’, but France said they wouldn’t do that unless and until women and men had equal treatment on the labour market. This was due to the fact that women had a position in the labour market in France. In Italy they didn’t, and they didn’t in the Netherlands or Ireland.” So this shows how, from the start, women’s rights have always been related to very important economic issues. At that time “the European Parliament started to make laws on the equal rights of women, first on the labour market, second on social security, maternity leaves, and so on; and the country members, under a lot of pressure and resistance, had to implement them. So the European level was very important in pushing the individual countries to change.”

In her view, a quota law would have been counterproductive in the Netherlands, “especially because our social fight to get our positions succeeded. And you are much stronger if you succeed that way and you don’t have to ask for legislation.” But she believes quota law is necessary in countries where women don’t stand a chance.

When I asked for any recommendations, she spoke with the authority that only experience brings and warned that “things did not change automatically, they never do. Change happened because

women protested. You have to be there, you have to be alert, make sure you are being heard.” With a great deal of honesty, she confesses “When I was Chair of the Women’s Right Committee at the European Parliament, women’s rights became personal to me. And because it became personal it was also much more difficult for me, because I could not take an emotional distance from it. I became very passionate and emotional about it, about gender issues. That did not happen to me when I was Chair of the Transport Committee, although everybody says I was a strong fighter and did a very good job there.”

We need to make sure that men get involved in household chores. They should share domestic tasks “and that has not yet been achieved”. Now in the Netherlands not only women work part time, but also more men do “and that means they also have to assume more responsibilities at home and with their children”. It is normal now to see men at school picking up children or taking them to health care but “it wasn’t at my time. My husband was questioned if and when he did that. Men were expected to support their wives and children, and wives were not expected to need to work. If they did, it was the man’s fault.”

What changes are yet to come? “There have been very few female party leaders in the Netherlands. Our political parties tend not to have female leaders. There are a few exceptions. We need to have more female bosses to set the example and show other women that it is possible.”

Hanja Maij-Weggen

It was another day of interviews, which involved a more than enjoyable journey by train to Eindhoven that I shared with my close and very dear companion in this project and adventure, Helen Schrooyen, NIMD Coordinator for Latin America. My objective was to converse with Hanja Maij-Weggen,¹³ who opened the doors of her home to us with generous hospitality. She was equally generous when it came to devoting her time and sharing her experiences and assessments. She has an impressive track-record and she has dedicated her whole life to politics as member of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) party. From 1989 until 1994, she was Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management. Between 1994 and 2003, she returned to the European Parliament, where she was a member of the commission that researched the position of women in Europe (1982-1984), of the Commissions on Employment and Social Affairs, (1982-1989) and Development Cooperation (1994-1997), among others. From 2003 until 2009, she was the Queen’s Provincial Governor of the Dutch Province of Noord-Brabant. At the European Parliament she worked on legislation on women’s rights and equal treatment, legislation that had to be accepted and implemented by country members.

She has seen a growing presence of women in political life and decision-making positions from 1980 onwards, but she states that it was not until the 1990s that it became more or less “normal”. By then, “the majority of political parties had decided at that time that they should have at least 40% of women in the electoral lists and a zipper system.” As we know, political parties were not obliged to do



so. But there was a warning from the Parliament that political parties should do this and adopt these practices: “There pressure on political parties from different organizations and the Parliament.” Concerning the quotas, she says: “I always tried to promote women, both in company boards and in politics. But I am a little bit hesitant about a quota law, because it makes it harder for women to be accepted; people say they have gotten there because they are women and because of the

quota, and not because they are really capable. The women’s organizations in the political parties had a very important role in doing without a quota law, they were very helpful.” She agrees with our previous interviewee, Nel van Dijk, that “women’s organizations in general, the women’s organizations within the political parties, and the strong legislation of the European Parliament were very helpful for the breakthrough.”

Does she remember having acquired an ability or having developed a strategy to be able to work in a male-dominated environment, which was clearly the case when she started to become engaged in political activities? “If male colleagues said the meeting was going to be held in a bar, I had no problem and went there. What’s more, I noticed that men and women tended to have different topics of conversation. For example, women often talked about family and children, and at that time men didn’t feel safe talking about those issues, so there was no point in asking them “How’s your daughter?” Male colleagues talked more about sports and careers. I am very glad this has changed now and many more men are taking care of their children. But at that time, for example, I read the papers and learned about sports, in order to bond and have a conversation topic that felt safe for them.”

As regards her experience with the mass media she remembers that “the press is not always helpful. Some media placed more emphasis on how I looked than in what I had said or what I had done. And if I didn’t look good, they would criticize me. So I always tried to look well in office. I remember the first year I was a member of the cabinet, a Minister, I thought ‘I will wear two suits. I will wear one of them while the other is at the dry cleaners’. But after some weeks, a photo

journalist came to me and said ‘Madam, you have always the same suit on’. I said ‘Yes, that’s not a problem for me. Is it a problem for you?’ And he answered that in fact it was a problem for him, because it gave the impression that the photographs were always the same, and old. I always wore a broach, so I told him, OK, I will give you something new: I will change the broaches’.”

When I asked for her best piece of advice, she didn’t hesitate even for a second before answering: “Mentorship is very important. I will give you an example. In the Netherlands we have mayors who are not elected, but who are appointed by the King. The preparatory work is done by the Commissioners of the King, that is, the governors from the provinces, and that was one of my tasks. But I had a lot of trouble finding female mayoral candidates. I was trying to find a tactic to improve that. The best candidates for becoming mayors were the local counsellors.

They serve a period of 4 years, and in the third year men counsellors came to me as Commissioner of the Queen and asked me if they could postulate themselves as candidates to become mayors. I answered they had to survive at least one period as counsellors, and then in their second term, after six or seven years in office, they could come to me and if I thought they were qualified I would put them on the list. Women hardly ever came. They did not even come in their second period. They came in their third term, after eight to ten years, when they realized that it was their last term, and worried about what they would do afterwards. I wanted to change that situation. So I asked all the female counsellors of my province to meet two or three female majors from other provinces, in the hope that they could see how nice it was to become a mayor, and then would come to me

not in their third term in office but earlier. And that tactic was very helpful”.

Before we said goodbye to each other, she told me in confidential tone of voice: “I do not like her policies at all, but I’ve always have been a ‘fan’ of Margaret Thatcher. I met her twice at the European Parliament, defending the Conservatives. She was a remarkably clever and effective politician, and heavily irritating for the Social Democrats. So sometimes being a little like Margaret Thatcher but on the other side of the political spectrum, it helps. She was a female Prime Minister in a party that is not at all friendly to women. And she did it, and spent a decade in office. Now after a long time we see Theresa May in the same position doing very well. Her first foreign visit was to Angela Merkel and that was wise and clever.”

Kathalijne Buitenweg

Another day and another journey by train, this time to Amsterdam. I was welcomed by Kathalijne Buitenweg¹⁴ at her house, which boasts a large window that overlooks a canal. I fell in love immediately with the view. She was a Member of the European Parliament for a decade, between 1999 and 2009. From 1999 to 2004, she served on one of the committees so begrudgingly given to women, the Budget Committee. She also served on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and was active against discrimination and for the equal treatment of people. In 2004 she became the party leader of the Green Left within the European Parliament. In 2009, she left the Eu-

ropean Parliament and has been working on a PhD in European Law at the University of Amsterdam since 2010. Since 2012, she has been member of the Board for the Protection of Human Rights.

We talked twice in reality. The first conversation that morning was face-to-face. The second was on the phone the next day, since she wanted to comment further on a number of issues she continued to think about after the interview. An energetic woman with a frank gaze, contagious smile and sharp intellect, she referred to the importance of breaking with the stereotypes discussed in the previous chapters. The need to break these stereotypes, which prescribe that “good women” do not self promote, they wait until someone gives them an opportunity, and are not ambitious since ambition and initiative are male characteristics. When we talked about some of her achievements, such as becoming the female leader of her political parties, or serving on the Budget Committee, she shared a moral of her own life in a self-critical tone: “One of the lessons I have learned in politics, is that you have to be clear about your ambitions. It is not nice to stand up for your own ambitions, but if you don’t do it, is often not nice either.”

The stereotypes that link leadership to masculinity account for the fact that it is so hard for women to learn how to communicate their ambitions and initiatives: “I think there is a need to talk about the importance of stereotyping. I mean, if I look at Amsterdam, we see a very diverse city. But the leaders of the lists are all white males. Why is that? I myself voted for one of these white males. I think it has to do with our image of leadership. So we have to change that, in order to believe that women or people from other minorities can be leaders too. Sometimes men have to do nothing to be attributed



qualities, because these are perceived as natural in men. The stereotypes are a very pervasive and persistent problem. We make a lot of assumptions on the basis of those prejudices and stereotypes. In the labour market, for example, prejudices have played a very important role in discrimination.”

She places the change towards a greater women’s participation in the decision-making process of the 1970s: “Since the 1970’s the

idea that having equal opportunities is very important has grown in our society as a strong and important value, the acceptance that men and women should have equal rights.” But “culturally, it is much more complicated. Women are supposed to have equal opportunities and good jobs. However, especially when you are a mother, you are expected to fulfill your family obligations.” Women, if they worked, “were expected to earn lower salaries in comparison to their husbands. And if women wanted to work, they usually had to ask for permission from their husbands. For a long time, women worked until they married and then their contracts ended. So we’ve come a long way. But, then values changed in the sense that it in the 1960s and 1970s it became accepted that you should have choices and autonomy.”

Why does she think a quota law wasn’t passed in her country? “I think the rejection of the quota law has to do with a cultural tendency that exists in some European countries to reject collective solutions, because culturally these countries are more inclined to the idea that you are not part of a group but you are an individual. That belief has advantages but also disadvantages because it covers up the existence of persistent patterns of power in societies. When problems are defined as individual, they are not tackled with collective solutions. This individualistic tendency of societies feeds the idea that collective solutions are an inadequate thing from the past, a thing from the sixties or the seventies that is not fashionable anymore. Of course you have to try as an individual. But it should be recognized that some groups are being marginalized.”

How was her experience as a visible female politician in the media? “When I became Member of Parliament, in a lot of media in-

terviews they asked me how I combined my work as a politician with motherhood or family life. Before we had kids, my husband had two jobs, one of them at the local City Council. Then when we had kids, he gave up one of the jobs to take care of the household and our children. And he was the one who looked after the kids mainly. But then, after eight years, he became Alderman in Amsterdam, Vice Mayor, and I was not finished yet as Member of the European Parliament, and then everybody turned to me and asked what I would do now. I answered “well, I have the same job, he is the one who has a new one, so ask him.”

We talked about cement ceilings – the limits set by the women themselves the closer they come to power. In this respect she reflected “Personally, I often ask myself ‘Why don’t I run as leader of the list?’ And that has to do with the fact that you don’t want to sacrifice everything. And I think that there lies a problem because, on the one hand, women are fighting for a better position of influence, and we do want to work hard; but on the other hand, if you are the leader of the list you don’t have a family life. So sometimes there is also a legitimate concern because you do not want to leave your family behind. It is a very complicated balance between what you really want and how you will do it. It is complicated because of the expectations society has of you, and because we have internalized these expectations so much. It is a very difficult struggle.”

Like Ingrid van Biezen, Kathalijne Buitenweg is concerned that in the Netherlands “gender issues are not being pushed anymore, not even by women, because everybody is confident that we are done on the matter, and that now it should only be a discussion at the kitchen table. For example, it is accepted that if you want to work part time

you have the choice to do so, and you only have to discuss that with your family. But there is something strange going on when only women choose to work part time. If that's the way it works, it doesn't look like a free option; I don't believe it. There is something else and that is not recognized. People are not as autonomous as they want to see themselves or believe they are." She also believes that "men face a problematic issue because if they tell their bosses they want to work four days a week, their bosses will probably think they are not ambitious enough. If a woman works four days a week and makes it known publicly that is because she wants to stay with her kids, it is seen as a positive thing. So men have this struggle to show that they can care about their kids and be ambitious as well."

When I asked her what remains to be done, she referred to substantive equality, the type of equality that takes not only numbers and quantity into consideration, but also quality and positions of influence: "First of all, the number of women in top positions should increase in all fields. In the case of the Netherlands, although around 40% of Members of Parliament are women, only 20% of the Mayors are women. So, when we talk about involvement of women in politics, it is important to make a distinction concerning the influence they have. It is not just a matter of numbers, but also of their position to exert influence; and how many of them are in 'hard core' areas like budget, for example, and really have visibility. And once they get into the posts, women also need to build a position. Parties need to train women on these things. I think it really helps when you have a mentor who shows you that, even when you have a formal position, you have to build a substantial position."

Kathleen Ferrier

I shared my lunch with the next interviewee that midday in Amersfoort. Kathleen Ferrier¹⁵ was a Member of Parliament for the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) from 2002 until 2012. She was previously General Secretary of SKIN, the organization of migrant churches in the Netherlands. Before this, she worked in development (including in Latin America). In parliament, she worked in the fields of development and education. She was Vice-President of the Permanent Committee on Health, Welfare and Sport, Vice-President of the All Party Initiative on HIV/Aids and SRHR; and Social Representative on Migration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. She is a woman of strong convictions and made honest assessments.

She firmly believes that women's movements "have been important in the Netherlands in fighting to increase the presence of women in all spheres, including the political and the entrepreneurial fields and even the armed forces. Had it not been for the strength and perseverance of women's movements, a quota law would have been necessary." Like other interviewees, she is worried that some people believe that everything has already been achieved as regards political equality. "We have to carry on fighting to maintain what we have accomplished and accomplish more. It is a slow process which is still in progress. This does not mean that there have not been some crucial moments in which women stood up and took significant steps for their inclusion in politics, which represented landmarks and were a great example for me personally."

She mentioned an issue that had not been raised by any of the



interviewees: the role of the pill. She believes that “the contraceptive pill was crucial in the sense that it contributed to women’s inclusion in public life in general and particularly in political life because it allowed for family planning: Women could decide how many children they would have and when that would happen. The victory of women’s sexual freedom, together with other freedoms attained by women in the sixties, gave them more freedom to make their own

decisions and this was translated into the political sphere.”

For her, there is a strong relationship between women’s fight for recognition and equality and the fight undertaken by other minorities, most of all, ethnic minorities. She explained: “Being black, I belong to a double minority. Personally, I had never thought of entering politics. I was working as General Secretary of a migrants’ church association named SKIN, which sought the integration of religious minorities. While I was working there, I received a letter from women from my current political party, who had learnt about my work and wanted to get to know me. That was how I joined the political party. There was a group of women who belonged to ethnic minorities. At first, I had my reservations because I thought that it could be one of those typical measures whereby a place is found for few Afro-American women and then say ‘women of this minority have enlisted our party and here they are. That shows that we as a political party don’t discriminate against them’. But it wasn’t like that. The president of the political party was always very interested in our opinions, the same applied to the president of the political party in Parliament. They listened to what we said and tried to translate it into concrete political actions. Later, the president invited me to be the Vice-President of the group in charge of writing the electoral programme for the 2002 elections and I took up the challenge. And then women asked me if I wanted to be on the electoral ticket as a candidate. That was how I got into Parliament.”

From her experience of serving in Parliament, she remembers that when she appeared on the list as candidate “many people reacted and told me two things, basically. First, that somebody like me, without any previous political experience and as idealistic as I am, wouldn’t

survive in Parliament. Secondly, that I would be used because I am an Afro-American woman, but they would never take me seriously. They were right in both cases. Stereotypes are very strong in the whole of society as regards the inferiority of women and people who belong to ethnic minorities. There is a subtle consensus that women and ethnic minorities should be grateful for having been accepted. As a result, we mustn't cause problems. That is to say, one has to show that one is not there in vain but rather because one has something to say."

Concerning what remains to be done, she holds a firm belief that all that glitters is not gold and that "appearances are deceptive, not least in this subject. There is a long way to go as regards equality. It is agreed in the Netherlands that it is important that women should have a role as a formality and for the sake of appearances. That's why it is essential that women should agree to play this role. More often than not, they content themselves with the place men have decided that they can occupy. They have to fight for leadership in political parties, in parliament, as the heads of parliamentary committees. As a woman, you have to show that you are twice, three times, five times more capable than a man. When a man performs badly in politics, that man is judged as an individual. When a woman performs badly in politics, there is always an implied meaning that she did not do it well because she is a woman."

She gave two recommendations along the same lines as those given by most of her colleagues. The first is that it is important that women who hold leadership positions should ensure that women gain more visibility. She believes in mentorships because "women who are involved in politics set a good example to other young women. Those who enter politics need to be pushed, advised and have

their queries resolved." The second recommendation is that "it would be very helpful and important for women's inclusion in politics to have a women's caucus in the political parties. In the nineties, the lack of necessity for a caucus started to be discussed because these meeting places for women were deemed useless after women had formally joined the political parties. I am absolutely convinced that these groups are essential. There should be a place where you can meet your peers, become stronger and then go back to society or to the rest of the party with a better sense of what you are. There should be a place where women meet, fight for their causes and even apply pressure on members of the political party. As an organized group you are more effective and you have to be taken seriously. The Chair of the women's group should be part of the council of the party to ensure that group be taken seriously. Women should get organized and arrange their own meetings. It is not yet time to stop meeting up."

Before finishing the interview she points out that "there is a lot of work yet to be done on behalf of equality, women's equality, equality for people of African descent, equality for all men and women of African descent and ethnic minorities. None of them have the opportunities they deserve, nor are they politically influential. More often than not, owing to prejudices, we don't make the most of the talented people we have in political parties."

Tineke Huizinga

Once we had had lunch, Kathleen Ferrier regretted being in a hurry to leave, knowing that the next interviewee I would meet was Tineke Huizinga,¹⁶ whom she would have liked to have greeted because, as contemporaries in politics, they share mutual affection and respect. Tineke Huizinga is an amusing and upfront woman without pretense, and her positions are frank and firm. She became the first female Member of Parliament for the Christian Union (CU), a centre left orthodox protestant Christian party in 2002,. In 2007, she became Secretary of State for Transport and Public Works, and in 2010 Minister for Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment.

She places the beginning of change in women's situation in her country "after World War II. That was the moment when change started, very slowly. Then the Feminist Movement in the 1970s started to fight for the right to abortion and for other rights and gender issues, such as legislation regarding the position of women in society. Although personally I was not happy about the abortion subject because I think an unborn child has a right to life of its own, it was important because it raised the issue of the position of women in society. It was an indicator of change and the start of the inclusion of gender issues on the agenda." She described how, culture-wise, the feeling grew that you could not exclude women from decision-making: "The feminist movements were quite influential in making people think and become aware of how strange it is that half of the population is excluded from things that the other half decides. We have to raise the issue. That is the most important thing. We have to ask for a quota even if



you don't need it so that people start thinking about the issue and the discussion can begin."

She relates resistance to lose ground to women in the fight to take up spaces of power to the fact that "the inclusion of women in political life means that in politics men have twice as much competition. I think that really is a problem for them because now they have to consider everybody when they look around a room. She remembers:

“I was the first woman to be elected in my political party. There were three of us, two men and me, and the men phoned each other before our meetings. When the meetings took place, they had already talked about what they were going to do, so when we had the meeting, everything had been decided, but of course never in the open. So I was always fighting to be heard. You have two options, you fight them or you let them continue. It was much tougher than I had imagined. But I did it, although it was not easy.”

With respect to the current situation, she is of the opinion that “now political parties have changed, but the influential positions are still held by men and women tend to be excluded. Sometimes I preferred to debate in parliament because they were nicer and treated me better than in my own party.” She shared the concern of the other interviewees that “when people look at the Netherlands from the outside, they get the image that equality has been fully achieved, and even people who live here think that we are doing well and it is not really an issue anymore. There is a kind of stagnation. But I think there is a barrier we need to tackle and break.” In this sense, she believes that it would be positive if the discussion about the quota law were put on the table: “I do not know if quota law is the way of to go about it, but it is good to talk about it anyway because it makes people think and become aware of the fact that there is still work to be done.” She doesn’t hesitate to state: “Raise the subject. That is the most important thing. And ask for a quota even if you do not really want it, because it will make people think about the subject and start a discussion.”

When we talked about the barriers that remain to be broken, she commented that “most of our political party leaders in parliament are

men. And this also has to do with the cultural fact that when most people think of a leader, of what they consider a ‘real’ leader, they think of a man.” She relates this stereotype to other more basic perceptions about femininity and masculinity: “when my oldest son was 12 or 13 years old and started to look a little like a man, people asked him what he wanted to study or what he wanted to do. But when my daughter turned 12 it was totally different. She was extremely smart, but no one asked her that question. It annoyed me, it shouldn’t be like that, and that is still going on.” She is glad to see that many men are fighting for a change of mentality: “my son, who is a successful lawyer, was the first man in his company to ask for a day off every week to take care of his children, and it was difficult for him. At the company, they found his request very strange, because he has a wife, and other lawyers also have children but they work every day. I think this is a very important movement that men are starting. They do not have to be ashamed that they want to build a close relationship with their children and they don’t want their children to grow up without them. That will bring about change.”

Before saying goodbye, when I asked for a recommendation for women who are fighting for their cause now, she highlighted that they must work to strengthen each other: “It is very important that women support each other. When a woman is in an influential position she should look out for other women.”

Esther de Lange

Esther de Lange¹⁷ is a politician of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA). Since 2007, she has been Member of the European Parliament for this party. Before the European elections of 2014, she was elected the party leader for the European branch of the CDA. In the European Parliament, she is member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Special Committee on Tax Rulings and Other Measures Similar in Nature or Effect, and a member of the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. From 1999-2007, she was a Senior Policy Adviser on EU Affairs for the CDA in Brussels. The day after the Amsterdam and Amersfoort interviews, I made a phone call to her from The Hague to Brussels. She came across as a determined and confident person. She offered a different and interesting perspective on the same issues.

Women's presence in political life, she argued, has changed the way of working for everybody "for the male colleagues too. When you have more diversity it influences the way we work together and cooperate. The European Parliament is a place based on reaching compromises and cooperating, whereas a lot of national parliaments are very confrontational. Maybe, I don't know, that might explain why some countries have more women in the European Parliament than in their national parliament."

She raised doubts about the effectiveness of parliamentary committees on women's rights and other issues related to women in resolving the existing problems. She holds the opinion that "If I look at the European Parliament, women compose 95% of the Women's



Rights Committee. The advice and opinions that they put in writing, in black and white, are often regarded with disdain, not only by a lot of male colleagues but also by some female colleagues: 'Oh, it's the Women's Committee, again'. I am actually convinced that women's rights and equal payment are still really big issues in Europe, because there is a pay gap of 15% between men and women doing the same job. It would actually be better to completely abolish the

Women's Committee and deal with these issues in the Committee on Economic Affairs, the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment, etc. Because then they will be treated on committees that are 60% or 65% male and the rest female, so they are much more mixed and gender-balanced than the Women's Committees. As a result, the topics that really merit attention will get more and a better quality of attention than they do now. So if you ask 'Does having more women in parliament mean devoting more attention to women's issues?' the answer is 'Yes, but in the wrong way', because you get the attention for women's issues in 'women only' settings. And that is not the way they deserve to be treated."

She believes most political parties in the Netherlands still have equality problems at the local level and there is still work to be done there. But at the national and European levels, she thinks equality has been pretty much achieved. Having said that, "for example, for our last European election list we had a lot of strong male candidates but we didn't have a lot of good applications from female candidates. So at the level of the scouting process, it is important to make sure you get enough quality, so that the final list or "output" of the people standing for election is also balanced enough."

Similarly, she stresses that "we've never had a female party leader". She believes that it is "harder for a woman to be perceived as a leader. Even if you ask me, I can think of very few women as leaders with the exception of Angela Merkel, of course. We are also physically smaller, and communication is not only based on intelligence or academic performance but also body language. For example, we had a very heated debate once at the European Parliament. The leader of the Green Party in the Parliament is a woman. The debate was getting

very heated, she was getting a lot of criticism, so there was a lot of shouting going on in the chamber, and her voice was rising, as were also the voices of male colleagues. At a certain point the microphone was turned off. She kept shouting. If a man does that, he is considered to be showing perseverance. If a woman does so, she is considered to be hysterical. So it is a very difficult task for a woman to find how to behave in order to be perceived as a leader. For men it is easier because they do not have as many traps as we do. If they lose their temper, is all right. If we do, it is much more damaging."

What are her recommendations? The first is that setting an example is very important. "Lead by example. If as a woman you get there, don't feel like the 'exotic bird'. Women in leadership positions should encourage other women." Second, she believes that "the scouting process for female candidates needs special attention. Women need another style of scouting. They tend to be less proactive than male candidates, so they need a more gradual process of inclusion."

Finally, she warns against cement ceilings and sticky floors: "children are another important issue for female politicians. For example, the crèche of the European Parliament closes at 7pm, and our evening meetings go on until 11pm. Women should know this and that there are ways of coping with this situation. Because if not, many women work very hard to get a place, and then when they do, they find out this reality and decline."

Tineke Netelenbos

Tineke Netelenbos¹⁸ came to the NIMD office in The Hague to share her thoughts and experiences. She is a warm and kind woman with a soft voice, and she expresses her ideas with clarity. She was elected to the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament in 1987. She has been member of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA). She served as her party's spokesperson for education and as Chair of the Public Health Parliamentary Commission. She was also appointed as Secretary of State for Education (1994–1998). From 1998 to 2002, she served as Minister for Transport, Public Works and Water Management. In the following years, she functioned as acting mayor of several smaller cities. Since 2008, she has been president of the Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners. She is a member of the Board of ECSA and the Board of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers. Among many other activities, she is a member of the Advisory Board of MARIN, President of ECP (Platform for the Information Society) and member of the Advisory Board on Cyber Security.

She told me that the inclusion of women in political decision-making “started in the 1970s and in my party, the Dutch Labour Party. There was a group of women in the party called ‘the red women’. They advocated for more women in politics, and they wanted more female candidates and for women to be involved. First, it was a group of women. In politics it always goes like this: you only get something if you raise your voice. At that moment it caused women a lot of trouble to be active in the Feminist Movement because it was perceived as a very radical movement. So these women in the party had a lot of



discussions regarding the links they should or shouldn't have with the Feminist Movement, because they were not so radical.”

When I ask her about affirmative action measures, she states that she is against quotas “because then people get to say that a woman is in parliament because of the quota. For women, it is always very difficult to show their abilities. And when you have a quota, people use that as an excuse to disqualify you. In my party, women fought for

their places, and they are now strong enough, and we use the zipper system, for example, for the electoral lists. But, on the other hand, the dominant places in the party are still occupied by men: party leaders are men, leaders in parliament tend to be men, regularly men are the leaders... We have had a lot of Queens, but never a female Prime Minister.”

She admits that the current division of work between gender disfavours the political participation of women: “in politics you have to work a lot, devoting a lot of energy and time. And on many occasions this is complex for women because they have to multitask. Often, the meetings in Parliament extend to 11pm in the evening. Some women stay, and others leave and go home. In my time, if you had an agreement at home, if you had stable children and managed to stay in Parliament late in the evenings, you had the chance to grow and get a position of influence, for example, becoming a Minister at some point. And that is because you have to be there in order to build up a network”. In spite of this, she believes that things have improved and “nowadays women face better conditions than we did in my time. Now women have education, careers, partners who share the family tasks. In my days, I encountered many, many situations where women didn’t struggle for higher and better places in politics because they feared the complexities that would bring to their family lives.”

She affirms that even if women manage to break the barriers and take up influential positions they still encounter difficulties with public perception and the mass media. Although leadership is regarded as male, her piece of advice for women is that they should be themselves: “We used to joke with other female Ministers that ‘if your hair is OK, everything is OK’. But it certainly helps when you feel

well-dressed and feminine. Do not copy men. Be yourself. If you behave like men, people will think of you as an ugly woman. In particular, opponents and hostile media will frame you that way. Women are the victims and targets of framing more often than men. Women suffer more negative framing than men. When a woman cries, she is portrayed as emotionally unstable. Men are allowed to make more mistakes than women. If you look at the internet, Twitter for example, there is a different standard for judging men and women in politics, their actions and mistakes.”

When I asked her what her main recommendations would be for women who want to occupy leadership positions, she focused on three main points. First, you should not be modest, “be active in politics, don’t be modest. You are representing people, you don’t need to be an academic or a professor to do that. If you want it, if you think you have something to win, fight for it, be active”. The second recommendation is that the examples set by other women are of utmost importance: “I believe in role models. Many times, when you meet with young girls and women, they ask “How can I be like you?” Finally, she advises women not to hesitate to accept a position that they are offered: “If a position is offered to you, just say yes. Do not think you don’t know anything about it. Men always say yes. Women miss opportunities because they are cautious. You have to say yes; ask for help once you are doing the job, and learn along the way. I think a trap for women is that we want to be very prepared and good at things before we agree to doing those things. But if you hesitate too much, you miss your chance. So you have to say ‘yes’, and then see where it lands.”

Winnie Sorgdrager

It is Friday. My last interview and the last day of my stay in The Hague. I am meeting Winnifred (Winnie) Sorgdrager,¹⁹ jurist and politician. She is a member of D66 party (Democrats 66). Before her political career, she was General Attorney. From 1994 to 1998 she was appointed Minister of Justice. Since 1 January 2006, she has been a member of the Council of State of the Netherlands. She is also member of the Supervisory Board of the Leiden University Medical Centre. She is Commissioner for the Association for the Preservation of Historic Houses of the Netherlands, Vereniging Hendrick de Keyser, and Member of the Board of the Arbo Unie. She welcomed me into her office in the afternoon and she struck me as a sound professional and an experienced, sensible and cautious woman.

We conversed as we had coffee. In her opinion, women's movements in the sixties "opened the eyes of both men and women. The change took place in a relatively short period. A cultural change took place across society as a whole." She was the second interviewee to state that "one thing especially was very important in the occurrence of this change: the contraceptive pill. It created the possibility to choose to have children or not, and when to have them". She believes that "In the Netherlands, women had a more traditional role than in other countries because of the Christian tradition that thought of women as housewives. Women who worked were seen to be taking the place of men."

She believes that quotas were not necessary because, given the cultural change that was taking place, the political parties did not want



to risk being frowned upon by society: "political parties recognized the problem, but most were afraid of how voters would see them, and half of the voters are women. So if they had neglected the position of women, they would have been taking a great risk. And that was an incentive to change in the sense of including women." When she analyzes the social dynamics of the inclusion of women she reflects that "the way women's rights became culturally accepted, the way women

pushed for equality, is more like the way homosexuals pushed for their rights and became accepted, than the dynamics of the inclusion and recognition of other groups, such as ethnic minorities.”

Along the same lines that other colleagues have expressed, and as has been testified throughout this book, she holds the opinion that, although women in politics have grown in numbers, they haven’t gained power and influence in the same proportion: “We have many congresswomen and also women in local communities. But once you get there, it is more difficult for a woman than for a man to build a position. For example, women do not get to deal with the important subjects; they are given to men. Instances of double standards and leadership stereotypes are still present in the way that they don’t challenge what is politically correct: “People will be nice to women, but they will treat women differently. It is so subtle that is hard to describe”. And what happens to the women who, like her, do make it and manage to hold one of those positions? When she describes how she managed to become the first female Minister of Justice in her country she said that “people had to get used to seeing a woman in an executive position that was traditionally associated with a masculine role, so they found it difficult.”

Similarly she describes having experienced first-hand another instance of double standards: the media. “The media also treats men and women differently. When it comes to women, sometimes the media focuses on the clothes they wear, but they do not do that with male politicians. At times we had long debates in the evening, and the light in Parliament is harsh. So the next day you would read in the papers that I looked tired and they asked themselves if maybe it was too much for me. Instead, the men who also looked tired like me, were

described as heroes.”

When I asked her for her recommendations, she placed an emphasis on acquiring negotiating skills as well as showing gender solidarity. Concerning the first issue, she holds the belief that women can be good at negotiating for the others but they “are not very good negociators for their own sake, not only in politics but also in private companies. What’s more, many women do not apply for or want to occupy the top positions, they are happy to be second or third. Women are afraid.” Concerning the second issue, she warns: “If you are in politics or in a ‘masculine’ organisation, try not to be the only woman in that situation, because you will be easily isolated and feel lonely. Try to have more women with you, look for the solidarity of other women.”

What did we learn?

There is no doubt that, in Sweden and the Netherlands, women have managed to come closer to a situation of numerical equality which compares favourably with that of the rest of the world, without resorting to quotas and affirmative action initiatives. However, all the interviewees highlight that there is a long way to go to achieve substantive equality. While I was listening attentively to all of them, I couldn’t help thinking about the analogy with “Animal Farm”, where all animals were equal but some animals were more equal than others. Here, even in these countries, where the situation is more egalitarian and favorable for women, in politics men and women are equal but in practice it seems that men are “more equal” than women.

In parliament, women seem to have almost achieved parity, unaided by the law. This happened because the idea of equality between women and men as a social value was culturally established. Also, because of all the pressure exerted by the regional block with its recommendations for the individual countries. But, in government, ministries and even in decisive parliamentary committees, the lesser presence of women is significant. No woman has been appointed Prime Minister in either of the countries. Glass ceilings and walls are still getting in women's way and hampering their development.

All the interviewees agree on the importance of cultural change. They think that breaking stereotypes is the cornerstone of success. Despite all the real progress that has been made, leadership is still an unresolved matter and society owes women a solution. Social stereotypes persist as well as cases of double standards, both in the media and in society itself, about leadership and what is "typical" of women and men. That is why most interviewees recommended that gender-unbiased education should start in the earliest stages of childhood. Both women and men should play new roles, the division of domestic chores and personal care tasks has to be raised again so that women are no longer hindered by the sticky floors or self-imposed cement ceilings for fear of making the lives of their families more difficult. It is important that women should lose their fear, break those ceilings, show their ambitions publicly, be competitive in the process of fulfilling them, and not hesitate to promote themselves, be proud of their achievements and blow their own horns.

Everything has not been solved yet. We must carry on talking and discussing. The debate on equality must be kept alive and active. And we must remember that gender equality is even more difficult when

apart from a woman's gender, there are other factors involved such as her belonging to an ethnic or religious minority or an economically disadvantaged group.

Although gender issues must to be pushed by the society as a whole, we know that women have decisive roles to play in multiple simultaneous fronts, both individually and collectively.

From the collective point of view, women's movements and organizations - either in civil society or within political parties - are fundamental to carrying on fighting for equality. Each and every one of the interviewees regardless of their age, political party membership and ideology, agreed that mentorships, building up networks for women and sisterhoods have the utmost importance in both politics and the business world.

From the individual point of view, every woman who "makes it" takes on the responsibility of bringing others along, not only in order to help others but also to help themselves and to avoid finding themselves in a lonely and isolating situation. And those women who have not yet achieved what they are trying to accomplish should let go of their fears, dare to take up challenges and truly believe that, as a great poet once said: "There is no path; the path is made by walking."

7

What is being done?

Important progress has been made regarding women's participation in politics around the world. Women are increasingly present at all levels of political representation, from parliamentary to presidential spheres, even though the latter is more relevant for its symbolic than statistical weight. These advances weren't accidental, born of chance or a product of the passage of time. They have taken place thanks to concrete and joint efforts made by organizations and people who work tirelessly and meticulously with defined goals and objectives. Organizations and people who work out solutions; gain experience; learn from mistakes and successes; make the most of what works and rule out what doesn't; and revise and re-implement improved programmes. These people and organizations do not stop pushing for the change that is so necessary.

In this chapter, I will provide documentary evidence on some of the initiatives and actions that are being carried out. The goals they all share include transforming cultural conceptions of gender within society and political parties; raising mass media awareness on the need

to change female and male stereotypes; and strengthen women themselves for their political participation by training them in areas such as leadership, negotiation skills and communication tools.

As I outlined at the beginning of this book, I will focus on only a handful of these initiatives. We will refer to some of the programmes carried out by The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) in Latin American and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the Dominican Republic. I chose these programmes because they are very good examples, which I know first-hand for I was given the chance to join them. This represents a tiny sample of what is going on not only on the American continent but also across the entire world. We can learn from these experiences and they may become a source of inspiration for creating new initiatives.

NIMD in Latin America

The last of the interviews that I carried out during my stay in Holland, was one with my host in The Hague, Heleen Schrooyen, Senior Programme Manager for NIMD in Latin America. She has clear standpoints and visions related to the work she does enthusiastically and with contagious gaiety. Heleen is a warm person, close and accessible, always willing to listen attentively without prejudices, open to welcoming the inclusion of new proposals and contributions to the intense and complex work she coordinates. I count myself lucky to have been working with her for a long time, sharing ideas, projects and experiences. She has the gift of optimism among her virtues, which makes things appear to be easy or at least, possible.

NIMD was founded in 2000 by seven Dutch political parties. This multiparty identity provides the legitimacy and unique opportunity to work on an impartial basis with all political parties in a country and encourage dialogue between them. NIMD strives for inclusive and transparent democracies by assisting political parties in developing democracies. The organisation's approach is characterized by dialogue. NIMD provides safe environments for political parties in a country to meet, overcome distrust and work together on political issues. NIMD also works directly with parties to strengthen their organizational and programmatic capacities. Furthermore, a democratic culture is fostered by providing political education programmes for politicians and potential politicians. It is based in the Netherlands, and works with over 200 political parties in more than 20 countries in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and Southern Europe. Together with the political parties and their local implementing partners, they contribute to inclusive and stable political systems in these countries. NIMD believes in inclusive democracies; both women and men need to be meaningfully involved in political parties, regardless of their age, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic background. The idea is to ensure that both written and unwritten rules and practices that exclude women from participating in the political arena are addressed.

I talked with Heleen Schrooyen about the initiatives that NIMD is carrying out in Latin America. In this region of the world, the organization supports five different programmes in Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. In each of these countries, diverse activities are conducted in accordance with the political system and political culture. According to Heleen, "some important progress has been made in women's political participation in the last few years,

but women who want to enter politics are still faced with formal and informal barriers."

NIMD backs women's inclusion, works with affirmative action initiatives which are already in progress, and finds alternatives to overcome existing obstacles. For this, reason it focuses on three main areas of work and considers "that long-lasting, sustainable and positive change can only take place when remarkable advances are made in three intertwined areas: the political system, political actors, and political culture." Regarding the political system, Heleen Schrooyen explains that "NIMD facilitates dialogue to identify and overcome the existing formal and informal barriers. Similarly, measures to modify the political system so that gender equality can be achieved are under discussion." NIMD regards the exchange of ideas as essential and "provides technical support in the debates for the reform of the political system and national legislations. It is about facilitating dialogue in different spheres: on the one hand, between the political parties and, on the other hand, between political parties and civil society."

Concerning the second critical area, the political actors, "NIMD works closely with political parties, giving technical training and providing women members with different tools. This training may take the form of a degree for female politicians, as is the case in El Salvador, but it might equally take the form of training for female candidates participating in electoral processes, such as is the case in Honduras and Guatemala." The work on the third area, political culture, is equally important in order to "introduce the idea that women can be as good politicians as men are. We consider the entire political situation as a whole. Therefore, we support change in legislation, but also work with each political party and with the way political parties

relate to society. Political parties have very good female politicians and they have to support them so that women dare to participate in politics.”

We talked about the programmes and activities NIMD supports to push for gender equality in the different countries of the region. In the case of Colombia, for example, NIMD contributes with the Ranking of Equality between women and men in political parties. “This is a ranking designed to support movements and political parties so that they can identify their weaknesses and strengths as regards the subject of equal opportunities. As a result, the political parties have revised internal strategies taking this information into account to guarantee equality between men and women.” In Guatemala “NIMD provides technical assistance in the process of reforming the electoral and the political party law. Among other things, the inclusion of a quota for female politicians was suggested given the small number of women in Parliament.” Similarly, in that same country, NIMD has worked for more than ten years with the Women’s Committee of the Political Parties’ Forum, “training members to become trainers for women from their own political parties.” Moreover, “thanks to the backing of NIMD, 80% of political parties in Guatemala boast a Women’s Secretariat.” This Committee has been instrumental in passing a law in Guatemala against femicide: “We managed to get women from the civil society and female politicians to come to an agreement to propose a bill which was passed.”

Heleen Schrooyen explained that NIMD started to work in Honduras in 2012 “but the situation there was different from Guatemala’s since Honduras already had a quota law, which would rise from 30% to 50% in the following elections. In the first place, we focused on the

“Candidate’s Academy”, a programme which aims to help candidates learn to communicate their electoral message and position themselves not only within their political parties but also before the general public. As a result, 10% of the participants were elected for Congress. We also learned that we cannot wait until the following electoral process to set up these schools, we have to start before with a view to achieving parity; that is to say, 50% women. Therefore, since the stakes are high we cannot run risks. It is important that all political parties should be open to women’s participation. That is why, since 2013 we have been working with all political parties individually in order to raise awareness of the issue of women’s participation”. Heleen explained that NIMD also works to link female politicians with civil society organizations “since within the civil society there existed a certain idea that everything had been achieved with the inclusion of the quota law. And as we know, based on experiences from other countries where NIMD works, the process is not necessarily linear, sometimes there are setbacks and this situation should be avoided.” In addition to the “Candidate’s Academy” whose activities take place during electoral campaigns, Honduras boasts the “Congresswomen’s School”, in which we work with elected congresswomen and facilitate a programme with the Women’s Committee of the National Congress to establish their legislative agenda”. She points out that, although it is not easy to draw up a joint agenda, “the idea appealed to women and they established an agenda which included different topics related to gender issues. This agenda is supposed to continue even after the current congressional period finishes and after a new electoral process takes place.”

In the case of El Salvador, this country has an “Association of

Congresswomen and former Congresswomen” which had already implemented a diploma programme for female politicians. It was then “that NIMD joined them and became associated with them. It is a four-month programme in which different subjects are covered. Local and national female politicians take part in it. They are given the tools they need and they work on different cultural and political aspects as well. Moreover, a 30% quota law was implemented in El Salvador for the first time in 2015 and NIMD worked closely with the political parties to ensure an increase in the number of women elected”.

NIMD’s underlying belief is that progress can only be made through dialogue and consensus: “That is why we believe it is important that men should be involved in gender issues. A programme is currently being carried out in Colombia, Tunisia and Kenya in which we pay special attention to two variables: unwritten barriers hidden by culture and ways of involving men in the process of achieving gender equality in political parties,” she explained.

As well as working with female politicians and female candidates, and trying to change the rules of the game, “we also try to include young people, for example, through our “Democracy Schools”, which are attended by leaders and young people from political parties and civil society, men and women in the same proportion. These schools embody the idea of gender equality. It is important that we should nurture the idea that gender is an important issue for young people in particular, who are the leaders of the future.”

Before ending the interview, she emphasised that gender will be one of NIMD’s priorities in the next five-year-period. She is convinced “that international cooperation is more useful to speeding up

processes of change which are already in progress in each society than starting new processes. When we see the numbers, we see that speeding up processes is very important to achieving equality.”

When I asked her if any other projects will be added to the ones in progress, she answered that they would carry on with current programmes but they have also identified “two main areas that we want to delve into and make progress on. One has to do with local political participation, because the percentages of female mayors and female councillors across Latin America are very low. Although parity has been achieved at the national level in some countries, there are still challenges ahead at the local level. The second area involves the press and communication. We need to work with the media in order to change the tendency of certain news stories to put the emphasis on women’s physical appearance or beauty rather than the content of their messages. These kinds of frames don’t help female politicians to be taken seriously at all. Therefore, we will try to influence and change the way the media gives coverage to female politicians.”

To understand in more detail how all these initiatives have been implemented and what each one of them is about, let me share with you what I learned after talking to the NIMD coordinators in three countries: Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

NIMD in El Salvador

Patricia Navarro Cañas is the coordinator of the NIMD Office in El Salvador. We worked together for the first time when she invited me to her country to work on workshops and trainings on commu-

nication skills aimed at female congresswomen, councillors, mayors and advisors as well as officials from the Gender Unit of the National Congress. It is really always a pleasure for me to work, share time and ideas with her. She told me that NIMD started working in El Salvador in the middle of 2013 and “since then it has been conducting different initiatives with a view to favouring better inclusion and participation of women in politics as this is crucial for the strengthening of democracy in this country.” In El Salvador women account for 52.7% of the population, which in turn represents 54% of the electorate. By 2016, women already made up 32% of those elected for the Legislative Assembly, as well as 10% of mayors and 25% of trade unions. Patricia Navarro explained that “although there had been a gradual increase in women’s political participation in the electoral processes of the past decades, women still encounter multiple economic, ideological and psychological obstacles to participating in politics. For example, the political sphere is still male-dominated, with typically male rules, cultural patterns and behaviour. In such political domains, there is a lack of backing from the political parties; we see a lack of cooperation between women or simply a lack of sisterhood, education or training. There is no trust in women’s abilities and capacity, and there is political violence.”

What initiatives does NIMD carry out in El Salvador? One of them is the Diploma Programme on women’s leadership in politics. Since 2013, NIMD has been helping to organize four yearly editions of this training programme. The objective is “to encourage women to participate in politics and join the lists of candidates for the elections. The Association of Congresswomen and Former Congresswomen from El Salvador has been implementing the training for the last ten

years. NIMD deemed it more effective to join this than doing something different since this initiative seems tailor-made for the mission and principles by means of which NIMD is ruled.” Navarro explains that the Diploma Programme targets “female leaders from all political parties represented in the Legislative Assembly and other State entities. For example, among its participants there are representatives of Attorney General’s Office of the Republic and the Electoral Supreme Court. On average there have been 44 participants in each programme.”

What are the contents of the syllabus? It consists 105 teaching hours and the subjects are divided into six modules of classroom-based training, involving theoretical and practical tuition methodologies. The topics include self-esteem, empowerment, leadership, communication skills, conflict resolution, management, and environmental skills. The Diploma training “emerged as a response to the problems that the Congresswomen themselves have experienced in the course of their careers. The schedule is flexible and it is revised and analyzed just in case something has to be changed, improved or expanded before each programme is run. That is the reason for the inclusion of an environment module, another on conflict resolution, and an increase in the number of hours.” Up to now, 170 female leaders have participated in the programme.

NIMD conducted surveys and interviews with graduates of the programme in order to systematize the lessons learned and make recommendations. All the information was included in a document entitled “Lead to Transform Together”, published in 2016. Regarding the transformations that the Diploma Programme brought about in the participants, Navarro believes that “one of the biggest changes in

the graduates and one of the most relevant achievements is in self-esteem. We can also see changes in their motivation to participate in politics and apply for positions. Also, in the type of leaders they became, which implied a significant shift in focus from 'I' to 'we'."

Another positive result is that this Diploma Programme promotes multiparty interaction "94% of graduates surveyed admitted keeping in touch with other graduates, which in 75% of cases included not only members of their own political party but also members of other parties". Patricia Navarro highlighted the fact that when women get the degree they are "empowered to empower. Many of the participants have become increasingly aware of injustice, unequal distribution of power and their rights."

Another activity aimed at women was the organization of workshops in 2015 and 2016 focusing on political communication skills. Congresswomen, their advisors and female officials from the Gender Unit of the Legislative Assembly attended one of the 2015 training sessions. Female mayors and councillors participated in the other session. In 2016, the participants were members of the Network of Women Politicians from El Salvador. In all cases, women from all the political parties with legislative or council representation participated. The workshops were conducted in coordination with the Gender Unit of the legislative Assembly, the Congresswomen Group and the National Association of Alderwomen, Women Trustees and Women Mayors. The methodology of the workshops involved both theoretical and practical tuition. "This activity was a response to one of the aspects prioritized by the Women's Parliamentary Group, namely the need to strengthen their knowledge and skills for public communication, especially in discourse and public speaking," explained Navarro.

Among the NIMD's many achievements in this respect, we can find the project entitled "The Possible Space: Women in positions of power at local level in the Departments of San Salvador and La Libertad", financed by the Canadian Embassy in El Salvador through The Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (FCIL), whose general objective is to promote the better inclusion of women in politics at the local level. The project lasted for five months and ended in January 2015. It led to alliances with several universities and associations, which supported each of its different aspects. Once the project had been finalized "the factors that favour and hinder women's political participation and representation at local level, were evaluated. Also, a multi-party agenda on equality was established, which contains a series of actions to be carried out to target the obstacles identified. A Commitment Act was signed by the seven political parties from El Salvador to implement the agenda." A document including both the study and the agenda was published. It was entitled "Women's political participation in local governments in El Salvador: Achievements and challenges". On their own initiative, the political parties from El Salvador decided to sign the recommendations to show their willingness to follow up on them.

Another task carried out by NIMD in El Salvador was to help with the implementation of Resolution 1325 adopted in 2000 by the United Nations Security Council. This Resolution reaffirms women's role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as the importance of their participation in peace negotiations, peace-keeping operations and post-conflict situations. This Resolution remained almost unknown in El Salvador in 2013. In collaboration with another Dutch institution (CORDAID), NIMD conducted a

study entitled “Women, Peace and Security. Report on the fulfillment of UN Resolution 1325 in El Salvador”. This served as a springboard for prioritizing this issue, which included the formation of a group called the “Women Friends’ Group of the R1325” to support its implementation. This group was set up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ISDEMU, UN Women, the Chilean Embassy in El Salvador, CORDAID-ASPRODE and NIMD itself. Patricia Navarro comments that, thanks to the backing of these institutions, “many workshops could be carried out to raise awareness of the Resolution – unknown up until then. This was conducive to satisfactory results.” In November 2014, the National Committee for the implementation of the Resolution was sworn in. The Committee was composed of 17 governmental institutions, the Public Ministry, the Legislative Organ and members of civil society. A roadmap towards elaborating a national action plan was agreed.

Regarding one of the previously mentioned areas on which NIMD plans to focus – the mass media and communication –, NIMD in El Salvador ran a workshop for journalists, social communicators, institutional communicators and academics in November 2016. Its aim was to reflect on the importance of providing an egalitarian and gender-unbiased journalistic coverage. The workshop resulted in a series of recommendations in the form of a Decalogue formulated by the attendees. Later, NIMD spread the word about these contributions in the mass media and in academic circles.

NIMD in El Salvador: A case study

Linda Villalta is an empowered woman dedicated to the inclusion of women in politics in El Salvador. She is a Systems Engineer with a specialization in technology management and training, and a calling in politics.

She started out in this field relatively recently, in 2011, as Membership Secretary for the National Coalition Party (Partido de Concertación Nacional, PCN), a party known for its male prevalence and considered for many years to be party of the military. In 2014, she became a member of the party’s Executive Board as National Secretary for Women’s Affairs. She was the first woman in PCN’s history to take a place on the Board, the party’s highest governing body, a position she still holds today.

She ran as a candidate in the capital, San Salvador, for the 2015-2018 period but was unsuccessful. Yet she was not discouraged; far from it, she continued her tireless work across the country’s 14 Departments, encouraging more women to get involved in politics and blazing a trail, both within her party and in El Salvador as a whole.

Linda is a graduate of the seventh edition of the Leadership Diploma for Women in Politics, held in 2013. She has also taken part in a number of other NIMD training activities, including sessions on training for trainers and political communication skills.

On the effect of this training on her life, Linda explains that “The Diploma really helps with personal growth, and with working alongside other

parties. It helps to depolarize politics; its great advantage is that it brings eight different parties together and this takes away the friction, stops you from viewing each other as enemies. I have realised that, in order to move our country forward, it is better to coexist harmoniously with other parties, than shutting them out.”

Regarding the training’s influence on her work, she says “I work across all 14 Departments, empowering women; building their capacities; and enhancing their self-esteem, leadership, group work and group dynamics. I target women from the party - my objective is to raise their awareness so that they can raise awareness among others. But we also strengthen the capacities of women who are not from the party, always at the national level.”

NIMD in Honduras

Miguel Cálix Martínez is the NIMD’s coordinator in Honduras. I have already lost count of the projects he invited me to join to train and advise female politicians, young leaders, political party spokespersons, civil society organizations and parliamentary committees in his country. They were all so interesting that it is difficult to choose one as my favourite. He is a tireless worker and I am very grateful to him for having confidence in me and sharing with me his valuable initiatives that he develops for NIMD. Work days are always intensive with him and Ana Lopez – Programme Officer in the same NIMD office.

However, his intelligence, humanity, warmth, extraordinary hospitality and great sense of humour make time fly, make me enjoy the adventure and help me to feel at home in Honduras. When we talked about NIMD’s main achievements regarding the political participation of women in his country, the first thing Miguel Cálix mentioned was that, from the very beginning of NIMD’s programme there, “it had among its priority objectives the strengthening of women’s capacities to allow them to exercise their political rights inclusively and without discrimination. In addition, the programme has always aimed to support their empowerment in leadership positions and decision-making as regards public and legislative tasks as well as the political party domain. In these efforts, strategic alliances, collective labour, and making the most of windows of opportunity were the fundamental pillars.”

Between July and August 2013 a project entitled “Candidates’ Academy: sowing more democracy and more equality” was rolled out. It created the possibility to join forces with other organizations and institutions with similar objectives, such as NDI, UNDP, UN Women INAM and International IDEA. The goal was to train women who would run for the first time as candidates for positions elected by popular vote, mainly Congresswomen. The Academy “carried out its activities in six cities and provided training to 187 women, all of them leaders from the nine political parties running for elections. During the training workshops, all the participants shared their experiences and knowledge with a team of experts who were responsible for providing them with theoretical and practical training focused on gender perspective, strategy and communication that would favour their electoral participation. When this process was over, 11 of the 33

congresswomen elected (the total number of seats was 128) and 5 out of the 38 substitutes had participated in the Candidates' Academy."

In September 2014, NIMD organized an International Seminar entitled "A road to follow: women's political equality", which brought together women politicians from several countries including the Latin American region and Europe. According to Cáliz, the objective was "to share visions and regional and international experiences about the advances and challenges to strengthen equitable and egalitarian political participation between men and women. A book with all the lessons learned from the Candidates' Academy was presented, and was very well received by the male and female participants."

In 2014, training for women politicians started up again, but this time around it was oriented towards a new generation of members of the National Congress. With the active participation of the Gender Equality Committee of the Congress and most institutions that had taken part in the Candidates' Academy, the "Congresswomen's Academy" was organized. Its goal is to "train Congresswomen from different political parties to draft public gender-oriented policies, placing a special emphasis on the strengthening of women's leadership in the political and social spheres. The emphasis is particularly – though not exclusively – placed on measures which allow the effective application of parity in political parties and in 2017 and subsequent candidacy elections."

The Congresswomen's Academy was conceived primarily as a semester training cycle. Three training sessions were organized from April 2014 to April 2015. Cáliz quickly explained that the Academy "served as a framework with a view to formulating and pushing a multiparty gender agenda based on four thematic areas: women's po-

litical participation, gender violence, budgets with gender perspective and economic empowerment." They managed to draft a memorandum of understanding between several accompanying institutions – NIMD among them – and the National Congress to mutually support the consolidation and empowerment of the Gender Equality Committee. In addition, the round-tables agreed to discuss the above-mentioned thematic areas.

In Honduras, NIMD placed the strengthening of the coordination capacities of the Gender Equality Committee as a high institutional priority. With this aim, it fostered the collective construction of a strategic action plan in which NIMD's support turned out to be crucial. Cáliz highlights that "this collective work culture has favoured the leaders of the Gender Equality Committee in the process of developing the proposal for the implementation of the regulations of political parity in the electoral processes. Representatives of the Gender Equality Committee, the Women's Secretariats of each political party, multiparty women's associations, feminist institutions from civil society, the National Woman's Institute and many other institutions – among them NIMD – participated in the process."

Throughout 2014, 2015 and 2016, NIMD has supported the early identification and training of emerging female leaders from political parties and civil society. NIMD forged an alliance with the Canadian Fund for the Local Initiatives (FCIL) to carry out training workshops in Honduras entitled "Women leaders: towards an egalitarian political participation." The aim is the effective achievement of parity in the primaries and general elections of 2017. Up to now, the workshops have trained "193 women who have been strengthened for their participation in this elective processes."

NIMD in Honduras currently focuses on supporting and developing three important processes. First, they are reviewing and monitoring the Gender Equality Committee's Action Plan 2016–2017, which also includes the development of a communication plan. Second, they are setting up and organizing a new “Candidates’ Academy” for the primaries in May 2017, in cooperation with other institutions and organizations. Third, they provide backing and technical support to the oversight of Political Parity and all the other laws, regulations and measures that guarantee an egalitarian participation. These are all challenges that, and I can testify to this, NIMD in Honduras is ready to face with the same enthusiasm which has always characterized this team. I have experienced this enthusiasm personally and it is without a doubt one of the keys to their excellent results.

NIMD in Honduras: A case study

“Being young and being a woman does not make me less capable nor less intelligent.”

These words were written by Fátima Mena Baide, Member of the National Congress in Honduras, in defense of her legislative and political work.

In 2013, she participated in a capacity-building workshop known as the “Candidate’s Academy”, organized by NIMD in cooperation with other partners. That same year, she was elected to represent the Cortés Department in the National Congress. At the age of 32, she was appointed Party Whip, Chair of the Com-

mittee on Ethics and Transparency, and Secretary of the Committee on Gender Equality.

She feels she owes part of her political success to the knowledge and skills she acquired through the Academy. In particular, the opportunity to share experiences with other participants helped her to understand the realities faced by women politicians in their communities.

A successful lawyer whose political approach is based on fighting corruption and improving the political system to achieve social justice, Mena has been involved in a number of significant projects supporting Honduran women. Her work includes advocating stronger penalties for irresponsible parenting, contributing to the parliamentary agenda on gender, and jointly drafting the bills on the principle of gender parity (50% quota) and the zipper system for the political participation of men and women in electoral processes. In addition, she has contributed to setting up an Academy of Women Parliamentarians, a space for dialogue where women can work together to draft gender-sensitive public policies and bills.

Today, she continues her dedication to inclusive initiatives and is an important figure in the fight towards equality and equity, not only in parliament, but also within her party and in Honduran society as a whole.

NIMD in Guatemala

Ligia Blanco is the Director and Legal Representative of NIMD in Guatemala. Although I knew her already, since we had both attended international events on gender issues and the promotion of equality, our first joint activity took place when she invited me to her home to run workshops for a diploma programme for female Congresswomen and legislative advisers. She welcomed me with the most generous hospitality; we shared work and the most delicious food. NIMD has carried out a wide range of activities in the last few years in Guatemala. Ligia Blanco explained that, in 2012 for example, “meetings took place with the Citizen Committee of the Permanent Forum of Political Parties, the elected Congresswomen for the period 2012–2016 and civil society organizations to address the issue of women’s political participation and define a strategic route to prioritize women’s legislative agenda.” In the same year, a training course on municipal management with a gender perspective for female mayors was developed jointly with Guatemala’s City Hall. In addition to this, NIMD provided the Women’s Committee from the National Congress with technical assistance in the process of implementing women’s municipal offices.

In 2013, the political trainings continued and three diploma courses were organized around the national and environmental reality, targeting female politicians and community leaders. In the same year, the Women’s Committee of the Permanent Forum of Political Parties “was responsible for generating ideas to create the Women’s Ministry or Women’s Institute. Several activities were carried out and a report was produced with recommendations for each political party

as regards three main gender issues: the institutionalization of women, the reforms of the electoral law, and sustainable development and gender.” As in El Salvador, NIMD also supported the UN 1325 Resolution in Guatemala, in collaboration with UN Women. In the same year, NIMD supported women’s organizations to sign agreements and stage events “in order to promote electoral reform to take parity into account and bring about alternation in the political representation system in positions elected by popular vote as well as in the internal organization of political parties,” explained Ligia Blanco.

In 2014, certain agreements were reached in discussion groups run by the Women’s Committee of the Permanent Forum of Political Parties. For example, “women who participated in political parties assumed a double responsibility both internally and externally as regards compliance to the 1325 Resolution and came to the conclusion that it required a national plan of action”. That same year, a strategic alliance was forged between NIMD and UN Women with an eye to “working on a campaign strategy to promote the political participation of women in Guatemala.” As a result, a political strategy for the media was designed.

In 2015, NIMD, UN women, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), launched a training Diploma for elected Congresswomen and male and female legislative advisers. The process started in November 2015 and finished in March 2016. The seminars covered subjects such as women and political participation, lobbying tools, political negotiation and communication, parliamentary practices, legislative agenda to facilitate women’s progress and round tables to share experiences with women from parliamentary caucuses.

NIMD in Guatemala: A case study

Sandra Morán is a versatile woman, someone who knows how to juggle her life as a social activist and her duties as a Member of Congress. She advocates strongly for the ethical role of women in party politics. She is a strong, spirited woman with roots in the women's movement who fought for the Guatemalan Peace Agreements in the 1990s.

As a social activist active in the fight for the rights of women, children and the LGBTI community, she ran in the 2015 elections with the Convergence party. In September of that year, she won her seat in the Congress, becoming the first feminist and lesbian MP in a highly conservative, male-dominated country.

Morán has undertaken a number of training courses with NIMD in Guatemala, including sessions on environmental security, training for women candidates and induction training for new women MPs. In her view, NIMD's technical and political support has helped her to "strengthen my relationship with various women leaders of organized groups in order to increase our impact in Parliament, creating spaces for oversight, intermediation and legislation". Morán stresses that NIMD's training procedures are useful for "understanding different topics linked to politics, the State and its institutions. For example, recent training on capacity building on the State budget cycle were key, especially to understanding how it works on the local level in order to carry out social auditing of Ministries in the communities.

Among the substantial assistance that NIMD offers in Guatemala, I will comment on only some of the examples. NIMD worked with the Women's Committee in Congress to achieve progress with a legislative agenda for women in line with the CEDAW recommendations. Similarly, NIMD collaborated by establishing links between the Parliamentary Women's Forum and the congresswomen through reflection sessions, analysis and interparty dialogue. Dialogue with civil society has also been facilitated in order to increase the political participation of women in general and indigenous women in particular. For instance, "the influence, the political negotiation and the lobbying capacity of the 23 organizations which make up the Women's Alliance and Indigenous Women to Seek Justice has been strengthened. In a similar way, the political negotiation, influence and lobbying capacities of the female coordinators, networks, organizations and feminist groups has been also strengthened," Blanco remarked.

UNDP in the Dominican Republic

Raissa Crespo, UNDP Gender Officer in the Dominican Republic, and I have known each other for a long time. I have taken part in several of the innumerable projects that she coordinates and keeps going simultaneously as an expert juggler. These projects are aimed at female politicians, female candidates, congresswomen and journalists, among others. If I had to describe Raissa Crespo, I would say that, in addition to being an excellent person and a great professional, she is a permanent source of ideas and a tireless bundle of energy from the beginning to the end of the day. Each day that I share with Raissa is

an adventure during which I enjoy her company and her excellent sense of humour very much. She explains that UNDP established two priority areas of intervention some time ago, namely the political and the economic autonomy of women.

As regards political autonomy, UNDP has worked on the parliamentary structure of the Congress to promote participation, women's rights and gender equality. UNDP works with the different committees of the Lower Chamber to provide training and education activities on its themes of gender and governability. Among these is the Gender Committee, with which UNDP has forged a strategic alliance to support the Committee in its role both within and outside of the Chamber. For example, UNDP stressed the need to place a focus on gender inside the institution itself, as well as calling for the enactment and reform of egalitarian laws that foster women's rights. To this end, a course was held for congressmen, congresswomen, and technical staff of the Second Chamber. The Senate was also invited and, together with the Chamber of Deputies, launched a bicameral legislative caucus for women and men in favour of gender equality and women's rights in 2012. Although this is not an institutional structure, it might help promote a gender agenda. Since UNDP started supporting the Gender Committee, it has gathered momentum and a lot of power. It is one of the parliamentary committees with the most activity and has managed to get the largest number of laws promoted and revised.

During the last national elections, the UNDP and the Gender Committee decided to back women's political participation through a project called "Political Dialogue on Gender". This project was developed in 2014 and began in March 2015. Its aim was to "increase

not only women's participation and representation but also the presence of gender agendas at political level. That is to say, it had not only a quantitative objective with a view to increasing women's presence in elected positions but also the qualitative goal of defending the gender agenda once these women had been elected."

As regards institutional barriers, for example, the project supported the Central Electoral Board to create an Observatory for women's political participation. Concerning non-institutional barriers, Raissa Crespo remarked that they had worked with female politicians. They had trained and educated them "to break gender stereotypes and give them tools in different areas. We were able to train 510 female pre-candidates from all political parties. What's more, a workshop for minority political parties and social movements was organized in order to be as inclusive as possible for the 2016 elections across the country. The training included general workshops on a number of subjects such as knowledge about the legislative domain, acquisition of communication skills, identification of gender stereotypes – which are sometimes internalized even in women themselves – and ways of obtaining financial support, among other issues."

A contest entitled "Women in the Political Career: The goal belongs to all women" took place simultaneously to the training. A small stage and film set were erected, where each woman had the option to participate voluntarily, communicate her message and call for other women's political participation. Out of a total of 510 women, 236 had taken part in the contest when the trainings came to an end. A panel of seven judges was set up, which included representatives of different areas such as, the Director of the "Cinema National Direction of the Republic," a magistrate from the Central Electoral Board, the

Director of the Centre for Gender Studies of a very well known university, and a communications professional from the Second Chamber, among others. A system of evaluation standards was developed “so that the winners would be from all regions, political parties and educational levels. The panel of judges chose 46 participants based on the videos they had filmed. The winners were awarded publicly in the Senate. The contest gained such significant coverage in the media that the Vice-President asked to meet the women to congratulate them in person. The winners received another training course, this time more focused on specific issues. We had been working on several issues, which the women themselves had identified as pressing, such as self-esteem, strategic communication, social networks, campaign financing... critical areas in which they said that they needed support. Nine workshops were organized between 2015 and 2016.”

Another activity organized by the UNDP along the same training and educational lines, was the launch of the “Diploma Course on Women and Politics” at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo, where 42 women have been trained. The Diploma course successfully started its fourth programme in 2016.

Another project is known as “Seals of Gender Equality in companies and organizations”. This initiative was promoted by the UNDP in 13 countries across Latin America, included Mexico, Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Costa Rica. The project aims to promote equality in the workplace, and break barriers and glass ceilings that damage women’s chances of growing inside companies and organizations. Raissa Crespo is of the belief that this initiative is also very suitable for men these days “because several studies have revealed that, the more women sit on

the boards of directors, or the larger the number of women is in the workplace, the more equality is achieved and productivity grows. In this respect the Dominican Republic made a country standard, the seal “Making equal DR”, which is a joint project with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Labour Ministry and the National Council of Competitiveness”. The UNDP has been working tirelessly to train auditors and advisors. The companies sign an agreement, an assessment is made of the company, and difficulties and gaps are defined, before an action plan is created. Then UNDP works with the company for a year to implement the improvements. Once the process comes to an end, an audit is carried out in order to ascertain whether they have managed to meet the requirements – of which there are eight – and their percentage of achievement. They may win the gold, silver or bronze seal depending on their percentage of efficiency in each dimension. The Dominican UNDP office itself entered the internal gender equality seal of the UNDP, where different UNDP offices from around the world competed for the gold, silver or bronze seal.

UNDP also works on the promotion of women’s economic autonomy through microenterprises and development projects at the local level. “There are six local economic development agencies in the country, in both the public and private sectors. The UNDP is pushing for women’s integration in the local economy and acknowledgement of their contributions. That is to say, they should earn the people’s recognition but they should also see their achievements for themselves and be aware of their contribution because often they don’t know that, in effect, they are making a contribution. It is fundamental that women should join activities, be integrated into value

chains and create their own value chains,” Crespo explains.

Another subject that UNDP is working on jointly with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs is “gender mainstreaming: the integration of the gender equality perspective in all areas; the acknowledgement of the fact that the world is composed of both women and men, that we are different but that women should be invited to participate and should have the same opportunities, something that often doesn’t happen for cultural reasons. We need to work on that a lot.”

When I asked her what the most important challenges ahead were, she didn’t hesitate: “One of the most important challenges is to break stereotypes. Cultural change is an essential issue and poses a big obstacle. It is very important that we should start working with the new generation. Another difficulty is that gender issues need the provision of economic resources, which are always difficult to obtain. We don’t need many resources either: we can do a lot with very little. The thing is that we need more resources than the ones allocated.”

What did we learn?

All experiences show that it is necessary to work simultaneously on three levels: the political system, political actors and the political culture of society as a whole, of political parties, young people, children and women themselves.

Academies, schools, diploma courses and programmes, workshops, and all kinds of trainings, which include subjects such as self-esteem, leadership and communication skills, negotiation tactics and strategies for the financing of campaigns, have been fundamental to

the identification and empowerment of women business leaders, candidates and congresswomen. We not only have to strengthen them individually but we also have to help them to build up inter-party networks and develop links with organizations from civil society so that their agendas can be taken more seriously and we can start to implement gender mainstreaming in all areas of the social, political and economic domains.

8

You've come a long way, baby. What else can we do?

Equality, what equality?

There is no doubt gender equality is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We have seen different ways in which female, male and leadership stereotypes – as well as the correspondence between the last two – prejudice women's concrete chances of reaching positions of power and influence.

Double standards persist when it comes to women and leadership, although they are often almost imperceptible. It is because of their subtlety that these double standards become more efficient. We learned from our interviewees that, despite being at a crossroads, it is neither advisable nor effective to imitate men and their behaviour. The solution to the puzzle, however slow and difficult, is uncovered every time a woman faces a situation with authenticity and, as a result, demonstrates the absurdity of the current stereotypes and prejudices.

I find the idea of equality which has ruled our societies very unequal. It was defined based on an image of the universal citizen,

who is not only a man but he is also a member of socioeconomically advantaged and dominant groups as regards power differential indicators on age, ethnic group, sexual orientation and religion. What is regarded as universality and equality is, in practice, a false universalism, the privilege of the few, which is not enjoyed by groups such as women or ethnic minorities because they don't embrace that ideal. When Michel Temer was appointed Interim President of Brazil after Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, he presented his cabinet. It didn't look like Brazil at all. The photograph of the day conclusively proved our point: He was surrounded by white men. There was neither a woman nor anyone from African descent.

Real equality is substantive. As mentioned before, substantive equality is not only quantitative or numerical but it is also qualitative, and takes into account the key positions in companies; ministries, parliamentary committees and whichever domain money and power are distributed and important decisions are made concerning our society. The fact that women work for the government or are Members of Parliament doesn't mean that they have power. Their numerical presence should not only be stronger but their political weight should also be real and effective. Moreover, this should be put into practice by countries like Sweden and the Netherlands, which are close to being role models as regards gender equality. Despite all that has been achieved in these countries, more women are needed in leading positions of legislative chambers, as chairs of influential committees – which have been considered a male domain – and as political party leaders.

All citizens' rights must be equally protected in any given democratic form of government. Women and men are required to partici-

pate under egalitarian conditions and they must exert the same influence in the economic and political processes. Women's political and economic situations are closely linked. That is why it is so important to push for hallmarks of equality in companies and integrate women in the production chain in order to improve not only the gender situation itself but also general productivity.

It is necessary to increase women's economic participation, to guarantee better salaries for them by considering the financial loss they incur simply because they are expected to be responsible for care and domestic work. Their access to credit and loans should be improved so that they can finance their electoral campaigns, their political work and their joint ventures, in the same way as men do. While many countries have adopted legislation which specifically deals with the financial problems involved in promoting women's political presence, female candidates don't often receive the same financial support from political parties and have fewer networks and worse positioning than their male colleagues with regards to obtaining money for their campaigns. Perhaps what makes matters even worse is that this occurs in such a subtle way that many women are not aware of it and they become involuntary accomplices, which favours the concealment of such behaviour.

Some useful ideas

Bringing all male and female players to the negotiating table poses a great challenge. There are no simple answers for complex problems. Complex matters require multidimensional and collective solutions.

Let's consider some possible courses of action which I have come across both through my professional work experience with women, and by listening to the voice of experience of the female leaders and politicians themselves.

Political parties should become involved

If we want to help women in the process of making themselves visible, it is important that they should work more on certain key skills, which men have already acquired and developed through their more frequent contact with the public sphere. Negotiation, lobbying, leadership and communication are some of the most important skills. Political parties should not only build internal democracy but they should also invest and allot a percentage of the public funds they receive to training and education activities for women on subjects such as leadership, negotiation tactics, communication skills, governance skills, public speaking, discourse, decision-making techniques, knowledge on rights and laws, and information on how government organs work, among others. Men should also be trained in technical questions such as gender with a view to eradicating the erroneous idea that gender is a "women's issue". These training activities and actions shouldn't be anything exceptional: they should be organized routinely with an eye to promoting greater political participation and democratic commitment among all actors.

Political parties formulate their own rules and put in place their own proceedings to recruit and select their candidates. They select and nominate male and female candidates for political positions. They control women's access and promotion to structures of political power. It is urgent to abolish sexist practices in these structures so that

women can be admitted on equal terms and under the same conditions.

We have learned that within political parties, we have to pay special attention to those who belong to “double minorities”. The combination of gender and belonging to an ethnic minority group is a case in point. In these cases, women are under subtle psychological pressure which makes them feel that they shouldn’t fight for their agendas or “cause problems”. The message they receive conveys the idea that they should be “grateful” instead, for the simple fact of having been taken into account and admitted.

Building up alliances, networks and creating women’s inter-party platforms

The establishment of women’s inter-party alliances is very desirable so that different political parties can interact with each other, forge strategic alliances and make collective action plans with an eye to promoting gender-oriented policies and establishing an inter-party gender agenda based on agreed subjects.

These plural networks help to position and subjects and gender issues and agendas. For these purposes, the creation of additional platforms would be very useful. In the United States the platform “Name it, Change it” was created with the participation of women from all political parties. Its slogan is “When you attack one woman, you attack all women”.¹ The project was born as a response to widespread sexism in the mass media and the highly toxic media environment, which has a negative effect on women’s electoral campaigns. The objective is to make the media aware of this situation and of the sexist messages sent across all media platforms. “Name it, change it” allows

users to report and denounce misogynist comments made by experts, bloggers and journalists. Similarly, the mass media are invited to take a pledge to respect gender neutrality when they cover male and female candidates.²

Educating the mass media

The issue of the mass media is no matter of little importance. In several of the testimonials included in this book, the interviewees confirmed that they had been exposed first-hand to gender-biased double standards. The situation has come to the point that – as Helleen Schrooyen mentioned in the previous chapter – one of the critical areas that NIMD will focus on in the next five-year period is to work with the media on the frames they use to refer to women in the public sphere, which instead of putting emphasis on their messages, reinforce questions related to their private lives, gender stereotypes and their appearance.

Journalists and students of journalism should be provided with training, and workshops should be run in order to question the way in which subjects are habitually covered when women are the protagonists. We should manage to make journalists ask themselves why media coverage – full of double standards, sexist language and stereotypes – leads women to be judged differently and has a negative impact on them. A study by Cambridge University Press looked at over 160 million words within the domain of sport using the Cambridge English Corpus, and examined how the language we use could indicate our gendered attitudes to sport. The Corpus is a huge collection of data, taken from a variety of different sources, including news articles, social media and internet forums. Based on the Rio de Janeiro

Olympic Games in 2016, the study showed the different treatment received by sportsmen and sportswomen.

Although women comprised 45% of the participants, sportsmen attracted three times as much media coverage as women received. When talking about women, the media highlighted marital status, age and appearance. When it came to performance, they said that women “compete”, “strive” and “participate” whereas men “beat”, “dominate” and “battle”. The most common words used to refer to women were “older”, “aged”, “pregnant”, “married” or “unmarried”. The most frequently used words to refer to men were instead; “fastest”, “strong”, “big”, “real” and “great”. In the Rio games, Corey Cogdell, who won a bronze medal in trap shooting, made the headlines of several American media. They mostly highlighted the fact that she was married to a player from the Chicago Bears football team. The Chicago Tribune headlined “Wife of a Bears’ lineman wins a bronze medal today in Rio Olympics”. The headline didn’t mention of her name, the event nor the fact it was her second Olympic bronze medal and the third Olympic Games in which she had participated. It wasn’t the only newspaper to behave in this way. Sexism enjoyed good health and was widespread in the media coverage. After the Hungarian swimmer Katinka Hosszú broke the world record by two seconds, the sports commentator from the NBC chain Dan Hicks hinted that her victory should be credited to her husband and trainer, saying “there is the man responsible for the gold medal”

The experts who produced the report indicated that, in the case of a sportswoman there was a stronger probability that the media would be discussing the length of her skirt than her chances of winning a gold medal. They highlighted that the language around wo-

men in sport focuses disproportionately on the appearance, clothes and personal lives of women, highlighting greater emphasis on aesthetics over athletics. The study also reveals that women tend to be infantilized in the use of language: men are called “men” whereas women are called “girls”.³

I firmly believe that both journalists and the media must be made aware of this, and reminded whenever necessary to apply and abide by “the reversibility rule”, which is nothing but the basic principle of reciprocity: very simple, they should abstain from asking women questions or making insinuations that would be unthinkable in the case of men. If you would not say it to a man, then do not say it to a woman. If you don’t use certain words to describe a man, don’t use them to describe a woman. The media should be educated to ensure they don’t depoliticize and undermine women’s leadership. Their political coverage of women shouldn’t focus on their private lives because, this makes women lose credit in the eyes of society and prejudices their chances of being seen as directors, political representatives, professionals or entrepreneurs.

Sexist media coverage damages women candidates and female politicians. Numerous surveys show that when the media focuses on a woman’s appearance and/or uses sexist rhetoric, it skews voters’ perceptions of the woman candidate in several ways: she is perceived as less likeable, confident, effective, qualified, and makes voters less likely to vote for her.⁴

Moreover, in the media, movies, news and all cultural domains, we should find women’s stories and experiences reflected in the same proportions as those of men. Symbolic equality must be reached in addition to equal representation.

Gender mainstreaming

The incorporation of gender mainstreaming – or the gender equality perspective – in all areas is essential. The world is inhabited by both women and men. Although they are different, they have to have the same level of participation and the same opportunities. A gender-based budget analysis should be carried out to determine whether women are integrated into all policies, plans and programmes or whether they are hidden behind a supposed “gender neutrality”, which favors the traditional view of women’s roles or ignores their rights.

Gender issues appear not to be taken into account even in the areas of pharmacology and medicine. We were recently alerted to the fact that, while most people who suffer from chronic pain are women, studies in the analgesic field are carried out with male animals. As regards pain, females are almost entirely unrepresented even though we know that a dose of the same drug – such as aspirin – has different effects on women and men. In the neurosciences, for each study conducted with female mice there are five in which male mice are used exclusively. It is not a laughing matter. The lack of female mice in the laboratories directly affects women’s health. Since 1997, 10 drugs with adverse effects have been withdrawn from sale in the United States. Eight of these were more harmful to women than men. In the case of cardiovascular diseases, the criteria for diagnosing a heart attack were established in accordance with symptoms observed only in men. This has caused women to be diagnosed later and, as a result, they have a worse prognosis.

But, why do scientists use fewer female than male mice in their research? I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry when I read that one of the main reasons is cited as the changing levels of female hor-

mones, which would lead to more variability in the results if females were included in the studies. Moreover, more specific checks would be necessary and the studies would be more complicated and expensive.⁵

The first software capable of voice recognition was an important tool for visually-impaired people. More often than not, women’s voices were not recognized because it had never crossed anybody’s mind to run tests on women using the technology. It was not until 2011 – when it became mandatory by law – that car security checks in the United States started to take the female anatomy into account. Before then, they were conducted with mannequins that reproduced a man’s weight and size. We might well carry on with a long list.

This is why it is so necessary to incorporate gender mainstreaming in the budgets of all areas and public policies.

Welcoming men to join the gender cause

We have said this time and again: gender issues shouldn’t only be raised and debated by women. Gender issues have to be included in the agenda of gender committees in parliaments, however, we should go beyond this to ensure that deliberation also takes place in the committees in which economic and labour matters are discussed.

In Latin America, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain and several other countries, the gender agenda needs to be pushed not only by women but also by men. We have to break the vicious circle whereby women have to act on behalf of all women in matters, concerning gender, infancy or any kind of impairment. Other social actors should also represent them. Women should also be free to speak on behalf of other citizens’ demands and interests without feeling like traitors be-

cause they are dealing with questions which have nothing to do with gender issues. The proportion of women who serve on the committees and ministries which are not traditionally considered to belong to the female domain (health, education, family and social affairs) must increase. Budget, economy, technology, foreign affairs, defense, science and technology, and housing, are all fields in which any human being can work, regardless of their gender.

Male and female electoral campaigns should include more proposals related to gender equality because these affect the quality of democracy for all citizens. To date, these proposals have been strikingly absent. If men joined the debate, this would help promote the discussion. Social networks in which men are included and can be counted on as members should be created. For example, the initiative called “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” was carried out at the global level when the network “Men for Equality” was created in Argentina in 2015 under the auspices of the UN.⁶ To increase visibility prior to launching the network, nineteen men regarded as celebrities from the political, cultural, sports, media and civil society spheres had participated in it. The objective of the network was precisely to involve men in the process of detecting and eliminating inequalities.

Building mentorship networks: A woman behind each woman

Empowered to empower others. Women should never be alone; they should be able to count on other women when they have to learn or make strategic decisions. Women with more experience have to support women who are less experienced. It would be ideal if the political parties themselves had these mentorship systems or programmes

where the most experienced women support, accompany and advise those who are just starting out on their career. Companies too should put this into practice.

My proposal is that it is equally important to create systems of mentorships outside of and beyond political parties and companies. Women need to find sisterhoods in their early stages of life, supportive networks that encourage them to do incredible things, which can only take place when we persevere and destroy the myths that make us believe that it is not acceptable to fail in our attempts. Half of the population cannot be left behind if what we want is growth and real change.

Avoiding “nirvana ceilings” by keeping all women’s organizations active

We were warned by our interviewees about the risks of believing that everything has already been achieved. This kind of social discourse poses a threat in the sense that it pushes people towards a comfort zone. If everything has been achieved and gender inequality is a problem of the past, why should we bother to continue fighting? Moreover, the tendency is to discredit people and movements which attempt to continue promoting the discussion of these issues, who are labeled as “extremist,” “crazy” or “pretentious.” A tactic known as “psychologization of the source” is used, by means of which the social claim is deprived of its legitimacy. Those who employ this tactic suggest that those who put forward an argument exhibit a deviant behaviour, which is attributed to personal problems which make them perceive or imagine conflicts which are, in fact, non-existent. Psychologization of the source has been employed against most groups

who have demanded their rights or the need to implement changes in the social order throughout history. Discreditation is a typical and expected reaction to the challenges posed by change.

Personally, I believe that the insight made by the interviewees represents a new ceiling which can be added to the others mentioned in previous chapters, and we need to stay very alert to it. It is a particularly dangerous ceiling. I call it “nirvana ceiling”; and it consists in the illusion that the dream has been fulfilled and that the final goal has been achieved. I define it as the stagnation or deactivation of all actions performed to ensure equality, which arises from a social opinion that fosters the illusion that inequality is a problem of the past that has already been solved, that everything has been accomplished and we have achieved equal conditions for everybody.

Nirvana ceilings not only prejudice women's chances but they also affect any minority group that is trying to change or influence the political agenda. I believe that the dynamics of the problems that affect women as a social collective can be understood and projected into a wider sense which helps us understand the dynamics of other groups who want to claim their rights and their place in society. That is to say, all the ceilings and limitations that we referred to in previous sections of this book, as well as the nirvana ceiling that we have just defined, are the typical obstacles that characterize the scenarios in which these disadvantaged groups carry out their activities.

Nirvana ceilings emerge as a phenomenon not only in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands where, in effect, considerable progress has been achieved but also in other countries in which partial achievements have been made - with solutions like quotas. In these cases, each time progress is made, inactivity or vigour loss fol-

lows when trying to fulfill more important objectives, which imply a really radical cultural change.

In Latin America there remains a lot to be done. In the European countries where the situation is more positive, we have to pay attention not only to continuing to make progress but also to avoiding setbacks. At the same time, some nations have made significant progress in Latin America and conversely, in some European countries, women's political representation has experienced setbacks over the past five-year period. Progress is not necessarily linear. If those political parties which believe gender issues to be irrelevant make progress, grow and gain influence in the political arena, this might mean an effective setback for women's political participation in the old continent.

Barriers persist and we have to make them visible through actions. Licia Ronzulli is a Member of the European Parliament. She was elected in 2009. She has been taking her daughter with her to the plenary sessions since she was 45 days old. She has been doing this as a symbolic gesture in order to demand more rights to help women to reconcile work and family life.

Insisting on quotas, parity and other affirmative action initiatives

We all agree: nobody “likes” quotas. Self-regulation and cultural change within political parties themselves is preferable because, then, quotas are no longer an imposition but rather something that they deem necessary to implement. However, when this doesn't happen, quotas are the only way that allows us to implement changes. In these cases, they become an indispensable instrument for women to reach decision-making positions. They should be mandatory, they should

include rules that stipulate the position that male and female candidates occupy. The electoral lists must take the shape of a zipper or braids so that women can alternate positions, and sanctions have to be imposed on those who do not abide by the rules.

Although affirmative action initiatives such as quotas or parity are arbitrary and don't appeal to us, they are certainly valuable because they speed up processes and help to redesign public policies for all fields of human activity. It is about achieving parity not only in electoral lists but also in sciences, in positions of corporate responsibility and in all fields of activity. It's not just about making more women join the political bandwagon; it is about rewriting the rules of the political and economic game so that it can be genuinely democratic.

Designing different public policies

Different simultaneous actions are required in many fields of activity to achieve substantive equality. Public policies as regards education and care and co-responsibility of domestic chores have to be modified. Owing to the division of work by gender and the lack of accessible care services, women are faced with challenges when it comes to reconciling work with family responsibilities and compare very unfavourably with their male counterparts. We have seen that political party or parliamentary work meetings tend to take place very late at night, which discourages women with young children from participating.

Women have to stop being exclusively in charge of care and domestic work. We have to stop this from being the norm, start learning, shuffle the cards and deal them again. Parliaments should have crèches so that childcare is readily available, and parliamentary work should

be carried out at hours suitable for everybody. Economic help should be provided or day centers be created, where the oldest people in families can be assisted.

The challenge of reconciling work and domestic life requires public policies. It is necessary that division of work by gender should be brought into the public and political debate. The reproduction of stereotypes that associate the public domain with men and the private domain with women should be avoided. Moreover, we must dispel the notions and stereotypes that portray men as rational, and suitable for civic life and political activities, while women are depicted as emotional, and good at family life and the private domain. In conclusion, we must break the sexual contract which pushes women towards the private domain and pushes them away from public life. To this end, dichotomous thinking must stop and we have to understand that the public and family domains are not mutually exclusive. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to address the underlying causes of all this: social values and stereotypes.

Education: The only hope to end stereotypes

The obstacles to women's access to managerial and decision-making positions arise from stereotypes and prejudices. We have to rule out the idea that femininity is incompatible with a political or entrepreneurial career – an idea that comes from the notion that women are “weaker” or more suited to certain tasks which come “naturally” to them and, as a result, their leadership capacity can be trusted less. It is not fair to expect them to demonstrate exceptional qualities in order to be taken into account, while we do not require the same of men. The assessment of leadership performance should be the same

regardless of gender. However, when we evaluate women and men as regards leadership, this assessment is made on gender-based grounds. That is to say, when women are assessed, typical male traits are taken as benchmarks. This is why – as we explained at the beginning of the book – leadership is thought of as male: because of the stereotypes that we internalize in infancy. However, as Michelle Bachelet reminded us during a press release at the end of her first electoral campaign that catapulted her to the Presidency of Chile: strength doesn't have a gender, nor do integrity, conviction and capacity.

The view that women are responsible for caregiving duties implies that the public domain can only be managed well by men. It is essential to work on the psychosocial and cultural dimensions of the problem; change the stereotypes which lead us to assess women and men differently when they behave similarly; and challenge the idea that when men adopt certain attitudes they are leaders, but women who do the same are authoritarian, bossy and loud-mouthed.

In order to fight stereotypes, the only real hope is to educate people about the value of equality from infancy. It is not at all wrong if girls play at being princesses on condition that they can also play with a soccer ball, with nuts and tools, play the drums, and dream of becoming scientists, engineers, astronauts or firefighters. Similarly, there is no reason why boys play shouldn't involve taking care of babies, cooking dinner, or vacuuming the house while they are dressed in their favorite super-hero's outfit. Much to many people's surprise, these are exactly the images shown by a video that formed part of a campaign launched by the French supermarket chain "System U" during the 2015 holiday period, whose objective was to make us think about the presents we buy for the youngest children. The video points out

that there is no such thing as toys for boys and girls, there are just toys. The commercial is headlined #GenderFreeChristmas and starts by reflecting that from the moment they are born, children are surrounded by clichés; they are exposed to social stereotypes in their early childhood. Our perceptions surrounding gender are shaped by what we are taught when we are very young. The video teaches us how these stereotypical conceptions fall apart when a group of little girls and boys are allowed to enter a room full of toys. A number of companies have become aware of this and have committed to stop publishing gender-differentiated catalogues and stop dividing toys in stores into categories for "girls" and "boys".

Breaking stereotypes requires people to be educated in a different way. I am referring not only to equal educational opportunities for women and men but also to equal opportunities to learn skills. For instance both genders should be equally encouraged to do sports or show interest in the fields of sciences and technology. Girls and boys can develop leadership, team and competition skills through sport. It is about changing the current conceptions of masculinity and femininity so that everybody can be exposed to the same processes of socialization. If we want to witness real and profound change, if we really want to fulfill the dream of living in more inclusive, more just and more egalitarian societies, it's fundamental that we break the stereotypes during early infancy, even before children start school.

Resigning ourselves is not an option. Nor is waiting one hundred or two hundred years for things to change on their own. If 50% of the population is overlooked, we must understand that were are prejudicing 50% of our chances of becoming successful as a society, which is absurd since we are not taking advantage our talents. In view of the

magnitude of the problems that most countries are facing nowadays, this is a luxury we cannot afford.

I am convinced that where there is passion, there is hope. From the social point of view, fewer things are more harmful than indifference. If we want to do a good job, we need to sincerely and passionately believe in what we do. Passion mobilizes and enhances our commitment to what we want to achieve and transform. If they asked me what I did for a living I would say that I offer advisory services in communication. If they asked me what I am passionate about I would say that empowering both young people and women is my great passion. But if they asked me what the purpose of my work is and, most of all, about my commitment to work, I wouldn't hesitate to answer that what makes my heart sing is to imagine that we will soon be inhabiting a world in which, thanks to the efforts made by lots of people simultaneously in several areas, no woman or girl will renounce her right to education, autonomy and existential sovereignty; her right to decide on her body or attire; her right to a dignified life free of violence; her right to economic independence; to equal pay; to self-actualization at work; to pursue her political or leadership vocation; to chase her dreams and be ambitious without asking for permission or apologizing for her gender. Many women and men work very hard each day harbouring the same desire, with the same passion and pursuing the same dream. That is why, despite all the real and existing difficulties, I feel highly optimistic.

In September 2014, NIMD organized an international event on women's political equality in Honduras. I was invited to give the inaugural conference. The Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Costa Rica approached me at the end of my speech. She told

me that her little son recently asked her: "Mom, can a man work as an ambassador? Can men also be ambassadors?" We burst into laughter at such a funny idea and exclaimed in unison with satisfaction "Yes! Something is changing!"

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Notes

Chapter 1

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2. Data from Observatorio de Igualdad de Género of ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America – CEPAL in Spanish-) www.cepal.org/oig
3. Data from International IDEA, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. See: Tello Rozas, P. y Cueva C., ¿Hacia dónde vamos?: Participación Política de la Mujer en América Latina, June 2016, INTERNATIONAL IDEA, See: www.idea.int/es/americas/hacia-donde-vamos-participacion-politica-de-la-mujer-en-america-latina.cfm
4. We refer to the publication Partidos Políticos y Paridad. Un desafío de la Democracia en América Latina
5. El País, 7 November 2016, "Así son los ministros de España"
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7. Law 3/2007 for effective equality between men and women
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9. See: Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de la ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America – CEPAL in Spanish-) See: www.cepal.org/oig

10. See: UNDP (2014). Aportes para el Desarrollo Humano en la Argentina 8 – Género en el trabajo: brechas en el acceso a puestos de decisión. See: www.ar.undp.org/content/argentina/es/home/library/human_development/Aportes8/
11. The data on Spain comes from the country's Instituto Nacional de Estadística, report dated 27 June, 2016
12. Diario El País, "Las cuotas obligatorias es lo que da el poder a las mujeres en las empresas", 17 January, 2016.
13. See: ILO, International Labour Organization (2015), Las mujeres y el futuro del trabajo, See: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_348089.pdf
14. Diario La Nación, 16 September, 2015, "Axel Kicillof: Si Victoria Donda quiere salir en los diarios, que se ponga las plumas"
15. See: Bernárdez Rodal, 2010
16. See: Valcárcel, 1997
17. See: Tello Rozas, P. & Cueva C., "¿Hacia dónde vamos?: Participación Política de la Mujer en América Latina", 3 June 2016, INTERNATIONAL IDEA, See: www.idea.int/es/americas/hacia-donde-vamos-participacion-politica-de-la-mujer-en-america-latina.cfm
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20. See: Ryan, Haslam & Kulich, 2010; Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007
21. El País, 13 April 2008, "Corredor: una caída de vértigo hacia un sector en caída libre"
22. CIPPEC, "Las mujeres ocupan el 22% de los cargos políticos del Ejecutivo", See: www.cippec.org/novedadshome/-/asset_publisher/nOpnoMLOwnPT/content/las-mujeres-ocupan-el-22-de-los-cargos-politicos-del-ejecutivo;jsessionid=0C980ECE984EA9F5B14E431AB73EB150
23. CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of discrimination against Women) was approved by the United Nations in 1979 and ratified by 187 countries.
24. UN Women, 2015, La Hora de la Igualdad Sustantiva. Participación Política de las Mujeres en América Latina y el Caribe Hispano.
25. Vice News, 4 November 2015, 'Because It's 2015': Why Justin Trudeau Push for Gender Parity in His Cabinet.

Chapter 2

1. See: Gallup, In Depth Topics, "Marriage". See: www.gallup.com/poll/117328/marriage.aspx
2. Information provided by the Foreign Affairs Ministry Government Offices of Sweden, in the publication Gender Equality. The responsibility of the entire Government, 2014
3. For the subject of social and sex stereotypes see: Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Cuadrado Guirado, 2007; Bacigalupo et al., 2007; Barberá y Benlloch, 2004
4. Survey carried out in the City of Buenos Aires, by the Public Opinion Center of the Belgrano University, between 24 February and 3 March, 2014. Sample: 620 citizens, segmented according to sex, age and socioeconomic status. Available on www.ub.edu.ar/copub.php
5. El País, 16 July 2016, "Siete pasajeros se bajan de un vuelo Miami – Buenos Aires porque los pilotos eran mujeres"
6. Diario Perfil, 17 July 2016, "Dos pasajeras se bajaron, no querían volar con una mujer"
7. El Mundo, 23 June 2016, "Denuncian machismo en la policía al impedir patrullar a dos mujeres"
8. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government Offices of Sweden. See: Gender Equality. The responsibility of the entire Government, 2014

Chapter 3

1. See: Morales, J.F. & Cuadrado, I. (2011), Perspectivas psicológicas sobre la implicación de la mujer en política, Psicología Política, N°42, 29-44

2. The concept was coined by Virginia Schein (2001)
3. See: Isabel Cuadrado, 2011, "Liderazgo y discriminación femenina".
4. See: McGinn, Kathleen L., & Nicole Tempest. "Heidi Roizen" Harvard Business School Case 800-228, January 2000, See: www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=26880
5. Survey carried out in the City of Buenos Aires, by the Public Opinion Center of the Belgrano University, between 24 February and 3 March 2014. Sample: 620 citizens, segmented according to sex, age and socioeconomic status. Available on www.ub.edu.ar/copub.php
6. Gallup, Americans still prefer a male boss, See: www.gallup.com/poll/165791/americans-prefer-male-boss.aspx
7. See: Fletcher, 2004
8. BBC News, 28 May 2015, "Oxford University First Female Head"
9. La Nación, 27 June 2016, "Por primera vez, una mujer liderará la Federación Universitaria"
10. Aux grandshommes la patriereconnaissant

Chapter 4

1. El País, "¿Qué frena a las mujeres?", 12 March 2016
2. The term "glass ceiling" was coined in 1986, in a report that addressed the situation of women and their possibilities of progress in the hierarchical scale of corporations, known as "The Glass Ceiling – Special Report on the Corporate Woman".
3. See: Eagly & Carli, 2007
4. See: Morrison, 1987
5. See: Chinchilla, Poelmans & León, 2005
6. See: Shambaugh, 2007
7. ILO, "Informe Mundial sobre Salarios", Geneva, 2015
8. European Commission, 2016, "Report on Progress on equality between women and men"
9. Data provided by Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España, 27 June 2016

10. UNDP and ILO, "El cuidado compartido: Hacia una propuesta de parentalidad", 2013
11. ILO, "Las Mujeres y el Futuro del Trabajo", Geneva, 2015
12. The results were presented in the document "¿Cómo identificar y neutralizar las técnicas de dominación y el acoso político?", at the International Seminar "Violencia Política contra las mujeres en América Latina: diagnósticos, diálogos y estrategias", 11 November 2015, México DF.
13. See: Panke, 2015
14. 26 April 2015, 5:22 PM, @realDonaldTrump
15. El Mundo, 15 April 2008, "Berlusconi regaña a Zapatero: su gobierno es demasiado rosa"; El País, 15 April 2008, "Berlusconi: Zapatero tendrá dificultad en gobernar con tanta ministra".
16. 20 Minutos, 16 April 2008, "Zapatero, Berlusconi y las mujeres", See: www.20minutos.es/noticia/369925/0/mujeres/zapatero/berlusconi/
17. ABC, 13 April 2008
18. Diario El Litoral, 6 June 2016
19. Google News, 6 June 2016

Chapter 5

1. Question asked by a journalist to Yelena Serova, first Russian Woman in the International Space Station, during a press conference that took place before her departure for the mission, 26 September 2014
2. Official data from UN Women 2015
3. La Nación, 16 June 2016, "La gran brecha de Hollywood"
4. Named for cartoonist Alison Bechdel, who created it in 1985
5. The Washington Post, 17 January 2014, "How many of this year's Oscar nominees pass the Bechdel Test? Not many"
6. The Wall Street Journal, 14 January 2016, How the 2016 Oscar nominee did on the Bechdel Test
7. Research carried out by the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University

- of Southern California, in 2013. 11,927 speaking characters were analyzed, across the following television and cable networks and channels: ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, CW, Cartoon Network, Disney, Nickelodeon, E!, MTV, PBS. All findings are available at seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/full-study-gender-roles-and-occupations-v2.pdf
8. See: Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1990, 1996; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, 2002
 9. See: Morgan 2002
 10. See: Morgan, 2002
 11. See: Morgan, 2002
 12. See: Belmonte & Guillamón, 2008
 13. See: secretariageneral.ugr.es/pages/tablon*/noticias-canal-ugr/las-mujeres-que-aparecen-en-los-dibujos-animados-son-consumistas-celosas-y-estan-obsesionadas-por-su-aspecto-fisico#.V2rhi7jhDIV
 14. See: The Washington Post, 15 January 2016, "Researchers have found a major problem with The Little Mermaid and other Disney Movies"
 15. See: Coyne, S. M.; Ruh Linder, J.; Nelson, D. A. & Birkbeck, V. (2016). Pretty as a Princess: Longitudinal effects of engagement with Disney Princesses on gender stereotypes, body esteem, and prosocial behavior in children, *Child Development*, Vol. 87, issue 3, May-June 2016, 28-37
 16. See: Berganza, Conde & Hoyo Hurtado, 2006
 17. See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCyw3prlWhc
 18. See: García Beaudoux, V. (2015). "Estereotipos de género, comunicación política y liderazgo femenino. ¿Para qué sirve la táctica de reencuadre?". *Más Poder Local*, N°25, 6-10.
 19. See: Buonomano, 2011
 20. See: Svensson, 2008
 21. The Guardian, 25 September 2014, "Female cosmonaut bats back questions about her hair and parenting"
 22. See: García Beaudoux, V.; D'Adamo, O & Aruguete, N., 2014
 23. Asteriscos.TV, 30 January 2010
 24. Escena TV, July, 2012
 25. América Noticias, "Mujeres con vuelo propio"; See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPzeoH1OZjU
 26. La Nación, 20 July 2016, "La única mujer argentina piloto de un Hércules cuenta cómo llegó a manejar una mole de 80 toneladas"
 27. El Tribuno, "Llegó el vuelo de Austral íntegramente tripulado por mujeres"; See: www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=2uBL3HQHad0
 28. Diario Perfil, 4 November 2011
 29. See: Carlin & Winfrey, 2009
 30. USA Today, 17 April 2014
 31. La Nación, 1 December, 2013
 32. El País, 13 April 2008
 33. New York Post, 24 January 2013
 34. The New Republic, 7 May 2008
 35. Revista Noticias, 11 July 2014
 36. ABC, 12 August 2014, "Mercedes Ayala, la jueza solitaria del caso ERE"
 37. Daily Mail UK, 13 August 2009
 38. Daily Mail, 17 November 2016
 39. Forbes, 30 August 2007
 40. Diario Perfil, 22 August 2014
 41. Diario Perfil, 11 October 2011, "Cómo llegó Victoria Donda a ser la DipuSex"
 42. 16 June 2016, (www.girabsas.com.ar)
 43. El diario de Chihuahua (México), 19 June 2016
 44. Daily News, 2 June 2014 & USA Today, 2 June 2014
 45. Glamour, 5 November 2014
 46. La Nación, 29 July 2009
 47. See: Llanos B., 2012, (Still) Unseeing Eyes: New Eight-country Report on Gender, Electoral Campaigns and Media in Latin America. Edited by International IDEA and UN Women. See: idea.int/publications/unseeing-eyes/upload/Ojos-Que-No-Ven.pdf

Chapter 6

1. Official data updated till July 2016. See: sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/
2. See: www.idea.int/news/upload/sweden_women.pdf
3. Personal interview with Angelica Broman, Sida headquarters, Stockholm, June 2015
4. Data from European Data Base, Women in Decision Making, Report from the Netherlands. See: www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Netherlands.htm
5. Personal interview with María Clara Medina at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, June 2015
6. Personal interview with Adrián Groglopo at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, June 2015
7. Personal interview with Tom Böhler at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, June 2015
8. Personal interview with Ingrid van Biezen, Leiden University, June 2015
9. Personal interview with Corine van Egten NIMD, The Hague, June 2015
10. Telephone interview with Sophie in 't Veld, June, 2015
11. Personal interview with Tamara van Ark, The Hague, June 2015
12. Personal interview with Nel van Dijk at NIMD headquarters, The Hague, June 2015
13. Personal interview with Hanja Majj-Weggen, Eindhoven, June 2015
14. Personal interview with Kahtalijne Buitenweg, Amsterdam, June 2015
15. Personal interview with Kathleen Ferrier, Amersfoort, June 2015
16. Personal interview with Tineke Huizinga, Amersfoort, June 2015
17. Telephone interview, with Esther de Lange June, 2015
18. Personal Interview with Tineke Netelenbos, NIMD Headquarters, June 2015
19. Personal Interview with Winnie Sorgdrager, The Hague, June 2015

Chapter 8

1. See: www.nameitchangeit.org
2. "I promise to adhere to fair journalistic standards that promote accuracy and objectivity in covering political candidates and their issues. I will try to treat all subjects with respect, regardless of gender, and to create an overall media culture in which sexism has no place. This includes not posing questions or using language for one gender that I would not feel is equally applicable to the other. I recognize that sexist language and representation do a disservice to my audiences and the public at large. I pledge to do my part to prevent all instances of sexist coverage of candidates, leaders, and people of all walks of life, and to hold fellow journalists and media outlets accountable to this same standard of conduct".
3. See: www.cambridge.org/about-us/news/aest/
4. See: An Examination of the Impact of Media Coverage of Women Candidates' Appearance. See: www.nameitchangeit.org
5. El País, 18 July 2016, "Ciencia solo para machos"
6. Joint initiative between UNDP, the Women's National Council, the AVON Foundation and the National San Martin University, in Argentina.

About the author



Virginia García Beaudoux is a CONICET-IIGG researcher in Argentina; consultant with NIMD and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP); and Director at COMMUNICATIO communication strategies consultants.

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Virginia is the author of ten books and a regular lecturer in international forums on politics, leadership and gender. She is a communication advisor for politicians, candidates and governments, who she provides with training on communication skills and leadership. In the last few years she has specialized in communication, leadership and the strategic development of political careers for female leaders, female politicians and female candidates.



About NIMD

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) strives for inclusive and transparent democracies by supporting political parties in developing democracies.

Our approach is characterized by dialogue. NIMD provides safe environments for political parties in a country to meet, overcome distrust and work together on political issues. We also work directly with parties to strengthen their organizational and programmatic capacities. Furthermore, we foster a democratic culture by providing political education programmes for (potential) politicians.

That is why diversity and gender equality are important focal points across NIMD's work. Through our programmes we aim to contribute to the active participation of all groups in society and the equal distribution of power and influence between women and men, regardless of their age, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic background.

DANCING BACKWARDS IN HIGH HEELS

"Women play in the same soccer field and share the same spaces as men but with different rules, less favourable conditions and with all the odds against them."

Using her wealth of knowledge and extensive experience working with male and female politicians, Virginia García Beaudoux takes us on a deeply personal journey to set out the work that still needs to be done to ensure gender parity.

García Beaudoux assesses the topic of female political participation not only rigorously, but also with humour and, above all, with human understanding. She takes us through the existing psychosocial and socio-cultural obstacles barriers that hamper gender equality and analyses how the way women and men are portrayed in the media can affect the way we perceive gender roles. The notions of glass walls, cement ceilings, sticky floors and nirvana ceilings help us to understand why women enjoy fewer opportunities than men even if they come from similar academic backgrounds and work experience.

Through a series of interviews with Swedish and Dutch political figures, *Dancing Backwards in High Heels* offers a unique glimpse into what it can mean to be an ambitious woman in an environment still dominated by males and shows that, even in countries that have made great progress towards gender equality, there is still a long way to go. With specific and well-considered recommendations, García Beaudoux stresses, however, that there is hope for the future, and sets out the pathway towards greater equality.

A must read for anyone who thinks that gender equality has already been achieved, and helpful support for those men and women who continue to put equal rights on the political agenda.