

A World in Transition

Feminist Perspectives on International Relations

Introduction

In 1997, the Swedish Journal of Political Science, *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift* is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary. In commemoration of this special event, the journal's editors decided to invite us as guest editors to put together a theme issue entitled 'Feminist Perspectives on International Relations'. In 14-16 June, 1996, the Department of Political Science and the Sociology of Law Section hosted a three-day international conference, *A World in Transition. Feminist Perspectives on International Relations*. As guest editors, we are therefore pleased to present a number of the conference papers in this theme issue.

The events leading up to *A World in Transition* began in 1993 with the founding of a feminist seminar at the Department of Political Science, Lund University. In this seminar (later re-named 'The Feminar') there were six to ten Ph.D. Candidates of Political Science, Sociology and Law who regularly participated. Five of the members of 'The Feminar' later decided to draw together feminist scholarship at an international conference that would largely mirror later years of feminist research and debates within the field of International Relations.

Since feminist studies traditionally is an interdisciplinary field, the conference sought to encourage participants in different fields and disciplines. Consequently, students and scholars concerned with the recent political, legal, social and economic developments and their effects on women's everyday lives came together in Lund. All in all fifty-nine papers were presented (*see* the workshop reports below) with participants from twenty countries, mainly from Western and Eastern Europe but also from the US, Canada, Hong Kong and Israel.

The increasing globalization of the economy and processes of democratization, integration and disintegration are indeed challenging traditional understanding of political and legal contexts. Feminist analysis of these dynamic processes are therefore vital. In other words, feminist perspectives can add to a deeper understanding of the world today, both in terms of practical politics and research approaches.

As an inspiration to the workshop sessions, the first day was devoted to presentations of a number of highly esteemed key note speakers. These were Christine Sylvester, Jane Roland Martin, Hanne Petersen, Hilary Rose and Galia Golan. Building on their own respective research traditions, the speakers presented their different perspectives on global politics.

The themes of the workshops were linked to the topics of the keynote speeches and represented contemporary feminist analyses in International Relations and Law. It was important that the conference participants would be

able to ventilate each paper extensively and to receive comments as well as establish personal research contacts within each workshop. The papers were circulated before the event and the participants were asked to remain in the same workshop during the conference. In an effort to create links between the different workshop themes, each day ended with a short plenary session in which brief reports were given by the workshop facilitators.

To promote networking between participants, we also had a social event at the end of each day. The first evening we gathered at the Art Gallery of Lund where Bruno Weimark's exhibition "Spuma" was shown. The second evening was reserved for a banquet in the beautiful and prestigious Hall of Pillars in the University Building. Professor Jane Roland Martin (piano) and Minna Gillberg (alto flute) – one of the organizers – quickly rehearsed in the afternoon and surprised us all with a most exquisite musical performance.

A much appreciated event at the conference was the speech made by the Vice-Chancellor (Rector) Boel Flodgren at Lund University. In a warm and personal way she spoke about her academic life, her career as a woman professor and as the first appointed vice-chancellor at a Swedish university. With examples from her own experience, she emphasized the importance of international academic exchanges and the role of the university in promoting women in society. Among the things Professor Flodgren discussed was the issue of gender and power structures. In her opinion, women have much to gain from thinking more strategically.

At the end of the conference, Professor Galia Golan from the Hebrew University spoke of her impressions: "I think that one of the really valuable things here has been not only bringing together feminists and different ways of thinking about these issues, but to bring graduate students together with professors; and what was the Eastern Bloc with the West. It has been an extraordinary experience."

Finally, this is an opportunity to once again thank our sponsors, the Swedish Institute (SI), the Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research (FRN), the Department of Political Science, the Department of Sociology, Lund University and Nils Larsson's foundation. The generosity and support of the sponsors enabled us to realize the primary goal of having a multi-contextual conference. The sponsors provided us with the means to support more than half of the participants' travels to Sweden. This included both a significant number of graduate students from across the world as well as scholars from Russia, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia and Romania among others.

In the preparatory phase of the conference we made extensive use of the new information technology. With our own web pages we were able to distribute up-dated information to various research networks on the Internet. After the conference the number of people networking has grown. This has been facilitated by a discussion group *lundfemconf-1@svet.lu.se* as well as an electronic bulletin board, <http://www.svet.lu.se/fem/fem.html>