

Quotas as a “Fast Track” to Equal Political Representation for Women

Why Scandinavia is no longer the model

by

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1. Introduction

Although highly controversial, electoral gender quotas are today being introduced in an increasing number of countries around the world. More than 30 countries have introduced gender quotas for elections to national parliament by constitutional amendment or by electoral law, most of them during recent years. In more than 50 countries quotas for public election are now stipulated in major political parties' own statutes, demanding that a certain minimum of the parties' candidates for election to national parliament must be women, often 30 per cent. This development raises many research questions and challenges previous theories of how women's political representation may increase.

In international literature on women in politics one can find the argument, that women's representation reached a historical and worldwide high in the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden due to quotas. (Phillips 1995:57). This is, however, not quite true. Firstly, there have never been any legal quota requirements in the Scandinavian countries. Secondly, only some political parties in Scandinavia have introduced quotas for public election, whereas others have rejected the idea. Thirdly, Denmark, number two in the world rank of women's representation (www.ipu.org), does not have any quota provisions today. Most importantly, the political parties in Scandinavia first introduced electoral gender quotas during the 1980s, when women already occupied 20-30 per cent of seats in parliament, at that time also the highest in the world. The real take off of women's representation in the Scandinavian countries occurred in the 1970's before the introduction of any quotas.

This historical development has led to the understanding, that it takes power to empower women through quotas. It was assumed that the introduction of quota systems is very difficult or impossible, if women do not already have a solid power base in parliament, because of resistance is usually very strong against this measure of affirmative action (Dahlerup 1988a). In the Scandinavian countries, quotas were seen as a *critical* act made by a large minority of women to *consolidate* women's representation and make more room for elected women (Dahlerup 1988b). In general, the Scandinavian countries represent what we in this article refer to as *the incremental track* to equal political representation for women and men. It took approximately 60 years for Denmark, Norway and Sweden to exceed the 20 per cent threshold, and 70 to reach 30 per cent. Today, women's movements all over the world express their unwillingness to wait that long.

In this article we contrast the Scandinavian development with the development in countries such as Argentina, Costa Rica and South Africa that represents what we refer to as *the fast track*. Today quotas are being introduced in countries where women only constitute a small minority in parliament, and the world is witnessing historical leaps in women's representation, for example from 19 per cent women in parliament to 35 in one election (Costa Rica) or 36 per cent women in the very first democratic parliamentary election (South Africa). Such great historical leaps might occur without quota provisions, but the focus here is on electoral gender quotas as a special measure to increase women representation.

Thus the aim of this article is to analyze quota discourses, to identify different quota systems and to discuss which factors have facilitated the introduction of electoral gender quotas in various countries in the last decades. It is argued that a new international discourse on women in institutional politics is an important factor behind recent introduction of quotas all over the world, even in countries that previously had a very low representation of women. However, the fact that some countries have opened up for quotas, while others have not, and secondly, the fact that *specific types* of quota systems do seem to occur in regional clusters, all point to the need for contextual based research about what we will call *the translation* of this international discourse into individual countries and regions, and about

the *mechanisms* behind the introduction of quotas nationally. In this article we will not discuss the effect quotas may have for the empowerment of women.

The article is based on the first worldwide overview of the use of quotas (www.quotaproject.org)ⁱ. Only electoral gender quotas are discussed in this article, defined as legal rules (constitutional or legislative) or internal party regulations that set up a fixed minimum of women or of either sex among the political parties' candidates for public election. Quotas for internal party structures are not discussed here, neither are quota provisions for public committees and boards, nor quotas in education or in the labor market.

2. Quota discourses

Women are still under-represented in parliaments all over the world. In 2003 women averaged only 15 percent of the membership of national parliaments worldwide (IPU 2003). Consequently, women participate to a small extent in the national decision-making process. But does it matter who our political representatives are? Is the representation of women important and why? What are women then expected to represent: the party and its ideological goals, women's interests or women's identities? Thus, in the discussion of electoral gender quotas, several important discussions about principles assemble, which touch upon fundamental questions in democratic and feminist theory (Fraser 1997, Phillips 1995, Young 1990).

Why electoral gender quotas?

Any question on electoral gender quotas touch upon a recognition of the importance of the representation of women in institutional decision-making bodies. But which form of representation and in what way women are most likely to secure presence in politics are debated. In her classic text, Hanna Pitkin argues, that there is no common understanding about the nature of representation and about what fair representation is (Pitkin 1967).

At least four arguments have been distinguished by scholars for women's equal participation in formal politics:

1. Women represent half the population and have the right to half the seats (the justice argument).
2. Women have different experiences (biological or socially constructed) that ought to be represented (the experience argument). In line with this argument women should enter into positions of power because they will engage in politics differently, thereby improving the nature of the public sphere.
3. Women and men have partly conflicting interests and thus men cannot represent women (the interest group argument), and 4) Women politicians represent important role models, encouraging other women to follow suit (Dahlerup 1978, Phillips 1995). The core idea behind electoral gender quotas is to recruit women into institutional politics and to ensure that women are not isolated in political life.

In the distinction between representation of ideas versus social representation (Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996, Holmberg 1999, Phillips 1995), quotas for women represent the second.

Opponents of quota systems often argue from the first position. Anne Phillips, however, advocates gender quotas in a system that combines a politics of ideas with a politics of presence. The fact, that women all over the world have been excluded from representation, must be taken as the starting point, not the abstract principles of representation (Phillips 1995).

Electoral gender quotas - a contested method?

At the same time as quotas represent a qualitative jump into a policy of explicit goals and means, quotas as a method raises a series of problematic questions. From a liberal perspective it could be argued that quotas - as a specific group right - conflict with the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference over men. By explicitly favoring certain groupings of citizens, i.e. women, all citizens (men) are not provided with equal chances to attain a political career, power and influence. Discourses on quotas thus point to the reluctance to provide specific categories a right to have a guaranteed outcome of representatives based on their specificity, and to mandate equal results rather than equal opportunity. Concerns about the multiplicity of categories and groups that might claim quota provisions have also been raised (Maier & Klausen 2001). Also, arguments focusing on social cohesion, accountability and fractionalization have been raised (Phillips 1995).¹

In contrast to America, where there has been a general reluctance to the introduction of quotas, more positive attitudes are found in the European discourse, based on an assumption that earlier injustice needs to be compensated and thus a willingness to correct the numerical imbalance between men and women in parliament. In France, for instance, the parity reform required all political parties to have 50 per cent of electoral candidates be women, based on the republican discourse of women constituting not a specific community, but a part of all communities (Gaspard 2001).

Electoral gender quotas also touch upon the current theoretical debate about 'the category women' and point to the problem, whether it is theoretically acceptable to continue invoking the "we" of a single category of women at all. Women as a group is both the Achilles' heel of the feminist movement and its raison d'etre. The present critique within feminist theory is partly a critique of Western ethnocentrism, stressing the principle of multiple identities, partly a poststructuralist critique, that feminism tends to construct the very category, it wants to dissolve (Benhabib et al 1995). But instead of labelling with static concepts of 'essentialism', the dilemmas and strategic choices of women in various contexts should be explored empirically (Dahlerup 2001). Research on quotas must therefore analyze empirically the groups of women involved in the promotion of quotas as well as the alliances with men.

From equal opportunity to equal results

By adopting quotas, however, a fast track towards an improved women's political representation is chosen. This pursuit implies a shift from one concept of equality to another. Where the classic liberal notion of equality stressed "equal opportunity" or "competitive equality," quotas represent a shift towards "equality of results." According to the former concept, the removal of formal barriers for women's political participation, such as providing women voting rights, was considered sufficient. It was then up to individual women to act. Following strong pressures from the women's movement and international organizations in the last few decades, and the slow development in women's representation at large, a second concept - equality of results - has gained increasing relevance and support. Equal opportunity does not exist just due to the removal of formal barriers, it is argued. Direct discrimination and a complex pattern of hidden barriers prevent women from attaining a fair share of political power and influence. Quotas and other measures aiming at an increased level of women's political participation are thus regarded as means towards equality of result. Equality as a goal cannot

¹ By the promotion of gender quotas, first, there is a risk of balkanization, according to which divisions among different social groups will be caused, which implicitly jeopardizes chances of alliances and collaboration. Accountability, second, raises the concern on how women politicians (representing ideas, interests and/or identities?) will be held accountable? Third, if "women" as a social group is recognized, with clearly defined group characteristics and political goals, chances of attaining political consensus are reduced. Where each social grouping strives to enhance its politics, an increased fractionalization is feared and the ideal of a deliberative dialogue is jeopardized. From a genealogical perspective, finally, it could be argued that gender quotas - and every institutionalizing of group identity - risks cementing and normalizing identities in a way that might be detrimental to the group in question, i.e. women.

be reached by formal equal treatment solely as a means. If barriers exist, compensatory measures must be introduced as a means to reach equality of result. In this perspective, quotas are not regarded as discrimination (of men), but as a compensation for structural barriers that women face in the electoral process. Thus, quotas as a fast track do not only challenge the Scandinavian model of women's representation, it also questions the concept of equal opportunity by providing the concept of equality with new significance and implications.

Parties as gatekeepers

Quota systems also aim at changing the gender pattern of party recruitment for elected positions. Research in this field has pointed to the crucial role of the political parties as gatekeepers to political office. In democratic political systems the political parties control or dominate the selection and nominations processes (Dahlerup 1988a, Lovenduski & Norris 1995, Norris ed. 1997, Freidenvall forthcoming). Quotas are thus a means to open up systems of closed and male-dominated patterns of recruitment. Quota systems do not accept the argument that there are not enough (competent) women, but demand that parties begin to seriously search for women and give room for women at all levels in the party organization. In this way quota provisions target the very heart of the recruitment process. However, quota systems do not remove all barriers that exist for women in politics, such as women's double burden, the gender imbalance of financial means for campaigning, the many obstacles women meet when executing assignments as elected politicians, and quotas may even contribute to the stigmatization of women politicians. But quota provisions, properly implemented, do obstruct and overcome some of the most crucial barriers for women's equal political representation, such as male succession patterns, women's lack of power in the parties, especially in the nomination processes, and invalidate the common argument that the party could not find sufficient amount of women to stand for election. Instead quota systems force parties to scrutinize and change their male-dominated gender profile and seriously start recruiting women who share their political conviction.

It could be argued, however, that quotas puts the burden on women, who need extra help and assistance in order to overcome the barriers and advance in politics. Quotas therefore construct women as the 2nd sex, consequently contributing to a reproduction of stereotyped gender roles and a stigmatization of women. However, it is important to emphasize that gender quotas, especially quotas with 50-50 per cent provisions (like the zipping system) or gender neutral quotas (i.e. a minimum of 40 per cent for both sexes) also challenge the conviction that only women need extra stimuli to advance. Rules, such as the zipping system, are actually both a guarantee and a limit to women's political participation, consequently constructing both men as a group in need of protection of their rights and women as a group that might become too powerful. Certain gender quotas provisions are therefore important strategic factors for securing women's representation.

The political parties' role as gatekeepers, means that they are able to increase the proportion of nominated women candidates by creating formal rules that prescribe a certain proportion of women among the party's candidates. Such direct action can take the form of a quota or a target. The implementation of quotas or targets by parties not only reflects the acceptance that gender under-representation is a problem; it also demonstrates an inclination to solve the problem. It also makes the political parties responsible for actions taken, not individual women.

Thus, there are several conflicting discourses on gender electoral quotas, both in theory and practice. Within the Nordic research community, some scholars see women's under-representation as a question of "time lag", implying that women will get an equal share of seats in they political institutions as they increase their general integration into the public sphere (Karvonen & Selle 1995). Other researchers, including the authors of this article, argue that backlash has proven possible, even in the Nordic countries, because gender inequality is not just a historical relict, but may be (re) produced also in modern settings. Consequently, quotas are a possible remedy to counteract the mechanisms of exclusion.

3. The Use of Quotas - a Global Overview.

Countries in various regions of the world have in recent years implemented constitutional quotas and/or quota regulations by law for national parliament, see table 1. Eleven countries in the world have inserted quota provisions for the national parliament in their constitution. A little more than twenty countries have introduced such quotas by law only. As the table shows, quotas provisions are found in many different political systems, included countries without democratic elections.

Table 1. Countries with constitutional quota and/or election law quota regulation for national parliaments²

Country	Quota type ³ (in constitution and/or in law)	Year of first introduction	Present quota percent	Women in parliament (last election)
South America				
Argentina	C, L	1991, 1991	30	30.7 (2001)
Bolivia	L	1997	30	18.5 (2002)
Brazil	L	1997	30	8.6 (2002)
Costa Rica	L	1996	40	35.1 (2002)
Ecuador	L	1997	20	16.0 (2002)
Guyana	C	N/A	33	20.0 (2001)
Mexico	L	2002	30	16.0 (2000)
Panama	L	1997	30	9.9 (1999)
Paraguay	L	1996	20	8.8 (2003)
Peru	L	1997	30	17.5 (2001)
Venezuela	L	1998	30	9.7 (2000)
Dominican Republic	L	1997	25	17.3 (2002)
Europe				
Belgium	L	1994 (2002)	33	35.3 (2003)
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2001	33	16.7 (2002)	
France	C, L	1999, 2000	45	12.2 (2002)
Macedonia	L	N/A	30	18.3 (2002)
Serbia & Montenegro	L	2002	30	7.9 (2003)
Africa and Middle East				
Djibouti	L	2002	10	10.8 (2003)
Eritrea	C	N/A	30	22.0 (1994)
Jordan	L	2003	6 seats	5.5 (2003)
Kenya	C	1997	50	7.1 (2002)
Morocco	L	N/A	10	10.8 (2002)
Sudan	L	N/A	10	9.7 (2000)
Tanzania	C, L	N/A	20-30	22.3 (2000)
Uganda	C, L	1995, N/A	-- ⁴	24.7 (2001)
Asia				
Armenia	L	1999	5	3.1 (1999)
China	C	1992	27	21.8 (1997-98)
Indonesia	L	2003	30	8.0 (1999)
Korea, Democratic Rep	L	N/A	20	20.1 (1998)
Nepal	C, L	1990, 1990	5	5.9 (1999)
Pakistan	L	2002	17	21.6 (2002)
Philippines	C, L	1995, 1995	20	17.8 (2001)
Taiwan, Prov. of China	C	1997	10-25	22.2 (2001)

² Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines and Taiwan have constitutional quotas for local and/or regional parliaments. See www.quotaproject.org.

³ C refers to quota provisions stipulated in the constitution, and L refers to quota provisions stipulated in law.

⁴ One parliamentary seat from each of the 56 districts is reserved for a woman.

Depending on how difficult it is to amend a constitution, quotas by law are in general less solid than constitutional quota systems. At the implementation stage the difference between the two different kinds of legal basis is however insignificant: As table 1 demonstrates, countries with constitutional quotas, that operate democratic elections, have usually inscribed quota regulations in the electoral law as well. Consequently, it seems adequate to talk about legal quota regulations as one category.

Consequently, a distinction should be made between *legal quotas* (constitutional and/or by law) and *party quotas*. In more than fifty countries major the political parties have decided to insert quota regulations in the party's own by-laws, setting of a formal requirement of a certain minimum of women on the party's candidate list (www.quotaproject.org). Numerous parties have passed recommendations, but only formal regulations are included here. It is evident that in countries with legal quota provisions (constitutional and/or by-law), political parties have often inserted those legal minimum requirements into their own by-laws. Some parties may even have gone further than is legally required.⁵ However, when contrasting legal quota systems with party quota system, we reserve the concept of 'party quotas' for countries, in which quota provisions are exclusively decided upon by the individual political parties, and required by national legal rules. The Nordic countries are example of countries without any legal quota regulations for public elections, only party quotas (Bergqvist et al 1999). It is an interesting research question to study what differences follow from these two quota systems, apart from the obvious fact, that legal quota systems comprise all political parties in a country, whereas party quotas in countries with no legal requirements are voluntary. A comparison between the Nordic case and the case of Latin America reveals that legal quota systems do not automatically lead to higher representation for women than systems with only party quotas.

Table 1 demonstrates interesting regional variations or clusters. *Latin America* represent one such cluster, within which many countries in the course of very few years, 1996-1998, with Argentina as front-runner in 1991, have introduced quota systems, preferably legal quotas. In Asia quota regulations are also being adopted in several countries, and people there even talk about a new "quota fever". The radical move to introduce a 33 per cent quota to village councils in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh represents a very important step towards empowering women in countries with massive female illiteracy and a strict patriarchal gender regime. Scholars evaluate this extraordinary experience differently, but it seems to be the general agreement that profound changes are taken place, but also, that without massive support and capacity building of the nominated and elected women, these often illiterate women tend to become tokens (Raman 2002).

There is no general pattern to be found in *Europe*, other than the fact that very few European countries have introduced legal quota systems. Countries like Belgium and France constitute an exception. A distinction should be made between *Western Europe* and *Eastern Europe*. In the former, party quotas are becoming more and more widespread. In contrast, in the former communist countries in Eastern- and Central Europe and Russia, with the exception of former Yugoslavia, quotas are not in use, since they are very unpopular. In some of the post-communist countries, as for instance Russia, quotas are in fact up for discussion today, but the resistance is vehement, also among women, because it reminds people of what is seen as "forced emancipation" of the Soviet rule.

It is, however, a widespread myth, that a 30 per cent quota for women was in use in the political life of most communist countries. But like the myth of the long use of quotas in the Nordic countries, which influenced quota discourses in other parts of the world, so has the construction of the myth 30 per cent quotas for women under communism contributed negatively to present days' discussion on quotas in Eastern Europe and Russia.

In *Africa* several countries have introduced quotas. Already in 1995 Uganda introduced a system of one reserved seat for a women representative in each constituency. The most notable example is South

⁵ In Belgium, for instance, the law of 2002 demands a 33 per cent quota, but some parties have themselves a higher requirement. Here seems to be an interesting interaction between party quotas and legal quotas, which one should remember are made by the very same parties, acting as legislators in parliament (www.quotaproject.org).

Africa, where the 30 per cent quota system of the ANC party brought the Republic of South Africa to the top of the world rank order of countries with high women's representation. Women's representation in the *Arab* world is negligible. However, quotas are being discussed in the Arab world today. Recently Morocco introduced a 30 per cent quota system, and at the June 2003 election in Jordan 6 seats were reserved for women for the first time.

In countries, administrated by or occupied by the international community, the concept of quotas for women is being discussed. In several instances like in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the initiative came from international organizations, which brought the claim forward in co-operation with local women's organizations (Nordlund 2003). In the case of East Timor, it was the UN that curbed on a quota demand put forward by women's organizations in East Timor (Pires 2002).

However, when comparing the percentage of women in South American countries with quota provisions to the international average percentage of women in parliament, one finds only small differences (17.3% compared to 15.2%). Also, a comparison between these countries and the regional average demonstrates a corresponding result (17.3% compared to 17.7% - including North America – US 14.3%, Canada 20.6%). The intra-regional difference between countries with and without quotas with regard to women's representation is somewhat greater in countries with quotas (17.3% compared to 11.1%). Thus, the table shows that the use of quotas alone is not sufficient to ensure high levels of women in parliament. Also, a high level of representation might be achieved without quotas.

Table 2. Women in national parliament and quota provisions (parliaments with more than 30% women)

Country	Women in national Parliament (%)	Type of quota provision	Electoral system: constitution/law/party/ no quotas
Sweden	45.3	P	List-PR
Denmark	38.0	NQ	List-PR
Finland	37.5	NQ	List-PR
Netherlands	36.7	P	List-PR
Norway	36.4	P	List-PR
Cuba	36.0	NQ	NDL
Belgium	35.3	L	List-PR
Costa Rica	35.1	L, P	List-PR
Austria	33.9	P	List-PR
Germany	32.2	P	MMP (PR)
Argentina	30.7	C, L, P	List-PR
Iceland	30.2	P	List-PR
Mozambique	30.0	P	List-PR

Source: www.ipu.org and www.quotaproject.org

Table 2 shows the top 13 countries of the world, ranked according to the level of women's representation in their national parliament. The table demonstrates that a majority of countries with more than 30 per cent women in national parliament has implemented quota provisions.⁶ Political party quotas for electoral candidates are the most frequent type of quota provision among the countries with quotas. However, some countries in the top of the list such as Denmark, Finland and Cuba have

⁶ In the 2003 election, 50 per cent women and men elected to the parliament of Wales. Being a part of the United Kingdom, and not an independent state, Wales is not included in table 2.

not implemented quotas. Political party quotas did exist for a short period in Denmark in the Social Democratic party and parties on the left, but were soon abandoned.

The table demonstrates that the use of quotas alone is not sufficient to ensure high levels of representation for women. Properly implemented, quotas are no doubt efficient instruments to bring about substantial improvements in women's political representation. Thus, a high women's representation may be attained by the implementation of various types of quotas, but also without them.

Table 1 revealed that discrepancies are often found between the quota provision and the actual representation of women. This discrepancy between the quota requirement and the actual election outcome should not just be considered a question of lack of time, that in due time women's representation will reach the required percentage. The very aim of quota systems is to produce a rapid and immediate change that is in the following election.⁷

The information about electoral systems of the top 13 countries, see table 2, gives support to the well known theory, that electoral systems based on proportional representation further women's representation better than the majority system (see also Rule 1987, Reynolds 1999). Among the democratic countries listed in table 2, all use the PR system, except for Germany that has a mixed system. However, women's representation is considerable higher among those elected to the German Bundestag from the PR lists than from the majority constituencies.

Table 2 reveals that quotas for women are also in use in parliaments that emerged from non-democratic elections. The connection between electoral system and the introduction and efficiency of quota systems is an interesting field of study, but will not be discussed further in this article (see Matland & Studlar 1996). No doubt, quota provisions are more compatible with PR electoral systems than with majority systems, even if quota provisions are being tried out in several majority systems such as England (party quotas), and France and Nepal (legal quotas).

4. Quotas as Reserved Seats

Quotas might be introduced in democratic political systems as well in systems with limited democratic freedoms, or even in non-democratic or authoritarian political systems. The following discussion is limited to those systems, in which some kind of election is taking place.

It seems appropriate to use the concept of "quotas as reserved seats" about systems that guarantee women a certain number of seats in for instance the parliament, independent of the electoral result, whereas 'electoral quotas' or 'candidate quotas' prescribe a certain percentage of women at the lists presented to the voters at the election. In both cases, the voters decide which of the women candidates are elected, but under the reserved seats system, women are guaranteed a certain number of seats.

The differences between various systems should not be exaggerated. In close list systems quotas in reality decide, whom of the candidates will get elected, but the number of seats for each party is decided by the electorate. Reserved seats may be applied in democratic as well as in non-democratic system or semi-democratic systems. In many of the former communist countries seats were often distributed in advance to various groups such as the women's organization, the trade unions, the youth organization, the farmers etc. However, the number of women increased among the trade union and the youth representatives in several communist countries in Europe during the 1970s and 80s.

Reserved seat systems may or may not give voters a choice between candidates, belonging to the designated group. In Uganda, an electoral college in each of the 56 districts elects a "Woman Representative" to parliament. Other groups such as youth, the armed forces and workers also have seats reserved for them. This is combined with open elections in 214 constituencies, and one also find

⁷ In some countries like Belgium and Brazil, a gradual increase of the minimum requirement was built into the law.

some women elected for the so-called free seats, which together with the women elected on the reserved seats make women's representation in Uganda's parliaments as high as 24,7 per cent (Christensen 1999; www.quotaproject.org).

The Jordanian quota system, which was introduced at the election in June 2003, constitutes still another kind of quota system. According to the law, 6 seats out of the 110 of the lower house of the parliament are reserved for women. In the Jordanian discussion this is labelled a "quota system". The government partly controls the nomination process, but there are no provisions to secure women a minimum share of the candidates, as is the case in most quota systems. On the basis on the individual votes (compulsory preferential voting in a multimember majority system) the 6 women that received the highest percentage of the total number of votes cast in their respective constituencies were elected to parliament – in case they were not already elected, which no women were. It is worth noticing, that all political systems operate some kind of geographical quotas, for instance reserving a non-proportional number of seats for densely populated districts. In the following focus is on quota systems, not reserved seats.

The principle of the quota system is to place the burden of recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process. The core idea behind this system is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not isolated in political life. Previous notions of having formal or de facto reserved seats for only one or for very few women, representing a vague and all-embracing category of "woman", are not considered sufficient in the world today.

5. The Implementation of Quotas

The introduction of quota systems is often in focus, while the complex process of implementing quotas is often neglected in the public debate. Even decision-makers do usually pay little attention to the implementation process that should make quotas work according to the purpose. Passing quota regulations may be just a symbolic gesture, if the implementation is not regulated and no sanctions for non-compliance installed. The women's movements have an important role to play not only when the quota rules are passed, but also throughout the whole implementation process. Consequently, comparative research into the rules and processes of quota implementation is needed.

"...In talking to legislators, feminist political activists, and the political analysts, this author found absolutely no evidence that any attention was paid to how quotas would actually work in conjunction with the very different rules that are used in municipal and congressional elections in Peru. Given the relatively high and unanticipated impact of gender quotas in Peru, perhaps this lack of attention to detail was a blessing in disguise." (Smidt 2003:3).

Several factors can be identified as important for the successful implementation of quota provisions. Here we will discuss two very crucial dimensions: First, the specification of the quota provisions, and secondly, the sanctions for non-compliance and the eventual (non) implementation of such sanctions.

Different quota requirements

Electoral gender quotas imply that women must hold as a certain minimum of the numbers or percentages of the candidate lists (Dahlerup 1998). Today, most quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a "critical minority" of 20-30 per cent.

As table 1 shows, quota provisions vary considerably, from Nepal's 5 per cent, to Costa Rica's 40 per cent and the 45 per cent of France. A demand of a minimum of 30 per cent women is most usual. Among the party quotas, some few parties like the Green parties in many countries and the Swedish Social Democratic Party demands an equal share of female and male candidates.

Most quotas systems aim at increasing women's representation, because the problem to be addressed usually is seen as the historical under-representation of women. Some quota systems are however,

formulated in a gender neutral way. Gender neutrality may be a way to overcome resistance, but it occurs that legislators or parties have not realized the difference between gender neutral and women based quota systems:

A minimum requirement for women implies a maximum set for the representation of men. In contrast, gender-neutral quotas set up a maximum for both sexes. An often-used rule is, neither gender should occupy more than 60 per cent and no less than 40 per cent of the seats. Legislators may not always have considered this, but gender neutral quota systems also sets a maximum for women's representation, which a minimum requirement for women in fact does not. In many countries women's organizations have demanded quotas for women, but the actual law was written in gender-neutral terms. As long as women's representation remains low, the gender-neutral framing does not have any consequences. But in countries like the Scandinavian, quotas were usually and deliberately constructed in a gender-neutral way as equal opportunity policies in general are in those countries. Gender neutrality may be a way to overcome an opposition according to which quotas are regarded as a discrimination against men.

Gender-neutral quotas may thus also help men. In the Scandinavian left wing parties, most of which during the peak of the new Women's Liberation Movement changed from male dominance to equality oriented parties with many active women, gender neutral quotas have in some instances moved men up the ladder. In the very first use of the party's new rules of gender neutral quotas for election, the Danish Socialist People's Party moved a man up as number two on the electoral list, after an internal primary had nominated four women for the top positions at the party's list for the European Parliament in 1984. Since the party got only two seats in the election, this man was subsequently elected (Dahlerup 1988a: 88).

The Green Parties were among the first to install gender quotas and to present gender balanced lists for the elections. Many Green parties also have one woman and one man as spokespersons. The German Greens, however, may also have and have actually had two women leaders. Why apply a maximum for women in an otherwise male dominated society? (Offe 2001).

A fifty-fifty quota is by nature gender neutral. The Swedish Social Democratic Party has used the so-called "zipper system" since 1993: the nomination committee suggests two lists of candidates, one for women candidates, and another for the men. These two lists are then combined like a zipper, and the only thing left to decide, is whether the lists should be topped by the top of the women's lists or should come from the list of male candidates. *In 50-50 per cent quota systems, the question of stigmatization of the elected women ("elected just because you are a woman") is not relevant, since both men and women are there as result of the quota.* Seen in relation to the discussion of women as a group, the fifty-fifty system no doubts constructs women and men as two separate categories in the nominations process. However, the discussion of categorization seems to be more vehement in systems with lower quota requirements, and especially in the introduction phase (Freidenvall, forthcoming).

Rules about the rank order on the candidates

A requirement of 30 per cent women on the list may lead to no women elected at all. But even a radical fifty-fifty regulation, which demands alternation of women and men throughout the list, may under specific circumstances result in the election of only men from the party in question. If for instance a small party nominates a man as the first and a woman as the second on the list in a closed list electoral system, and the party wins none or only one seat in all constituencies, then a radical fifty-fifty quota provision is of no help. In this case, like in majority systems, the central party has to intervene in order to break the tradition.

The women's movements in Latin America have been extremely quick in formulating and having passed new demands when the first quota regulations in most cases did not result in the fulfillment of the 20 or 30% requirement, neither on the lists, nor among the elected (Marques-Pereira 2001; Peschard 2003). In countries such as Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Ecuador rules were eventually

passed about the rank ordering of the candidates on the electoral list, the so called "placement mandates" or "double quotas". In Argentina, which has been the pioneer among the Latin American countries in the area of quotas, the decree of 11993 fixes the minimum number of seats guaranteed women: at least 1 post when 2-4 are available, 2 when 5-8 available etc.

In Costa Rica, and after intervention from women's organizations, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in 1999 came up with the following radical interpretation of the quota law: that women should not only have the required 40 per cent of the candidates of the lists, but also 40 per cent of the "electable" seats, interpreted as the number of seats that the party won in the constituency in the previous election. Right now, discussions are carried out about how to interpret this ruling for new parties (Perschard 2003; Quesada 2003).

In the case of Peru, a 25 percent quota was introduced in 1997 to be raised to 30 per cent in 2001. In 1997 women constituted only 11 per cent of Congress, today the percentage is 18 per cent. Women's organizations have push hard to make the National Board of Elections actually implement the rules. A complaint for non-compliance has been filed to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (www.quotaproject.org).

The conclusion is that quota regulations work differently in different electoral systems, and that further research is needed in this area.

Sanctions

The distinction between legal quotas and party quotas becomes highly relevant, when it comes to sanctions for non-compliance. In party quota systems the sanctions are only political - critique from women's groups in the party or reactions from the voters. In legal quota systems, there are often some rules about sanctions in case of non-compliance. However, our global overview shows a vast range of sanctions - from none, whatsoever, to the most efficient, the duty (and not just discretionary right) of the electoral commission to reject lists that do not comply with the demanded quota provisions. It is important to be mindful of, that regulated sanctions are important, but that even sanctions might not be applied, as in Peru and Brazil for example. In France, the rejection of the lists that did not meet the requirement did work, and women's representation doubled in the municipal councils in larger cities. At the national level, only financial sanctions were at hand, which obviously did not deter the parties, and consequently women's representation increased marginally from 10,9 to 12,3 per cent in the French National Assembly - a disappointment after an extensive debate about "parité" in the French public (Sineau 2002). More international comparisons are needed about the effectiveness of various types of sanctions in various political systems.

A temporary measure?

In some countries quotas may be considered a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed. But in the formal regulations, few countries or parties have made time limits in their quota provisions. In quota discourses, an often-expressed wish is that some day quotas will no longer be necessary and equal representation will come "by itself". No political system has, however, reached that point.

6. International Diffusion and Translation

The Scandinavian notion that the introduction of quota systems is very difficult, if not impossible, if women do not already have a solid power base in parliament or in the political party in question, is contradicted by the amazing pace, by which quotas are introduced around the world. Today quota provisions are introduced in countries where women's representation is low, and where women

seemingly have little political influence. This implies that we see male-dominated political systems give way to women.

In the following, this astonishing development and the factors behind it are discussed. We argue that one of the most important factors is the influence from a new international discourse supportive of active measure to increase women's representation, as it was expressed, for instance, by the UN conference in Beijing 1995. However, this does not explain why quotas are being introduced in some countries of the world, and not in others, and why quota systems seem to expand in clusters, as table 1 shows. Consequently, the focus should be on the study of the mechanisms that lead to the international diffusion of quota systems.

From a theory of contagion to a theory of translation

In our problematization of the fast track as a challenge to the Scandinavian model, theoretical insights can be drawn from theories of contagion. According to contagion theory it is suggested that traditional political parties will feel forced to nominate more women if one of their political competitors, usually a smaller party to the left, starts to promote representation of women. Matland and Studlar (1996) suggest that as smaller rivaling parties, usually on the political periphery, begins promoting women actively, larger parties will follow suit. By nominating women, small parties demonstrate that there is no penalty in promoting women and larger parties will feel inclined to respond to these pressures by taking direct action in the support of women. This will explicitly hold for parties that are ideological neighbors to the parties initiating the launch of women candidates. These parties fear losing voters to the innovating party. Over time, as each party reacts to a felt threat from close political competitors on the issue of sending more women to parliament, the perceived need to nominate women will trigger approximately all parties in the political spectrum to comply with the new norms. It is then anticipated that all mainstream parties will finally begin promoting a greater proportion of women politicians to demonstrate their commitment to equal rights. Matland and Studlar make a distinction between macro-contagion and micro-contagion, where the first occurs at the national/central level, and the latter at the local/electoral district level (Matland & Studlar 1996).

The concept of contagion, however, can be criticized for implying a transference of ideas with modest space for actors. However, one could argue that there is an element of competition between countries that strive for international recognition with regard to women's representation, a competition that also includes political parties that compete nationally. In the pursuit of an increased women's representation by the use of electoral quotas we can thus point to competition being carried out at different levels: one inter-state competition (between countries) and one intra-state competition (between political parties).

As an alternative the concept of 'international diffusion' can be applied, defined as a process where a country responds to general political pressures partly from the level of women's political participation in "competing" countries, and partly from international organizations such as the UN (CEDAW), and the national women's movement. However, the concept 'diffusion' mainly points to structural factors, with the risk of neglecting the role of actors.

Processes of translation

According to processes of translation, however, communication as the transference of new ideas can be regarded as the production and exchange of meanings. Perceiving quotas as social constructions implies that they can be regarded as products of historically distinct social interpretation processes. Diffusion can consequently be redefined as a process where meaning is constructed by temporally and spatially embedded policy ideas from previous contexts and using them as models for policy change in new contexts (Johnson 2003). Policy translation can thus be regarded as a process of social interpretation, where implicit meanings built into the policy contributes to its explicit construction.

Translation of quota discourses, as a modified version of diffusion, puts a greater emphasis on an actor-dependent character of translation. The spread in time and space of innovative ideas - such as quotas - is in the hands of actors, actors that may act in various ways. If there are no actors, such as women's organizations and political activists, there will be neither senders nor receivers of ideas on quotas. There will in fact be no policy transmission. According to this discussion it could also be argued that the more actors involved in the process, the greater effect. The power behind policy translation is not only the idea of quotas, but also the consequence of its many adherents (Latour 1986). In line with this argumentation, one could reformulate the idea of critical mass, i.e. it takes a certain critical mass before critical acts - such as the idea of quotas - may start spreading (Dahlerup 1988b). In this case it could be claimed that when several countries have introduced quotas, others will follow suit, for various reasons. The same perspective has been applied to the campaign for women's suffrage (Townes 2003).

The diffusion of ideas on quotas is not enough for their implementation. Local actors willing to internalize new ideas in their way of thinking are needed in order to import innovative ideas into their organizations and translate them for practical use. Thus, we do not only need senders of policy ideas, but also receivers who are willing and capable of receiving these ideas and copying them in local contexts. Policy translation should, as a consequence, be regarded as an activity where local actors play the main casts, staged in a local institutional and discursive frame, which sets the border for the practical translation. All processes of policy translations in time and space are therefore always connected to local contexts. Thus, the translation approach focuses on diffusion of ideas as a process of imitation, where different actors internalize and conceptualize ideas to assimilate and adapt them in their local contexts. Translation of quotas is then all about how policy ideas derive their meaning in the local political context and how these ideas are adapted to, and limited by, the given context.

Transmission of quota provisions can be defined as a process, where meaning is constructed by temporally and spatially policy ideas from external contexts and using them as models for policy change in a new, internal context. The translation of quota policies can therefore be perceived as policy ideas spreading from spatially distant contexts (such as the UN) and being translated and internalized in local contexts, where preference is given to policy ideas in close contexts (neighboring countries) to foreign and distant ones. According to this theory, one would expect finding clusters of countries with approximately 1, the same type of quota provisions, 2, the same type of quota discourses, and 3, introduced in the same time period.

Countries as actors sensitive to their international image

Researchers have commented upon variations in women's political representation from several perspectives. A common explanation is the importance of institutional factors, such as electoral systems. Proportional representation systems have a higher proportion of women legislators and have had faster increases in the proportion of women members compared to single-member districts, simple plurality systems (Rule 1981, 1987; Norris 1985). Larger district magnitudes and centralized nomination processes are other important institutional factors having an impact on women's representation. Another common explanation is the impact of socio-economic factors, such as women's participation in the work force, education, birth rates and the existence of social welfare benefits. Also cultural factors are emphasized, such as religiosity and gender equality. For instance, some scholars claim that a presumed Nordic gender equality culture has been favorable to women's degree of participation in politics in Nordic countries (Norris 1985).

Although there is a general agreement on the impact of these explanations, especially the role of electoral systems, structural factors should be seen as just frames, within which actors are acting, sometimes even in an effort to change the very frames. Consequently, many researchers have studied the role of various actors in increasing women's representation, such as independent feminist organizations, women's organizations within the political parties, the party themselves as well as the

equality machineries of the state (Dahlerup 1988a & b; Sainsbury 1993; Norris and Lovenduski 1995; Norris 1996; Caul 1999, 2001; Freidenvall forthcoming).

Building on theories focusing on the importance of actors, this article argues that not only political parties but also *countries* are important actors as they compete in a run for gender equality. By legislating electoral gender quota provisions, countries such as Costa Rica can take up the race with rivals in the same region, such as Argentina. In countries renowned for its outstanding women's representation, such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark, the competition is carried out preferably at the intra-state level, i.e. between political parties. Quotas - as a key to equality - demonstrates not only countries' (and parties') willingness to act to do something about the problem of women's low representation, it also demonstrates *a country's pursuit of constructing itself as modern and innovative*. In the endeavors to solve the problem of women's under-representation, quota provisions represent a fast and effective method. (However, far from all countries feel obliged to act on this matter).

This reasoning rests on the assumption, that *the international image* has become more and more important, internationally but also in the national context. Internationalized media contribute to this, as the fact that political leaders of the world meet much more regularly in public today, followed by the media that report back. Thus the international construction of a country's image is of increasing importance and is being reported – and constructed – in the national media, through which people still get most of their information.

The role of the women's movements

The women's movement has always been internationally oriented. During the suffrage campaign, women's organizations had a well developed international network, through which victory in one country fast was reported to other countries. Because the arguments against women's suffrage was partly biological, it was seen as extremely important to be able to tell about countries that had already granted women suffrage (Freidenvall 2003).

The possibilities for the women's movements to play the international cart have increased rapidly during the last decades. Globalization has led to a growing number of *transnational advocacy networks*, so that today, the borders between states have come permeable to international political activism in a reciprocal interaction with local activists (Sperling et al 2001). The recommendation by the UN women's conference i Beijing about affirmative action and quota systems and the continuous international report systems in the CEDAW convention have proved significant. It has been argued that today's trends of internationalization (globalization) offers both new possibilities and new difficulties for the feminist movement, especially for the less professional movements that do not have the capacities to act on the international level (Dahlerup 2001). Thus new frames are created for movement actions.

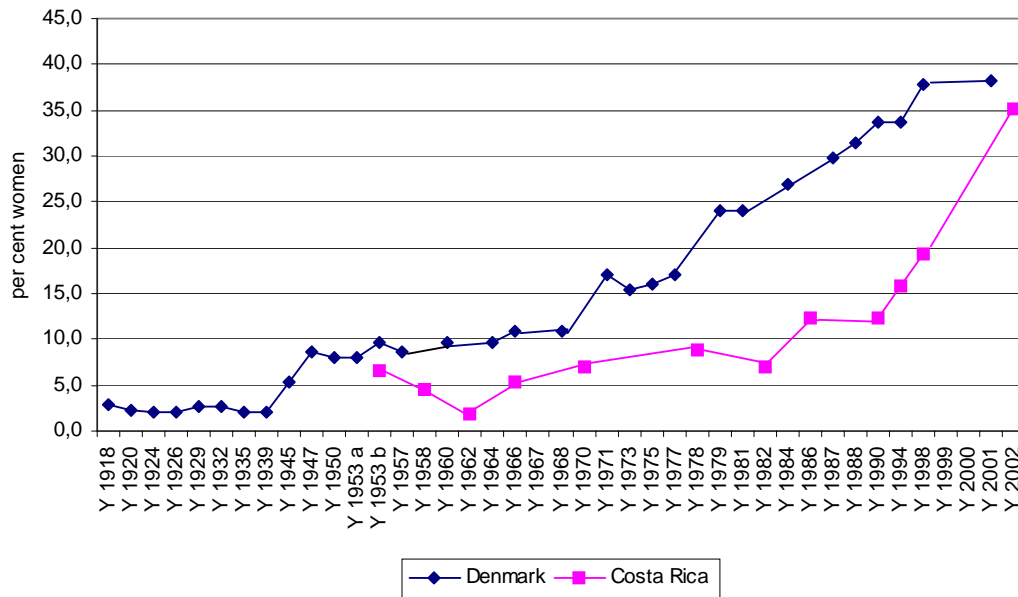
However, in case where actions are needed by national legislators or parties, as in the case of introduction of quotas, it is the local women's movement that takes on the role of *translator* of the demands. The women's movement in the individual country has in many cases been able to increase the legitimacy of their claim for equal representation by referring to the international community. Comparative research on the diffusion of quota systems should therefore analyze the very process of translation. Important is how the demands are adapted to the national discourse on democracy and principles of representation, and to the actual gender regime and gendered discourses - at the same time trying to change these discursive frames.

7. The Incremental versus the Fast Track.

In this last section we will discuss the new concepts of the incremental track versus the fast track to high representation of women in politics. We will do this by comparing Scandinavia, (Denmark,

Norway and Sweden) as a prominent example of the incremental track, with Latin America, as a prominent example of the fast track. Figure 1 illustrates the two types of tracks.

Figure 1. Women’s Parliamentary Representation in Costa Rica and Denmark. Percentage¹⁾



¹⁾ No information from the 1974 election in Costa Rica.

While the incremental track, such as the Scandinavian one, rests on a gradual increase in women's overall resources and on gradual historical changes in the perceptions of womanhood, the fast track represents a historical leap forward in women's representation. The research question to be addressed here is, how it has been possible to introduce quota provisions in patriarchal strongholds like Latin American countries (and South East Asia, for that matter), where women's political power were minimal? Here we draw on the concepts of international imitation in clusters and processes of translation discussed in section 5. In the end we will shortly raise the crucial question of possible differences in the consequences of the fast track compared with the incremental track in terms of women's empowerment? This may also be phrased as a question of empowerment from below versus empowerment from above.

Case 1: The incremental track – the Scandinavian countries

Compared with national parliaments in other regions, the Scandinavian countries enjoy the highest proportion of women parliamentarians. According to the latest statistics, the Nordic countries, that is the three Scandinavian including Finland and Iceland, has an average of 39,7 per cent women in parliament, compared to the international average of 14 per cent. Sweden has the highest figure, with 45 percent women in parliament. Due to this extra-ordinary high representation of women in politics, scholars and women activists have raised the question: How come? Why does the Scandinavian countries have such a high political representation of women? It needs to be emphasized, however, that the proportion of women in the Scandinavian parliaments, which constitutes an important result for women activists and Scandinavian representative democracy *per se*, increased very slowly at the beginning. In 1971, more than 50 years after women’s suffrage was won, women’s representation in

the Nordic parliament was only 15 per cent. During the 70s and 80s, however, women's representation started to increase. In 1981, it had increased to 25 per cent, in 1990 to 33.5 per cent, and presently there are approx. 40 per cent women parliamentarians. Thus, the breakthrough for women in Nordic national politics is a phenomenon of the past 30 years, with the 1970's as the take off phase.

There are several factors explaining the development of women's representation in Scandinavian countries. Institutional factors such as the system of proportional representation, and socioeconomic factors such as the early development of the welfare system and women's opportunity to study and take paid employment are usually stressed. However, although these factors are important, indeed, one has to consider efforts taken by the political parties and women's organizations. A crucial factor in the increase of women's representation in the Scandinavian countries during the last 30 years, is the political parties' and the women's organizations' strategies to raise women's political representation.

The 1970s and onward witnessed a wide range of initiatives to increase the parliamentary representation of women; campaigns by the women's movement, in several cases supported by the state, actions against male dominated assemblies, forming "Women's Parliaments", the threat of forming a Women's Party, eventually successfully realized in Iceland. Party quotas, however, was not passed until the 1980s and 90s, when women already had 20-30 per cent in parliament and had reached a high level of education and labor market participation. How was quotas eventually passed? Quotas in Scandinavian politics were always voluntary party quotas. They were decided by the political parties only after women had gained considerable influence in the party structure, and successfully demanded their share of the seats in the nominations committees. Quotas for the internal party structure usually predated quotas for electoral lists. Thus the introduction of quotas was the result of a long gradual process of empowerment of women.

It was the parties of the left that first adopted party quotas. Pressured by strong women's movements in the 1970s and 80s, traditionally male dominated left parties were changed into equality oriented political parties with many active women members, programs for equality etc. Quota provisions for the internal party organizations and for the electoral lists of the parties followed (Dahlerup 1988a). The political parties on the right to a greater extent preferred more individualist strategies such as training and mentoring programs (Freidenvall forthcoming).

Norway serves as an interesting example. It was the Norwegian psychologist and politician Berit Ås who introduced quotas in the Norwegian left Socialist party. In the 1980's, The Labor Party, one of the biggest Norwegian parties, introduced party quotas provisions with a minimum requirement of 40 per cent of each sex, and several other parties followed suit. Today only two out of the seven largest parties reject the use of quotas. This *competition* between parties consequently worked to women's advantage, since the establishment of these quota provisions has been used for both the composition of internal party organization and for nominations to public elections (Skjeie 1991, Skjeie & Siim 2000). When Gro Harlem Brundtland was appointed to her 2nd cabinet in 1986, she extended the quota provisions to the composition of the cabinet as well (Skjeie 2002). Thus, in Norway the use of quotas has become translated into an institutional norm in party politics, and norm that can also be used for institutional politics (i.e. the cabinet, and public commission and boards).

The use of party quotas has been most prominent in Norway. In Sweden, quotas were first introduced by the Greens in 1981, followed by the Left party in 1987. Upon its founding in 1981, the Green Party adopted quotas provisions of a minimum of 40 percent of either sex in boards and committees. This policy was extended to include electoral lists in 1987, and in 1997, quotas provisions were extended to 50 percent, plus minus one person. The Left Party implemented in 1987 a strategy of at least the same proportion on women on the party lists as women members in the constituency. This strategy was extended to a minimum of 40 percent of either sex in 1990, and raised to 50 percent in 1993. It was not until 1993, however, that the largest Swedish political party, the Social Democratic Party, introduced their *zipping system*, being challenged by the party's women's section and the women's movement *the Support Stockings*. According to the *zipping system*, men and women are alternated on the electoral ballot.

As the Norwegian case, gender-neutral policies on quotas have generally been preferred in Sweden, adhering to the establishment of a minimum representation of a certain percentage for “each sex”. But while the Norwegian discourse on quotas has been founded on a perception of women as a resource with gender specific interests and experiences, “ a politics of difference,” the Swedish discourse has to a greater extent stressed power imbalances between women and men in society. The Swedish Social Democratic Party has, however, put a limit on women’s representation on 50 per cent, guaranteeing the representation of men as well. Parties to the right have tended to prefer non-mandatory rules, such as the 1972 Liberal recommendation of alternating men and women on electoral ballots or the relatively imprecise or indeterminate goals on an increased women’s representation of the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Center Party. It needs to be stressed, however, that also parties without party quotas have obtained an increased level of women parliamentarians. For instance, since the 1970s, the Center Party has had the highest proportion of women in parliament most frequently. This result points to the decisive factor of *competition* among Swedish parties as a factor explaining the high women’s representation.

In Denmark, furthermore, the Socialist People's Party was the first to introduce quotas, in the beginning only for internal party structures, later to be expanded to the electoral lists. In 1983, the largest party, the Social Democratic Party adopted quotas of 40 per cent for both sexes for the internal boards, later to be expanded to local elections, but never to national election. The political parties to the right never adopted formal quota provisions, but worked hard to prove that quotas were not necessary in order to increase women's representation. After the middle of the 1990s no political party in Denmark operates quotas for public elections. This development is part of a recent and surprising anti-feminist discourse in Denmark, according to which equality is more or less obtained, or will at any rate, come "by itself" (Dahlerup 2001; Borchorst & Christensen 2003). In Finland and Iceland no party quotas have been put forward.

Party quota provisions have been transmitted and inscribed not only into competing political parties’ statutes, but also to allied parties in neighboring countries, albeit with some modifications to translate the ideas of quotas to local institutional and discursive contexts. In this Nordic cluster, party quotas have not been the dominant strategy to increase the number of women in parliament, but during the last decade, quota provisions were expanded and radicalized in some of the leading political parties, especially in Sweden. The Nordic countries in general have taken the neighboring countries as point of reference. Thus, the Nordic countries usually refer to each other, and feminist will use this in arguing that changes has to be made to match the neighboring countries. It needs to be emphasized, however, that the competition between parties in each country might be a stronger force, than the inter-state competition.

Case 2: the fast track - Latin America.

The introduction of quota systems in many Latin American countries during such a short period of history has claimed the attention of many scholars. In this article we have drawn many Latin America examples. To sum up, with Argentina as the leading country, a large number of Latin American countries have introduced quota systems during the 1990's, see table 1. Further, and again with Argentina as the pioneer country, the actual quota rules are being strengthened in many countries following the initial lack of sufficient results. In the Latin American case, legal quota provisions have been preferred, thus making quotas an obligation for all political parties - in contrast to the Scandinavian model of party quotas only.

How was this possible in Latin America, known for its very traditional gender regime? In the beginning, legitimacy was rendered from the international community and the new international discourse on the need for action to secure women's political representation. In Argentina, the women's movement even referred to how the Scandinavian countries had succeeded in attaining a very high women's representation through quota provisions. Even if this, as mention above, was not a totally

adequate representation, it served its purpose!⁸ The development of a whole cluster of quota countries in Latin America illustrates how actors seek and create legitimacy for their claims by referring to neighboring countries, to which their own country normally compares itself. But we still need an answer to the question of how it was possible to have initially very unpopular quota provisions passed through the male dominated parliaments of Latin America?

Researchers have concluded, that male leaders introduced quotas - after strong pressure from the women's movements - out of consideration for the international image of the country. The introduction of quotas made it possible for the male political leaders to present their country as "modern", nationally as well as internationally. The introduction of quotas was supposed to construct the country as modern and democratic (Htun & Jones 2002; Marques-Pereira 2001). The increased importance of a country's international image is in focus here. Jacqueline Peschard argues, that more women in politics could represent a "democratic normalization", as an incentive after the turbulent years of the 1980's in Latin America (Peschard 2003). For the Peruvian case, Gregory Smidt adds that president Fujimoro, who in the end of his career made claims for the enactment of quotas into law, also saw this as a move that was expected to increase his support among women voters, that is a vote maximizing motive (Smidt 2003).

The Latin American quotas also illustrate the relevance of the concept of 'translation processes', discussed in section 5. Firstly, the international community did not always support the idea of quota provisions, not even did the international women's movements do so initially. Here we need more research into how the international advocacy networks in the end managed to construct this new international discourse. As pointed out by Sperling et al (2001), this construction takes place in a reciprocal process between the international level and the national, not in a one-way move from the international to the national. In the case of quotas, women's movements in individual countries have not just referred to an existing discourse of exclusion and quotas as a possible means, *they contributed to the creation of this international discourse by the very reference to it.*

Through the 'process of translation', demands are being translated into specific national contexts. In this process, references are often made to generally accepted principles of the country. In the Peruvian case, and because of the widespread corruption in Peru, the feminist movement added a new dimension to the well-known discourse of human rights: They translated the international discussion of women's different political agenda into a discourse of the supposed honesty and newness of women's politicians. In conclusion, the whole process of translation of the demands for quotas, from the international community as well as from the neighboring countries, to a specific country and back again represents an interesting field for future research.

Quotas from above and below.

Finally, we will raise the question of empowerment through quotas from 'below' versus from 'above'. Even if there are many different routes to quotas, two distinct types of quota introduction can be identified, which might have different consequences for the empowerment of women. In the Scandinavian case, quotas were introduced after a history of gradual integration of women into public life. One might label this gradualism 'from below'. In the South Asian cluster, notably in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (33 percent quota for local councils), quotas are introduced from above. The same has occurred to some extent in countries administrated by the international community (like in Bosnia). As a case, the Latin American cluster should be placed between these two extremes. The growing number of research on the South Asian cluster all points to the importance of extensive

⁸ Oral report by one of the leading Argentinean feminists during the IDEA meeting on Latin American Quotas in Lima, Peru, February 2003. It should also be mentioned, that there was an important interaction between researchers from IPSA and the Argentinean Women's Movement, and especially the women represented in the constitutional commission at that time, during the IPSA world congress in Buenos Aires in 1989.

capacity building and support of the new elected women, who by the nature of empowerment from above possess very few resources of their own.

The conclusion is, that both the incremental track and the fast track have their advantages and their problems. The fast track, in which women are given political positions from above, tends to make them into tokens, unless this initiative is followed by massive capacity-building, critique and support of the many newcomers by women's organizations. The incremental track to high representation usually secures, that the elected women have some power base outside parliament. Today, however, impatience of women worldwide is growing. Women's movements all over the world demand gender balanced political institutions now. Therefore we have argued that the gradualist Scandinavian case cannot any longer be considered the model for women's political empowerment around the world.

Finally, we want to emphasize, that jumps in women's representation might occur by many other means than quotas (like the Women's Party in Iceland, the historical jumps in the 1970s in the Nordic countries or like in the United Kingdom today). Also, quotas do not always result in increased women's representation, and may even have unintended consequences. However, properly implemented and backed up by an active women's movement, electoral gender quotas do represent one of the most efficient measures for increasing women's representation in political institutions.

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ⁱ This web site, representing the first global overview over the use electoral gender quotas (www.quotaproject.org), is the result of a joint venture between International IDEA and our research project, entitled "Quotas - a Key to Equality? An International Comparison of the Use of Electoral Quotas to obtain Equal Political Citizenship for Women" (www.statsvet.su.se). We want to thank all those who participated in the hard work of collecting data for the web site: Julie Ballington and Virginia Beramendi-Heine at IDEA, Christina Alnevall and Anja Taarup Nordlund at our department, and Mona Lena Krook at Columbia University. This global overview would not have been possible without the help of a large number of researchers and women's organizations from all over the world.