

Does the Political Participation of Women Matter? Democratic Representation, Affirmative Action and Quotas in Costa Rica

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Abstract For many countries, despite their adoption of quotas, women's political participation remains low. Costa Rica, however, presents a success story in terms of increasing women's descriptive representation and, as a country which has tried a variety of quota systems, it represents a unique case study. This article looks at the processes which have influenced the evolution of the Costa Rican experience, and the struggle to achieve effective quota law highlights the importance of clear, unambiguous legislation that leaves no loopholes for those resisting its implementation. However, there is also a cautionary note that although quotas can be effective in increasing numbers, the quest by women's organisations to seek transformation can be co-opted by others leading perhaps to undesired outcomes. The quota system can ensure a higher presence of women but it does not necessarily enhance democracy or social justice, or promote women's interests within the public agenda.

1 Introduction

During the past few decades, numerous countries have adopted legislation that established a minimum presence – or quota – for women on party lists used for the election of legislative bodies. However, in spite of the adoption of these norms, the percentage of women in the different decision-making bodies remains relatively low, with only a few cases that could be considered substantially successful. Costa Rica is one of these cases.

Costa Rica is considered one of the most consolidated democracies in Latin America and has held free and fair democratic elections since 1953. It is a presidential democracy with one legislative body, composed of 57 legislators. It is the only country in the world that has used three different types of quota legislation over a short period of time (Jones 2004), making it a unique political scenario to analyse the effectiveness of those different types of legislation: voluntary quota, quota without placement and quota with mandatory placement, which increased the descriptive representation¹ of women in

parliament from 15 per cent in 1994 to 38.5 per cent in 2006. In addition, Costa Rica is one of the few countries in the world to have adopted legislation establishing gender parity and mandatory alternate placement, which will come into effect in the 2014 national election.

This article sheds light on the political and social processes – including the main actors – that influenced the evolution of the different types of quota legislation, culminating with the adoption of the norms that established gender parity. It also analyses the effectiveness of each type of legislation to increase the descriptive representation of women and ends with some considerations in regards to the impact of implementing a quota system on the advance of a feminist agenda of social and gender justice.

2 Evolution of the quota legislation in Costa Rica: the first steps

The first initiatives to embody some of the rules in the national legislation for the establishment of a minimum quota for women's political participation in Costa Rica emerged in 1988.

After strong pressures from the women's movement, the First Lady at the time, Margarita Penón,² negotiated a Bill in the legislative assembly for the enactment of a law for real equality, with the aim of helping to transcend the formal equality as it is defined in the Constitution. Inspired by the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Bill was written by feminist lawyers and activists who had dedicated themselves to work together with the First Lady with the aim of presenting to Congress a legal reform for promoting true equality for women in different spheres, including that of political representation.

The original Bill included various legal provisions to establish a quota system. However, the debate on the Bill provoked strong negative reactions in the Legislative Assembly that motivated their exclusion from the final text, which was endorsed in 1990 under the name 'Law for the Promotion of Social Equality of Women' (Law 7142).³ As can be derived from the title with which the Bill was finally passed, the original content, which intended to transcend the concept of formal equality, was eliminated, including the proposal to establish mandatory quotas for the political representation of women.

Although explicit mention of the quotas was eliminated from the Law, it included a chapter on 'Political Rights of Women', which made a reference to the obligation of the political parties to incorporate in their by-laws mechanisms to promote and assure the effective participation of women in significant percentages (articles 5 and 6 of Chapter 11 of Law 7142). Although the various political parties did implement some reforms to their internal rules in 1992, the vague phrasing of the Law ensured that there were no concrete mechanisms established for the implementation of quotas, making it an essentially voluntary exercise. In short, in this period, reforms were introduced with good intentions and declarations of goodwill, but they did not have any practical impact for women.

Given that the dispositions in the Law for the Promotion of Social Equality of Women were not being fulfilled, the Depute from the Partido Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Party), Gladys Rojas, presented a Bill to the Legislative Assembly in 1992 aimed at reforming the

Electoral Code (the legal instrument that regulates the national election processes), in order to introduce a mandatory quota system for women's participation in political parties. On this occasion, the Supreme Elections Tribunal was against the proposal, claiming that the Bill did not establish the necessary mechanisms to ensure the fulfillment of the principle of proportional representation nor the mechanisms to sanction those who did not fulfill the requirements. In other words, it was another vague project that was sent to the archives.

However, these first initiatives generated expectation and hope in female activists from various political parties, which started to build an important movement to reform the Electoral Code in a clear and precise way with the aim of establishing a quota system as a mandatory mechanism for all political parties. On 28 November 1996, Article 60 of the Electoral Code was reformed in such a manner that it obliged political parties to include, in their internal rules, the necessary mechanisms to ensure a 40 per cent participation of women in the party structure, the electoral lists and in the delegations to the different assemblies of the parties (Bolaños 2006).

2.1 Formal equality vis-à-vis real equality

These reforms to the Electoral Code created the basis for parity in the access of women to positions of power and represented a significant advance in legal norms for equity in political participation. The national discussion around these reforms also made evident the existent myths around the political participation of women and added to the public debate the voices of women who aspired to positions of popular representation, but who had not been able to get them as a result of the perverted mechanisms of patriarchal pacts and arrangements that operate inside the party structures.

In spite of the important step that the approval of these regulations meant, the 1998 elections were a demonstration of the great distance that exists between formal equality and real equality. It also showed the diverse stratagems that political parties can use when there is no real will to guarantee gender equality. On this occasion, the main problem came from the fact that the regulation had not explicitly stated that the 40 per cent representation of women should

be for electable positions. The norm also failed to state that the registration of parties that did not comply would not be accepted.

As a result of a request made by the Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (National Institute for Women – the national machinery for the advancement of women) the Electoral Tribunal had to inform political parties that it was not going to accept the registration of any lists that did not fulfill the requirement of a minimum 40 per cent of women. This is when the big charade began. On the lists that did fulfill the requirement, all women were placed last, in positions without any possibility of being elected. The registration of lists that did not fulfill the quota was accepted because the parties claimed they had not found enough women who wanted to participate. Some parties used the trick of adding together all the women on a national scale, without considering the lists separated for each municipality or region. On some lists, not one single woman was registered. In fact, out of the 23 parties that presented candidates for the Legislative Assembly in the 1998 elections, 15 did not fulfill the quota (Torres 2001). It seemed evident then that parties may have included women on the journey but they did not want them there at arrival.

Thus, the Costa Rican experience shows that if the quota legislation is not explicit and strict, the traditional masculine power culture within political parties will find loopholes to avoid giving women equal opportunities to occupy elected positions. Women, in general, lack the experience to negotiate their presence and depend on the goodwill of male party leaders, who will not give up their privileged positions unless they are forced by explicit legislation. Therefore, although the 1998 election represented a significant advance for women since they increased their representation to 19 per cent in Congress and 30 per cent in municipal government (compared with 15 and 12 per cent, respectively in the previous election), there was clear evidence of resistance to the quota legislation, and the necessity of explicit and mandatory rules was apparent.

The analysis of the practical application of the quota legislation in the national elections of 1998 allowed for the construction of well-grounded arguments to appeal to the Supreme Elections

Tribunal for a revision of those norms. After some heavy lobbying by women's organisations, the appeal for revision was presented by Gloria Valerín, Minister for Women's Affairs and supported by Olga Nidia Fallas, an influential judge with the Elections Tribunal. As a result, in Resolution No. 1863, 23 September 1999, the Elections Tribunal, interpreted the very 'spirit' of the 1996 reform to the Electoral Code, stating that:

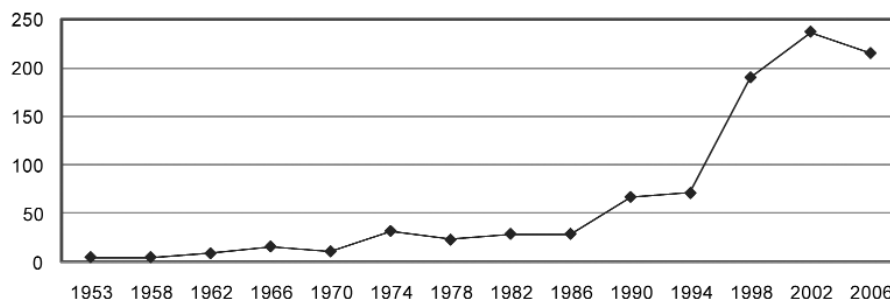
- The quota of 40 per cent of women in the electoral lists must be in positions with a possibility of being elected.
- The quota of 40 per cent must be respected in each district, municipality and province assembly and not seen as an overall 'global' quota.
- Each party is obliged to incorporate the necessary adjustments in their by-laws in order to guarantee the effective participation of women in the given form and percentage.
- The Civil Registry will not register candidate lists that do not adjust to these parameters.
- The Civil Registry will not accredit reforms of by-laws or the acts of the assemblies that do not fulfill the established requirements.

The 1999 ruling surprised many politicians who had grudgingly supported the original law in 1996, which they thought would be relatively ineffective due to the decision not to include a placement mandate (Jones 2004). Thus, in another resolution (No. 2837) from 12 December 1999, as a result of a consultation made by various political parties who were trying to find a way of getting around the requirements for the quota, claiming that they had not properly understood the concept of 'electable position', the Elections Tribunal clarifies the following:

By 'electable position' it should be understood that which gives a person real possibility of being elected and hence should be considered individually in the confirmation of lists per province. The political parties are obliged to implement the quota system for women and should consider the percentage of 40 per cent to be a minimum that as such could increase but not decrease.

The political party is obliged to promote a culture of democracy and participation that will make possible the incorporation of women.

Figure 1 Costa Rica: female representation in municipal governments, 1953–2006 (absolute numbers)



Source System of gender Indicators (SIEG) – INAMU (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres; National Institute for Women).

Once the rules, proceedings and sanctions were completely clear, one could begin to see the effects of the quota system. In the 2002 elections, women’s representation in the Legislative Assembly reached 35 per cent (see Figure 2), giving the Costa Rican Congress the highest female representation in any Latin American political body at that time. In the municipalities, the percentage increased to 47 per cent (see Figure 1), almost reaching parity (Bolaños 2006).

During the last two elections of 2006 and 2010, the participation of women in the Legislative Assembly increased to 38.5 per cent, while the municipalities maintained figures close to 50 per cent.

The importance of using a quota system is reflected not only in the significant increase on the descriptive participation of women in Congress and local government, but also when, by contrast, one analyses the spaces and posts where the legal mandate of the quota is not imposed. In these posts, such as the ministries,

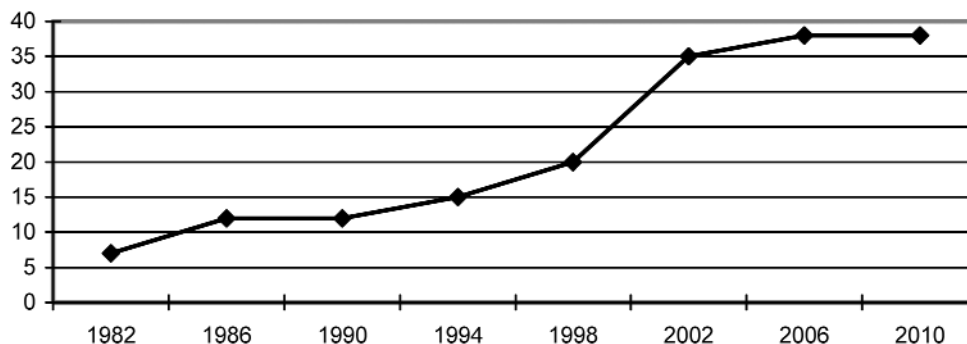
the Supreme Court of Justice, the autonomous institutions, the Foreign Service and the Mayors, women continue to be a minority. For instance, women only represent 11 per cent of the country’s Mayors, 30 per cent of the Supreme Court Justices and, during the second presidency of Oscar Arias (2006–2010), only five women were appointed Ministers, out of a cabinet of 21 members.

2.2 Moving forward and backwards

The Costa Rican experience can be used to show the permanent tension between the proposals and visions of any progressive movement and its influence on the public agenda. In other words, as the women’s movement’s proposals earn social recognition, they risk losing their profoundly transforming nature. Thus, the institutions begin to appropriate women’s demands for equality and parity, but to adapt them to their logic and interests, even becoming counteractive.

As an example of how the mechanisms created by the feminist movement can become

Figure 2 Costa Rica: female representation in the legislative assembly, 1982–2010 (%)



Source System of gender Indicators (SIEG) – INAMU.

counteractive, it is worth mentioning the case of the Partido Nueva Liga Feminista (New Feminist League Party), which participated in the 2006 elections. When this party, which intended to bring candidates and an openly feminist agenda to Congress, presented their registration, it was refused by the Civil Registry who claimed that they had not fulfilled the quota for men, i.e. 40 per cent. Finally, after a long struggle, the Supreme Elections Tribunal took an important decision which helped to clarify not only the legitimacy of the Nueva Liga Feminista and their entitlement to register as a political party – in spite of not having ‘enough’ men nominated – but also the quota system for women, creating jurisprudence which clarified the mechanisms even further and deepened its justification as a compensatory measure. On this occasion, the Elections Tribunal declared (Resolution No. 2096-E-2005, 31 August 2005):

The 40 per cent participation provided as an electoral rule is a minimum and not a maximum ... The policy development of the quota for women’s participation... is the recognition of the legislator that, in spite of the principle of equality being guaranteed in the Political Constitution and in the diverse instruments for Human Rights ratified by the country, there is historically an inequality between men and women in the electoral sphere which should be remedied with positive discrimination, to avoid this discrimination. The special protection that the Electoral Code gives to women ... cannot be understood for men also, as this would be admitting that they have been equally discriminated, when truth is that in political elections, men have an advantageous position in relation to women...

In spite of the important clarifications made by the Elections Tribunal, the tensions between the progressive proposals of the women’s movement and its concrete results are permanent. In that sense, rather than bringing about social and cultural transformations, the processes of institutionalisation of feminist claims often end up producing co-optation of those claims and of the movement itself. In the case of Costa Rica, as will be discussed later in this article, the passing of the quota legislation has also meant the arrival into power of many conservative women, closely connected to political and economic elites, who do not have any progressive agendas and who, in fact,

act as strong opponents of the feminist movement, particularly on those issues related to sexual and reproductive rights. Therefore, the quota system can be seen as a major achievement, but also as an example of how the women’s movement’s transforming approaches are then ‘recycled’ by the State and returned to society as socially acceptable laws and policies that do not represent a real threat to the establishment.

2.3 *Achieving parity*

The discussions around the need for a new Electoral Code that started at the end of the 1990s, served as an opportunity for the women’s movement to envision the possibility of including the concept of parity in the new Code. In addition, the creation of a new political party in 2000, the Partido Acción Ciudadana (Citizen’s Action Party), which voluntarily incorporated into its internal regulations the notions of parity and alternability by sex (woman-man, man-woman in such a way that two people of the same sex cannot be listed consecutively in the same list) in the electoral lists, opened up expectations in women members of other parties and also reinforced the idea that this was not an impossible goal after all.

Hence, as a result of actions undertaken by the Ministry for Women’s Affairs, some feminist organisations, legislators from different political parties⁴ and the Supreme Elections Tribunal itself, since 2001, an important step in guaranteeing women’s equal representation was achieved in 2009, with the final endorsement of the new Electoral Code, which will be activated in the 2014 national elections. Thus, after a decade of heated debates and negotiations – and strong opposition by some parties⁵ – in this new Electoral Code, approved in September 2009 (Law No. 8765), the political participation of men and women is defined as a human right under the protection of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, establishing parity and alternability by sex as an obligation.

The second article of the new Electoral code stipulates, on the issues of parity and alternation by sex, that:

Participation is governed by the principle of parity which implies that all delegations, electoral lists and other bodies with even numbers should be composed of 50 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men, and that in

delegations, payrolls and bodies with odd number of members the total difference between men and women cannot be more than one.

All the electoral lists will use the mechanism of alternation of sex (woman–man and man–woman) in such a way that two people of the same sex cannot be listed consecutively on the list.

The new Electoral Code also established clearly that the bylaws of the political parties should contain regulations and mechanisms that assure the principles of equality, gender equity, non-discrimination and parity, as much in the party structure as in the electoral lists. Also, sanctions were included for parties that do not fulfill these principles, including the refusal or cancellation of their registration and the prohibition of participation in electoral processes.

Finally, the state contribution was authorised within a series of constitutional arrangements, for the political parties to develop capacity building for men and women in a permanent way, with the aim of creating and promoting knowledge on human rights and gender equality; encouraging leadership, political participation and empowerment; and nomination for and holding of positions with decision-making power; among others.

With these reforms to the Electoral Code, it is evident that Costa Rica has become one of the first countries in Latin America to establish gender parity as an obligatory legal norm in political representation. It is evident that for the 2014 elections this implies an important change to the face of politics. Nevertheless, after almost a decade of progressive application of a quota system, the mechanism also starts to show some of its limitations in reaching its fundamental goals, for example the real redistribution of power between genders, a substantive representation of women and the construction of a more just and egalitarian society.

3 Some lessons to be drawn from the Costa Rican experience

The first lesson learnt about the application of the quota legislation in Costa Rica is that this system only functions if clear norms and procedures are established, which includes

sanctions for those who do not fulfil the requirements. Also, extremely significant is the existence of a strong and persistent women's movement, pushing reforms and keeping an eye on their fulfilment (Jones 2004). In this way, the effectiveness of the quota system to guarantee, at least, the descriptive representation of women is dependent on five factors:

- 1 That it is part of the national electoral legislation;
- 2 That there exists a women's movement with the capacity to monitor compliance with the regulations;
- 3 That there is clarity in terms of the mechanisms for implementation;
- 4 That it is obligatory to apply the corresponding quota for women in eligible positions;
- 5 That the electoral body is directly involved in guaranteeing the fulfilment of the system and that there are clearly defined sanctions, consistently applied when requirements are not fulfilled.

While having women's greater participation in decision-making spaces has a fundamental impact on electoral politics, the quota system does not necessarily influence the more central and substantive aspects of a real political transformation towards gender justice. It may change the face of politics, which is an important achievement and a modification in the traditional political culture, but it does not necessarily allow the advancement of a feminist agenda of social transformation.

In the case of Costa Rica, it is interesting to note that the development of legislation to extend the rights of women reached a peak in the country between 1994 and 2000. During this period, the highest number of laws and reforms in this matter were endorsed and promoted, in particular, the Convention of Belem do Pará and a large quantity of legislation and public policies on sexual harassment, domestic violence, alimony, civil union, commercial sexual exploitation, sexual rights and reproductive rights. Curiously, the legislation on quotas was not in force at that time, and hence the representation of women in Congress was relatively low. In fact, these advances, including the legislation on quotas, seem to connect more to an expansion of the activities of the feminist

movement at the national and international levels during the 1990s and not so much to a greater presence of women in electable positions.

On the contrary, from 2001, when the legislation on quotas was already in force, as well as the clarifications made by the Elections Tribunal, the pace of endorsement of public policies and laws related to equality and gender equity slowed down notably. So, the significant increase in the number of women in Congress does not seem to have had a direct effect on gender and social justice. Also, there are no significant differences among women from the different parties. The few women legislators who have brought about an open agenda for gender justice since the implementation of the quota system, seem to respond more to their personal interests and history, and to their previous relations with the feminist movement, than to party lines.

In that sense, very few pieces of new legislation for the advancement of women's rights have been approved since the implementation of the quota system. According to reports by lobbyists from the women's movement, they tend to negotiate the different law proposals with legislators on an individual basis, not always taking their gender into consideration, since that does not seem to be a positive factor in all cases. For instance, during the discussions on the Bill to Criminalise Violence Against Women in 2007, the President of the Congressional Women's Commission,⁶ in charge of analysing all law proposals related to women's issues, disagreed with the Bill, arguing that, on many occasions, women provoke the family violence and the important thing was not to create more privileges for women, but to preserve the sanctity of the family.⁷ Also, women legislators from different parties were opposed to a Bill that proposed an eight-hour work-day for domestic workers, arguing that they could no longer participate in politics if their domestic workers did not work extended hours. As Rosita Acosta, president of the Domestic Workers Association, told these women legislators at a public hearing, 'what you want is a slave and not a domestic worker'.⁸

In spite of the quota system, during the past legislature (2006–10), with 38.5 per cent of female representation, only one of the legislators, Ana Helena Chacón, from the Partido Unidad Social Cristiana (Social Christian Unity Party),

put forward an open programme for justice and gender equity. This shows that the relationship between increasing the presence of women in Parliament and the endorsement of laws for the advancement of equality and equity is neither automatic nor direct. As Susan Franceschet (2008) argues (citing Dodson 2006):

Whilst existing studies show that in general it is more likely that female legislators give priority to gender than their male colleagues, their greater preoccupation with themes related to women does not directly translate into better legislative results for them. (Franceschet 2008: 69)

From this perspective, although the existence of the quota legislation increases the possibility of women getting into electable positions, there is no guarantee of whom these women will be, nor what their political agenda is. In Costa Rica, the main parties have chosen very disciplined women, faithful to party lines, with close relationships, almost subordinate, to important men in these parties, and hence very unlikely to defy the status quo. In fact, the three main traditional parties from the right or centre-right (Liberación Nacional, National Liberation; Unidad Social Cristiana, Social Christian Unity and Movimiento Libertario, Libertarian Movement), have nominated women as Party Speakers at critical political points, and it has been precisely these women who have been in charge of bringing forward the neoliberal agenda, including the ratification of the Free Trade Agreement with the USA, which had the people of Costa Rica in social upheaval for almost two years.

As a result, as suggested by some critics, in practice, the quota system and neoliberalism are not mutually exclusive but more like partners in the search for a new world order (Krook 2008). In the context of a growing global neoliberalism, it appears then that the quota system means an important concession to the demands of the women's movement, but at the same time, it becomes an empty promise in terms of contributing to breaching the growing gap between political empowerment on the one hand and social and economic empowerment on the other (Phillips 1999).

In Costa Rica, the women elected after the approval of the quota system have been more

willing to pass legislation intended to transform the welfare character of the national state, than legislation that extends social justice. For instance, most women legislators voted in favour of Bills that privatised the telecommunications and insurance services (2008),⁹ landmark institutions of the Costa Rican welfare state since 1948. In addition, the majority of women legislators have voted in favour of Bills related to intellectual property (in 2008 and 2009), that grant privileges to the transnational pharmaceutical companies, compromising access for the poor to affordable medicines.¹⁰ However, they have not been willing to pass existing law proposals¹¹ related to women's access to better health services, sexual and reproductive rights, same sex civil unions, the autonomy of indigenous people, which will secure them rights over their lands, or the constitutional reform to separate the Church from the State.¹²

This raises the question as to whether it is more important to have, in a decision-making position, a person that shares feminist principles or simply a woman, independently of her political position, ideology or ethics. In Costa Rica, the most clear and convincing position on justice and gender equality was held by José Merino, legislator from Partido Frente Amplio (2006–10), a small leftist party with a conscious discourse about social inequalities and the necessity to confront them in all their different dimensions, including gender.

The quota system thus guarantees women access to positions of political representation, but does not guarantee the quality of their actions nor the type of decisions they are going to make. Hence, quotas encourage the descriptive participation of women, but not necessarily their substantive participation. Because of this, many feminists express doubts about quotas, arguing that, among other things, these mechanisms help push neoliberal agendas, demobilise women's movements, result in the election of conservative women, promote a static vision of women as a group and diminish their efficiency as political actors (Krook 2008).

However, other feminists also argue that in a truly democratic society, the participation of women in positions of decision-making and power should be understood as a right that cannot be conditioned to their willingness to fight for women's issues. From this perspective, the quota system represents an advance but has to go hand

in hand with other processes of empowerment and social transformation that really question the patriarchal order. But instead, they only produce partial ruptures in the system, but nothing that really changes the very foundations, which have generated not only inequality but also a society that is ethically unsustainable.

The Costa Rican experience shows that quota legislation mandating a minimum percentage of seats to be occupied by women, accompanied with a placement in electable positions, had a powerful effect on the number of women elected in Congress. Another important lesson drawn from Costa Rica is that the quota legislation needs to be precise and strictly enforced. Norms that rely merely on the will of political parties, usually fall on deaf ears, exercising no significant impact on the election of women. The role played by a strong women's movement that advocates for quota legislation and is capable of monitoring its implementation is significant. After several years of constant effort, the persistence of quota advocates paid off with the landmark 1999 Elections Tribunal ruling and with the introduction of the notions of parity and alternability in the new Electoral Code.

Thus, the quota system, as applied in Costa Rica, has proved to be a very effective instrument for increasing the descriptive representation of women. In fact, it provides a good case for quota supporters in other countries that have adopted ineffective quota legislation. However, as stated before, while the quota system, as implemented in Costa Rica, will ensure a significant presence for women in legislative bodies, that system by itself will not enhance the quality of democracy, nor will it expand social justice or guarantee the representation of feminist interests in the public agenda.

Because of this, the objective of the feminist movement is not and cannot be only to fight to extend the representation of women in electable positions or for an improvement in policies and laws. The objective of the feminist movement should be to continue with the struggle that was initiated more than 200 years ago for the construction of a just society that guarantees autonomy to women and all other excluded groups, as well as their wellbeing, integrity and equal access to power and to the material and symbolic resources of society.

Notes

- * The author wishes to thank Gloria Valerín, former Minister of Women's Affairs and former legislator, for her generous assistance in locating the entire Congressional file on the discussions and passing of the new Electoral Code.
- 1 Descriptive representation is here understood as the presence of members of a specific social group in a political entity (Franceschet 2008).
 - 2 At the time, she was the wife of President Oscar Arias, who supported the Bill, giving it political viability.
 - 3 Among the arguments put forward against the project for real equality were: that the idea of proportional gender representation was unconstitutional; that the project was unnecessary as discrimination no longer existed against Costa Rican women; that recognising the necessity of a reform of this kind would be accepting that both the Constitution and the laws were gender discriminating, which was not true; that equality cannot be imposed by force; and, finally, that those promoting the project were 'frustrated women' (Badilla 1997).
 - 4 Since 2002, legislators from different political parties, including Emilia Rodríguez, Margarita Penón and Rodrigo Alberto Carazo (Partido Acción Ciudadana, Citizen Action Party), Kyra de la Rosa (Partido Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Party) and

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Gloria Valerín, former Minister of Women's Affairs and now legislator (Partido Unidad Social Cristiana, Social Christian Unity Party) began presenting motions to include the principles of parity and alternability by sex in the new Electoral Code.

- 5 The main opposition to the incorporation of the principles of parity and alternation in the new Electoral Code came from the Partido Movimiento Libertario (Libertarian Movement Party), a right-wing party that had been created in 1996.
- 6 Legislator Gilda González from the Partido Liberación Nacional.
- 7 Information provided by Gabriela Arguedas, former legislative aide.
- 8 Information provided by Rosita Acosta, President of the Domestic Workers Association.
- 9 With the exception of the women legislators from Partido Acción Ciudadana, who voted against those reforms, but were a minority.
- 10 Here again, all legislators from Partido Acción Ciudadana voted against these Bills.
- 11 These law proposals have not been accepted by women legislators from any party, with the exception of Ana Helena Chacón, who is, in fact, the proponent of many of the reforms.
- 12 Costa Rica is one of the few confessional states in the world. The Constitution stipulates that the official religion of the State is Roman Catholicism.

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