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Femeile în politica românească – dezvoltarea activismului politic
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Coordonator:

Prof. univ. dr. Enikő Vincze

Drd. Laura Georgescu-Păun

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Thesis Summary

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Given the general tendency claimed by the literature concerning women's massive disengagement with formal politics this paper tries to answer to the question: Who are the women who still choose to take part in politics? In order to answer to this question I will look more closely into women's experiences with the political domain. I will take into consideration the fact that the discursive context concerning participation and representation is shaped by a perspective emphasizing the quantitative and descriptive aspect of representation. In order to answer to the research questions it uses the case study method in order to interpret their motivation strategies and experiences in this field taking into account their life histories and their perspective on politics. Concerning women's political representation it focuses on aspects such as women's definitions of their problems like gender inequality and what solutions do they foresee to it. The study aims to bring more knowledge for those interested into the field both academically and as practitioners. The research was also an explorative one as it tried to imprint a collaborative style in the interaction with the participants. I also want the participant's feedback at the end of the study. The Finnish case in addition provides the possibility to contrast the results obtained in Romania. If one has to think about the limitation of its study I could say that this has to do with the target group, namely an elite who enjoys certain privileges and who already gained visibility as well as capacity to promote its interests to the political agenda. On the other hand the literature strengthened my opinion concerning the positive effect that women's mobilization has on their political situation.

Chapter I presents the methodology and mainly the comparative method that I adopted. I present the two cases and discuss their implication and connection to the rest of the study. I also present the commonalities and differences concerning the cases. Therefore the paper is concerned with political participation and aims to understand how women present their experiences concerning participation in politics and as a possible future research theme the way in which political space produces one or multiple patterns of femininity associated with politics. For the current research I want to understand women's experiences concerning politics and I hope that the comparative approach to identify the commonalities and differences between my cases. The study of the two cases has as its purpose an in depth understanding of political participation and its connection with gender and this will be undertaken by gathering data that will contain the participant's narratives about political

participation. The two cases belong to two different spaces but along which certain commonalities could be identified as far as gender and participation were connected at least in the last century. From this point of view I wanted to identify the connection between gender and political participation and then against this common background to see to what degree the reported experiences are different. The conclusion of the analysis is that for each case the tendencies concerning participation named by the theories are there. In the Romanian case the politicians reported distance and inadequacy concerning their relation with the political domain. Even those with a record of years in politics do not consider themselves political persons or having political causes or aims. In the case of Finland women politicians promoted political issues to a higher degree although they also tended to explain certain aspects of women's lives by non political causes.

The structure of the thesis consists of an introductory part followed by seven main chapters each chapter containing subchapters and conclusions. The first two chapters are theoretical followed by two mixed chapters namely containing both a theoretical part and an empirical one which helped me in contextualizing the cases. The first chapter contains the methodology and explains the interpretative paradigm in which the paper is placed as well as the methodological choices. It also presents the research design and the research theme, the comparison criteria among which that the participants should have similar participative background and the research units to be similar as far as demographic characteristics are concerned. Concerning the methodology I explained choosing the research methods, the data gathering process as well as the research instruments. In the same time I emphasized the importance of the case study method when the purpose is obtaining the participant's narratives concerning their experiences as well as the accent put on gathering and interpreting the data and here. The interview guide contains three sections: one aims at obtaining general data about the organization, the second one which brings about questions concerning gender equality and the third one which is about the experiences concerning the political domain. Then I described in detail the research instruments, namely the interview and the observation as well as the pilot study. Then I briefly describe the field work, the pilot study and the document analysis. I presented the research phases the problems that were specific to each case, how access into the organizations was gained as well as the kind of relation that were instituted with the participants in the study. In the Romanian case the entry into the organization was

made by contacting the leaders and than the regular members of each organization mostly by phone or e-mail. In the Finnish case the contact was established through e-mail with all the participants. In the Romanian case the pilot study consisted in two preliminary interviews and they counted in the interview guide economy as far as the guide design is concerned. Participant observation and documentation targeted the organizations and their context.

Therefore the field work consisted in two main phases related to the two spaces studied. In Romania's case the field work consisted in observation and documentation as well as taking part in events or meetings. In Finland's case the field work consisted exclusively in interviews and the preliminary documentation by consulting the web pages and consultations with the Finnish supervisors. Than I discuss the interview's content and how I connected them in order to answer the research questions, what I aimed with the interviews concerning the organizations and most importantly the participants. Concerning the organizational context I emphasized the importance of the feminist movement and especially of its institutionalized part in the state construction and gender identity in Finland. The relation between gender and political participation had gained a lot of attention in the literature initially in Western Europe although after the political transformation in Eastern Europe studies addressing this theme started to emerge. The studies focused both on the formal aspects of representation and participation and upon women's views towards the political domain. Some studies addressed the systemic problems showing how politics generated and imposed a patriarchal model which was than reproduced in all social spheres. Most of the studies addressed the socialism and postsocialism linking gender construction by political participation and representation but fewer focused on a certain group of women involved in politics in order to have access to this type of data. The political domain was less studied from women's politicians' perspective and when they were present it was mostly in the form of the categories that emerged in the postsocialist context (entrepreneurs, elites the socialist proletarian). Given these reasons, the present study aims to offer an analysis of women's politicians perception of politics and this is considered in the context of their life histories and their daily experiences. In Romanian context, the relation between gender and politics is a controversial one, because politics have been defined as a masculine domain. This definition as well as other social determinants produced a continuous sensation of inadequacy from the part of the few women belonging to this space.

Chapter II contains the theoretical framework which constituted the support for the paper. It also presents the theories that inspired the research. I began by presenting the feminist critique of the classical political texts, especially of the contract theories that refer to the „origins” of the political society. I also critically discuss the liberal writings who also contributed to the configuration of the political space and the feminist critique of this construction. In a later stage I also present the Marxist writings concerning its approach to gender and I show how the feminist critique of Marxism produced knowledge towards Marxism’s limits in contesting gender inequalities. The feminist theory shows how the masculine premises on which the political society is founded influenced women’s condition for a long time. By exposing the masculine construction of the political society the possibility of advancing solutions and the feminist theories managed to adapt the ideologies to the feminist cause. Therefore feminism became a critique of the political ideologies that dominated political thought.

Chapter III discusses the impact of socialism and postsocialism upon women’s participation and representation. Gender construction was important because it determined the tasks assigned to women and men in the society. Socialism represented a progress towards women’s participation in formal institutions but according to the theories that emphasize the patriarchal construction of socialist states the system was reproducing men’s supremacy. B. Einhorn considers that because of the gender arrangements that were in place, women had to accommodate a double role (mother and worker) whereas men did not have this experience. Instead of generating emancipation, socialism offered a double or triple burden to women. Postsocialism did not represent a step forward in this respect. We have a renegotiation of the public/private dimension with a greater emphasis on the private sphere. This arrangement was detrimental to women because it reduced their public visibility and it gave them the social responsibilities that the state was no longer able or willing to take. In the new neoliberal paradigm, participation in formal institutions was limited whereas participation in non formal organizations was devalued. The latest approaches consider that the explanation that rests on patriarchy is the kind of explanation that leaves unexplained condition pertaining to women that are not related strictly to the internal context.

In Finland's case gender construction was also discussed as well as the role played by the feminist movement in designing the social state. The ideology that emphasized equality joined Protestantism in developing a consensual and non conflictual political culture. In the same time the critiques say that this invisibilized alternative gender models as well as aspects of women's lives that never made it to the political agenda. The dual role attributed to women was burdening even though women were able to advance most of their demands through the state. Due to the equality ideology, the critical voices pointing to the unequal power relations or other arrangements are unheard.

Chapter IV presents the participatory model developed in the two spaces from the standard theories' perspective and feminist theories. If concerning Eastern Europe the discussion was about the token participation taking place in socialism, in Finland's case the main dimension is state organizations vs. autonomous organizations. Feminist theories were critical towards this approach in the case of Eastern Europe because the new channels for participation that emerged in postsocialism were not taken into consideration. In Finland, because the state was friendly towards women's issues the autonomous movement was not very much developed. In the case of Eastern Europe the discussion moves towards the barriers for women's representation which are related to formal procedures and practices but also by the political culture or gender regime. In Finland's case representation was consisted at both descriptive and substantive level but we also hear voices talking about the need to improve women's representation. The theories talking about political participation in the case of Eastern Europe aim to explain participation as acquiring abilities in non political spaces that can be easily transferred to political ones. The main critique was that these theories do not take into consideration gender and class as determinants for participation.

Chapter V considers the organizational scene from socialism and postsocialism. It focuses on the role played by women in different types of organizations both state and dissident ones. If in the case of the first type the problem was that they were not considered as representing women in the case of the second the literature identified the same patriarchal gender arrangements present in the state organizations. The dissident organizations were giving women a peripheral positions promoting an

oppositional message proclaiming the return to the private sphere. Both types of organizations disadvantaged women in the context of a lack of feminist consciousness. In postsocialism we have an increase in the number of grassroots organizations due to massive withdrawal of state from social spheres. However women's participation does not increase, an important role in the development of these organizations being played by the international networks and donors.

Chapter VI contains the empirical data and more specific its results concerning the two case studies. I made an in depth description the interviews analysis as well as the main themes that resulted. Each interview was considered in order to find out what kind of information was providing about each participant. Than the categorization and coding stage followed. The chapter begins with a general presentation of each case. The information contained demographic data, data about the political system. For Cluj I was looking at the local bodies gander composition. In Helsinki the information referred to the organization of the municipalities and the decision making process. In Romania the field work started with the pilot study as well as getting access into the organization and familiarizing with the context. I was also interested in the level of gender awareness and I wanted to see whether there were any courses and activities in this respect. At the end of the pilot study I had two preliminary discussions with the participants and I also started the participant observation. During the participant observation I recorded the organizational life as detailed as possible. In the same time I was establishing contact with the members.

In the Finnish case I wanted to observe the intra and interorganizational relations in order to better understand the organizational context and the individual histories. In this case I could also identify few themes and strategies.

The next phase consisted in a detailed discussion of each interview as well as a presentation of each participant. The data was presented in the form of a synthesis in order to get a broader view of the participant's profile. The questions from the interview guide were approximately the same as well as the themes that emerged however they were not similar. In Finland women's organizations are comprised in a network and cooperation is stronger than in the Romanian case. The participants proved very interested in discussing gender issues.

The next chapter presents the main themes and it is obvious that there's no perfect match between the cases. However there are enough elements that would allow for a comparative analysis.

Chapter VIII presents the main themes and presents the comparative discussion of the two cases. The interview guide aimed to obtain two types of data: the individual histories and information about the organizations. Based on these two sets of data the following themes emerged: women's evaluation of their political activity, of women's condition in politics, and political role models. Based on this data I was able to draw some conclusions concerning each case as well as the cases considered together. I will briefly discuss the themes. Concerning the opinion towards politics there were two types of answers: those that reflected women's perspective concerning gender equality issues and the other type reflecting the personal experience with the political domain. For the participants in the Romanian case gender equality is mostly something on paper but which rarely becomes reality. The political domain is seen as something accompanying the professional life but as secondary importance for their life. In the Finnish case, gender equality seem to be perceived as a daily reality of the participants. The politics is instrumentalized to serve women's interests.

Concerning political role models in the Romanian case participant's opinions seem to be heavily influenced by the images promoted by the media as well as the prevalent gender norms. According to those norms women are perceived as second class citizens. In the Finnish case the dominant model is the professional and competent woman.

This was the short presentation of the chapters of the paper. The thesis contains an extensive presentation of each.