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### **GENDER STUDIES**

#### **Master's Thesis**

# **Conservative mobilization against progressive gender equality policies in Central and Eastern Europe**

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## **List of abbreviations**

ACJL-American Centre for Law and Justice

DPA-Democratic party of Albanians

DUI-Democratic Union for integration

EC-European Commission

ECI-European Citizen Initiative

ECLJ-European Centre for Law and Justice

EDW-European Dignity Watch

EP-European Parliament

ERA-Equal Rights Amendment

EU-European Union

GROZD-The Voice for Parents (Glas za za roditelje i decu)

HRAST-A movement for the successful Croatia (Pokrijet za uspesnu Hrvatsku)

ICC-International Criminal Court

KDNP- Christian Democrats

MIT-Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MEPs-Member of European Parliament

MP-Member of Parliament

NOM-National Organization for Marriage

NOW-National Organization for Women

ORC-Orthodox Church

OSCE- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OS-Family party (Obiteljska stranka)

VMRO-DPMNE-Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

UN-United Nation

WHO-World Health Organization

## ABSTRACT

The present master's thesis seeks to give an overview of the recent attacks on the notion of gender and progressive notions such as gender and marriage equality, sexual and reproductive rights and sexual education by the massive conservative mobilization in the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. As a starting point are taken the different theories of gender such as gender as a social construction and gender as a performativity. On the other hand, the thesis gave an overview of the recent intentional misinterpretation of the notion of gender as a global conspiracy. The conservative forces jointly with the Catholic Church, traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals and right-wing political parties, invented the gender ideology as a response to the international recognition of gender equality and human rights. The main goal is the shift of the paradigm and thus the imposition of illiberal democracy.

The conservative tried to reach the most vulnerable citizen from the transitional period. The rightists offered a new alternative and protection to the 'losers' from the processes of transition and globalization. The situation in countries in Central and Eastern Europe is presented as a fight for the salvation of national identity, national economy and natural order. Western Europe, Brussels and EU are viewed as colonizers and conspirators. Gender is thus only a symbolic metaphor for the wider crisis of the current social order.

What could be done and how progressive forces could handle with this massive trend? They should advocate for positive changes and reforms that will improve the socioeconomic condition. The depoliticization of the issues such as human rights and gender equality need to be done immediately as well as self-critical examination of the weakness of the left. The case studies of countries in Central and Eastern Europe are presented focusing on different issues that in the momentum are under attack. The focus is put on analyzing the content of structured qualitative data. Feminist phenomenological approach as well as interpretative approach is used as an alternative approach to knowledge, generating data from individual experience of the informants and researcher.

**Key words:** gender, conservative mobilization, global conspiracy, ideology, illiberal democracy

## АПСТРАКТ

Овој магистерски труд има за цел да даде преглед на неодамнешните напади врз родот и родовата еднаквост како и останатите прогресивни прашања како што се брачната еднаквост, сексуалните и репродуктивни права и сексуалното образование од страна на конзервативните сили во земјите во Централна и Источна Европа.

Како појдовна точка се земаат различните теории за родот, како што се родот како социјална конструкција и родот како перформативност. Од друга страна тезата дава преглед на неодамнешните намерни погрешни интерпретации на родот како теорија на глобален заговор. Конзервативните сили заедно со Католичката Црква, традиционалните интелектуалци и политичките партии со десничарска идеологија ја конструираа родовата идеологија како одговор на меѓународното признавање на родовата еднаквост и човековите права. Главната цел е промена на парадигмата и наметнување на илибералната демократија како систем. Конзервативните сили се обидуваат да допрат до најранливите граѓани од периодот на транзицијата. Десничарите нудат нова алтернатива и заштита на жртвите и губитниците од периодот на транзицијата и глобализацијата. Состојбата во земјите во Централна и Источна Европа е прикажана како борба за заштита на националниот идентитет, националната економија и природниот поредок. Западна Европа, Брисел и ЕУ се сметаат за колонизатори и заговорници против природниот поредок. Родот е само метафора за поголема криза на постоечкиот општествен поредок.

Што може да се направи и како прогресивните сили да се спрват со овој масивен тренд? Тие треба да застапуваат за позитивни промени и реформи кои ќе ја подобрат социо-економската положба на најранливите граѓани. Деполитизацијата на прашањата како што се човековите права и родовата еднаквот треба да се направи веднаш како и самокритичко анализирање на слабостите на левицата.

Во тезата се презентираат студии на случај од земјите во Централна и Источна Европа фокусирајќи се на прашања кои во моментот се цел на нападите и се соочуваат со предизвици. Фокусот е ставен на анализа на содржината на структурираните квалитативни податоци како што се книги, текстови и статии. Феминистичкиот феноменолошки пристап

како и интерпретативниот пристап се користат како алтернатива кон знаењето, а истовремено се генерираат податоци од индивидуалното искуство на учесниците во интервјуата и истражувачот.

**Клучни зборови :** род, конзервативни сили, глобален заговор, идеологија, илиберална демократија

## INTRODUCTION

Gender is a socially, culturally and psychologically constructed phenomenon. Gender depends on social and cultural roles, which include the influence of religion and education. Whilst sex is a biological term, gender is predicated as feminine and masculine. The term existed in linguistics long before it drew attention in social theory in the early 80.<sup>7</sup> Feminists and feminist theory adopted the concept of gender to make a distinction between the biological sex of the individual and social differences or roles assigned to individuals. Simon De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) claimed that women are the Other to the universal idea of Man, and as the Other, they are unessential. According to her, being female and femininity is acquired through learning the feminine behavior and traits, thus she made a clear distinction between the gender as a social construct and sex as a biological trait while nonetheless insisting that biology played a role in women's status in history (the barred access to it). Gradually, the traditional understanding of gender was expanded with the poststructuralist constructivist theory of Butler emphasizing the meaning of gender as performance, produced and reproduced lifelong. Butler denied De Beauvoir's claims that gender is a social construct pointing out that gender is not construed and is not a stable identity but a very fluid and variable notion. Thus, Butler equated sex and gender.

In parallel with the feminist theory of the third wave or post feminism, gender theory and public discourse of the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century concepts such as gender equality and gender mainstreaming were developed. Gender equality postulates the issues of equal value and worth of men and women and argues for the prevention of gender-based discrimination. The concept of gender mainstreaming was introduced to include the gender equality perspective in policies at all levels. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming as a part of gender theory and activism became important concepts in the work of international institutions dealing with human and women's rights, EU institutions, domestic institutions and NGO's. Gender and women's studies were developed to explore and explain the importance of gender equality, gender identity, non-discrimination, and the intersection of gender with other categories such as class, race, sexuality, disability and nationality.

However, gender as a term in the last few years was perceived as one of the major threats to the social order. The first attack on the notion of gender as a social construct was made by Vatican at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Gender by Vatican and by the Pope was seen as a radical notion that suppresses and falsifies the natural and biological distinction between women and men. Pope John Paul II explicitly stressed that gender has its ideology and that this ideology of gender is dangerous for the natural heterosexual marriage as well as for the role of men and women assigned at birth. Along with the Catholic Church as the major opponent to the notion of gender, in the last five years, gradually emerged many traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals that made the same attacks. These traditional intellectuals are related to the Church trying to represent the values such as morality, charity, justice, family values, care for the children and religious education as the most important values in order to protect the patriarchal system, national and religious identity. They scapegoated feminists for the promotion of the idea that there are more than two sexes and that feminist and LGBTQI activists are destroying the natural humankind. The interconnectedness of those traditional intellectuals is not only on European level, but they are acting as very organized groups on transnational and global level. Traditional eclectic intellectuals are related not only to the Church but as well as to many intentionally established NGOs, related to the right wing and extreme right parties. It's not only gender that is presented as guilt for destroying the old patriarchal order, but as well as all scientific knowledge of gender theorists produced through the gender studies. The Catholic Church and the intellectuals biased to it claimed that gender does not have any scientific meaning and that the department of gender studies should be closed. The department of gender studies in the Central European University in Budapest was particularly targeted as one of the first founded in 1991, which encompasses approximately 1400 students from around 130 countries.

The attack is not only directed towards gender, gender studies and gender theorists, but it is directed as well towards all other progressive notions related to human rights such as women's sexual and reproductive rights, sexual education in schools and marriage equality. Therefore, the attack on gender is not solely the attack on the issue itself, but it is wider and includes all progressive gender equality policies introduced in the beginning of the 1980s in the countries in

Central and Eastern Europe. Gender is perceived as the biggest enemy. The gender ideology proclaimed by the Catholic Church and the rightists is only a mask used by the opponents of the liberal democracy and human rights. The ‘gender ideology,’ popularized by the Church enclosed in itself many ‘critical issues’ such as family and sexuality, reproductive rights and sexual education.

The latest research shows that this mobilization against gender starts not only by intentional misinterpretation of the concept of gender, but as well as part of the larger neoliberal discourse which seeks to prevent the identification of the structural inequalities. Neoliberal market driven economy and globalization excluded certain groups of people and pushed them into the neo-conservative movements. These people come from the lower and middle-class families. They were the so-called losers of the traditional period. They found a new alternative and a way out of this situation in the promises of the right wing and extreme right political parties. Right wing parties were on the other hand very successful in the mobilization of classes and groups of people, affected by the neoliberalism, the economic crisis of the 2007-2008 and the process of globalization. This mobilization of the rightists represents only a new form of neoliberal governance and a new way of achieving cultural hegemony via the consent of the masses.

The war on regaining the cultural hegemony by the right finds its place not only in the streets and in the forms of ideological state apparatuses but even in the European Parliament in the mobilization around the reports on gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights and discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity. The forms of organized counter movements such as anti-feminism and masculinism raise and strive towards anti-progressive changes in the society and regaining of patriarchal hegemony.

The focus is put on countries in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Baltic states as well as Croatia where the influence of the Catholic Church is enormous and where the strengthening of the right-wing political parties and anti-progressive social forces is reaching its peak. On the other hand, in the Baltic States, the influence of Russia is the most prevalent. The research focused on the recent happenings in these

countries through the case studies of the respective countries, encompassing different components such as gender, gender studies, sexual and reproductive rights as well as marriage equality and sexual education. The focus was put on analyzing the content of structured qualitative data, such as texts, articles, books, and data gathered from the participation on few seminars related to the topic. Interviews as techniques of qualitative data were used as part of gathering information and knowledge. The interviews were semi-structured. The structure of the questions was outlined previously, but left as open-ended, to allow a fluid, interactive and dynamic flow of the interview. The participants in the interviews were sample selected on the base of their experience and knowledge related to the research questions.

The research questions of the thesis, which are explored are the following: the main research question is to explore the attack on gender, perceived as one of the biggest threats and the emergence (construction) of so-called “gender ideology”

- to understand of the concept of gender through the theory of De Beauvoir of sexual differences and Judith Butler's theory of performativity
- to explain the social movements and counter-movements, particularly the anti-feminist movement and the role of the right-wing women as well as masculinism as a form of organized movement
- to clarify the intersection among neo-liberalism, globalization and economic crisis in the emergence of mobilization against gender and other progressive notions
- to explain the influence of the ideology and the ideological state apparatuses on these organized movements and to clarify the gender seen as a theory of conspiracy
- to explain the mobilization against gender through the case studies of Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Baltic states and Macedonia

# Chapter 1

## Understanding the notion of gender through different gender theories

### 1.1. The notion of gender versus sex

The notion of gender became known in the social theory in the early 1970s, although it existed in linguistic earlier than that. The term was for the first time used by the psychologist Robert Stoller, who wrote about transsexuality to explain why some people are filling as they are in the wrong body. He separated these two notions of sex and gender to explain the phenomenon of transsexuality. Stoller used gender to mark the femininity and masculinity that these persons displayed.<sup>1</sup>

Feminists in the 1970s were divided along the notion of gender. Some welcomed the notion of gender as a social construction (Ann Oakley, Anne-Fausto Sterling), according to which the existing differences between women and men are not based in biology, but are based on the social power which is overwhelmingly held by men thus maintaining the gender inequalities whilst some still referred to biology and sex (Irigaray, Braidotti). Around 1980s the notion got prominence in the poststructuralist constructivist social theory of Judith Butler. Butler following the French historian and philosopher Michael Foucault associated with the structuralist and post-structuralist movements claimed that to be sexed is to be depended to the law. Foucault and Butler did not deny the biological sex of the persons. He claimed that many different things fall under the category of sex, such as biological distinctions, parts of the body, and social meanings. Whilst some of the feminists in the 70's such as De Beauvoir and Irigaray claimed that there is only one sex and that is the masculine sex, Foucault considered that the "category of sex is a production of a diffuse regulatory economy of sexuality."<sup>2</sup> For him the body is not sexed prior to the discourse. The construction of sex such as one is one's sex and could not be the other sex is artificially constructed by the social regulations. He proposed sexuality instead of sex as a system of power. Feminists such as Irigaray in that period, assert on the sex binary whilst

Foucault with the figure of Herculine Barbin in *The History of sexuality* refuted the binary sex classification. Following this, he was suspicious about the strictly demarcated identity of people as male and female. According to him, men and women were prisoners of the socially imposed and constructed models of gender. For Michael Foucault, power is that one which regulates the production of the dichotomy sex-gender and regulates the relations between women and men. Both, bio power and disciplinary power are the one, which regulates the life of individuals, particularly women, and they are important concepts for de-essentializing of feminine identity and gender identity.<sup>3</sup>

It was a common position that only two sexes exist and that biological sex is unproblematic. Later, as Foucault, Ann Fausto -Sterling in *Sexing the body*, posed the question “Should there be only two sexes?”<sup>4</sup> She claimed that although biology is obvious, that is only the surface, which is visible. She argued that the model of two sexes is not simple and that a small percent of people who fall into the category of intersex. Thus, she tried to illustrate the idea that theorists who claimed that there are only females and males are wrong. She reopened the idea of the social construction of sex.

Judith Butler pointed out that both are socially constructed, sex and gender. She equated sex with gender and showed that sex and gender distinction is not helpful. For her, sex as biological, anatomical and physiological feature could not be seen outside the social and cultural meanings. Monique Wittig as Butler too, opposes the binary sex system, stating that there are as many sexes as there are individuals. For Wittig sex is a fictive category, there is no distinction between gender and sex, and the latter is fully naturalized but not natural category.<sup>5</sup> Currently there is still a great polarization between the distinctions of the two. Feminists have different opinions towards this issue, some consider that the distinction is useful and overlap with the idea of mind and body dualism whilst others consider that sex and gender distinction seen by Wittig and Butler shows that biological determinism is false. On the other hand, claiming that gender is a product of the social forces and systems such as patriarchy, traditionalism and conservatism shows that feminists and progressive forces should work more in order to achieve gender justice.

In the next part I will elaborate on Simon de Beauvoir thoughts on women and Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity.

## **1.2. Simon De Beauvoir versus Judith Butler's theory of performativity**

The famous quote of De Beauvoir “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,”<sup>6</sup> illustrate the social and cultural construction of gender that De Beauvoir ‘imposed’ to many feminists in the 1970s. De Beauvoir quotation makes clear the distinction between the sex as a biology and gender as a constructed category. Females and femininity, according to her were acquired through the process of learning the feminine behavior and traits and through the process of acculturation. The process of acculturation is a long-term and ongoing process that never ends. Thus, gender as a social construct according to the De Beauvoir theory could be understood as a long and never end, recurring act of the woman’s body in order the sexed body to become a ‘real’ woman’s gendered body.

“What is a woman?”<sup>7</sup> asked De Beauvoir. “Woman is a womb,”<sup>8</sup> but “every female human being is not necessarily a woman,”<sup>9</sup> she stated. In order, a woman to become a woman she must develop and acquire femininity as a basic woman’s feature. The main challenge in De Beauvoir claims is, as Judith Butler points out the cultural compulsion for a woman to become a woman and from where this compulsion comes from. Butler states that there is nothing in De Beauvoir claims that the person who becomes a woman is born as a woman or not. Although, Simon De Beauvoir analyzed the femininity as a socially constructed trait, she was not clear in her statements what the body is, is it a female or male body on which cultural features are engraved. Thus, Butler concluded that sex in this case is gender all the time.

For De Beauvoir, the woman is the Other and as such, she is unessential. She is marked by the lack of the features that the Subject-man has. In man’s gaze, the woman is the sex. She is not the sex she is appointed to be, but the one different from man’s sex, the other sex. According to De Beauvoir, the individual is born with sex; sex is unchangeable for her, which is very wrong according to Foucault. Foucault took the example of the case of Alexina in *The History of Sexuality*, prior a girl and later transformed into a man. The practice shows that some individuals

are born with genitalia from both sexes as Foucault's Herculine Barbin (Alexina), struggle with their given sexual traits and their own sense of their gender. Thus, they often decide to change the sex assigned to them at birth. On the other hand, gender is developed, adopted and acquired. Thus, De Beauvoir, makes a radical distinction between the two of them, the sex as unchangeable and gender as developed and gradually acquired.

Monique Wittig, a radical lesbian feminist, claimed as Butler that there are no differences between the gender and sex, because a person can if he/she wants to change the sex in which is born. On the other hand, the gender is constructed on the base of sex, gender is into the sex and that sex is gender from the very beginning. For Wittig, sex is a political interpretation of the natural category to satisfy the heterosexuality as an institution and its reproductive function. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler stated that the category of sex is in its very beginning a normative category, which does not act only as a norm, but as a part of the "regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs."<sup>10</sup> Thus, sex could be understood as not simple thing that someone has it, but as a norm that allows someone to live and allow the body to live within the cultural environment. She stated that if gender is the social construction of sex as De Beauvoir claimed than the result would be that "sex is absorbed by gender"<sup>11</sup> and not only absorbed but sex is becoming a fantasy, something that never existed. On the other hand, the question that naturally imposes here is who is doing this construction, and is this construction of gender a process of repeating acts. Sex for Butler was from the beginning gender, claiming that both, the sex and the gender are socially constructed. According to her, there is no clear and legitimate distinction between sex and gender, as well as between nature versus culture. Butler denies the claims of De Beauvoir and other feminists of the 1970s that gender is constructed stating that

gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, institute in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.<sup>12</sup>

She concluded that gender is a fluid and variable notion. We behave in different situations regardless who we are a man or a woman. Butler defined the women as a heterogeneous group consisted of many unique individuals who have many differences between

them. The main point, according to her is that the women should not be defined in relation to their sex, because the women's sexed bodies should not be seen outside social meanings.

According to her, gender is not the essential feature of our identity, but it is a performance. In this performance, individuals are using performative acts in different situations thus performing their gender. Behind these acts of individuals, she claimed there is no preexisting identity and these acts are constitutive not expressive acts. Thus, gendered women and gendered men, according to her are open to interpretation, re-interpretation and re-signification which mean that gender is not stable and universal but it is performative.<sup>13</sup> Her thought about how gender identities are established is reasonable since it is based on the differences between individuals. Compared to others who see at sex as biological category and gender as a social construct, she sees the sex as a natural category as gender. When the sex and gender are equated, then there are no separate sex and gender differences, then the differences are disregarded and the human being are not classified into a male or female, but into the category of the human beings only and the result is reaching a true equality.

### **1.3. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming**

Gender equality refers to the equal rights between women and men, to the equal possibilities and responsibilities not only to men and women but to boys and girls as well. Reaching equality means that the different interests, needs and priorities of women and men, boys and girls needs to be considered knowing the diversity of different groups of women and men. The concept of equality is one of the basic principles of the international human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human rights claims that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights. Gender equality is not only an issue of women's importance, but it should equally include men and boys. It is a precondition for enhancing productivity, sustainable development, positive outcomes for future generations, as well as ensuring equitable treatment of both, men and women, taking into consideration their rights, needs and opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

On the global level, reaching gender equality means elimination of harmful traditional practices against women and girls such as violence, femicide, sexual exploitation and trafficking and other culturally based practices that differs from country to country and particularly from culture to culture such as early and arranged marriages, dowry, female genital mutilation. Reaching gender equality means more girls in the educational process, more women in economic and political spheres and less women victims of violence, trafficking, less child brides etc. Gender equality requires equal available resources, equal rewards, and equal enjoyment of goods. It requires empowerment of women in different areas, although many areas are interconnected. Ensuring equal education and equal accessibility of health benefits are basic for social empowerment whilst economic support is necessary for capacity building and independence of women as a first step towards achieving gender equality. The process of empowerment will result in the transformation of the gender relations in the society in general. The overall goal of gender equality is a society that will ensure equitable sustainable development for women and men, boys and girls.

On the other hand, gender mainstreaming is the “(re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.”<sup>15</sup> Gender mainstreaming is a political strategy for achieving the equality between women and men. It is a transformative process aiming at integration of the differences between women and men, their different needs and opportunities in the whole process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies at the state level. The point of gender mainstreaming is addressing the existing structural gender inequalities between women and men. The final goal is achieving social justice, democracy and equitable and sustainable gender equality. The concept was proposed the first time at the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. The report of the Conference criticized the development policy demanding for inclusion of women in the mainstream. Although this report does not mention both terms, gender and gender mainstreaming it represent important document for building future strategy of gender mainstreaming. Later, in 1994, the Council of Europe established a Steering Committee for Equality between women and men, which adopted the concept of gender

mainstreaming for the first time, and declared equal opportunities for women and men as one of the main aims in the EU. At last, the idea for gender mainstreaming was reintroduced and developed as a strategy in international equality policy at the Fourth World Conference on Women. According to this, all member-states signatories of the Platform for Action were obliged to integrate the concept of gender mainstreaming into their national strategies. The European Commission since 1996 proposed and dedicates itself to an approach that will include gender mainstreaming as a perspective in all policies. At the same time, the EC oblige itself to implement specific measures in order to prevent and eliminate gender inequalities. A 1996 Communication from the European Commission states that “Under the Gender Mainstreaming concept, all policy measures must constantly be monitored for their effects on the life situation of women and men and, if necessary, revised.”<sup>16</sup> In 1997, European Commission appointed gender-mainstreaming officers in order develop gender-mainstreaming policies. Later, in 1999, Treaty of Amsterdam came into force representing a compulsory legal base for Gender Mainstreaming strategy at EU level. This Treaty obliged EU member-states to commit themselves to developing an active gender equality policy. Later, many programs, documents, guidelines, road maps for equality between women and men were developed. The European Institute for Gender Equality was opened in 2007 with a general aim to support the EU’s institutions and the Member States in promoting gender equality and fighting discrimination based on gender. Gender Mainstreaming became the central theme in the EU. The aim was the integration of equal opportunities for women and men into all policies and activities of the EU and on a national level in all member-states. Gender equality is represented as a cross-sectional area of action extended not only to European, regional, but as well as to the national and local level.<sup>17</sup>

## Chapter 2

### **Misinterpretation and attack on the notion of gender**

#### **2.1. The attack on gender by the Pope and Vatican**

In the previous chapter, I explained the notion of gender grounded in the theory of Simon De Beauvoir and Judith Butler. Although it is very clear what gender means and as such does not represent any danger for the social order, still in the last five years, gender became the main battleground for anti-progressive social forces and for the rightists. Vatican made the first attack on the notion of gender at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995 in Beijing. The objection of Vatican to the usage of the term gender is present in the report in a separate paragraph stating that

The term "gender" is understood by the Holy See as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female. The Holy See thus excludes dubious interpretations based on world views which assert that sexual identity can be adapted indefinitely to suit new and different purposes.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Vatican insisted on the peculiarity and compatibility of women and men pointing out that feminism and gay rights as well as radical definitions of gender jeopardize the human nature. Later, in 2011 Vatican repeated the objection to the "radical" definition of the notion of gender in its statement on the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission of the Status of Women of the United Nation Economic and Social Council. They affirmed again the significant diversity between masculinity and femininity. They emphasized that the true progress of women should not be at the expense of abandoning what is determined for women. The essential for women according to Vatican is the priceless and unique role of women as wives and mothers.<sup>19</sup> The opposition of The Holy See and some Arab states to the term gender at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was a beginning of the discussions over the use of the gender in the Roma Statute.

The definition of the gender in the Roma Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998 launched many discussions between those who supported the progressively common usage of the term and those opposing it. The opposition to the notion of gender was grounded in the usage of terms sex and two sexes and referred to the distinct role of the two sexes in the society. The opponents required no new meanings and connotation of the term, insisting the term to refer to the biology rather than to the social construction. The supporters claimed that the definition is tailored intentionally without leaving room for social and cultural construction of the gender and gender roles.<sup>20</sup> Opponents of the notion of gender insist hard for equating the definition of gender to the one of sex. They insisted because they were afraid that defining gender, as social construction would include more than two genders such as gay, lesbian, transgendered persons and hermaphrodites. The inclusion of gender as a social construction for the ICC was very important in the late 1990s because otherwise the ICC could not have defined and stood for the gender-based violence. As well, the definition of gender as social construction is important for the protection of not only men and women but for the social construction of male and female.<sup>21</sup>

All current discursive basis for the anti-gender rhetoric had its early beginnings in the writings of Christian and conservative circles, particularly in the writings of Pope John Paul II in the period before 2003 as well as in the works of conservative authors related to or emerged from the Catholic Church itself. Pope John Paul II explicitly stressed that gender has its ideology and criticized the “gender ideology” repeating many times that marriage is a pledge between man and a woman. He pointed that people cannot be the other gender except the sex assigned to them at birth.<sup>22</sup> His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, made the criticism on gender stricter, referring to gender as a danger to the nature claiming that if the social norms tend to be ‘modern’ and to overthrow the God’s creationism, then the naturalness is jeopardized.<sup>23</sup>

The influence of the Catholic Church in overwhelmingly Catholic countries in Central Europe and in the Catholic countries in the Balkans, particularly in Croatia is influential not only on a national level but as well as on a local level in small communities particularly rural ones. Bishops have a huge importance in people’s everyday life in these communities and create a wide variety of opportunities for misinterpretation of the notion of gender. Firstly, appeared verbal attacks on gender, which later became visible in organized ideological ‘war’ against

gender. Smaller communities at local level are thus ‘voluntarily’ and intentionally involved in this organized attack on gender making them a good foundation for further expansion of anti-gender war. Gender is perceived as a major threat to a patriarchal and traditional system that is still prevalent on a local level, particularly in Poland and Slovakia and is presented as a major enemy to the traditional heterosexual family, as well as a reason for the demographic crisis. These attacks by Popes and Catholic Church on gender, gives political recognition and strong political meaning of the notion. When the notion of gender and gender equality reached its highest peak, then it is perceived as a danger. At the same time, the Catholic Church invented the “gender ideology” as an analytical and political tool to stop the advancement of sexual and reproductive rights and to stop the achievements of the progressive human rights policies. Later, “gender ideology” was expanded and proclaimed as highly dangerous by the traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals biased to the Catholic Church and other religious institutions.

Gender along with all the achievements of the gender studies by the gender theorists and academics, and gender equality and human rights policies are the main reasons not only for mobilization of the Catholic Church, but for the rise of the right-wing populism against on the other hand the decline of the liberal democracy. They mobilized the most vulnerable citizen from small communities, the citizen that were the most hit by the transition period. The war against gender and invented “gender ideology” is a symbol of the broader crisis, of the crisis of the emancipatory and progressive politics, as well as a symbol of insecurity of the current socioeconomic policy. The Catholic Church used this moment of economic, social and political insecurity and crisis of the left to start this ‘war of position’ between the illiberal and liberal democracy. This mobilization against gender is neither universal nor reached the same result in different Catholic countries. Whilst in some countries gender is a very important notion, in other although Catholic countries gender is not yet put in a negative connotation.

## 2.2. The attack on gender by the traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals

Antonio Gramsci claimed “all men are intellectuals”<sup>24</sup> including in the group of intellectuals not only scholars and theorists, but as well as the administrators, industrial managers, public and civil servants all those who organize the society. On the other hand, he pointed out that although all of us could be intellectuals, not all of us function as intellectuals. Only those who “are the agents of legitimization of the existing order”<sup>25</sup> are the true functional intellectuals. He classified the intellectuals into two types traditional and organic. Traditional intellectuals are linked to the tradition, to the past and perceive themselves as the ones who are not class biased, but keep the system in place by reproducing its ideas. Traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals are related to the church and through stressing the morality; justice, charity, good works, and education are trying to think along with the masses to obtain voluntary consent from the masses.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the organic intellectuals emerge from different social groups in the society. Each social group developing its own organic intellectuals aims to articulate its own position through them. They are more related to the economic structure of the society giving the social groups that represent the homogeneity in economic, social and political level.

In the last, few years in Europe emerged many different intellectuals. The most important for the explanation of the misinterpretation of the notion of gender and the attack on the notion are traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals. Gradually, many of these traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals became biased to the Catholic Church expressing the attitudes and views almost identical to the views of the Catholic Church, or they stood up on behalf of the Church. These intellectuals interconnected among themselves not only in Europe, but the interconnectedness is present wider in the world. They are related and support each other and are very successful in imposing and spreading their ideas and views among ordinary people in the countries in the so-called New Europa. The transnational and global influence and connection could be seen in the example of Dale O’Leary, an American journalist and pro-family advocate, who had an influential influence through her books and interviews in the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland. In Poland, the journalists biased to the Catholic Church cite her views, trying to get national visibility and recognition of “gender ideology.” She took the same

standpoint as the Catholic Church stating on one of her blogs that gender was invented by radical feminists to justify their war against marriage as an institution and motherhood as a primary role of women as well as to justify their “fanatical support for lesbianism and abortion on demand.”<sup>27</sup>

In the same article, she raised the issue of usage of the term, answering that one should not use the word, because using it one is rejecting the idea of the human nature. Another important notion of her is that gender is destroying the patriarchy, the order that is the natural division of humanity of male and female. O’Leary scapegoated feminist movement for changing men into pseudo men and for rejecting the natural distinctions of gender. Dale O’Leary was among the first one that jointly with Gabriele Kuby the inventor of the “gender ideology” in the early 1990s started her research on the invented ideology of gender. She emphasized that the first requirement of the “gender ideology” was the access to abortion and the second requirement is allowing same-sex marriages. She stated that gender is everywhere in the university and in the government, but luckily, the pro-family social forces, finally realized that the natural family, the heterosexual marriage and the children are in danger and need to be saved from the gender.<sup>28</sup>

According to Andrea Peto, professor of Central European University, Department of Gender studies in the last few years in Germany the most known and translated writer and sociologist is Gabriele Kuby, whose conservative positions on gender drew much attention among the scholars, feminists, conservatives and the public in general. She as well as Dale O’Leary is considered as a traditional ecclesiastic intellectual bias to the Church. Peto pointed out that Kuby labels gender, gender mainstreaming, gender studies and LGBT issues as a “culture of death.”<sup>29</sup> Kuby’s books such as *The Gender Revolution* and *The Global Sexual Revolution*, translated in six languages mainly in the countries in Central and Eastern Europe are directly attacking the notion of gender and are used as a platform for the lecturers that Catholic Church, conservative intellectuals and the supporters of right-wing ideology are delivering throughout this part of Europe.

Rita Perintfalvi in *The real face of Anti-Gender Kulturkampf –The rise of a new kind of political and religious fundamentalism in Europe*, pointed out Gabriele Kuby observation in *The Gender Revolution*, about the notion of gender

In our age, we are experiencing the most extreme manifestation of relativism: they (advocates of gender ideology) deny what is obvious and conceivable for every human being, and what is, since the dawn of humanity, as self-evident as the alternation of day and night: humans exist in two sexes-male and female. Anyone who hasn't met this way of thinking may see it as morbid hubris, which is unnecessary to deal with. However, this perspective has, since the last decade, silently, become the guiding principle of the UN, the EU and national government, leading to a social revolution, shaking the very foundations of the human existence.<sup>30</sup>

Kuby pointed out that gender was invented by feminist to promote the idea that there are more than two sexes and that the gender perspective does not recognize the innate differences between men and women. According to her, the supporters of gender ignore the results made in the fields of medicine, psychology and brain research, which make men, and women distinct.<sup>31</sup> At this point she represents herself as an “expert on gender,” and coined the notion of the “gender ideology” as a global gender conspiracy to destroy the natural humankind. Her appearance showed that the main battleground for the notion of gender is science. She emerged with “new scientific” data, whereas the major danger has actually been the anti-universality approach, claiming that her truth is equally valid as other truths whatever the evidences are. Kuby was the most vocal against the Resolution of the European Parliament on equality between women and men in the EU (2012) stating that the Resolution is against the innate core of the different identities of women and men and that the battle over the equality is taking away men’s power and identity. At the same time, women are blinded by the continuous emphasis of the gender and gender equality whilst they can’t see that their biggest freedom is to be mothers and wives.<sup>32</sup> Kuby refers to Judith Butler in her second book *The Global Sexual Revolution*, as one of the leaders of the “gender ideology.” She states that according to Butler there are no male or female human beings and that her wish to increase the freedom of men and women leads towards the destruction of the natural family, abolition of the heterosexuality and destabilization of the society in general. The opinions of Gabriele Kuby became the official standpoints of the Catholic Church in Poland and Croatia as well as in Hungary and Slovakia. Kuby start her war on gender inspired by Marquerite A. Peeters, Director of the Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics

in Brussels, Belgium. Peeters, on the other hand, stressed continuously that the gender theory is not a new concept, that it originates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century cultural revolution and compared it with “the death-dealing wave of a tsunami is only noticed once it arrives near the coast.”<sup>33</sup> She considers that gender theory represents a double deconstruction of one hand a God’s plan and of the other hand the abuses of the modernity. Peeters highlights that gender revolution is a “revolution carried out by the subversion of gender,”<sup>34</sup> which, she claims, originates both from a homosexual plan and a radical feminism. According to her, gender concept is the Trojan horse of the Western feminism, which gradually leads to the death of the father and the mother. Once one opens the door to modernism and secularism, there are no clear borders between the two (father and mother).

Among other ‘intellectuals’ is Tony Anatrella, a French Lacanian psychoanalyst priest. He played one of the most important roles in resisting the UN and EU in their promotion of the notion of gender and gender equality. According to his interpretation, gender is “an intellectual virus” and brings “war between the sexes, the devaluation of the motherhood, promotion of contraception and abortion.”<sup>35</sup> At the same time, it means acceptance of homosexual partnerships and parentage and decline of heterosexual marriages.<sup>36</sup> The paradox to be bigger he was accused in homosexual sex scandals.

The work of these conservative actors supported by the Catholic Church as a powerful ideological institution allowed this designed misinterpretation of the notion of gender as well as the construction of the “gender ideology” to come into ordinary people’s lives. Thus, gender and constructed gender ideology became a major battlefield between right and left-wing ideology.<sup>37</sup> The goal of this massive mobilization against the notion of gender by the Catholic Church and intellectuals biased to it, is the redefinition of the concept of gender equality by scapegoating feminists, democrats and leftists for the destruction of the human order.

### **2.3. Gender studies and the attack on gender studies**

Gender studies as an academic discipline can be dated back in the late 1960s and its emergence and development is related to the second wave of feminism. The critics of the gender inequality, particularly political, economic and social inequalities provoke the interest for developing a set of academic knowledge, which will include experiences, identities and different issues specifically for women. The attention was directed towards women's unpaid homework, motherhood, violence against women, and unequal representation in different spheres. The gender studies were preceded by the women's studies organized as separate studies in USA and in the UK. The first women's studies represent the challenge to the existing academic knowledge that until the emergence of women's studies totally excludes women and was gender blind. The differences and inequalities between women and men were totally ignored and neglected in academic disciplines prior to the development of a clear identity of women's studies. The first national conference on women's studies was organized in 1976 in the UK. Later, when men pro-feminist became publicly visible, accordingly to their visibility, men's studies emerge as a new area in the academic disciplines focused on men and masculinity in the early 1990s. They were organized to show that men's needs and priorities are equally important as women's. The aim was to emphasize that men should not be deprived of the privilege that women get with separate studies. Women's studies organized in Women's studies centers in North America and in the UK set up the foundation of the gender studies, putting an accent on the invisible and ignored gendered power relations in the society.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, gender research expanded its field to a diversity of issues such as sexuality, sexual differences, because the notion of women and men as a unitary category was questioned within the post-structuralism. Gender studies according its advocates, compared to women's studies are more inclusive of men and masculinity studies and are more appropriate for feminist politics and institutions. Although, on the other hand, according to the advocates for women's studies, gender studies make women invisible in men's studies. The gender studies are characteristic of Anglo-Saxon countries because in non-English speaking countries in Europe, such as France and Italy and wider in the Latin America (Argentina) they were hardy

institutionalized. In this part of Europe and in Latin America, they were named as women's studies instead of gender studies.

One of the major dimensions of gender studies is the political one, because it questions the power in the society, the distribution of the power and utilization of the latter. The actors and theoreticians that were previously excluded along with the excluded issues now became acknowledged due to the institutionalization of gender studies. In that way, the power and recognition of those questioned and challenged before became visible. Gender studies questioned, pointed out and correct disparities in diverse disciplines. They represent a new direction in feminist criticism. At the same time, they had and still have a strong connection with the public and civil activism, representing in an academic way the interest and issues of different categories of groups such as women and sexual minorities. Later gender studies spread in different, less or more complementary studies such as queer studies.

The gender studies in Central and Eastern Europe became institutionalized around 1980s. The first feminist organizations in Poland start with their organized activities mainly in the Institutes of Sociology at the end of the 1980s. At the beginning of the 1990s first women's studies were organized within the universities in Lodz and Poznan in 1993. Before that, in 1992 the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences offered the first graduate and Ph.D. courses in women and gender studies. In 1996, the Gender Studies at Institute of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw was the first interdisciplinary postgraduate courses dedicated to gender issues. During the 1990s and at the beginning of 2000s were introduced undergraduate and post-graduated gender studies programs in different universities in Poland.<sup>39</sup> Gender studies in Hungary began identically as in Poland around late 1980s and early 1990s. At first similarly to the USA and UK the studies were organized as women's studies offering courses on feminism, women's movement and women's issues. They firstly developed in NGOs whereas different lectures and courses were held. At the beginning of 1990s the emergence of the first gender studies was related to the Central European University and Corvinus University. Later they expand to universities within the countries in different cities such as Szeged, Debrecen and Pecs.<sup>40</sup> In Romania, women's studies after 1990s were looked at with skepticism. They were introduced in higher education in different ways. The first way was

as gender components in some courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The second way was as optional and mandatory modules offered in universities in Bucharest, Cluj and Timisoara. The distinction was that they were taught at the beginning without any foreign funding, as it was the case in other Eastern and Central European countries. Later the master program in gender studies was established in Bucharest financed from the state budget.<sup>41</sup>

Andrea Peto pointed out that after 1989 the state became open for new academic disciplines such as gender. The problem with the gender studies as academic discipline was that due to competitiveness and consideration that they are less important compared to other disciplines faced with many problems for funding. According to Peto, graduates from gender studies in the so-called New Europe, implemented their knowledge mainly in NGOs, which were the first informal centers for gender courses as well as in newly established governmental institutions on a national and local level related to gender equality machinery appropriately to the request of the EU accession requirements. A big number of those graduated failed to find their place because of the control of the resources and work of the government. The government not only controls the gender machinery institutions in the countries of the so-called New Europe, but they also interfered in the work of NGOs. Peto stressed that gender studies can be one of the critical fields fighting the differences between Old and New Europa. Whilst in Old Europe the gender studies were developed as academic disciplines to smoothly, produce cadres, research and knowledge, in New Europe the gender studies faced with many opponents imposing obstacles and questioning the scientific meaning of the studies.<sup>42</sup>

The global economic crisis in 2008 firstly affects the social sciences and humanities. Since gender studies are part of humanity, they were the first hit by budget cuts as an effect of the further rise of economic crisis and particularly with the introduction of the austerity measures. Many institutions, academic and public related to the gender studies and the concepts of gender equality were closed or were faced with the reduction in human resources and funds. In some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the educational programs that include the term gender were not at all fund from the state. This attack on gender studies has different forms such as in the form of budget cuts, closure down and reduction of the jobs, as well as form of public verbal attacks questioning the scientific knowledge of gender and the academic discipline. This

phenomenon becomes quickly not only Central and Eastern European phenomenon, but as well as a global phenomenon. The phenomenon is present in the USA, as well as in Australia. The example of the University of Queensland which is the only university in Queensland with established gender studies and was the first one in 2013 hit by the budget cuts which resulted in an announcement by the University that it will stop teaching of the gender studies by 2018. These all resulted in a march of professors, students, citizen, as well as in submitting petitions for finding better policies in order the studies to continue to work permanently.<sup>43</sup>

Andrea Peto in *How are anti-gender movements changing gender studies as a profession in Religion and Gender*, pointed out that the attack on gender studies is having a huge support all over in Europe. According to her, the attackers are different, some of them are related to the Church, particularly Catholic, some are using the notion of gender and gender studies to criticize the neoliberal order and the crisis of the liberal democracy. The goal is to establish their own cultural hegemony.<sup>44</sup> Institutionalized gender studies, were developed by the liberal paradigm, offering the societies an alternative for the illiberal democracy that existed in some countries. Gender studies along with the notion of gender are scapegoat for the dissolution of the traditional marriage and traditional family and along with that since the demographic crisis in the states.

On the other hand, this attack on gender studies makes the studies more visible as well as the work of theoreticians and professionals more known. It gave them more publicity for their work. The public attacks on gender studies got political dimension because the attack and war against them lead to the recognition of what was denied as an academic discipline. The attack on the gender studies is equivalent to the attack of the liberal democracy. The attack is the attempt to foster profound social change in the educational system and again to revive the traditional values, aiming at neglecting the gender equality, totally disregarding women, and their specific needs, experiences and priorities

## Chapter 3

### **Ideology and the construction of gender ideology**

#### **3.1. The concept of ideology**

The theory of framing points out that the driving force behind every mobilization, organization in groups, social movements and particularly in countermovement is ideology. Thus, the conservative mobilization, anti-progressive movements, anti-feminism, masculinism are considered countermovement directed towards the notion of gender and along with it the other associated notions such as marriage equality, sexual and reproductive rights, sexual education in schools, introduction and advancement of academic gender curriculum are primarily driven by the ideology.

What means the concept of ideology? The definition varied gradually and depends on the position of different intellectuals. Generally, it is a set of repeated actions in which the main actors reflect their action, demonstrate the objectives, goals and results towards which the action strives. The first definition was related to the De Tracy “science of ideas,” which main mission was to serve to the people and to remove the prejudices. Napoleon viewed at the ideology with mistrust and as one of the most repressive elements in thoughts. Marxist view on ideology was related to the “false consciousness,” referring to the systematic falsification of the dominant social relations in the mental frames of the subaltern. Mannheim associated the notion of ideology with the ideas and thoughts that are less or more conservative. He differentiated particular and total ideology, claiming that particular one is the expression of the individually vocalized thoughts and beliefs while the total ideology is including the general socially determined structures of the views. For him, ideology is related to groups that have a dominant position in the society and it serves as a tool to protect their place in the society and to keep to societal order established by the dominant group.

Antonio Gramsci redefined the notion of ideology as an organic ideology where the set of repeated actions, practices and ideas overcome the class as a category and diffuse through the

civil society, social institutions and structures such as families, churches, schools, and media. Gramsci's organic ideology could not be articulated in the society if "organic intellectuals" does not exist. These organic intellectuals emerged from different social groups in the society. Each social group strives to develop its own organic intellectuals to articulate its positions. For Gramsci, there is the interrelation between the ideology and the concept of hegemony, which he defined as "the capacity to organize the ideological substratum of society into a historical block."<sup>45</sup> Thus, ideology can be imposed through the hegemony, particularly through the cultural hegemony which is institutionalized through its hegemonic apparatuses such as the civil society, the church, the trade union, schools, media, political parties and the family system. The point is to achieve the consent of the masses to follow the social norms and rules of the dominant social group without force. Cultural hegemony refers to people's process of socialization, to their exposure to norms and culture in everyday life, their experience with institutions, and economic and social environment.<sup>46</sup>

Althusser grounded his concept of ideology in Gramsci's theory of ideology and hegemony. He emphasized the role of the Ideological State Apparatuses, the churches, schools, families related to the private sphere of society, that have a huge influence in imposing ideas, actions and practices to the general population without the repression but as Gramsci claimed through cultural hegemony. The actions of the main ideological actors in the society such as the ideological state apparatuses and the repressive state apparatuses have an integrative function trying to widen the base of the movement and to spread as much as possible among masses. The bearers of ideology usually never admit that they are in ideology, but on the contrary, accuse others for being into ideology. Thus, the Catholic Church and intellectuals biased to the Church, do not admit the existence of their own ideology and imposition of their ideological views although they are trying to make a shift into people's thoughts, minds and beliefs by their ideology to gain their own domination in the society.

We can conclude that this attack on gender driven by the Catholic Church and the traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals is spreading as a virus among the ordinary people with their 'consent' given to the above-mentioned institutions.

### 3.2. Does gender ideology really exist?

The “gender ideology” was firstly invented by the Catholic Church as a response of the international recognition of the sexual and reproductive rights in Cairo in 1994 and one year later in Beijing. The term by the inventors encompasses all the academic knowledge achieved by gender theorists, as well as all achievements by feminists and their fight for gender equality, and all adopted progressive human rights policies. The scientific knowledge of the gender studies as an academic discipline was questioned as well as the overall knowledge that the theorists of gender produced along with the justification of the produced cadres that was also called into question. The Catholic Church and the traditional ecclesiastic proclaimed highly the term gender ideology as the most dangerous ideology imposed by liberal democracy. The Church itself claimed that the gender ideology was imposed in the name of personal freedoms and rights. On the other hand, traditional intellectuals claimed it is aimed towards destroying the traditional order. Taking into consideration the definition of the notion of ideology, the question raised here is does gender ideology really exists and if exist how it can be imposed to the masses. Gabriele Kuby, Dale O’Leary, The Catholic Church and the representatives of the conservative social forces and right-wing political parties claim it exists. The theorists of gender claim it does not exist.

Anna Odrowąż-Coates in *Gender Crisis in Poland, Catholic Ideology and the Media*, explained the view of the Polish Catholic Church, which claimed that “gender ideology” is based on Marxism and neo-Marxism and as such has the leading position in jeopardizing the society. The Polish Catholic Church claimed that the society is jeopardized in terms of destroying the natural family with low birth rates, early sexualization of the children and sexual freedom of women due to the right of abortion and contraception. The Catholic Church claimed that according to the “gender ideology” one could choose to be a woman or a man, which is a denial of the God’s plans and results in the death of the whole nation and human civilization. According to many bishops, the “gender ideology” is responsible for a new cultural revolution which leads towards removal of the father and mother and their replacement with parent one and parent two.

Among the many claims of the Catholic Church is the one that gender is anti-Christian and is invented by atheists and sexual maniacs.<sup>47</sup>

Dale O’Leary claimed that the fight of radical feminist to eliminate women’s oppression is a fight of abolishment of the biological family, of the elimination of men’s privileges and at the same time of elimination of the differences between the biological sexes. In an interview given to the Polish journalist, she stated

The gender ideology caused that the priority of the feminist movement ceased to be the fight against politics that discriminated women but the priority was to the fight against the ideas that showed the differences between women and men and emphasized the fundamental role of woman in the sphere of education and upbringing.<sup>48</sup>

According to her from the view point of the “gender ideology” woman does not have a choice of motherhood. She cited and misinterpreted De Beauvoir’s answer, “women should not have such a choice because if such a possibility really existed too many women would use it.”<sup>49</sup> Gabriele Kuby similarly to O’Leary described “gender ideology,” as a rebellion against the natural human existence in a form of a woman and a man, which confuse people and they do not know what and who they are. At the same time when accepting gender and “gender ideology,” one’s identity of a woman or a man is under attack of a new social vision of how human should look like. She pointed out that “gender ideology” does not have only one goal, but a wider scope of goals such as to enter governments, to enter the legal codes of the states, and into the academia. It is easy to enter into the Western states due to their openness and liberal democracy whilst according to her East European countries were protected until recently from the gender revolution by its previous system, communist totalitarianism. She criticized the UN, EU, WHO for adopting and enforcing the concepts of gender mainstreaming. For her, gender mainstreaming is only a tool in the set of tools of the “gender ideology” for achieving “a new form of totalitarianism under the cloak of freedom.”<sup>50</sup> Kuby considered that “gender ideology” is a product of the communism; radical feminism and gay movement lead by Marx and Engels, Freud, De Beauvoir and Frankfurt School. Gender ideology for Kuby is “the global political strategy of the UN as spelled out in the Yogyakarta Principles.”<sup>51</sup> One could see here that gender

and particularly the “gender ideology” is perceived as a major threat to the society and it is used by the Catholic Church as a tool to mobilize the masses against the liberal democracy. Such rhetoric of the Church is understood as a backlash against emancipation and progressivity. It is the mobilization against the feminism and human rights of minorities as well as successful mobilization of the illiberal social forces versus the failure of the democratic representatives.

On the other hand, many gender theorists, progressive intellectuals, left-wing politicians and supporters claimed that gender is a form of social construction and it is not about ideology but about cultural and social identity of the person. Judith Lorber in *Paradoxes of Gender* pointed out that gender as a social construction is composed of many components such as gender statuses, gender division of labor, kinship, gendered personalities, gendered social control as well as the gender ideology. She defined the gender ideology as “the justification of gender statuses, particularly their differential evaluation. The dominant ideology tends to suppress criticism by making these evaluations seem natural.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, she explains that culture is one of the major supporters of gender ideology and that not biology but culture is one’s destiny.

Hossein Zahed in *Consequences of Gender Ideology* explains that gender ideology is at the core of the gender inequality. He stresses that until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the division of labor was based on sex and thus jobs were divided into feminine and masculine as the most visible forms of gender inequality. Later, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fundamental changes happened in the viewpoint towards gender that he called gender ideology. According to him, gender ideology was a set of beliefs, actions and perspectives, which have a huge impact on men’s and women’s equality. Gender ideology of the person depends on what we inherit from our parents, either a traditional view on men’s and women’s role or egalitarian view.<sup>53</sup> We can see in Zahed’s explanation of gender ideology that he perceives it as a view on how the distribution of the housework, economic dependence and family roles between women and men are shared. Thus, one can conclude that there is a traditional and egalitarian gender ideology whereas the former points out the distinctive roles of women and men whilst the latter supports the equality between women and men.

The international agencies such as UN, WHO, OSCE gave an extensive definition of gender, stating that it is the issue of equality, diversity, tolerance and human rights. That in such connotation is far away from ideology because is based on the relations of power in the society. Left-wing politicians support the notion of gender, for them it is about women's and men's equality in political, economic and social life.

According to Ana Campoy in *A conspiracy theory about sex and gender is being peddled around the world by the far-right*, the “gender ideology” does not exist. It is the invention of the conservatives and of the rightist. The conservatives and rightist mobilize against the democracy and against the supporters of diversity and human rights around a fake ideology. The notion of gender for them is a framework for the fight against the policies such as the right of abortion, contraception, sexual education in schools, same-sex marriages and adoption of children by same-sex couples. They included all these rights in one notion of the so-called gender ideology and oppose to it claiming that men and women are complementary by nature, but not equal. Campoy pointed out that the invented gender ideology is a “very effective communication and persuasion tool”<sup>54</sup> which allow the opponents of gender to frame the arguments in a secular way. She highlights the views of Bruno Perreau, an MIT professor that in order for people to recognize the misinterpretation of the gender they should know and realize more insightfully, what gender really means. As well, he points, “It's the church which believes in creationism, they are the ones who believe that you can define yourself out of nothing.”<sup>55</sup> Stressing this, he pointed that the gender theorists and the notion of gender does not come out of nothing, it's a scientifically proven notion and many research are done in the exploration of the gender as socially, culturally and psychologically constructed term.

The ‘gender ideology’ popularized by the Catholic Church represented gender as an enemy which gathers jointly religious, non-religious and right-wing actors and produced panic among the public allowing in some countries to be blocked some juridical reforms and newly adopted or proposed laws. Thus, we can conclude that although non-existent it is spread through various channels and has a huge influence among the masses and authorities.

## Chapter 4

### Mobilization and counter movements

#### 4.1. Mobilization in groups and framing theory

Iris Marion Young in *Justice and politics of differences* emphasized the fact that people organized into groups because of their specific kind of collectivity, specific affinity and similar experience in the life. The one social group is different from the other because of specific life, cultural practices, values and beliefs. Young used the notion *group in seriality* to reformulate the category of women meaning a collection of individuals who are put together in a group because of the same practices and habits they have towards achieving certain action. The notion was borrowed from Sartre, who stated that the individuals in the series are accidentally engaged in the same action and is anonymous and isolated. Later, he developed the concept *the groups in fusion*, which arise out of seriality, but individuals in this case are intentionally linked together, forming a common bond, expressing solidarity and are striving towards the same goal. Sartre expanded later the concept with the notion of *organized groups* and *institutions*.<sup>56</sup> Based on this different social groups exist such as women's and men's, racial, ethnic and religious groups that have the common goal. Individuals constituted groups and individuals mobilized themselves to achieve social change and control through groups.

Resource mobilization theory pointed out that individuals mobilized into social groups and furthermore into movements are rational social actors who are very much familiar with the change they are striving. According to this theory, the grievance in the society, the discontent and the frustration of people leads towards developing of collective consciousness and collective behavior. On the other hand, the resource mobilization theory followed by political opportunity theory underline the fact that people need more than a grievance to form a social movement. Among other reasons for mobilization of people are the presence of specific political opportunities varying from increased pluralism to the stronger institutions where people can

participate.<sup>57</sup> As I mention above people's organizing into social groups is according to the shared beliefs, to their perception and to the way they frame and perceive the reality. Framing theory involves the social construction of the movement's activists who are active agents engaged in the construction of the movement and its activities. The framing theory is contrary to the rational choice theory. Frames influence the perception of the activists in the movement as well as help social actors to interpret the social reality and to represent it to the others. Different social actors could see the same issues differently depending on the way they frame the issues. Accordingly, to this framing, different social actors could get along with each other, while at the same time could confront with others around interpretation of certain issues. Construction of the meaning plays an important role in the dissemination of ideas and values in the society. Framing and social constructivist approach explains why some individuals in similar situations respond differently while others react in identical ways. The more individual thinking's, values and beliefs in the movement are identical and aligned with the activities and goal of the movement the highest is the level of commonness and of collective identity.

## **4.2 Mobilization and movement aiming towards social change**

The mobilization of people into organized formal or informal movements is related to a collective behavior, which refers to the behavior of at least two individuals or more acting jointly for a common agenda. The movements are a kind of collective actions of interest groups closely organized to achieve or to persist certain social change. Social movements tend to be integrated into the political system as a driving force imposing institutional pressure, or tend to be linked to the organic crisis in the states and societies, follow by setting up a new hegemony.<sup>58</sup> Social movements are aiming towards change in the society, whether it is for a new one or against it. "Social change could be defined as any variation in a social system perceived by an observer,"<sup>59</sup> which is preceded by a well-determined boundary of the system and of the observer's viewpoint. The main paradigm shift in the society followed social change. Depending on the social institution through which the social change is achieved, the social movements could be categorized as political, religious, economic, human rights movements, etc. On the other hand,

depending on the direction and level of the achieved social change, the social movements could be conservative, reformatory, revolutionary, radical, reactionary movements. Change in a society is perceived as an analytical concept, which cannot be observed as a homogeneous phenomenon, but as a process of different collective actions present in forms of behavior, which intersected with many other factors such as individual resistance, individual mobility, collective rituals that are all linked with the collective mobilizations.<sup>60</sup>

The dominant notion of the movements until the 1960s was the class struggle and class-oriented understanding. According to Marxist paradigm the class conflict and class struggle was the ground for the emergence of social movements. The Marxist paradigm of analysis of social movements was related to the crisis of the capitalist mode of production and to the historical analysis of the class action. Accordingly, to this by analyzing the movements it was unacceptable to think about the emergence of spontaneous actions without developing a class consciousness. The contemporary approaches are categorized as structural and constructivist. Structural approach takes into consideration the resource mobilization theory instead the theory of relative deprivation, as well as a political process approach, emphasizing the organized forms of protest that are rational and look for resources and opportunities. On the other hand, the social constructivist approach is grounded in the construction of the reality, it is oriented towards identity and ideology and the bearers of social movements are identity, cultural, religious and other forms of groups.

In the late 1960s the classical explanatory paradigm for the emergence of the social movements was debunked. The social movements shift their focus from the traditional issues such as class and race towards cultural grounds aiming at challenging cultural norms and beliefs and examining the collective behavior of members of the social movements. In the period after '60s new movements emerged, such as women's movements, civil movements, peace movements, student's movements, environmental movements. The explanatory paradigm used for exploration of these movements was grounded in the contemporary approaches, taking into the consideration the resource mobilization theory and political process theory. These movements are defined as new social movements.

### 4.3. New Social Movements

The theory of the new social movements derives from the social base, which goes beyond the class structure. The emergence of these new social movements was related to the alteration from industrial to post-industrial society. The alterations were the structural leading to the new type of society that results in new types of social movements. The old movements were based on labor and union whilst the new movements are grounded on human rights, within them women's and gay rights, environment protection etc.

According to the new emerging theorists of social movements Marxist theory became less relevant because the new emerging movements went beyond the class structure and emphasized the inequalities in terms of gender, youth and sexual orientation, as well as the dominance of mass media, the welfare state and the identities of certain groups that were totally neglected. The old-traditional movements were focused on the structure of economies and industrial society while the new ones were focused on recognition of individual rights and individual or collective identities. The ideology of new social movements is in total contradiction to the Marxist working-class movements and the Marxist view of ideology. The new social movements consist of a wide variety of ideas and values that look for institutional democratic reforms and higher participation of citizen and civil society organization. The mobilizing factors of new social movements are linked with cultural issues and values more than with the theory of economic deprivation characteristic for the *old* social movements. The new social movements are about interconnection between social structural and cultural perspective. The main difference between old and new movements is the focus, which shifts from economic well-being to human rights. At the core of these new movements are issues such as identity, issues of belonging to social groups, issues of equalities in societal and political sphere. The issues reflected in old movements were directed towards a wide-ranging societal change whilst the issues reflected in new movements are more limited and directed towards recognition of the identities of new emerging groups and individual identities. In the new social movements, new forms of identity emerged along with people's participation in the movements. "The new social movements are said to arise in defense of identity."<sup>61</sup>

New social movements such as feminist movement and movement for gay rights are inseparably related to the search of personal and group identity of the movement's members. Identity in these two movements has two dimensions, individual and collective but both are structured around the third one, public identity. Whilst, individual and collective identities are structured around self-estimation of the individual and of the groups, the creators of the public identity are the states, media, governments that have an influence on the way members of the new social movements perceive themselves.

Hanspeter Kriesi in *New Social movements in Western Europe* classified new social movements according to the logic of action as identity movements and instrumental movements and according to the general orientation as internal and external. Ecology movements, peace movements and solidarity movements are classified into the group of instrumental and externally oriented. On the other hand, feminist movements and gay movements are dominantly identity based and internally oriented. The type of the movement can differ from one country to the other as well as can change gradually over the time. In identity, oriented movements such as feminist and gay rights movements, collective action has a central place, whilst the instrumental movements as externally oriented can reach a much higher level of mobilization compared to identity movements.<sup>62</sup> Kriesi differs countercultural movements besides this classification. These movements according to him are in between the above-mentioned movements and they combine the identity ground with external orientation. According to him, countercultural movements can be different such as autonomous movements and anti-reformist movements, which could be very confrontational and radical. The “repression” in these movements has a strong influence in the mobilization of members. Countercultural movements are anticipated to reproduce the collective identity through relations with opponents, mostly with political actors and authorities. These countercultural movements relate rather to confrontation then to cooperation.<sup>63</sup>

#### 4.4. Counter movements

Along with the emergence of the social movements in the 1960s, new movements start to emerge that had their own strategies, frameworks and ideologies opposing the social changes. Scholars of the social movements defined these movements as counter movements. Thus, counter movements are referred as movements, which resist and go against the original movement's goals. These movements are the ones that are mobilizing against the other progressive movements. Simin Fadaee in *Social Movements, counter movements and their dynamic interplay* highlighted Meyer and Staggenborg observations that there are three main factors for the emergence of the counter movements. First, they emerge when the original movements reach its highest peak of the power and success, secondly, when the goals of the original movements are perceived as a threat to a certain group of people and thirdly when there are political supporters of the countermovement mobilization.<sup>64</sup>

The first one is the most accepted among the scholars because less powerful and unsuccessful original movements could rarely provoke any kind of oppositional movement. The theory of backlash stated that a backlash emerges when the dominant group in the society perceives itself intimidated by the rise of the groups that are disadvantaged and look for improvement of their position in the society. The backlash of social movements has many forms and ways of acting such as the strategy *divide and conquers* and can include overt or covert force and threats. Backlash includes reaction of one group to the efforts of another group to change or improve its position. In addition, it can be a reaction on individual level, including one individual to react against another individual. Simin Fadaee emphasized the Whitteier's opinion that "They (counter movements) emerge not because they are supported by the other movement's organizational infrastructure, but in response to its gains."<sup>65</sup> Touraine from his ideological approach to social theory of movements pointed out that "counter movements are associated with the dominant and oppressive forces of the society."<sup>66</sup> Backlash is associated with the ideological backlash, with the reconstruction of the patriarchy and with the authoritarian power in the societies. Backlash is the usage of forced power in order to regain the previously lost power and the process of aggressive resistance to changes.

These counter movements are conservative, reactionary and can vary from anti-feminist movements, including movements against abortion and sexual and reproductive rights, against the notion of gender and marriage equality, to masculinist movements, which scapegoat feminists, to the religious and fundamentalist movements. Counter movements influence negatively on the original movements weakening the goals and values of the movement and at the same time mobilizing all its resources to block the original movement. On the other hand, the emergence of countermovement could challenge and give impetus to the original movement to strengthen its strategies and overall capacity. The driving force behind every countermovement is the ideology. Definitions of ideology varied during the time. Firstly, it was related to the “science of ideas,” perceived as a very positive term aiming at eradication of prejudice in people. Napoleon reversed this meaning to the offensive term, aiming at that which is beyond the science as a depository of prejudices. Marxist view on ideology was related to the “false consciousness,” referring to the systematic falsification of the dominant social relation in the mental frames of the subordinated classes. Thus, the ideology was represented as a problem of the domination and legitimization of the domination of the dominant class in the society. “Ideologies are thus potent conservative forces, permitting even dissidents to work ultimately to maintain the existing social order.”<sup>67</sup>

Later, Antonio Gramsci redefined the notion of ideology in terms of an “organic ideology” where the set of repeated actions, overcome the class as a category and diffuse through civil society, social structures such as family, churches, media, schools, etc. Louis Althusser grounded his concept of ideology in Gramsci’s theory of ideology and hegemony. He emphasized the importance of the Ideological State Apparatuses (the churches, schools, families) that are related to the private sphere of society and hence have a huge influence in imposing ideas, actions and practices to the wider public without the repression but through its ideology and cultural hegemony. The ideology of the aforementioned institutions has a huge influence in imposing the ideological frame to the potential participants in the counter movements. The current mobilization against the gender and progressive politics, including gender equality and human rights policies, have a conservative political background and are trying to manipulate the

masses with the misinterpretation of the gender. However, in the background, is the general aim to regain the cultural hegemony and to make an overall paradigm shift.

In the next part of this chapter, I will elaborate the anti-feminist and masculinist movements and I will explain the influence of the ideological state apparatuses on the membership of these movements and to the public.

#### **4.5. Anti-feminist movements and right-wing women**

Feminism as a movement strives towards political, economic, social and personal rights and equality between women and men in all societies and cultures, regardless they are less or more patriarchal, regardless where they are located. Susan Moller Okin defined feminism as

the belief that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex, that they should be recognized as having human dignity equal to that of men, and that they should have the opportunity to live as fulfilling and as freely chosen lives as men can.<sup>68</sup>

The feminist movement mobilized in the late 1960s and early 1970s, although the first women fighting for women's enfranchisement are dated back in the period of abolitionist movement in the USA. This first wave of feminism was focused on gaining of women's enfranchisement and rights of women to property. The second wave feminism was focused on fighting against social and cultural inequalities of women, women's sexual and reproductive rights and women's sexuality. The third wave of feminism emerges as a response to the failure of fulfillment of the second wave feminism to include the women as a very heterogeneous group taking into the consideration the color, religion, ethnicity of women. Thus, the third wave feminist movement embraced the concept of intersectionality. Many feminists during the years marched for equal rights, equal pay for the same job position, same and equal opportunities for education, against gender discrimination, challenging the centrality of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. As the movement reached its highest peak and as the women gained rights to higher education and work, to organize their family life, to have right on their own body, the backlash was emerging to regain the power of the social forces, that was considered lost gradually over

the time with granting women more and more rights. The anti-feminist movement is not motivated by the mobilization of the feminist, but rather by the actual policy changes and policy success of the feminist activists. Susan Faludi in *Backlash the Undeclared war against the American women*, highlighted Cynthia Kinnard's observation that anti-feminist movement "grew in intensity during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and reached regular peaks with each new suffrage campaign."<sup>69</sup> The arguments that were in favor of the rise of anti-feminist movement were that the "equal education would make women spinsters, equal employment would make women sterile, equal rights would make women bad mothers."<sup>70</sup> As the feminist movement was growing in scope and in mobilization, the threats against it re-emerged and strengthened.

In the USA in the mid-1970s, strong opposite campaigns emerged associated with the equal rights of women to work and to the abortion and reproductive rights generally. Women's mobilization and counter mobilization started around the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was about guaranteeing equal rights for all persons regardless of their sex. Women supporters of the ERA, led by the *National Organization for Women* (NOW) and *ERAmERICA* organized in coalition of almost 80 women's organizations demanding their natural rights as equal citizens. The ERA passed the Senate in 1972, but the Congress placed a seven-year deadline for the ratification process. Thirty-five states ratified the ERA in the USA by the 1990s. In March 2017 one more state ratified it.<sup>71</sup> At the same time when feminists were organizing around the ratification of ERA, the opponents such as the anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly, leader of the *STOP ERA* and right-wing leader of the conservative group *Eagle Forum*, succeed in mobilizing opposition to the ratification of the ERA. As arguments against the ERA, Schlafly pointed out "ERA would deny woman's right to be supported by her husband, privacy rights would be overturned, women would be sent into combat, and abortion rights and homosexual marriages would be upheld."<sup>72</sup>

In *The Flipside of Feminism, What conservative women know and men won't say*, Suzzane Venker and Phyllis Schlafly stated

Feminist have manipulated human nature to their advantage-they know it's easy to get people to succumb to victimhood. That's why, if you ask a feminist to define feminism,

she'll give you the standard, bogus answer: "Feminism is about equal rights for women." That benign, but very inaccurate, definition gives people the impression that feminism is a good thing. After all, who doesn't believe in equal rights? But feminism is not about equal rights at all. Feminism is about power for the female left.<sup>73</sup>

Some of the most recent American anti-feminists went too far, claiming that women should not have the right to vote. Ann Coulter, the American conservative political author and commentator on many occasions stated her opinion and support for women's disenfranchisement. In 2007, she stated "If we took away women's right to vote, we'd never have to worry about another Democrat president."<sup>74</sup> She particularly offended single women who, according to her "are voting so stupidly,"<sup>75</sup> bearing in mind that they do not have a spouse who should tell or impose to them whom to vote for, thus they are voting independently on their own and are making according to her 'stupid decisions.' Thus, the opponents of the women's rights from 1970s and later, emerged from traditional sectors such as from conservative right groups, from the membership and politicians of the Republican Party and right wing parties as well as from fundamentalist religious groups and some business interest groups.

Another important issue for women's mobilization was the issue of abortion. The issue mobilized many supporters as well as many opponents. The mobilization started in the early 1970s around the legal right of abortion in the USA. The Supreme Court passed a decision that granted women right to seek an abortion in the first trimester without interference of the state. At the same time, it gives women right to state funding of the abortion.<sup>76</sup> The opponents mobilized as soon as this success was achieved. Phyllis Schlafly was again, among the leaders of this anti-abortion mobilization jointly with many anti-abortion organizations such as *National Right to Life Committee, Eagle Forum, Concerned women for America*. The mobilization got its peak in the 1980s and early 1990s, when the actions against the right of abortion, moved on the streets and in front of clinics in the forms of violent attacks, arson attacks, and even clinic bombings<sup>77</sup>

The question that arises here is *Why women's rights to decide about their bodies mobilize so many opponents, in the previous decades and now too?* The category of life has a central position in the agenda of the conservatives, populists and fundamentalists. It is the manifestation

of power over women and the manifestation of the traditional order that according to the conservatives need to be maintained. Women are central to the nation; they are the symbolic boundary marker of the nation. They are the bearers of the collective identity of the nation, ethnicity, of the group. That is the reason why the regulation of women's bodies and sexuality is essential in order the nation to be reproduced and maintain. Permission of the abortion, according to the conservatives will be the attack of the demography resulting in the further demographic crisis and the death of the nation. The theory of patriarchy referred historically to the autocratic power of the male head of the family. Later it shifts the focus of the social system in which power is held by the dominant notion of hegemonic masculinity and allows men and the system to exploit women and men who do not belong to the culturally constructed form of hegemonic masculinity.

One of the questions that is raising here is why do women stand in front of the anti-abortions movements. *Why it takes woman to fight against a woman?* Many women that are against progress of women's rights are coming from the right-wing parties and thus are related to the set of beliefs and norms, which correspond to the right-wing ideology. Women are attracted by rightist doctrine because it produces and preserves the femininity with which some women identify. These are traditionally depicted roles of women as mothers, as caregivers, as caring, devoted wives. Women supporters of the right-wing ideology identify as the one who preserve, transmit and symbolize the traditional relations of power. Many right-wings women think of women's and men's union in normative heterosexual familial lines. Many of them in right-wing ideology feel as "the right woman," idealize motherhood and detest the homosexuality. Among them there are overwhelming majorities who state that they are strongly anti-feminist, whilst on the other hand, there are some of them who claim that they are feminist. The first one stands for women as biological, cultural and national producers, as carriers of collective identity of the nation. The latter group, which claims is feminist, struggle for some kind of women's liberation as women's political participation, women's economic empowerment but not necessarily challenge heteronormative gender roles. As an example, in some parts of the United States, they fought for their enfranchisement, but on the other hand, they were imposing white supremacist ideology and saw nothing contradictory in it. Many right-wing women, particularly the main

activists and leaders, have a double standard in the way they live their lives. While, they preach for women as devoted wives and caring mothers, opposing divorce and abortion, they are childless and divorced. They are fighting for a society, which would eliminate childless and divorced women as they are.

Andrea Dworkin in *Right wing women* stated “women can be expected to be socially, politically, economically, and sexually conservative because the status quo, whatever it is, is safer than change, whatever the change.”<sup>78</sup> According to her, the Right is offering the following to the women: the form, which offers women a fixed social and biological order, the shelter because women need a home and their place in it, safety because the world is dangerous for women, rules because women need them in order to know what to do further, and love as a key factor in getting women’s loyalty. These are only manipulation of the rightist to draw more and more women. Dworkin highlighted “Feminism is hated because women are hated. Anti-feminism is a direct expression of misogyny; it is the political defense of woman hating.”<sup>79</sup>

Anti-feminism did not leave any choice for the women who suffer from systematic deprivation of liberty, rights and choice. Examples of Phyllis Schlafly and later Margaret Thatcher, the leader of the Conservative party and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom showed that their right-wing policy undermine their potential to motivate and encourage other women towards embracing neoliberalism as a modern political and economic theory that favors privatization, reduction of public expenditures on social services and supports fiscal austerity although these measures mostly affected women. The right-wing ideology is always gendered. Gender is that what marks the right-wing ideology. The right-wing women produce women-friendly environment of a ‘real womanliness’ identifies women with the traditional gender roles. Thatcher during being at the head of the state emphasized the iconography of the housewife and of the nuclear family. Although she broke the glass ceiling for women in politics, women’s rights were a low priority for her. Her power was interpreted as a personal power and a personal achievement. She was not interested in social equality; she was unfamiliar with female solidarity, although many women supported her because she was a woman and expected a better treatment of women. Thatcher was viewed as a betrayer of her gender. Once she stated, “The feminists hate me, don’t they? And I don’t blame them. For I hate feminism. It is poison.”<sup>80</sup> Among, other

anti-feminists and anti-women remarks are her thoughts about the single mothers equating them with bad mothers and stressing, “The children of lone mothers were better off in the care of a very good religious’ organization so that they could grow up with family values.”<sup>81</sup> She achieved her power through anti-feminism. Schwarzmantel highlighted Stuart Hall observation about Thatcher, according to whom she “was able to articulate a new form of common sense and to develop a form of authoritarian populism to achieve hegemony.”<sup>82</sup> She imposed a new form of conservatism as a response of the organic crisis in which the social democrats were at that time in Britain and tried to reach hegemony of the conservatives. Hall concluded that the Right represents by Thatcher was more capable to understand the people and to become a “dirigente” in political and social realm.

The politics subverted a female solidarity in the fight for women’s rights. In recent years, many neo-conservative women emerged in European states such as Marine Le Pen in France, Pia Kjaersgaard from Danish People Party in Denmark, Frauke Petry from Alternative for Germany, Siv Jensen from anti-immigrants Progress party from Norway, Beata Kampa from Poland, Croatian MEPs Ruza Tomasic and Marijana Petir and many more. These women should not be considered as a phenomenon because they are historically a very notable group, which needs to be taken very seriously. At the same time, the emergence of the important female leading figures in the right activism showed that these women are not uneducated, rural women stacked in the patriarchal system, but on the contrary, they are very well educated, middle class women who are not the victims of the transitions but some of them are very successful businesswomen. Women are the agents of change, but the change that these women are promoting is the anti-progressive change of women’s emancipation.

#### 4.6. Masculinist movement

Masculinism or masculinist movement emerged in the 1980s along with the growing of the anti-feminist movement and is a result of the countermovement dynamic. As a movement, it asserts that men are in crisis and their problems and rights are neglected because of the shift of the society towards emphasizing and solving women's rights, issues and problems. It pointed out that because of granting women too many rights, men's masculinity particularly the hegemonic one is undermined and need to be reevaluated. Masculinism is strongly opposed to feminism, masculinists scapegoat women, and particularly women feminists for the crisis they claim are into. Masculinism could be considered as one of the few components of the antifeminism along with religious, conservative, nationalist movements. Masculinist or masculinism is usually a French usage of the term while in England, mostly used is a men's movement or father's movement.<sup>83</sup>

Masculinism focuses on hegemonic masculinity and on the position of white heterosexual men in societies. Raewyn Connell considers the concept of masculinity as inherently relational, which cannot exist if the opposite concept of femininity does not exist. A culture that does not treat women and men differently does not have the concept of masculinity. This notion co-occurs with the notion of separate spheres in the nineteenth century. Connell followed different definitions to distinguish the person who is masculine. Firstly, following the essentialist definition, one feature is usually chosen to define the core of the masculinity, such as men's activity as opposite to women's passivity, men's risk-taking, aggression, energy, etc. Secondly, positivist definition draw attention to what men are, although here an attention should be paid to the standpoint, to the process of social ascription of men and women, and to the gender analysis, because the notions of masculine and feminine go further than the sex differences. Normative definitions of masculinity view of the latter as a social norm and it is often emphasized in media studies and in the sex role theory. This means that men are what men are ought to be by the imposed social norms. Semiotic point of view, define masculinity through the semiotic opposition of masculine and feminine, where the masculine is unmarked and the feminine is marked by the lack.<sup>84</sup>

Connell uses the concept of hegemonic masculinity to allude to the pattern of behavior and practices that allow men to dominate over women. Hegemonic masculinity according to Connell is in a superior position and although most men do not live in this form of masculinity, they accepted it as the most powerful and socially acceptable. Masculinity, she stresses is not monolithic and static, but rarely any kind of masculinity could achieve a cultural dominance in the society as a hegemonic one. The concept of hegemony in hegemonic masculinity derives from the work of the Italian political activist and communist Antonio Gramsci, so Connell grounded and expanded her work on the Gramsci's cultural hegemony. Gramsci used the notion of cultural hegemony to explain the domination and power achieved not by violence and coercion, but with cultural means and with the voluntary consent of the masses. Cultural meaning refers to the strong influence of the ideology of the people in power to the behavior, expectation and thought to the other groups in the society. Thus, the hegemonic masculinity:

Can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of the patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”<sup>85</sup>

The base of the hegemonic masculinity is eroded when the patriarchy as a social system is jeopardized. Accordingly, Connell introduces another important concept, the concept of “patriarchal dividend.”<sup>86</sup> The two concepts are linked terms in exploration of the emergence and sustainability of the masculinism or men’s movements. The discourse of the masculinism mobilizes men primarily around the issues such as divorce laws, child custody, alimony, violence. The ones who are mobilized are mainly fathers and spouses, although there is a support from emerging organic intellectuals, primarily men, as well as women generally someone’s mothers, partners or new spouses. The actions are directed towards women, particularly feminists scapegoating them for the current crisis of masculinity in which men felt they are. Melissa Blais and Francis Dupuis Deri in *Masculinism and the Antifeminist Countermovement* explored the actions of the men-members and supporters of the movement in a variety of forms such as verbal insults on the telephone or written threatened e-mails to the ex-wives and

feminists who supported them, to the anti-choice actions in front of the clinics and continuous denigration of women as a group in the media. The activists of the movement claimed that feminist hate men, that they are ugly, emotionally unfilled women, and that the divorced and single women are the cancer of the society eroding the traditional family. The movement joins “men-victims,” “battered men,” men who felt neglected by the media not giving them enough space for expressing publicly their fight and right to the “alternating residency of children.”<sup>87</sup> Men of the movement claimed that there is a proportion ratio between female victims of domestic violence and male victims, as well as that there is a high level of suicide among divorced men and that the women who choose to divorce are scapegoat for this. Masculinists, as well mobilized because of the transformation of job market claiming that gender-based division of labor is necessary to protect certain male benefits. The main battlefield as I mention previously are the child custody, payment of alimony and the divorce laws. The research conducted in Canada showed that men, who sought for equal sharing of parenthood, want to maintain the control over their ex-wives.

In December 1989 were killed 14 female students and injured ten more female students in the Polytechnic University in Montreal, by a man who stressed, “You’re all a bunch of feminists, and I hate feminists!”<sup>88</sup> Many men’s rights groups established at that time in Canada and this case was related to the establishment of men’s groups. The explanations for the motives for the murder varied some claimed that the murderer was “as innocent as his victims, and himself a victim of an increasingly merciless society.”<sup>89</sup> The others explained the murder as politically motivated because feminist ruined his life due to lobbying and advocating for equal rights in all spheres as well as in education. Feminist, lobbying for more women at the University, took murderer’s position at the university. He was denied admission to the same University. Feminist scholars explained the case as a form of societal misogyny and violence against women, although the murderer came from a single mother working family. The masculinist movement at first emerges in Canada and later spread in the other countries. It is composed of a variety of organizations, such as father’s supports groups, separate or divorce fathers’ groups, organized committees of men that have their common cause and represent a collective identity. They emerge when men feel that are losing their male privileged acquired in the patriarchal system.

Masculinist movement is grounded in the social power relations between men and women as a class as well as in the political and economic relations. The fight is addressed against feminism and the progress of women, particularly against policy achievements of the feminist movement. Feminists are scapegoated for denying the basic socially imposed differences between men and women, and thus jeopardize the natural hierarchy. Organic intellectuals primarily men who mostly work in social sector and health sector support the movement and identify with it, mostly because their work is often used by the activists in the movement. They asserted that women should take care of men, instead of fighting for their emancipation.

In later years, masculinism rise in Eastern and Central Europe as well. The rise of it is rooted primarily in the traditional characteristics of the relation between men and women in this part of Europe. Under state socialism, the gender equality was reinforced by granting women equal rights to employment, education, abortion. Later, the transition to liberal democracy and market economy in Eastern Europe brought selective power, in terms of a new market economy based on private property in overwhelmingly men's hands. The shift in power in the market economy produced shifts in political and social power. The East Europeans Parliaments became overwhelmingly male Parliaments and start drafting bans and to limit women's power. The power was the first thing exercised on women because women and their regulation where the action seen as the most 'natural and normal' as women and men were different. A high official and MP Vaclav Havel claimed, "Feminism is a refuge for bored housewives and dissatisfied mistresses."<sup>90</sup> Janusz Korwin- Mikke, the Polish leader of the right-wing libertarian and the Eurosceptic party Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic-Liberty and Hope and current MEP stated, "Equality of the sexes is patent non-sense."<sup>91</sup> Thus, masculinism in these parts of Europe is exercised as a natural part of men's hegemonic masculinity and women's natural and innate subaltern position. In later years, particularly last five years many organized groups of conservative fathers emerged in this part of Europe to save the traditional concept of masculinity, manhood and fatherhood. The economic issue is an important aspect within the emergence of these fathers' groups to protect the 'breadwinner' model and to revive the old-new model of manhood based on the patriarchal structure that promote the aggressive masculinism, anti-feminism and homophobia. Such fathers' groups emerged in Poland, Croatia, Hungary,

Romania, Bulgaria and they will be broadly described later in the case studies for the respective countries.

Masculinism claims that equality between women and men exists and that feminism reached too far and because of that, masculinist movement emerged as a counter movement to feminism. The development of the masculinism is an indicator of the condition between the gender relations. It means that gender relation is marginal and sex relation is the primary. It is a relation of a backlash of gender. The actors argued that gender hierarchy is not in its place, that men are those who are disadvantaged with the new gender relation and with the introduction of the gender equality. Some consider that anti-feminism and masculinism are identical movements due to their opposition to the feminism. However, the difference is that anti-feminism can be considered as an ideology against feminism whilst masculinism is also addressed towards feminism, but in a different way, not only scapegoating feminists, but at the same time it can be viewed as a movement for empowering men and fighting for men's rights. This fight for men's rights is on the expense of women's rights. One is clear that the movements such as anti-feminism and masculinism are dangerous because they increase the pressure on feminist and egalitarian projects and reverse all the gains achieved so far.<sup>92</sup>

## Chapter 5

### Gender as an umbrella term for different challenged issues

#### 5.1. The war on gender by organizations and lobby groups and the attack on reports in EP

The gender equality as the very idea of gender is in the center of the recent conservative mobilization in Central and Eastern Europe. Gender here is not perceived as a solely notion, but as a notion that includes many other complementary notions, related to the progressive politics and human rights. These notions are gender equality, gender mainstreaming, sexual and reproductive rights, marriage equality, sexual education of children. They are all challenged at once under the notion of gender as an umbrella term. The current conservative anti-gender mobilization represents a new chapter in Europe's political, cultural and social sphere challenging the current established system in different countries in Europe. Thousands of people protest in the streets against women's sexual and reproductive rights, such as abortion rights and contraception, against sexual education in schools, against same-sex marriages and adoption of children from same-sex partners, against the notion of gender and its usage in schools, against advancing academic gender studies curricula.<sup>93</sup>

This conservative anti-gender mobilization in forms of organized movements is not only a transnational European phenomenon, but as well as a global phenomenon because gender is perceived as an enemy in Latin America, in the USA and in Africa. The leading organizations against gender are connected and have their branches and offices worldwide. The difference is only in the fact that conservative social forces mobilize against slightly different issues some of them mentioned above, depending on the particular situation in the respective country.<sup>94</sup> When that issue gain policy achievement, then the anti-gender mobilization reaches its highest peak. The driving force behind this anti-gender mobilization is the Catholic Church, neo-conservative organizations and lobby groups, which nowadays extend beyond their circles trying to reach to the wider public thought different mechanisms and tools, mostly without violence and force but through imposition of cultural hegemony through a variety of ideological state apparatuses. Cultural hegemony is a term introduced by Antonio Gramsci and refers to ruling by shaping the

values and ideas through “intellectual and moral leadership” instead of domination.”<sup>95</sup> The power in Gramscian sense is imposed not by force, but by spreading their ideas (in this case the ideas of the Catholic Church and conservatives) and co-opting other social forces into their ranks. The Catholic Church as one of the most powerful religious, ideological state apparatuses play the main role in spreading its ideas and beliefs to the wider public and keeping the power in its hands by the voluntary consent of the masses.

The Catholic Church is the bearer of the new discourse against gender as well as the new discourse is supported by the Orthodox Church in Russia, and gain a support in the orthodox countries in Eastern Europe and in the Balkan orthodox states. Gender, consequently becomes a symbolic umbrella notion for all these challenged issues mentioned above. According to the enemies of gender, gender is portrayed as a global conspiracy originated from the communist regime, which enforced gender equality.<sup>96</sup> The anti-gender social forces claim that gender is supported by the international organizations such as the UN, WHO, and the EU trying to impose their hegemony whilst promoting abortion, moral perversion and capricious sex change to children. This mobilization against gender and along with it the other complementary issues, is a conservative reaction to the adopted progressive EU gender mainstreaming and equality policies. At the same time, it is a result of the growing influence and importance of the academic curricula of gender studies in different universities and in informal gender education in NGOs.

Hodzic and Bijelic in *Neo-conservative threats to sexual and reproductive health and rights in the European Union* observed that there are a lot of organizations and lobby groups intentionally created to lobby against the human rights of sexual minorities and women as well as against the notion of gender and its further scientific advance. Among the most vocal organizations in promoting the anti-gender agenda in the USA is the American Center for Law and Justice (ACJL) which has its branches in Europe as it is the European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ) through which operate and coordinate its activities in Europe. ACJL has even local branches in Africa, particularly in Uganda, where the rhetoric is addressed towards penalizing homosexuality with death penalty. The focus of the work of ACJL and ECLJ is active lobbying and advocating against sexual and reproductive rights of women as well as against same-sex marriages. These are organized groups which have effective leadership, organized networks

on national, transnational and global level as well as are very well organized and active in online platforms.<sup>97</sup> Main lobby group in Europe is the European Dignity Watch (EDW) lead by Sophie Kuby, the daughter of Gabriele Kuby, the inventor of the “gender ideology.” The main mission of the EDW is to lobby for ‘natural’ family, for life, and fundamental freedoms (whatever it means in their opinion). The EDW accused the European institutions and the European Commission (EC) for putting pressure on member-states to urge them to legalize same-sex marriages and recognize same-sex families stating that LGBTI persons are not discriminated and that research made on discrimination on LGBTI is without ground.<sup>98</sup>

One of the important facts is that this war on gender finds its place in the European Parliament (EP) as well. The representatives from conservative and right-wing political parties in the EP supported by these organized groups and organizations mention above, mobilize themselves around voting for the reports on gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights, discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity submitted by different MEPs. The following reports were particularly under attack: The Estrela report submitted by Portuguese MEPs, Edite Estrela in 2013 referred on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, The Lunacek report submitted by Ulrike Lunacek in 2014, the Green MEPs, referred to the Roadmap for LGBTI Rights and The Zuber report submitted by Christine Zuber in 2014, the Portuguese MEPs, referred to the equality between women and men in the EU. They all faced a heated opposition debate in the Parliament, as well as faced with very active online platforms in forms of submitting petitions against the reports and protests on the streets. Among the other reports, which faced many obstacles for adoption, were The Tarabella report in 2015 on the progress in equality between women and men, and the last one The Noichl report submitted by Maria Noichl, German MEPs on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men. These reports were attacked on the variety of issues included in it and mention previously such as the abortion, LGBT rights, gender mainstreaming, medically assisted reproduction.<sup>99</sup> The organized actions against adoption of the Estrela, Lunacek, Zuber and other reports were preceded by the European citizens’ initiative (ECI).

The European citizens’ initiative is a new instrument of citizen participative democracy, which must be supported by at least one million EU citizens from at least 7 out of 28 (27) states

members of the EU. The most vocal against these reports was the ECI “One of Us,” which is the first officially registered ECI aims toward the protection of the human life from its conception. The human life according to “One of Us” starts with the human embryo, thus defining the abortion as a murder of a human being and denying the right of the same. They asked from the EU to stop financing all activities related to the research of embryonic stem cells and public health.<sup>100</sup> According to the European Women’s lobby, the “One of Us” is the extremist initiative, which wants to impose a neo-conservative definition of the embryo as an attempt to open the way towards the total ban to the abortion. The initiative is in total discrepancy with the Cairo Conference on Population and Development where among the goals is the access to reproductive and sexual health services and Sustainable Development Goals where one of the goals is the maternal health. They gathered approximately 1.9 million signatures for banning of all activities and research in the name of a human embryo demanding it to be recognized as “one of us.” Luckily, this number was not enough for the European Commission to submit a legislative proposal for putting an end to the financing of research activities of human embryos. Another important and very visible platform for mobilization against the above-mentioned reports is the *CitizenGO*. The *CitizenGO* is the community of as they call themselves “active citizen who work together, using online petitions and actions alerts as a resource, to defend and promote life, family and liberty.”<sup>101</sup> Originally it is a Spanish foundation, established by a group of conservative Christians who believe that one’s life start from the moment of conception and the family is born from a joint pledge between a man and a woman.

The transnational connection and the global connection of this conservative organization is visible in the composition of the Board of Citizen Go where one of the main actors is Brian Brown, the president of the *National Organization for Marriage* (NOM) in the USA who is one of the most vocal advocates for traditional family and marriage. Another active platform is *Life Site News*, which stresses the traditional Christian values and beliefs claiming that secularists try to eliminate traditional Christian’s values and morality imposing new world order. Unfortunately, these two initiatives *One of Us* and *CitizenGo* had a huge impact on the MEPs decisions on the adoption of the reports mention above with placing and publishing a lot of misinformation. Finally, The Lunacek report was adopted, whilst the Estrella and Zuber reports

were rejected, showing that most members of EP, don't support women's sexual and reproductive rights and equality between women and men. This was a proof that MEPs are more open to different sexual orientation and gay rights than to women's rights and equality. Once more women were marked as the most marginalized group. They are the group that must fit into the box. The Estrella report that referred to the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights was rejected as well. That was an obvious example that the category of life from conception is very important for the conservatives and is used as an argument against the abortion. One very important argument that it is used not only in EP, but as well as in the rhetoric of the conservative's mobilization in the streets and on social platforms is the concept of the religious freedom. This concept gave the conservative social forces permission to act, speak, and think on the base of their religious beliefs that on the other hand could discriminate the others that do not fit into the framework of their religious freedom.

The paradox to be bigger some of the MEPs appointed at the head of the important Commissions in the EU regarding promotion of human rights and freedoms holds totally opposite view towards human rights. As an example, the Slovak MEP, Jan Figel was appointed as a Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion and belief outside EU, although he is famous for his antifeminist rhetoric. He was a vocal supporter and a signatory of the initiative "One of Us," and one of the leading speakers on many forums that "One of Us" held. In relation to the abortion in general and particularly in Slovakia he stated, "Christianity and value-driven policies achieved a ban to use chemical abortion, because morning after pill was not allowed to be used in our industry and medical system."<sup>102</sup> Regarding the notion of gender, he stated "Gender ideology is the most dangerous and urgent threat to our values. It is a dangerous threat to human dignity and human freedom."<sup>103</sup> The backlash towards gender equality in the EU is visible in the non-adoption of the new Strategy for equality between women and men in 2016. The last Strategy (2010-2015) was expected to be followed by the new one in 2016, unfortunately certain political party groups in EP do not recognize gender equality as an important issue in Europe and following this, was adopted only a working-document instead of a strategy. This showed that conservative and right-wing political parties in the EP and their representatives are very strong, influential and very well organized on European and on national

level in different EU-member-states and are attempting to regain their lost power from the progressive social forces and left-wing political parties.

## **5.2. Case study Hungary**

The situation of gender equality, gender studies, the women's sexual and reproductive rights, LGBT rights is worse in Visegrad countries where the recent anti-gender mobilizations alarmed that "the progress that has been made in the field of gender equality has not only been rather stagnant and uneven, but also much shakier and easier to reverse."<sup>104</sup>

In Hungary, the war on gender mainstreaming started under the initiative of the Jobbik, the far-right party founded by a group of young male conservative students in 2003. The party, firstly opposed strongly to the economic liberalization, and strived towards preserving the national interest and values. Later, they became very vocal against Roma and Jews population in Hungary. After 2011, they included LGBT and women's issues in their conservative nationalistic rhetoric. One of their members, a woman stated that gender mainstreaming means elimination of motherhood and the natural family. She stated that "gender ideology" is a part of the gay lobby to legitimate the homosexuality and that acceptance of the "gender ideology" would lead to the collapse of the nation. In 2012, Jobbik proposed a legislative change asking for prison penalties for those who promote homosexuality as a part of people's alternative sexual orientation. At the same time, they demand for abortion only for medical reasons.<sup>105</sup> In Hungary, gender is considered as imposed by the EU and Brussels and is interpreted as a colonization of the country by EU and Brussels. This "colonization" according to Hungarian government does not allow the country to keep its traditional values and beliefs. The members of Jobbik and other conservative forces in Hungary are leaders of the cultural war against the European transnational values and the anti-gender rhetoric is interpreted as the fight for the preservation of the Hungarian national identity. Many measures were undertaken to weaken the gender mainstreaming and equality in the country such as dismantling of the Gender Equality Department, the adoption of new Family code that considered the family only the one composed of heterosexual couple and the adoption of new Civil Code in 2014, which does not include same-sex partnership. Andrea Peto *in*

*Challenges for gender Studies amidst the Surge in Anti-gender movements* pointed out that Hungarian Prime-Minister Orbán listed Gabrielle's Kuby books as important books in defining gender mainstreaming together with gender studies as a “culture of death.” According to Peto, Kuby's views are reflected in religious educational institutions in Hungary thus making various attacks on gender studies as an academic discipline and decreasing the state funds or totally prohibiting state funding of it.<sup>106</sup>

Bence Retvari, current Parliamentary Secretary of State of the Ministry of Human Resources in Hungary and Christian Democrats stated “Gender studies go against traditional values and it is questionable whether it is a science at all or just an ideology of the liberal political movement.”<sup>107</sup> One of the ruling parties in Hungary, Christian Democrats (KDNP) attacked the University of Eötvös Lóránd, Faculty of Social science, submitting letters after the announcement of opening Gender studies department stating, “The leadership of the university, decided to deal with a marginal topic that is disguised as science, suffocated by political correctness and has no benefits for Hungarian society.”<sup>108</sup> The recent attacks on the Central European University particularly on gender studies department, which is one of the most prestigious in Europe were made in the name of preserving the ‘good side’ of the identity politics presented through the classical family and natural parenthood. On the other hand, gender was considered as being on the ‘bad side’ of the identity politics, proclaiming abortion and gay marriages. One major attack on the democracy in Hungary was made with targeting independent civil society organizations funded by foreign funds. The law on the transparency of organizations funded by foreign funds was adopted on June 13, 2017, targeting NGOs with foreign funding above 26.200 euros. According to this law, associations that receive fund higher than this amount need to report the court and to announce the founders in their electronic and printed publications. The Hungarian civil sector immediately organized in campaign *Civilizacio* stressing that the law is harmful and stigmatizing because the NGOs are already transparent about the donors and finance providing the public with the annual reports. According to the civil sector, this is a step forward in discrediting of real democracy provided by independent and critical NGOs.<sup>109</sup> At the same time in Hungary, gender equality is seen as a part of the emancipation process of women endorsed in the period of state socialism. Thus, gender equality was equated it with the

communism and considered to be defeated only with the anti-communist attitudes such as rising fascism and far-right politics.

It is worth to notice that this war against gender has different names, in some countries is used as a war against “gender ideology,” in other countries’ war against gender theory, and in third countries is called genderism.

### **5.3. Case study Poland**

Agnieszka Graff and Elzbieta Korolczuk in *Worse than communism and Nazism put together: War on Gender in Poland*, emphasized the fact that the conservative mobilization against gender in Poland started in 2012 with the opposition by the government to the ratification of the *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* known as *The Istanbul Convention*. The Polish Government perceived the Convention as the enemy of the traditionally patriarchal society because of the inclusion of the term gender, although the Convention aimed at prevention and combating violence against women. At the same time, polish feminists, liberals and pro-EU forces were considered as traitors, conspirators and tools in the hands of the EU, UN and WHO. There was a fear that the ratification of the Convention will produce new educative programs for fighting against gender stereotypes that will furthermore result in cultural and traditional changes. Finally, after so much opposition against the ratification, the Polish President ratified the Convention in 2015.<sup>110</sup>

The attacks were directed towards the notion of gender, sexual education in schools, against oral contraception, particularly against the usage of the morning after pill, as well as against LGBT rights. Different strategies were applied, such as lectures on local level in smaller communities, petitions, demonstrations, conferences as well as the usage of new internet technologies including social media and online platforms. The conservatives having the Catholic Church and its bishops at the head were very active on the local level in small communities trying to reach the ordinary people. Many Polish bishops held lectures in different regions of the country for the wider audience, such as concerned parents, catholic religious people, but as well

as to the students in primary, secondary schools and teachers to introduce them about the meaning of the notion of gender as a “hideous monster.”<sup>111</sup> Separate courses were held for the protection of the families and children from the gender. Bishops named their activities and actions as a war against gender in which all “participants will be victorious even if they become martyrs for the cause”<sup>112</sup> of the revealing of the truth of gender and salvation of the children.

The Government targeted the sexual education programs made according to the WHO standards. Educational handbooks for children were presented in front of parents as programs that will confuse children about who they are, boys or girls. Many groups of conservative parents emerged as well as specific conservative fathers’ rights groups, which organized to protect the children, the traditional order, heterosexual marriages and families. The groups such as *Brave Dad (Dzielny Tato)*, *Mom and Dad Foundation* and *Foundation for Parents Rights*, became in the front lines in the fight against gender and so-called gender ideology. The groups had their own media stations such as Catholic Radio Maryja, where speeches of the bishops were broadcasted as well as many books against gender were published by newly emerged intellectuals biased to the Catholic Church where gender was presented as a trap imposed by Brussels colonization, as a new form of totalitarianism and neo-colonialism. Women were particularly active in the fight against gender and portrayed as saviors and defenders of the natural womanhood, particularly motherhood whilst feminists were represented as an enemy of the real women and feminism as an ideology that is imposed by leftist and homosexuals. Few online platforms were established specially aimed at the attack on the gender and sexual education named as stop gender ([www.stopgender.pl](http://www.stopgender.pl)) and stop sexualization ([www.stop-seksualizacji.pl](http://www.stop-seksualizacji.pl)). The general aim of the first one, was to introduce the public to the danger of the gender and gender ideology as well as with the consequences of abortion, in vitro fertilization and the homosexual propaganda. The latter platform was directed towards protection of the children from early sexualization and from getting information and knowledge about the existence of sexual orientation other than heterosexual. The WHO standards widely accepted were presented as an attack on the national tradition and interference in the citizen private lives.<sup>113</sup>

Another important aspect of Polish war against gender and the construction of gender ideology as a threat to the society is that along with the Catholic church, the government was very much involved in all these activities against gender, against gender equality and feminism in general. Taking into consideration that the Polish Government is right wing, it was not difficult different opinions, programs, beliefs of bishops and intellectuals to be put high on the agenda in the National Parliament. Beata Kempa, a well-known right-wing politician, head of the Chancellery of the current Polish Prime Minister, labeled gender as “mafia” that enter very fast into schools and in kindergartens, claiming that gender is destroying the traditional and patriarchal structure of the Polish society. She even established the parliamentary group “Stop the gender ideology” and started a huge campaign on a national level to inform the wider public about the “gender ideology” as a biggest state and nation’s enemy. The paradox to be bigger, the first Polish openly transgender MP, join this parliamentary group which main aim was to fight against gender and “gender ideology,” although her intention was to advocate for gender and to fight against the conservative’s creation of the “gender ideology.” Representatives from the conservative’s parties within the group stated that she “cannot be a member of a parliamentary group that’s aim is to restrict the propagation of gender ideology, if one is a supporter of that ideology.”<sup>114</sup> The Catholic Church in general and particularly in Poland embraced the theory of power wanting to control and to have power over the people’s body and sexuality because the Church become aware that they are the most important features of humans.

Gender studies in Poland were institutionalized around the late 1980s. During the 1990s and early 2000 in different universities in different cities in Poland were established more gender studies and post-graduated programs. However, in the early 2000 first attacks on the gender studies became publicly visible. Magdalena Grabowska in *Between Gender Studies and „Gender Ideology,“ Gender Education in Poland*, pointed out that the first articles attacking and accusing the gender studies as pseudo-science were published in 2000 by the polish philosopher Agnieszka Kolakowska. Whilst, at that time the attacks were directed towards gender studies, later they shift their focus and were directed towards sexual education in kindergartens and in primary schools against the very notion of gender. In the discourse of the opponents of gender and gender studies, gender education and the term gender are represented as a part of a wider

gender ideology that aims towards negation of the nature, social production of the sex and early sexualization of children. It is obvious that it is not only misinterpretation, because gender is a social construction, not sex, but as well as this is a war for cultural domination and hegemony between two different groups in the society. This is the war between traditional approach and ideas and on the other hand progressive approach towards respecting human right of everyone.<sup>115</sup>

#### **5.4. Case study Croatia**

My main interests in the research are countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Croatia, although is not in this geographical area is an interesting phenomenon due to the strong influence, particularly political one by the Catholic Church. The country is a secular one, but the interference of the Church in the political and socioeconomic policies is very noticeable through various actions, activities, campaigns, verbal attacks directed towards different issues. The important phenomenon are organizations and associations established intentionally in the last seven years for the promotion of the traditional and conservative values. The first beginning of the indirect interference of the Church started in 2006 when the association *The Voice of Parents for Children-GROZD*, lobbied for the introduction of the abstinence program for sexual education in schools. The program was based on the views and beliefs of the Catholic Church on sexuality, sexual health and gender roles pointing out that it is the expression of the national Croatian system of values.<sup>116</sup> The organization called on the parents' rights to educate their children according to their own value system respectively thinking about Catholic value systems. This organization and others mentioned below based their actions on the freedom of the religious conviction, claiming that the part of the people in the Croatian society have a right to act accordingly their religious catholic beliefs. This resulted in polarization in the society on the base of ideological and cultural beliefs.

Along with the attempt to introduce its system of sexual education in schools through its organizations, the Catholic Church in Croatia started with an organized strategy to oppose the abortion and to denounce the law on assistive reproductive technologies. The Initiative called *I was an Embryo, too*, established in 2012 aimed at protecting the life of the embryo, claiming that

the human rights of the embryo could not be taken away at the price of someone's right to choose what to do with the embryo, thus jeopardizing the right of the other (embryo). The representatives of the initiative stated that they want laws that would protect, promote and embrace the natural family as a Croatian heritage and Croatian future and that the current government (2012) did not take into consideration the most important issues such as the beginning of the human life, the issue about marriage, family and parenting. According to this initiative is put too much accentuation of the distorted values of the assertive progressive minority neglecting the identity, culture and dignity of the majority of the catholic Croatian people.<sup>117</sup>

This initiative advocating for a ban on abortion and assisted reproductive technology had an opportunity to lobby for their beliefs and activities through the programs of the right-wing political party HRAST- *A Movement for the successful Croatia*. Recently in March 2017, the same political party supported the petition *I have a right to live*, initiated by the *Prolife, Croatia* which was as well as supported by the *The Voice of Parents for Children*. At the beginning, all these initiatives find their way to the Parliament through the *Alliance for Croatia*, composed of the right-wing political parties, aiming at imposing and putting on the agenda conservative ideas and goals, but luckily, the *Alliance* was terminated in 2015. "Croatian women need to start having three, four or five children, otherwise we won't exist for much longer,"<sup>118</sup> pointed out party leader of the Family party (OS). Women in Croatian right-wing political parties were the most vocal for the abortion ban, stating that they do not welcome women's statement *My body, my decision*, because when women can get pregnant without men, then they can claim the above mentioned statement. As a main and final point of their views is that Croatia should keep its national and traditional values, not values imposed from Western Europe. We could see the similar opinion and rhetoric as in the case of Hungary. The result towards which the conservatives were striving is the salvation of Croatia itself. The representatives of conservative associations and groups held the prayers in front of the hospitals, in the capital Zagreb but as well as in other cities. They are still an everyday phenomenon.

In 2013, the association *In the Name of the Family*, started the initiative to change the Croatian Constitution by introducing a provision about the marriage explicitly defining it as the

union of a woman and a man and thus closing the possibility of same-sex marriages. The association collected around 700.00 signatures for the referendum on which the citizen would be able to decide whether they are in favor to include in the Constitution the provision about exclusively heterosexual marriage. The information boxes and kiosks were the citizen could put their signature were set up mainly in front of the churches and bishops were the most vocal and active in motivating people to vote for exclusively heterosexual marriage. The Croatian Parliament in November the same year based on the collected signatures called and scheduled the referendum for December 1, 2013. The turnout was approximately 38% of which almost two-thirds of the voters supported the referendum question and thereby introduced in the Constitution the definition that marriage is a union between a woman and a man.<sup>119</sup> In the case of Croatia is very important to emphasize the influence of USA particularly through the Croatian diaspora. Visits and lecturers of extreme anti-choice US activists and European neo-conservatives' figures such as Gabriele and Sophie Kuby were organized by the Croatian diaspora. The example of Croatia is an evidence for the interconnectedness of these conservatives and religious rights organizations and movements on the transnational and global level. At the same time is important to emphasize that the conservative groups and associations do not have only religious background, acting and imposing catholic values and beliefs but are having political background too. The neo-conservative agenda of these organizations was emphasized and strengthen, as it is visible from the example of the HRAST, as well as from the actions and activities of other conservative parties supporting these organizations or acting on behalf of them in Parliament in order easier to push some initiatives. Right-wing and conservative's parties are acting as instruments of these organizations and groups for achieving easier their goals in the public and political sphere with organizing their voters and supporters, promising them better future with the revival of the traditional and catholic agenda through tree main ideological aspects such as the traditional family, life and religious freedom. Thus, they paved the way for the main initiator of re-emergence of the neo-conservative ideology, the Catholic Church in Croatia. The interviewee from Croatia stressed that the Catholic Church has a very noticeable and important influence in people's everyday life, pointing that the bishops in Croatia are interfering everywhere, at hospitals, in schools, at home. According to the interviewee, these organized

groups, associations and movements in Croatia, came up to the surface in the early 2000s, offering to the people a new leadership and a new alternative, which was based on the strong national identity and on the traditional values such as natural family and strong belonging to the religion. Last year in October, Zagreb the capital of Croatia hosted a few days' conference where round tables on different topics were held. Among the topics were "Traditional and Conservative versus militant secularism in Croatia," "Until when that sex education and gender ideology in Croatian schools," "Final confrontation between the Church and anti-church," "Gospel of life and the new evangelization." The guests- speakers came mainly from the USA and Poland representing their conservative attitudes and ideas. Among them were the conservative figures in Poland who proposed the new law on a total ban on abortion as well as the American cardinal Burke, leader of the extreme right wing within the Catholic Church who previously was known with his statement that radical feminists should be scapegoated for the pedophilia within the Catholic Church. The conference was opened and attended by the representatives from domestic conservative catholic associations, such as HRAST and representatives from conservative and center-right political party such as Croatian Democratic Union.<sup>120</sup>

The Croatian case is an example of the diffusion and circulation of the same ideas, strategies, and actions of one country to another country, not only on the European ground but as well as importing ideas from the USA. The inclusion of the same or similar actors in this conservative mobilization against progressive human rights shows how activists against "gender ideology" are very well connected and how this activism is taking not only transnational level but as well as it is globalized. The main actors are coming from the USA and the branches and connections that the organizations from the USA have in Europe, but the Russian influence could not be neglected as well. The Russian influence, particularly in Baltic States is not only indirect but as well direct and I will refer later in the case study of the Baltic States.

## 5.5. Case study Slovakia

In Slovakia, the war against gender started as a response to the preparation and adoption of the National Gender Equality Strategy (2014-2017) and The National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion. The case of Slovakia simply shows that when the issue of gender reaches its policy achievements then the strong opposition forces mobilize. Among the first one opposed to the adoption of the two strategies was the Catholic Church that at the same time was a driving force behind the civil movement *Alliance for the Family*. This strong opposition to the gender equality strategy and to human rights resulted in introducing the ban on same-sex marriages and in an attempt to hold a referendum to prevent sexual minorities to ask for their rights in the future. The referendum was illegitimate due to low turnout.<sup>121</sup> This civil movement has support not only from the Slovak Bishops, but as well as from the MEPs Jan Fidel whom I mentioned before. He took the most influential position in the support of the campaign against funding research of embryos and claimed “liberal societies say live and let to live. Our society, our federation should promote live and help to live. This is much more important and fruitful for future of Europe.”<sup>122</sup>

The public in Slovakia was influenced by the lectures of Gabriele Kuby, who was the main lecturer invited by the Slovak bishops, on the topics of imposition of children to early sexualization and homosexuality. Thus, the goal was to stop the sexual education in schools and inform the parents about the program that without their consent and consultation is about to be introduced in schools. Petra Durinova exploring the case of Slovakia in *Gender as symbolic glue*, highlighted the Slovak bishops’ claims that “the followers of the culture of death (thinking of gender) bring a new gender ideology. On behalf of which, they want to enforce so called gender equality.”<sup>123</sup> According to them the campaigners for gender equality want to take the natural and innate man’s and woman’s identity as a man and as a woman, and at the same time want to promote a new form of family identity. The *Alliance for the Family* collected a petition with around 408.000 signatures for a referendum for the family protection; luckily, the turnout for the referendum was low. The resistance around the adoption of the National Gender Equality Strategy started by the Bishops and by the several NGOs. The conservative and right wing

parties such as Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) supported the non-adoption of the Strategy. Jan Figel, representative of the KDH, was very vocal in EP against gender equality, abortion and LGBT rights, stating that the strategy is inspired by the “gender ideology.” The main opposition argument was that they (conservatives) do not want the strategy to be supported by the public funds because it does not represent the opinion and view of the public in the country. Although, the resistance by the Catholic Church and civil conservative movement was strong, the National Gender Equality strategy was adopted in 2015 as well as the National Strategy for the protection of human rights.<sup>124</sup>

## **5.6. Case study Romania**

In Romania, around the beginnings of the 1990s feminism, gender studies and gender equality issues were met with skepticism. The resistance of the feminism and gender was part of the political and social context characteristic of the post-communist countries. The general public view was that this issue of gender equality is imported from the West because women in Romania in the socialist narrative and regime were already on an equal footing with men.

The gender studies developed in three different ways, firstly as gender components in courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level, secondly in university centers in the three biggest cities were offered optional and mandatory courses and as third, they were all financed by the state itself not by foreign funding, as it was the case in other countries. In Romania, the huge national campaign was led by the Orthodox Church to ban same-sex marriage in the Constitution. Almost, 3 million signatures were collected and the initiative is still in the Parliament. The right wing parties supported the ban. The Liberals supported it as well. Later, they claimed that they never supported the ban. On the other hand, in Romania are active different religious bodies and the organizations such as the *Coalition for Family*, which, along with the Orthodox and Evangelical Church declared a war against the same-sex unions. At the same time, the Orthodox Church was very active in organizing marches in banning the abortion, which is currently legal in the country.<sup>125</sup>

According to Citizen Go, the March for Life was organized on March 25, 2017 under the motto “*Help the Mother and the Child! They Depend on You*” in many Romanian cities. The organizers of the march advocate for new pregnancy and future mothers allowance available to pregnant women at their 14<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, claiming that the allowance will reduce the abortion rate in the country. In Romania and in Moldova were organized such marches in 2014, 2015 and 2016 in 247 cities. Among other organizations active in this field for the protection of life is the organization *Students for Life*, which is very active in running the online petition for Government allowance for pregnant mothers. According to the representative from the Romanian women’s lobby, in the pro-life sites in Romania the quilt for the high abortion rate in the country was put on the communism as a system because it represented the abortion as emancipation. After the fall of the communist system, the mentality and opinion towards the issue started to change due to the decline in population. Currently the pro-life organizations are very active online, presenting on web pages the regretting testimonies of women who performed abortions and at the same time testimonies of ‘happy’ women who do not change their minds and keep the babies.<sup>126</sup>

## **5.7. Case study Bulgaria**

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee stresses that the religious and fundamentalist attack on human rights in Bulgaria is very strong. The role of the Orthodox Church is particularly influential in issues regarding sexual orientation different from the heterosexual. The Orthodox Church is the biggest opponent of the Sofia Pride, accompanied by the civil groups and organizations such as the *Orthodox Bulgarian Citizen, Society and Values Association, Civil Forum for Protection of Children and Family*, Civil Rights Organization “*Freedom for everyone*” and the ultra-right nationalist coalition *Ataka*, the *National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria* as well as IMRO (International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization). The ultra-right nationalist coalition Ataka in 2013 proposed a ban on the public manifestation of homosexuality demanding 1 to 5 years’ imprisonment and between 500-2.500 euro fines. Their position is in favor of traditional family, and they are extremely homophobic, xenophobic and

anti-Muslim. The *National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria* actively advocated on a local level in many cities to introduce ban on gay pride events. At the same time, they were against the adoption of the Lunacek, Estrela and Zuber reports in EP. In Bulgaria are very active few organizations that operate with the monetary support and voluntary support of American and European conservative organizations and movements such as *World Congress of Families and Alliance Defend Fund*.

According to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, there is a strong connection between ultra-right parties, conservative groups and organizations and the Orthodox Church. At the same time, it is visible that when new progressive law regarding human rights is introduced then the national mobilization against it reaches its peak and it is very effective. According to the interviewee from Bulgarian women's lobby in the country are very active in the last two years, associations of fathers lobbying for changing the legislation for child custody. They are very assertive and aggressive and provoke a lot of media attention. However, there is no change in current law and after the divorce; mothers mostly get the children. The Sofia-pride is not so visible publicly due to the low presence of people and currently the focus is shifted from the LGBT community towards refugees. The Orthodox Church in Bulgaria has no important or strong influence on the general policies regarding human rights, although last two years they start to lobby for changes in the abortion law, but luckily without any success. Gender studies are relatively new academic discipline in Bulgaria and according to the interviewee; they established around 7 years ago. Last year there were no students applying for enrolment, so the University had to close for one year.

Attacks on gender and feminists are mainly lead in Parliament between male and female politicians or between left and right wing political parties. The current Prime minister claimed that women are equal already with men in Bulgaria and that women are in the Parliament because he (they-men) allowed that. According to him, women must follow men. The statement of the Prime minister, provoke only a slight reaction mainly from Bulgarian women's lobby and young women feminists on social media. Gender equality in Bulgaria is seen as something that is reached very long ago during the socialism. According to the government, currently there is no

need for high level of gender equality, because gender inequality is problem of Western Europe, which some domestic forces and feminists try to impose it on national level.<sup>127</sup>

### **5.8. Case study Baltic states**

The Baltic States seem more advanced compared to Eastern and Central European states in the achievement of human rights and gender equality, but they are geographically very near to Russia and the impact of Russia's position towards the LGBT issues and the preservation of heterosexual family are very influential. In Lithuania, the term "genderizmas" (genderism) is used as a designation for "gender ideology." The notion includes the notions of gender, homosexuality and transsexuality and is seen as a secret conspiracy towards the educational system, the national identity and the society in general. The mobilization starts with opposition to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, after that against new methodology called *Gender Loop* for teachers-gender educators in primary schools, and the Danish methodology (*The Day Frederick was Frida*) which provoked mass resistance among the conservative non-governmental organizations, groups of concerned parents and conservatives and right-wing parties. These initiatives were supported by the establishment of a Parliamentary Group, called *For the family*, to lobby and advocate against the 'genderism' directly in Parliament on a national level. Among the achieved results of these anti-progressive groups were the blockage of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, then the Constitutional amendment in 2013 to define the family as a unit of a man and woman. As well, the Lithuanian MEPs were the most vocal against the adoption of the Estrela report claiming that it is dangerous to the European traditions and morality.<sup>128</sup>

In Latvia have been established three organizations of concerned parents in 2013. These organizations *Let's protect our children*, *Our children and Kin* are advocating for traditional values and lobby for changes in the laws for introducing penalties for propaganda of homosexuality and particularly for the limitation of the national social services. The latter refers to strengthening the process of the adoption of children by same-sex couples because that way the children will be taken away from the natural families. In the same year, these three

organizations tried to organize a referendum against the ‘homosexual propaganda’ claiming that the ‘genderism’ and its widespread usage promoted by the liberal politicians is the attack of the traditional values of the family. The policy achievements of genderism will lead towards “non – gender human beings, with an undefined gender.”<sup>129</sup> The number of collected signature was not enough for the referendum. The other issue around which these conservative organizations mobilized was the abortion, asking for mandatory consultation for women prior to abortion supported by the right-wing political parties. Then, the teaching materials in school curricula were as well under the monitoring of the conservatives to ban the early sexualization of the children. All these organizations claimed that the sexual education of children should not be a part of the regular school curriculum, but it should be the obligation of the family. Another battlefield in Latvia was the signature of the Istanbul Convention. Government signed the Convention in 2016, after many pro and contra struggles, but it did not ratify. The arguments against Convention were related to the thoughts that the Convention did not take into consideration parents’ rights in children’s education as well as neglects religious freedom of parents. Some parents might want to educate their children according to their religious views.<sup>130</sup> According to the Latvian coordination, member of the European women’s lobby network, pro-life and religious groups are very strong and are trying to impose their agenda into the gender equality institutional bodies. On the other hand, Catholic Church established its own NGOs with a clear pro-life and anti-gender agenda, particularly in smaller municipalities thus trying to reach directly into the lives of ordinary people in small communities. The influence of the Russia’s propaganda against gender and homosexuality is much stronger in Latvia than in Lithuania due to a higher percentage of Russian minority in the country and the influence of the Russian media.

The case of Estonia is a different from the case of the other two Baltic States mentioned above. In Estonia, the mobilization against gender is related to the refugee crisis in Europe. First, the conservative forces mobilized around the acceptance of the refugees claiming that they will jeopardize the country’s national identity. The first torch march against the refugee was held in October 2015 and the second one, one month later in front of the National Parliament and gained a huge support. One torch march was held a few weeks later in November 2015 for the protection of the traditional family. This march was preceded by two torch marches, one in 2014

and the second one in February 2015.<sup>131</sup> As a measure to ‘encourage’ demographic development Estonia introduce ‘progressive’ maternity leave policies, such as salaries for mothers for 12 months paid maternity leave. In 2014, the country passed civil partnership for heterosexual and same-sex couples, although the public opinion survey showed that the majority of the people (60%) were against the newly adopted legislation.<sup>132</sup>

## **5.9. Case study Macedonia**

The Republic of Macedonia as all other states in this region is not an immune of the conservative mobilization against progressive human rights and gender equality policies. On the contrary, the political context in the country taking into the consideration the 11-year rule of the moderate right-wing party VMRO-DPMNE jointly in a coalition firstly with the right-wing Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) and later with the Democratic Union of Integration (DUI) made the conservative mobilization easier accompanied with nationalist rhetoric and right-wing populism. Among other factors besides usage of radical ethnic, nationalistic rhetoric of both parties, the speculated radical fundamentalism based on religious identity plays an important role in mobilizing against the progressive human rights agenda.

The issues that were put on the conservative agenda in recent years in Macedonia were the right on abortion related to the demographic crisis in the country, the questioning of the scientific knowledge of gender studies and the introduction of family studies, the discrimination on the base of sexual orientation and LGBTIQ rights. After reaching independence, Macedonia by succession adopted the Law on abortion dated back from 1977 in ex-Yugoslavia. According to this law, the abortion was legal without any restrictions. In 2013 The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a new law on abortion by urgent procedure without consultation and debates with civil sector and the public. The Law provoked reaction among women’s organizations, feminists and organizations working specifically on women’s sexual and reproductive rights. The newly adopted law has foreseen the abortion before the termination of the 10<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. On the other hand, the termination of the pregnancy could not be done after the 10<sup>th</sup> week if it is considered harmful to the woman’s health and if does not pass

one year after the previous termination of pregnancy. That one that has provoked the major reactions is the introduction of the procedure for approval of the abortion revoked in 1969 by the physician. The doctor is obliged under the new law to perform counseling services to pregnant women about the possible advantages of continuing the pregnancy and risks of preformation of abortion. The pregnant women that want to perform the abortion should give a written statement of consent for the intervention. The legal obligation of waiting three days between the obligatory counseling and intervention of abortion provoked many reactions in public, particularly from Ngo's working on sexual and reproductive rights.<sup>133</sup>

The slogans such as *Abortion is murder* were not only present on the posters on visible public places, but as well as presented on TV in a form of a morbid spot screened on the national television. The statements of doctor or nurse “Congratulation your abortion was successful, you just killed your healthy baby who could become a beautiful boy or girl” accompanied the slogans.<sup>134</sup> The spot was later removed from screening on TV before midnight, and was screened in a slightly changed form, after midnight when the ratings of the audience are not as high. At the same time, few NGOs promoting the idea of pro-life were working throughout the country, particularly with young girls and young pregnant women in order to change their decision for performing abortion.

Along with the pro-life campaigns as a method of resolving the demographic crisis in the country in which former government claimed we are, the campaigns for family values titled “Create future” started in 2008. This first campaign was actually created as a support of young couples to persuade them to have children, namely to have more than two children. Later, this first campaign finds out its continuation in the following campaign in 2009-2010 titled as “Have third child.” The financial burden of the state for the realization of these campaigns was much higher than the expected. Only two benefits left for families with more children, such as one-time monetary help for the first child in the amount of approximately 80 euros and monthly monetary help in the amount of almost 140 euro in a period of 10 years for the birth of the third child in the family.<sup>135</sup> The message received from these campaigns and TV spots was that the society is in crisis, that the social order is changing its direction towards a more liberal and it needs to be stopped on time. The main aim of these campaigns was the imposition of the

patriarchal and traditional values and beliefs and the promotion of the ideological matrix of the right-wing populism. Obviously among the aims of the government with this kind of politics was to revive and make stronger the stereotypical porters of men and women and to scapegoat citizens for the demographic crisis and ‘crisis of social order.’ The influence of the Orthodox Church was not as strong as the influence of the Catholic Church in dominantly catholic countries but influential as well. The high-ranking official in the OC stated in the media that the NGOs are opposing the nation and natural order and are damaging the humanity as well. Besides this, the same Church official stated that the “abortion is murder and Merlin Monroe killed herself due to not having children and not being a mother.”<sup>136</sup>

According to Professor Katerina Kolozova the gender studies in the county were for the first time organized in 1999 in Euro-Balkan—The Institute for Social Science and Humanities Research within the Research Centre for Gender Studies. The main objective was the gender perspective to be integrated into the educational curricula. In 2002, a joint Centre of the Euro-Balkan Centre and the State University in Skopje was organized. At the beginning, they were funded by the Soros Foundation in the country. Later, the gender studies were accredited in 2007 as an undergraduate at the Faculty of Philosophy. In March 2012, it was accredited a postgraduate program of gender studies in the Institute of Social science and humanities. The accreditation of the gender studies in Macedonia was justified by the necessity of gender sensitive teaching, and the need to adjust the educational system along with the EU standards. At the same time, when introducing the first programs, the opponents of the gender studies became vocal. The question of gender studies scientific knowledge and their objectivity was put high on the agenda. The main oppositional idea was that there is no need of gender studies because of the view of science as gender neutral.<sup>137</sup> Six years later the gender studies at the Faculty of Philosophy were put on hold. The justification for this measure given by the Ministry of education was that there is no need for more students in social science and humanities, but we need to increase the number of technical science students’ due to the demand of the labor market. At the same time, the idea of opening of family studies was born justified with the negative demographic image of the country and the needs of the labor market. In *Why no for family studies*, Katerina Kolozova pointed out that “family studies are not academic discipline, neither

in classical way nor in interdisciplinary way.” “The family studies look like the ministerial religious agenda and do not have nothing in common with science, this discipline does not exist nowhere in the established academic discipline.”<sup>138</sup>

Another important issue around which the progressive public particularly the organizations working on human rights and LGBTIQ agenda, reacted is the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination adopted in 2010, which does not contain sexual orientation as a base of discrimination. The draft law proposed by the working group firstly contained the sexual orientation as a protective ground, but later this provision was removed before it was sent into the Parliament. Until now, there are no changes in the current law regarding the sexual orientation as a base of discrimination although all Progress reports by the European Commission contained significant remarks related to this. The general view is that people with different sexual orientation are perceived as a threat and are demonized and stigmatized. The first LGBTI support center was opened in October 2012 and until now, the center was targeted many times as well as some of the LGBTI activists were severely attacked.<sup>139</sup> Lately, as in all neighboring countries frequency of the attacks by the opponents of feminism and feminists increased. Known journalist biased to the conservative political party on social media characterized feminists as ugly women who are unhappy with themselves and their lives and who scapegoat men for everything. At the same time, the verbal attacks on single mothers and female single families flourished. Male organizations fighting for shared parental custody of children after the parents’ divorce developed infographics in which divorced mothers and single mothers were portrayed as selfish career women interested only in alimony from their former husbands and fathers of their children.

According to the *Network for protection against the discrimination* and the citizen organization for improvement of the status of single parent families *One can*, the campaign of the initiative *Joint and responsible parenthood after the divorce* in which the members are mainly single fathers placed content on its Facebook profile that is discriminatory and disturbing for single mothers describing them as tragic and selfish parents struggling for some ‘equal gender rights,’ who deliberately shorten the rights of their children to see the other parent namely the father. At the same time, they are portrayed as a group of mothers for whom the most

important is the monetary benefits from former spouses or fathers of the children.<sup>140</sup> Obviously, the conservative mobilization towards different progressive human rights policies and issues took its highest peak in recent five years. Conservative views spill over from one country to another in the region and is either directly copied conservative initiatives or only slightly changed in relation to the national context. Progressive actors should connect and work together and put high on the agenda the issues of human rights and gender equality.

## Chapter 6

### Intersection among neoliberalism, globalization, economic crisis and emergence of conservative mobilization

#### 6.1. Influence of neoliberalism, economic crisis and globalization towards rising of attacks on progressive gender equality policies

Gregor and Grzebalska in *Thoughts on the contested relationship between neoliberalism and feminism*, highlighted Thorsen observation on neoliberalism that it “is a set of political beliefs about the required role of the state regarding the (de) regulation of the free market and contains a moral perspective to evaluate individuals.”<sup>141</sup> Following this neoliberalism do not only refer to imposing austerity policies in time of economic crisis but to a set of political rules and governance to maintain the unequal social, economic and political relations. At the same time, maintaining the inequality in different fields it shapes people’s social and cultural values. It promotes the idea of different social groups and classes as well as maintains the gendered power relations by emphasizing the reproductive role of women and excluding unpaid care work.

Neoliberal austerity measures in the time of the economic crisis in 2007 and 2008 were introduced mainly in fields that were gendered, like social services, health services, education and pension system. Thus, the neoliberalism weakened the states in fields that are essential for the ordinary citizen. Later, the neoliberal politics resulted in opening and developing big business and international corporations on the one hand and on the other hand, in the inability of the states to guarantee the citizen’s full social and economic rights. Inability to guarantee the rights of people aimed at high level of social insecurity, economic dependence and immigration. On the other hand, the process of globalization opened the European market for citizen of less strong and less developed states in Europe producing a high immigration rate of citizen particularly of Eastern and Central Europe to Western European countries. The globalization defined as a denationalization process had a different impact on the citizen. Some citizen benefit from the opportunities that globalization brings with it, whilst others perceived it as a threat and

came out of the process as losers. The process itself as the neoliberalism resulted in new discrepancies in economic, cultural and political sphere. It is related to the rising phenomenon of immigration, which by some citizen is perceived as a major threat to preserving their cultural and national identity as well as preserving their life standard. Citizen with lower educational background perceived the new comers as competition in the labor market and became less tolerant towards the Other different from them. The national and cultural identity was perceived as most jeopardized.

At the same time, the populist right that emerged, became stronger in their rhetoric to provide citizen economic security, support for workers, women and promoted well-being for the most vulnerable one. The high level of unemployment in countries in Central and particularly in Eastern Europe, the lack of facilities in health, care and educational sectors, challenged the hegemony of neoliberalism and produced the shift to illiberal democracy. The illiberal democracy focused on the protection of the national identity through the motherhood, ‘natural’ family, and dismantled the liberal values on the expense of the promotion of new values such as religion, family values, demographic development and a strong national identity. The rightists were very successful in the mobilization of the vulnerable unemployed citizen and in identification of key concerns in social, economic and political sphere. They successfully mobilized the frustrated and angered people who have been victims of the neoliberal politics. These are mainly the underprivileged people from the lower and middle-class income families. In other words, the people mobilized by the right-wing parties were the losers of the transitional period or the period of the economic crisis in 2007 and 2008. The rightists hidden the class differences and interests of winners and losers and imposed new cultural issues that were set up high on the agenda, such as family values, heterosexual marriages, protection of the natural role of women as mothers, spouses and caregivers.<sup>142</sup>

Pawel Marzewski in *Poland's turn to the Right*, stated that more than 60 percent of voters for the political party Law and Justice, a right-wing populist political party in Poland and for the extreme right-wing parties are young voters in the ages between 19-29. The reason for this turn of young people to the right is according to Marzewski; the division in income, education, social injustice, and a loss of confidence in the neoliberal elites. This is not only European but a global

trend.<sup>143</sup> Weronika Grzebalska pointed out that in Poland now there are cities that have 25% less of the total population because of immigration in other countries in Europe. She stressed that women are the majority of those who immigrated. The women made a hard decision to leave their spouses and children in the attempt to find food for their families. This high rate of immigration of women in the media was presented as egoistic and immoral. On the other hand, the right-wing politicians called women to come back in the country promising them solution of the poverty and preservation of their ‘broken’ family.<sup>144</sup> The shift that these right-wing parties and their membership and supporters brought was directed towards renewing the patriarchy as a system. Progressive gender equality policies were particularly under attack. The link between the globalized, neoliberal economy and the emergence of the mobilization of the rightists against gender is obvious in the examples from Poland, but it is the same in other countries particularly in Eastern Europe such as Bulgaria and Romania. Gender was declared the main enemy by rightists. The gender equality and along with it gay rights and particularly the invented gender ideology was a metaphor for the insecurity and unequal power relations produced by the neoliberal order. This shift from progressive gender equality polices towards neo-patriarchy leads to as Magdalena Sroda pointed out, “alliance between church and the stadium.”<sup>145</sup> According to her, these mobilizations of the rightists against gender and all other notions along with gender represent a new type of neoliberal governance that is based again on establishing control over the masses through imposition of power and cultural hegemony. The invented gender ideology and its demonization became a main tool in the rhetoric of the right and extreme right parties in their fight for the protection of the new human rights paradigm based on the national and religious values and freedom centered on the individual’s own choice instead of the ‘imported’ and ‘imposed’ values of the EU and Brussels

## Conclusion

In the last five years, we have been witnessing a stronger mobilization of Christian religious extremists as well as mobilization of membership and supporters of right wing and extreme right parties across Europe. The mobilization is directed towards national and European progressive social forces, particularly towards NGOs dealing with a human rights agenda and gender equality, academic institution and gender equality machinery on national but as well as on European level. These conservative, extremists and anti-progressive groups and organizations intentionally tailored to support the religious and patriarchal agenda are jointly linked not only across Europe but have their branches in the USA, Latin America and Russia. The origin of European anti-human and anti-gender equality NGOs is connected to the organization in USA and Russia. One of their strongest points is the shared agenda, the interconnectedness, richness in funds, connections with extreme right parties and their public visibility to the ordinary citizen as the organizations that are concerned about the position of the ordinary people. Conservative movements mobilized citizens who were perceived as the 'losers' from the period of transition, as well as from the neoliberalism and globalization.

The neoliberalism and globalization, although seen as a positive phenomenon by some people and as an opportunity for a better socioeconomic position, by other people were considered as the threat to national order, national economy and identity. The neoliberal market driven economy is a deeply gendered system, because it excluded the most vulnerable people such as women and young people. They were the first one hit hard by the economic crisis in 2007-2008, particularly hit by the austerity measures introduced to the sectors and services that are mainly considered as gendered sectors. Thus, women and young were excluded from the labor market participation as well as from social and political participation. That was the reason why women and particularly young people found a new opportunity, a new outlet for their concerns shifting to the right-wing political parties that use the momentum of the weakness of the leftists and draw a lot of potential supporters and members among the most vulnerable citizen in the states. Women and youth got from the right what they were looking for, such as agency and shelter that leftists could not offer. On the other hand, this conservative mobilization is a

backlash against all progressive policies that have been achieved so far. It is a backlash against feminism, against gender equality and human rights. Feminists became perceived as a threat to the neo-patriarchal order that these conservative forces supported mainly by the Catholic Church, traditional ecclesiastic intellectuals and anti-progressive NGOs, aimed to re-establish it. Not, only feminists, but gender as a notion became the biggest enemy. That showed that gender is a very important notion in global politics and that everything is gendered. Gender was intentionally misinterpreted and presented as a global conspiracy imposed from the Brussels and EU as a colonizer. The political forces on power in countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the so-called New Europe equated gender with the colonial power of the UN, EU and Western Europe. The gender was equated to the totalitarian ideologies such as Stalinism and Nazism. Gender in this case was not seen solely, but as a notion including other notions such as human rights, women's rights and gender equality, women's sexual and reproductive rights, sexual education, marriage equality, LGBT rights and gender studies as an academic discipline.

The concept of “gender ideology” served as a metaphor for the current socioeconomic order that was unable to provide security for the masses. The ideology of gender was intentionally invented to impose beliefs, perceptions and cultural values totally opposite than the values of the liberal democracy. The invented and constructed “gender ideology” by the Catholic Church and traditional intellectuals mobilized people offering them a new alternative way of thinking, but on the other hand the aim was to foster the profound change in the society. The change of the current social order towards which the conservatives are striving is possible only with the imposition of a renewed patriarchal order where the primary notions are the preservation of the national identity through maintenance of ‘natural’ family, religious education of children, and imposition of measures to tackle with the demographic crisis in the societies. These conservative movements are based on the inability of the left-wing political parties that were unable to connect the losers from the transition with the winners of the same period. They were not able to offer perspectives to young people and women. This shift towards conservatism is an attack on the enlightened ideas and values and shift towards a new paradigm in the society. Power by the conservatives and religious extremists is achieved through the imposition of cultural hegemony, through making people feel that they are pushed into the new paradigm by

consent not by violence and force. The power is conquered with the ‘voluntary’ submission and in alliance of the powerful with the subaltern. The main battlegrounds are science and culture. Every standpoint is taken as a scientific and every truth is considered as a valid truth. Culture encompasses the values, beliefs, tradition, expressing different and particular national traditions are the main weapon in the fight against the imposed values by the EU, UN and leftists. It is the war of position and gender is used as an excuse for the rightists to justify their anti-progressive policies. This success of the right-wing political parties and illiberal democracy and along with it the massive mobilization against progressive gender equality policies should not be considered only as a policy problem but as well as a political problem. The progressive gender equality and human rights policies are not the only one, which is challenged but the weakness and incapability of the left. It is a problem of a wider political crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. The relationship between the right-wing political parties and the masses that they mobilized is like the relationship between the landlords and the tenants. Landlords, in this case represented through the conservatives hold the power and use the top-down strategy. They have the control over the resources and thus automatically the control over the less powerful-the subaltern masses. The power that landlords have, attracted the masses voluntarily because they have no other choice and they voluntarily join the side that promise them the exit from the deadlock. The rightists through controlling their base consist of subaltern citizen got the structural advantage. As the number of tenants (supporters) of the base increased, the power of the landlords (rightists) proportionally grew.

In the last five years, the space of the progressive NGOs, progressive forces and leftists shrunk too. The concept of shrinking space is related to the structure that act with repressive methods and forces directed towards progressive forces to regain the space of anti-progressivist through shrinking the space of work and actions of the progressive. Many grass-roots organizations and NGOs working on human rights and gender equality agenda faced with this problem imposed by their illiberal governments. Shrinking space is a political issue due to the shift of the hegemony in the society. It is delegitimization of the human rights politics and imposition of a new authoritarianism. Neoliberalism, economic crisis and illiberal democracy are

the bastions of the power of the rightists. There is a necessity of a holistic and critical approach for the solvation of this problem.

What could be done and how progressive forces could handle with this massive trend in this part of Europe? First, they should stand up, talk, work and deal with the issues affecting the most vulnerable people in the society. They should advocate for positive changes and reforms that will improve the socioeconomic life and the position of the most affected parts of the society. The link between the winners and the losers is necessary to avoid the huge gap and creation of different classes in the society. The unique European model for tackling with these issues is needed as soon as possible. A new positive and progressive paradigm is essential whilst at the same time the renewal of the unity in these already much-polarized societies in Central and Eastern Europe. The depoliticization should take place when the issues of gender equality and human rights are on the agenda. On the other hand, it was obvious that some social groups in the societies benefit from progressive gender equality policies whilst others were excluded and neglected. Some women and feminists shifted into the neoliberal paradigm and became the privileged minority whilst other became structurally oppressed. The need for self-critical examination of the left and some feminists is as well necessary because the progressive agenda is beyond the national and class identity. The shrinkage of the civil society and of the state has gendered consequences and should be addressed widely in Europe and the time is now. The most important as well as is the coalition with the moderate Catholics, that could be used a starting point for mobilizing support around certain issues such as women's rights, human rights, etc. It is a better option to emphasize the critical issues rather than to emphasize the identity. It is important to find a common goal with people who do not consider themselves neither progressive nor conservatives but something in between. The ones who are most involved in creating the counter strategies to fight this mobilization against gender are the LGBT movements, groups and organizations as well as feminists and human rights groups. The progressive actors and leftists did not organize any campaign against the anti-gender rhetoric and mobilization, which is their disadvantage. The most important part of a potential progressive and leftist mobilization against this anti-gender and anti-progressive mobilization is to have a good message to attract new potential supporters. The essential is to create a new common sense

instead of accentuation of the differences. These groups of progressive should include feminists, LGBT activists, scholars and theoreticians of gender, NGOs working on the human rights agenda as well as on gender equality, politicians and of course a new wider audience is necessary to convince the wider public in the importance of the gender equality and human rights agenda. The public should be very well informed about the concept of gender, gender equality as well as about gender sensitive education in order the distortion of the notion to be avoided. The prevention against huge anti-gender influence is important and could be done with wider publicity of gender theorists, academic science of gender explaining the real meaning of gender and gender equality for the progress of the society, civil society and citizen in general.

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