

SOCIAL IMPLICATION OF GENDER ISSUES WITHIN CONTEMPORARY ACADEMIC POLICIES

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Abstract

Gender subject represented a neglected theme on the transitional agenda in most of the post-communist societies. The presence of a conflictual memory regarding gender communist policies and the resurrection of a traditionalist transitional culture nourished a set of multiple cultural and structural cleavages. The general status of women within East European Academia was depreciating, contrary to some apparently positive evolutions. The central paradox of women's condition in the field of Higher Education was concerned with an apparent equilibration of gender gap in the upper levels of academic pyramid while, at the bottom of hierarchies, women became a subject of a double marginalization mechanism. The study aims at investigating the main sources of gender inequalities in the sphere of academic formation, with a focus point on the social implications of post-welfare state paradigm.

Keywords: *gender, Higher Education, social implication, academic policies, transitional societies*

1. ACADEMIC PROFESSION AS A CHANGING PLAYGROUND. A FAREWELL TO EUROPE'S WELFARE MODEL

The profound transformations that occurred in the structural configurations of national economies in the past two decades determined essential institutional changes. The decline of welfare state paradigm entailed renegotiations of the major post-war social contract and, at a subsidiary level, alteration of another modern social contract, concerning the pact between the university and the nation state¹ (Kwiek, 2005).

The increasing relevance of the global culture and the disappearance of many of the internal equilibria of national economies created the presupposition for a strong modification of academic sphere. The social pact of modern societies was based on a balance mechanism, moderating the tensions raised between the free

market and the bureaucratic scaffolding of the welfare state². The accelerated change triggered by the new global economic landscape pressed the national state to adapt and to restrain its functions and roles. Consequently, the compression of welfare state attributions generated a "downsizing" of the public sector, the academic field losing its former "pivotal" function³.

This major turn of the national public policies exposed Higher Education to multiple mutations and shifts. Trapped between a marketization movement and a de-professionalization of the bottom hierarchies, the academic work-place was rapidly deteriorating (Altbach, 2005)⁴. Despite the optimistic concerns regarding the de-nationalization of Academia, the globalized knowledge society did not fulfil its promises. The structural difficulties encountered by the academic sphere in the new frame of the minimal state were also disclosing some hidden fragmentations and vulnerabilities. Rising market pressure led to a commodification of knowledge, which affected the gender status in an asymmetrical manner. Although the marginalization of women inside the academic field represented an old condition of the Higher Education system, the contemporary recalibration of university's functions and roles aggravated these initial inequities. Gender component was thus confronting with new economic burdens, mostly generated by the dissolution of internal balances of the welfare state. Through marketization of Higher Education and within the occurrence of a deregulated academic labor market, the border between the academic sphere and the national economies was abolished. In this very context, Higher Education became the

subject of new evaluation frames, determined by productive criteria. An essential consequence of the changes encountered in the academic profession concerns the major breeches installed between the bottom of hierarchies and contemporary academic elites. This influential shift appeared in the economy of the academic system is mainly the result of an efficiency test.

The staff isolated at the base of Higher Education pyramid could no longer sustain their professional evolution under the stress of reduced teaching and research quotas, while the academic elites created during the golden welfare decade of the '70 and 80'ies conserved their previous position and status. Due to the apparition of part time occupational profiles⁵, the bottom levels of the academic staff migrated to parallel domains, contributing to the general phenomenon of de-professionalization of the academic field (Enders, 2001). The gender work force specificity encompasses a substantially different trajectory during this restructuration process. Women were confronted with major difficulties in accessing collateral domains, while their primary academic profile was also endangered. The decline of the welfare practices also equated with a drastic restraint of the institutional support for working mothers. Facing a double professional burden, women were gradually pushed at the periphery of academic landscape. Another relevant mutation that arose in contemporary academic space is related with deconstruction of protectionist functions of the state. The general evolution of Academia in the last two decades revealed strong tendencies for reducing incentives and gratification for early formative stages. Compelled to profess both in the academic space and in the free market economy, young researchers were pressed to accept poorly paid junior positions⁶. In this context, the new entrants in the academic profession had a difficult time in obtaining and maintaining full time appointments, the chronic adjournment of academic promotion triggering subsequent long-term costs. The general evolution for post-secondary education is nowadays far from optimistic, nonetheless the gender status inside the Academia is exposed to additional expenses.

Paradoxically, the negative dynamic of the academic field was similar in Eastern and Western parts of Europe. Despite the existence of different systemic legacies in the history of Academia, downsizing of the public sector and the presence of a redefined minimal welfare state reunited European Higher Education space in a uniform model⁷. Still, degradation of gender status within the academic profession was disclosing some interesting peculiarities, as well. The heritage of the 80'ies, labeled as a "feminine decade of education" (Kollonay-Lehoczky, 2006)⁸, was exerting some posthumous consequences for the post-communist academic systems. Conservation of an important gender reservoir within the academic profession was however the result of an ambivalent promotion method. The communist gender quotas were dependent on restrictive ideological ideals, which isolated women inside desirable educational axes. The communist emancipation model was in its profound substance a controversial phenomenon, creating hybrid results in the reconstruction of gender educational and lucrative status. By assuring a high labour market participation, accompanied with state childcare services and other social support measures, the communist stage changed women experience within the Academia in an essential manner⁹.

Against the deceitful equality promoted by socialist Cultural Revolution, gender subject gained some important steps towards liberation under five decades of state communism. Still, the communist ambivalent gender policies created a difficult heritage for the transitional phase. Trapped in an inefficient and low paid research and educational branches, such as health sciences, culture or social sciences, women status inside the new democratic academic sphere did not evolve under a positive omen. The "downward feminisation"¹⁰ of Higher Education was in great part the result of general crises of the welfare state model. Nevertheless, the historical and systemic legacy of Eastern and Western Europe comprised strong differences, the intersection point remaining a startling one. The post-communist societies were confronted with strong difficulties during transition, the educational sphere playing the role of a neglected part. At

the same time, with the end of Cold War, Western Europe lost most of its protectionist and nationally-designed political culture, and gradually accepted the end of the welfare model. These two divergent processes created an unexpected unification of academic trends and practices. Dissolution of state's regulative power in the West and failure of the Eastern post-communist societies in construction of functional institutional balances annihilated the previous traditions and borders. In the aftermath of the welfare paradigm, the academic field became the subject of major reconfigurations, one of the most affected benchmarks remaining gender. The social implication of post-national academic policies were tremendous, women's status within Academia supporting a continuous degradation and marginalization. The following sections intend to explore the sources of this major identity and equality loss, with a focus point on the eastern transitional scenarios. This particular approach is motivated by the presence of an ambivalent gender dynamics within the Academia, which requires a broader analysis of Higher Education driving ideals and practices. The study is evolving around two main assumptions. The first research hypothesis sustains the presence of an influential communist legacy, which promoted a cryptic gender inequity in the field of Higher Education, while the second one claims the apparition of a hybrid modernization process, which affected women status in the Academia in an asymmetrical manner.

2. COMMUNIST ACADEMIA UNDER SCRUTINY. GENDER EMANCIPATION IN THE AGE OF SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

History of communist ideology of gender is strongly marked by the presence of multiple shades and paradoxes and requires a broader explanatory context. The emergence of socialist democracies in Eastern Europe is directly connected with the presence of some dysfunctional structural evolutions, hosted by the interwar societies. The creation of national states and the clash of previous imperial equations required strong cultural exercises, for generating new

collective identity frames. The gender subject became an influential theme for interwar ideologies as a result of coagulation of new national discourses, which recuperated women's issue as a constitutive part of their new cultural proselytism. Nonetheless, gender emancipation movements, triggered by the national phenomenon in the beginning of the '20ies, were hiding a two-side approach of feminist agenda (Blagojevic & all, 2004) ¹¹. Tensions appeared between the traditionalist and patriarchal vocation of the nation, whereas the issues of cultural modernization determined strong limitation inside women's emancipation project. Through diffusion of nationalist ideologies, gender identity was transformed into a marginal component of the modernization process, the consequences of this fragmentary liberation being fully exploited by communist Cultural Revolution.

The generalized crisis of interwar democratic experiments had complex sources. Still, the role played by structural disparities and social cleavages remains nevertheless crucial. Marginalization of gender identities and hybridization of modernization path stimulated radical political slippages, culminating with the authoritarian regimes of the '30ies. Gender social and economic status was depreciating in an accelerated manner, women being deprived even by their early emancipation gains, concerning social autonomy or cultural activism. The inversion of modernity operated in Eastern Europe convenient to Second World War acted as an aggravation factor for gender marginality, communist take-over bringing some surprisingly progressive steps towards women liberation. Socialist movements promoted responsive practices to what was called "women question" and inaugurated radical transformations of feminine referential frames¹² (Gruber, Graves, 1998). The dynamics of women issues on the orbit of communist modernization was essential, through the presence of a set of interconnected elements. Soviet-inspired regimes were capturing the argumentation of gender liberation in order to disperse the traditional social landmarks. Patriarchal societies of Eastern Europe were dependent on a traditional architecture of social relations, which isolated gender in the private

sphere. Overbidding the domestic and maternal vocation of women, interwar ideologies created a strong gap between the general project of modernity and the gender emancipation process. This fragmentary modernization movement created and nourished strong gender disparities that will continue to exert major influences even during the post-socialist regimes.

Negotiation of gender contract during the fragile interwar democratic experiments failed under the influence of nationalist discourses. The pressure exerted by the nationalist ideologies and their strong claims for homogeneity and uniformity transformed "women question" in a peripheral term of the new political culture. In this context, the persistence of a marginality condition is essential in explaining the dynamics that had been encountered by gender subject during communism. The double rhetoric exploited by nationalist ideologies was ironically conserved in the profound fabric of the communist vision. Communist quest for women liberation was grounded on three central aspects: expansion of labor force, through integration of gender reservoir, deconstruction of patriarchal culture, by extracting women within their domestic universe and, not at least, dissolution of previous collective identities and references. In this context, edification of Higher Education represented an interesting modernization project developed by the Soviet-patronized political regimes. In interwar period, the share of women studying in the Academia was modest, not exceeding 25%, in most of the East European societies¹³.

State socialism triggered historical expansion in the field of education, motivated especially by two types of concerns: the urgent need to replace the previous "intelligentsia", and the necessity to increase social and economic mobility¹⁴ (Kollonay-Lehoczky, 2006). Gender subject benefited by a recovery of the interwar deficit of modernity, increasing accessibility to Higher Education, thus making some important steps towards a genuine equalization. Despite the intrusive and abusive practices and policies of communist regimes during the '50 and '60ies, the general status of women inside Academia was improving. The ratios of women involvement within the academic sphere was growing steadily, reaching more than 50% in the late 80' ies¹⁵. This

type of intense advocacy in favor of women involvement in the space of Higher Education represented a general trend in the socialist space, increasing the relevance of gender within Academia, and creating a deceitful image of communist emancipation cause. Even if the numbers were impressive, a closer look in the structure and peculiarities of this Cultural Revolution disclosed some hidden malfunction. The cartography of professional distribution was suffering from strong misbalances, the gender reservoir being associated with a set of restrictive branches, such as social sciences, health, culture, pedagogy¹⁶ (Havelkova, 2014). This type of fundamental segregation acted as confirmation of the communist dual emancipation project. At the same time, the internal structure of the academic field was reaffirming a broader form of gender isolation.

Although initially, socialism aimed at eradicating gender economic and formative gap, the communist regimes created a set of restrictive axes for women participation in post-war economies. When post-conflictual reconstruction came to an end, the productive emancipation of women faded away¹⁷. Feminine work force was exploited in an instrumental manner, the initial economic segregation being very soon restored. Reinforcement of previous "soft borders"¹⁸, generated some chronically disfunctional economic scenarios (Mostov, 2008). This type of silent marginalization has showed its fruits in all spaces, including the field of Higher Education. Thus, the connections formulated between the economic cartography of gender and the peripheral status of women within the Academia is confirming the fact that gender was sharing a general marginal condition. Communist educational system can be considered as a gender-tracked ensemble, men being directed towards well-paid industrial jobs, while women were trained as a secondary work supply for light industries or for other subordinated domain, such as education or health (Nagle, Mahr, 1999)¹⁹.

Feminization of certain economic branches was in this context doubled by feminization of the specific educational frames. The dependencies raised by the industrial architecture of the communist space proved to be essential in explaining the general decay and degradation of

gender. Through separation of feminine layers of Higher Education and by imposing gendered patterns of socialization and representation, the progressive project of communist emancipation experienced an inverted dynamics. In the late '70ies, most of the East European communist societies were engraved by the presence of purified feminine industrial and educational frames. As an example, in GDR, after 1975, an overwhelming 77% percent of educational staff was represented by women²⁰, but they were almost absent in the upper structures (Einhorn, 1993). Concurrently, 90% of female students of communist Hungary were trapped in the classic gender educational sectors: pre-school teaching, health sciences, humanities²¹ (Kollonay-Lehoczky, 2006).

Even in the case of isolated and personalized totalitarian rule of communist Romania, this segregation model is confirmed. In 1985, 80% of gender labor force was associated with the secondary space of food industry or rural economy, while in the educational sphere the gender component was occupying 40%, with a dominant presence in the feminine layers of research and culture ²² (Verdery, 1996). Aggravation of gender formative and occupational cleavage during the '80ies represented a general process within the Socialist Bloc, segregation stereotypes proving to burden other subsequent marginalization axes, as well. Gender component was not only insulated in the low paid and non-functional industries and domains of the socialist world, but women were also confronted with vertical compartmentalization. Vertical segregation implied the insertion of invisible limits for women promotion in the upper layers of hierarchies. The composition of Hungarian Higher Education staff in the late '80ies, as a relevant illustration, was indicating that only a few women could access the top of professional pyramid. The percent²³, of women rewarded with upper scientific degree was less than 10%, this intermediary breach creating some parallel feminine enclaves in the socialist projects of Academia (Idem). Even during the "feminine decade" ²⁴ of the '70ies, the general status of women within the academic field did not genuinely evolve, the new gender quotas ideology generating only a chimeric emancipation project.

Nevertheless, this type of concentrated inquiry is assuming the presence of some simplified tendencies. Still, a general perspective over the communist history of the academic sphere disclosed a set of provocative recurrences concerning the evolution of gender identity and status. The specificity of gender communist policies in the landscape of Higher Education is strongly connected with a segregationist model. Despite the fact that communist regimes operated a slow glissade from the Soviet patronage after the '60ies, the nuances and shades experienced by nationalization of the socialist democracies did not apparently change the configurations of the Academia. Thus, the existence of generalized conditions of gender marginality represented an unexpected outcome of communist educational emancipation ideal. The occurrence of feminized educational branches was concomitantly accompanied by reinforcement of a gender-purified economical model.

The historical development supported by the academic sphere during the fifth decade of communism cannot be denied. Still, the communist legacy was concerned with Higher Education needs to be disenchanted. The roots of downward feminization in the Academia can be identified within a broader economic and cultural perspective. Vertical segregation and radial marginalization of gender created a difficult systemic legacy. Isolation of gender in certain dysfunctional economic layers and under-financed educational branches generated a potential transitional chance deficit. At the same time, the relation established between the public and private welfare paradigm established some peculiar vulnerability for gender equation, inside and outside Higher Education. Conservation of traditional formative stereotypes encouraged an asymmetrical evolution towards modernization, "women question" remaining paradoxically an adjourned theme.

3. GENDER AND ACADEMIA IN TRANSITION. FROM GLASS CEILING TO THE POLITICS OF INDIFFERENCE

The communist epoch genuinely enhanced women's professional skills, made full-time employment possible through childcare

infrastructure, and encouraged a fragmentary emancipation project²⁵ (Blagojevic et al., 2004). Nonetheless, the double formative and economic shift experienced by gender continued to exert influential consequences during the transition period. The general degradation of women status inside the post-communist societies and their continuous marginalization inside the Academia created an amalgam of continuities and contradictions²⁶. Trapped between the nostalgia of communist ambivalent emancipation practices and the transitional disfunctional scenarios, the general condition of women in the academic field remained engraved by multiple burdens. Through cryptic survival of the socialist culture, labeling gender as a second breadwinner²⁷, women's role in the newly-emergent democracies was difficult to define (Idem). As a general phenomenon, the first post-communist decades were characterized by a lack of awareness and interest regarding the gender subject. These generalized politics of indifference were based on two interdependent aspects: the socialist structural heritage and the increasing cleavages and social gaps created by the breakdown of communist-designed social equilibria.

When communist regimes were suppressed in the beginning of the '90ies, the institutional scaffolding of socialist states did not entirely disappear. Instead, the emergent democracies operated a selective set of operations, maintaining the efficient economic and formative branches and abandoning the peripheral axes of the former communist world. Gender labor force situated inside and outside the academic field was thus confronted with a particular and specific experience of transition. The gender-segregated policies promoted by most of the societies integrated within the Communist Bloc conducted to a gendered-deficit of economic chance. Hence, the general marginalization of gender practiced during the communist epoch became the hidden source for a problematic transition. Women's status within Academia can not be analyzed in an isolationist pattern, requiring an extended economic background. The general process of structural hybridization generated a disaggregation of previous feminized industries. Higher Education was in great part an occupational dimension colonized with women,

especially in the areas of humanities, health sciences, culture or research. After the disappearance of the communist-planned economic model, these marginal spaces imploded. Although socialist state could not be defined as an authentic welfare model, yet its corrective internal flows assured the survival of inefficient branches.

The assertion of free market regulations eliminated these internal balances, and the feminized economic peripheries became the subject of major reconfigurations and adaptations. In this context, it remains important to underline that a bijective relation arose between the economic dimension and the formative space. Through dissolution of feminine industries and branches, the corresponding educational areas were exposed to supplementary economic stress. State funding in the sphere of Higher Education had followed an efficiency chart, marginal axes of social sciences, health or culture remaining in most of the cases a neglected part of the new academic policies²⁸ (Ibidem). The major decline experienced in state funding of the academic sphere during transition became the triggering vector for marketization and commodification of Higher Education. Nevertheless, the structural gap formulated between the technical field of education and the feminized areas of social sciences proved once again its relevance. By the presence of a dominant feminine labour force, the secondary fields of humanities were confronted with additional economic burdens. If, in the case of technical education, the new paradigm generated some new market opportunities, mostly determined by the remanence of a residual efficiency, the un-productive branches of culture or health were paying the price of dropping state influence over the public education sector. The general phenomenon of pyramidal distribution of academic opportunities, inherited from the communist epoch, was surviving in the transitional stages. Women continued to concentrate at the bottom of academic scale, while their ascension to the superior hierarchies was compromised and limited by an amalgamated structural and cultural bias²⁹ (Kollonay-Lehoczky, 2006). The "glass ceiling"³⁰ was acting as a non-manifest limitation for women professional

ascension, the sources of this invisible border being often structural (David, Woodward, 2005).

Consequently, the marginal layers of Higher Education were exposed in post-communist societies to a set of processes that paradoxically were affecting simultaneously the Western academic tradition. The increasing relevance of market value of formative profiles conducted to adaptive features that tended to foster the productive aspects of education. After the assertion of a strong determination between the economic value and the funding policies for public education, the component branches of Academia reacted substantially different. Lacking communist massive financial support for the ideologically-protected educational sectors, such as engineering or other technical profiles, such academic layers tried to bargain their financial vulnerability using two types of practices. One of the first adaptive measures adopted by chronically unfunded academic systems of transitional societies was aiming at creating economic and institutional partnerships. The market relevance of technical professions was nonetheless different from the one associated with classical humanities axes. In this very context, the structural fracture created by communist economic strategy determined parallel transitional paths for the post-communist academic systems. The marketization process has a subsequent consequence deconstruction of basal infrastructure of Higher Education pyramid. This generalized process can be also considered as a source cleavage for a collection of interdependent pathologies which tended to affected with predilection the gender condition within the post-welfare paradigm. De-professionalization of academic staff stimulated the apparition of "drain-away, part-time and secondary income"³¹.

Due to cancellation of state incentives and gratification tools for young researchers and teaching staff, the bottom levels of the academic pyramid were pressed to access secondary occupational profiles. In order to compensate the declining remuneration of the entry-level positions, gender academic staff, clustered at the bottom of all hierarchies, needed to confront the exigencies of de-regulated and much too free transitional markets. In the presence of rising

inequities concerning gender economic opportunities, women within Academia very often migrated to other, more easily to secure professional spheres. Concurrently, insertion of a dual occupational profile triggered different structural effects in the Western academic sphere, comparative to Eastern evolution of Higher Education³². An overall perspective disclosed better occupational opportunities for masculine academic staff, while women were trapped in an ambivalent movement, between the increasing free market pressure and the rising insecurity of the academic profession. The general process of fragmentation of academic occupational profiles doubled the gender economic deficit of equality. Women inherited a "natural vulnerability" concerning the labour market, the new emergent economic landscape using preferentially the masculine dimension, more mobile and lacking supplementary social costs. Gender academic staff, coerced to perform multiple professional roles, failed to secure their economic status. Marginalized in their fundamental profession and isolated at the periphery of new transitional economies, women academics were forced to pay the price of an ambivalent communist legacy. The silent expulsion of women from the academic field can be therefore considered as a result of accumulations of multiple burdens. A great part of women engaged in their early academic formation had fewer opportunities to trade their free time for a secondary income source³³. Their general mobility and capacity of occupational adaptation was inferior to the one of the masculine component, a situation that tended to stimulate alternative professional scenarios. The departure of young female researchers and teachers to more efficient and secured economic layers deepened the gender gap already inveterated inside the communist model of Higher Education. This kind of silent hemorrhagic of gender staff was in most of the cases treated with indifference. On the grounds of a negative memory regarding communist gender quotas and through the revival of traditional cultural stereotypes, women position within the academic frame did not become the subject of authentic public debates and concerns.

Another influential aspect which contributed to the degradation of gender condition within

the Academia is connected with the general phenomenon of commodification of Higher Education. By the development of a growing private sector for Higher Education, which started to act as a competitor for public education, the general dynamics of the academic labor market encountered another destabilizing vector. Masculine elites proved to be more mobile and accessed in great number the new private universities³⁴, while women academics were benefiting in small proportions by this new professional market. In this context, studies showed that in Hungary, less than 18% of women academic staff succeeded in accessing a second teaching or research position, while also conserving their primary status in the public academic system³⁵. Within the same context, and Poland confirmed the tendency, women presence in the public educational sector remained dominant (over 50% of the teaching and research staff³⁶), yet the gender component was clustered at the bottom of all hierarchies (Kwiek, 2003). In contrast to this, the masculine staff, more versatile and mobile, transferred to the newly emergent private educational market their previous professional chains and networks. Marginalization of women and their isolation by the assertion of various types of "soft borders" was also aggravated by the absence of gender-oriented professional structures. The new economic order of the changing societies required important adaptation skills, the masculine academic staff benefiting in this case by the professional networks conserved from the communist era. Transitional academic elites were structured through the intervention of parallel networks, while the absence of women from this traditional males association nourishing the informational deficit. The cultural implications of transition are crucial for decrypting the sources of gender deficit of equality in the space of Higher Education.

The absence of women from the main stream professional academic networks did not always imply manifest limitations. Despite the fact that, often, women were officially admitted to new professional bodies, their membership remained formal and incomplete. As a direct consequence, gender staff had less access to information, confronted with significantly decreasing chances

in developing collaboration with upper levels of academic hierarchies, encountering strong opposition in creating their own professional networks. The climate of general suspicion regarding gender promotion stimulated a secondary equality deficit. The general reforms supported by most of the post-communist societies reconfigured previous academic policies. The social implications exerted over the gender labor force by the increasing relevance of market efficiency demands were less discussed and the long-time effects still remain cast in shadow. Nevertheless, the increasing traditionalism experienced by most of the transitional societies was determined by the negative gender practices promoted under communism. Yet, preservation of gender segregated formative and professional patterns continued to act as triggering vectors for women's marginalization. Consequently, the apparent liberalization of the academic sphere generated de-regulation and marketization of education. Other subsequent phenomenon that tended to adjourn gender equality within post-communist Academia was the changing financing system and separation of the managerial task from the general teaching and research activities³⁷.

For most of the transitional academic systems, the financing mechanism supported deep modification. The decreasing state funding and the rising market pressure created the conditions for the apparition of new managerial elites. In this context, university's activities were divided between the new bureaucratic activities and the primary research and teaching quotas. Women academic staff was in most of the cases appointed to organizational and collateral tasks, exploiting the communist design stereotypes of gender efficiency in "non-core and secondary activities"³⁸. Compelled to exert multiple bureaucratic and professional roles, women were confronted with new emergent discrete borders. Unpaid bureaucratic work generated additional marginalization tools, women benefiting from a substantially different amount of time for increasing their professional profiles and aptitudes. The creation of constellation of gender burdens inside the academic sphere was accompanied by the reinforcement of traditional and patriarchal views concerning family roles.

The vanishing communist adjuvant policies on the sensible subject of “working mothers” stimulated fragmentary professional scenarios, for women engaged in academic formation. Studies emphasized that a significant number of women were confronted with strong institutional pressures in conserving their academic promotion chances, when they decided to take maternity leaves³⁹. Fragmentation of professional scenarios and the rising unbalances concerning gender general economic and cultural status within the academic field represented hidden aspects of the new efficiency-driven state policies. The general crisis of welfare paradigm all over the European space and the increasing marketization and commodification of Higher Education created multiple social effects. Women were not the only affected group but, in a certain manner, they were the most unable to defend their peculiar “natural vulnerabilities”.

Admission within the European frame is often considered as a genuine sign of progress for the emergent democracies of the East. Consequently, joining the European structures created tremendous expectations in the direction of gender equity, inside and outside the academic sphere. In the beginning of the transitional period, women general condition in the framework of Higher Education was far from positive. For most of the East European societies, gender participation in education was engraved by communist segregationist heritage. Nonetheless, during the late transitional stages, participation of the gender component in the landscape of Higher Education was apparently reaching a long expected equilibrium. Studies and research developed in late '90ies proved the growing participation of women in the upper levels of universities⁴⁰ (Blagojevic et al., 2004). Still, this deceitful recalibration of the academic landscape was disclosing an ironical legacy of communist educational policies. Most of the women reaching superior academic levels were accepted into the system in the late '80ies, and their present visibility and professional ascension was made possible by the protective measures of the last decades of communism. In their early formation, women were protected by the communist educational strategy. Even if, for now, the gender gap seems to find a resolution,

the hidden sources of these contemporary evolutions raise only moderate enthusiasm. Contemporary achievements in the space of gender academic equity can be considered a form of inverted ceiling class. The last communist decades delivered important gender participation within the Academia. The entrance of women in the field of Higher Education was secured, the protectionist social policies assuring a moderation of gender natural vulnerabilities. The manifestation of gender academic elites in Eastern Europe is hence strongly connected with the presence of a complicated historical and structural legacy. When this gender reservoir originated in the academic revolution of the '80ies will retire, Eastern Europe perspective over Academic could dramatically change. In post-communism, gender became one of the most affected cultural and economic landmarks. The multiple balances of planned economy were destroyed during the transitional period, gender subject accumulating an essential economic deficit. The evolution of various educational systems in the post-communist equation implies the presence of multiple shades. Another question still to address in this context refers to the intermediary transition triggered by the Gorbachev doctrine in mid '80ies. Some of the academic ensembles proved to be more adapt and experienced a moderate transition, while other encapsulated models were confronted with dramatic scenarios. Nevertheless, against all relevant differences, gender remained a shadow issue for Eastern European Higher Education.

As a concluding remark, it is important to assume that communist economic cartography cannot be annihilated and gender cultural stereotypes cannot be simply cured. Women status within post-communist Academia remains strongly connected with an extended structural and identity background. In the aftermath of welfare paradigms, the current situation of academic systems is put under question all over the world. Globalization acts both as a catalyst and as an aggravation factor for commodification of Higher Education. By the persistence of a marginal condition, gender equity in the field of Higher Education depends on a broader economic, cultural and political frame. Promoting exclusively gender regulations, the genuine

problem of women in academic professions cannot be solved. Also, the general process of reshaping university's societal role generates new systemic pressure, and concurrently requires a major reconstruction of state's regulative approach regarding Academia.

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