Claudia Septimia Sabău • Oana-Ramona Ilovan
(editors)

Gender and Development 1

# PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER IN ROMANIA

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ UNIVERSITY PRESS Târgu Mureș

# PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER IN ROMANIA

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**Claudia Septimia Sabău | Oana-Ramona Ilovan**
**(EDITORS)**

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**Claudia Septimia Sabău | Oana-Ramona Ilovan**

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# Foreword

The present volume contributes to a better understanding of gender, gender roles and relations in nowadays Romania and in its recent past, highlighting women's position in society, analysing the cultural stereotypes related to them, the political and cultural mechanisms through which they had been put apart, the pressures they faced, their daily patterns and behaviours. The interdisciplinary profile of all studies gathered in the volume is clear and will be focused on step by step when briefly presenting them. Gender perspectives and insights are present in the historical, anthropological, anthropo-geographical, legislative approaches the volume contains, as well as in those from mobility studies and visual arts.

Meanwhile, the methodologies involved in all these studies, both qualitative and quantitative, are rather complementary and extremely useful, contributing to better understanding the topic. Participant observation, interviews (semi-structured and in-depth ones), and discourse analysis are only a few qualitative methods used by authors in their studies included in this volume. As mentioned, they are complemented by quantitative methodology.

The temporal frames chosen in the proposed studies are mainly communist and post-communist Romania, present and recent past but, in many cases, the insights and given explanations explore traditions and distant past as well, offering complex understandings of the selected topics. The theoretical frames are very well constructed in all chapters, and the proposed case studies are adequately linked to them.

The first chapter *Why Do We Need Gender Studies in Romania?* (Claudia Septimia Sabău and Oana-Ramona Ilovan) constructs the

framework for the entire collective volume, offering insights into the present situation of gender studies in Romania and the relationship between gender and societal development.

The chapter *Gender and Nation(alism). A Useful and Necessary Historical Approach* (Georgeta Fodor) is, as pointed out from the very beginning, an analysis of the gendered construction of the nation, its main goal being to explain how the nation construction process was influenced by the gender discourse of the Romanian intellectuals, the approach highlighting the Transylvanian case. The conceptual apparatus is very well defined, and the relevant literature, applied to the case study is clearly exposed and ingeniously connected to the case study regarding Transylvania (an entire subchapter is dedicated to Nation Gendered and Gendered Nations in the context of the national movement of Romanians from Transylvania).

The theoretical literature on gender identity, femininity and masculinity, and gender stereotypes is connected to the one referring to nation, nationalism, national identity, the author demonstrating the necessity of engaging gender (as an analytical category) in the study of nation and nationalism, integrating them in an interdisciplinary approach. The study explains how masculinity and femininity had been defined, and mostly how specifically the intersection of the gender and national discourses was achieved, the articles published in journals, memoirs, literature from the 19$^{th}$ century until the interwar period being the main documentation sources.

The chapter *Gender, State Policies and Lived Experience(s) Among Roma in Romania During the Communist Regime* (Ionela-Maria Bogdan) explores how Roma women faced the pronatalist policies in Romania, the ways their experiences were shared with other non-Roma women groups, using personal narratives as an important documentation source, as well as analytical focus. The literature overview demonstrates how and why the author combines historical, social anthropological and gender studies literature, clearly underlining that such a topic is to be approached

interdisciplinary, in order to have an adequate understanding of it. Meanwhile, in the part of the study dedicated to Methodology, Ionela-Maria Bogdan explains why oral history has an important role for the appropriate understanding of the topic, and the necessity to collect life histories, using them as valuable sources in scholarly work.

The overview on Gender, state policies and lived experiences analyses the state policies and their impact on gender and gender relations, especially in the context of pronatalist policies after the Decree 770/1966 prohibiting abortions. The state intrusion in private lives and its terrible consequences are deeply approached in this study, the lived experiences documented through interviews being revelatory in this sense, underlining the Roma women case but also the shared experiences with non-Roma women.

The next book chapter, *Looking Back for the Future. Marriage in Romania* (Iulia-Elena Hossu) proposes an interdisciplinary approach, combining perspectives from history, ethnology and social anthropology with elements of legislation regarding marriage, constructing a diachronic and synchronic analysis on the mentioned topic. The study underlines synthetically how, till 1864 (when the Civil Code appeared), marriage was under the protection of the Church, following then how a specific Family Code appeared and pointing out the specificities of the laws related to it from 1954 until 2011. As Iulia-Elena Hossu mentions, the analysis focuses on the legal provisions in Romania with respect to the topic, between 1965 and 2000.

The study explains the ways in which marriage is defined in Romania as a heterosexual institution, the roles of religion and legislation and how they had an impact on family. The literature overview regarding marriage, family and women in the Romanian studies reflects adequately the interdisciplinary profile of the study, the mentioned bibliographical sources being from various domains. It is made clear how historical and legislative topics are intertwined, when discussing the legislative landmarks between 1864 and 1954, then during the entire totalitarian period, with a special focus on the timeframe of pronatalist policies and on the post-communist period.

The chapter *Mothers and Daughters in Post-Communist Romania: Bridging the Generational Gap* (Petruța Teampău) is, as the author points out, an anthropological approach on women's lives, having as time frames the last decades of communism and post-communism. Valuing women's voices of mothers and daughters, this study explores women's most significant experiences in the above-mentioned periods, their place and roles in the new social order(s), the ways they reflect on the social, political, and economic mechanisms of their times. A comparative frame is created, revealing different perspectives and opinions of the mothers' and daughter's generations, those with life experiences consumed at least partially in totalitarian times, and those with life experiences consumed in the post-communist period.

Using theoretical sources especially from social anthropology and gender studies, the author explains the mechanisms through which the communist regime maintained the traditional gender roles, mainly through the pro-natalist policy which was aggressively on the agenda after 1966. Petruța Teampău points out that, in her previous studies, the specific interest was to analyse how the official propaganda constructed and represented a specific image of women in *Femeia* magazine – as worker, homemaker, mother, and constructor of a new society.

Although this is not a mentioned goal of the present study, the author is viewing implicitly how propaganda was perceived by women, at which levels it affected their daily lives and routines. The genuine voices of women as they are present in the interviews depict their experiences as mothers, workers, intellectuals, their burdens, the ways they are socialising. Through them, a whole social-cultural context is presented, with its functional mechanisms, positive parts, problems, and limitations.

At least parts of the Romanian communist period are put on the agenda through women's/mothers' generation voices. Then, the interviews with the daughters' generation reveal the changes of women's roles and position in society, their emancipation, beauty

ideals, perspectives on motherhood, and career. They bring into discussion the new post-communist context, with all its turbulences, levels of uncertainties, limitations, and crises.

The chapter *Visual Images and Romanian Public Space Thirty Years After Communism. A Gendered Perspective* (Sorina Voiculescu and Margareta Lelea) combines perspectives from urban geography (studies of transformations of post-socialist cities) and gender studies and responds to a series of questions which are systematically addressed in the study. They target issues such as the types of visual representations of women in Romanian cities, the women suitable for statues in the public opinion, the gender awareness of visual representations and places people consider to be masculine and feminine. The objectives of the study are clarified accordingly.

The theoretical background is mainly pointing out the connectedness between visual imagery and gender in the public space, explaining why the public space is traditionally privileged with a more masculine coding. As methods, the authors mention participant observation in the public space of Timișoara, interviews complemented with two sets of different questionnaires, addressed face-to-face and online. The results are systematically presented, being clear how public spaces, gender and visual imagery are seen in their interconnectedness and why. The necessity of a feminist geography, the ways the space, place and gender are connected and seen in it are also topics discussed in this interdisciplinary study.

The chapter *Mobility Patterns and Behaviours from a Gender Perspective in Alba Iulia Metropolitan Area, Romania* (Emanuel-Cristian Adorean, Ana Rita Lynce, and Sofia Kalakou) has as theoretical background studies valuing gender perspective as fundamental in analysing nowadays urban mobility. Approaches on various temporal and spatial dimensions of mobility-migration, tourism, and daily mobility are mentioned and briefly analysed, with their specific goals and results. Special attention is dedicated to studies on the mobility gender gap, revealing that women travel less frequently, cover shorter distances per day, also stressing on that

their journeys are more complex. Other blocks of literature point out the differences in security women and men feel in transport. All these aspects are put on the agenda in order to underline better the role of gendered understandings on urban mobility. Then, the study presents adequately the focused on metropolitan area, as Alba Iulia was the first one including public transport in 2012.

Methodological clarifications are systematically done, the study being conducted in the framework of a larger project, TinnGO, involving ten European Hubs; a few necessary details regarding GIS techniques and Pyton coding, along with the sample characterisation are present in this text as well. Assessing mobility patterns and behaviours from a gender perspective are entirely done based on a quantitative analysis, which is clearly exposed, with all its findings.

The chapter *Romanian Women in and out of Development. From Ideological Pressure to Freedom of Speech in the Local Press on International Women's Day (1979-2000). Case Study: Bistrița-Năsăud County* (Oana-Ramona Ilovan and Claudia Septimia Sabău) proposes an analysis of the representations of women, using the images and texts in two newspapers of Bistrița-Năsăud County: *Ecoul* [The Echo] and *Răsunetul* [The Resonance]. The materials focused on were published on the occasion of celebrating the 8$^{th}$ of March between 1979-1989 in *Ecoul* and 1990-2000 *Răsunetul*, the temporal frames being clarified from the very beginning, as well as the in-depth comparative approach.

The study underlines the cultural/gender stereotypes as they were constructed and represented in these publications, in their recurrencies and specificities meanwhile. Although the two time frames under scrutiny are two continuous decades (1979-2000), they bring into discussion the commonalities and specificities of two decades belonging to different historical and ideological contexts, the last decade of the totalitarian regime in Romania (1979-1989) and the first one after 1989.

Through analysing the gender representation in totalitarian Romania, the very well documented study reveals mostly how and

why ideology and political regime controlled it, involving specific mechanisms, promoting images of socially, economically, and politically engaged women, underlining their role as mothers. Their roles in achieving social and economic tasks, in production, social competitions, in fields such as education are pointed out in this chapter, being analysed in connection with the totalitarian regime propaganda, and the political and ideological context.

Regarding the decade after 1989, the materials under scrutiny are from the renamed newspaper, *Răsunetul*. The changes in gender representations and gender stereotypes are systematically analysed, underlining the causes and mechanisms producing them in the new political, economic, and social context. The texts are now emphasising other dimensions of femininity, pointing out for instance women's beauty, their interest in clothes and cosmetics, their maternal love.

Theoretically, the study uses as key concept "representation", defined in the New Cultural Geography and Cultural Studies, which is very well explained and applied on newspaper materials, the link between the theoretical and applied parts of the study being clearly established, and the discourse analysis well conducted.

These are, in brief, the topics analysed in the present volume, with their goals, theoretical frames and methodologies involved. The collective volume edited by Claudia Septimia Sabău and Oana-Ramona Ilovan is a successful attempt to gather studies on gender in Romania, analysing it through various lenses, valuing perspectives and domains in an inspired interdisciplinary manner.

This frame proves to be extremely necessary in the effort to understand gender and gender relations issues as adequate as possible, putting them in social and cultural contexts and using comparative temporal frames to see them in diachrony and synchrony, in their developments and complex processes, in their relations with other cultural facts, processes, and developments.

The volume is addressed to different categories of readers, to specialists with research interests in these topics and the fields involved in the proposed approaches, as well as to a broader public.

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## Chapter 1. Why Do We Need Gender Studies in Romania?

Claudia Septimia SABĂU[1], Oana-Ramona ILOVAN[2]

The aim of this first chapter is to set the framework for the entire collective volume. At the same time, it assesses the present situation of gender studies in Romania in an attempt to argue why we still need to further develop this field. As such, this study is structured in three parts: general remarks on the evolution of gender studies in Romania, gender and development in the Romanian society, and proposing an agenda for further research.

### 1. General remarks on the evolution of gender studies in Romania

In the Romanian public space, in mass media, the approach of gender themes arouses inflammatory discourses, it "produces fears that are even more irrational when perceived from the perspective of biases than from one of *a posteriori* judgements" (Miroiu, 2020, p. 6). Feminist ideas and projects, "associated with Marxism, communism, and exaggerated leftism and awkwardness [RO. stângăcism]", either

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political, civil or academic, "crush against an ideological barrier that strongly delegitimates and marginalises them" (Băluță, 2020, p. 37). To combat this situation, we require scientific and rational arguments that originate from interdisciplinary and multicultural research, based on critical and responsible analyses. It is necessary for gender studies to be developed and advertised not only in academia but also in the civic and political spheres (Miroiu, 2020, p. 2).

Moreover, it is high time that the institutionalising of gender studies is generalised and research schools in the Romanian academia are developed. In these schools, one should emphasise especially the competence to teach about gender studies and develop the necessary theoretical and methodological tools for research in this field. Interdisciplinary debates and cooperation among diverse social sciences enable researchers to better understand contemporary realities, proving the mutual advantages of teamwork in a multidisciplinary framework. In addition, gender studies could and should determine consequences at the political, cultural, and civic levels, thus influencing new conceptions of power:

> "[…] namely, the one in which the exertion of power does not mean domination and submission, but it means to help others form, develop and use their own capacities" (Miroiu, 2020, p. 6).

After the 2000s, approaching gender topics and perspectives of institutionalising research on this subject seemed to have an ascending trend. However, in 2022, it is obvious that all this has come to a standstill, or we could even witness a decline if we consider the situation of gender studies in Babeș-Bolyai University, for instance, where these studies are no longer offered as study programmes at Bachelor's and Master's levels.

Starting from the above-mentioned ideas, we present, making no claims to exhaustivity, a brief review of the key contributions to gender studies in Romania. Our aim is to show the framework in which gender research developed up to now. We shall mention only a few examples to portray the research orientation. We started from the presumption that, unfortunately, in Romania, characterised by a "still

dominating masculinist culture" (Anemțoaicei, 2020), gender studies seem to continue being the Cinderella of academic research.

In Romania, gender studies appeared and developed only starting in the 1990s, after the fall of the communist regime. It is the period when researchers in Social Sciences and the Humanities, liberated by the communist ideological constraints, timidly began to develop new research directed at topics that had not been enough or not at all researched in the past. During communism, in Romanian research, the terms "studies about women" and "feminist studies" were missing (Miroiu, 2020, p. 1).

Ionela Băluță wrote about the difficult path of introducing and institutionalising gender studies in Romania. She published on this topic in 2020, in the pages of a thematic issue of *Transilvania* journal, dedicated exclusively to gender studies (Băluță, 2020). In her article, the author argues that:

> "[…] gender studies are the litmus of democracy: the way these have been introduced and (partially) institutionalised, the institutional obstacles, but also the ideological ones these studies cope with, the values and political stakes that accompany the promotion and contestation of gender studies respectively, all these elements are revealing both for the process of democratising the academic space and also for the degree and quality of the Romanian democracy after 1989" (Băluță, 2020, p. 35).

Besides the contribution brought by Ionela Băluță, the articles signed by established names in the field (i.e., Mihaela Miroiu, Maria Bucur, Oana Băluță, Ovidiu Anemțoaicei, etc.) offer an analysis of the development level of this research field in Romania (*Transilvania*, no. 10/2020). The development of gender studies and women studies, respectively, took place at the same time. The first category was a main research field of specialists in Social Sciences, and the second one was preferred by historians.

In Social Sciences, gender studies refer to:

> "[…] interpreting the social relationship constructed between the sexes. The concept of 'gender' [...] supposing 'dynamism, processualism, evolution'" (Băluță and Cîrstocea, 2003, pp. 8-9).

According to Ionela Băluță and Ioana Cîrstocea, gender is an analysis tool, "a lecture grid that has the potential to change traditional perspectives", imposing new research directions:

> "[…] and leading to deconstructing classical study objects, refining interpretation and to a critical approach of the manner in which are elaborated the forms of scientific knowledge, interdisciplinarity being instrumental to articulating any coherent enterprise" (Băluță and Cîrstocea, 2003, pp. 8-9).

Women's history, as a new research field developed in the European space starting with the 1970s:

> "[…] proposed a critical re-evaluation of the knowledge accumulated up to the respective moment, addressing to the past questions meant to transform women in visible actors of past societies and to make of their experiences a legitimate subject, having complete rights within the scientific universe" (Cîrstocea, 2003, pp. 96-97).

In the preface to a volume edited in 2004, Alin Ciupală asserted that, for a long time, there had been a biased perception of studying women's history in the Romanian space: the result of a lack of research sources (Ciupală, 2004). Through the volumes he signed or edited on women's history in Romania (2003, 2004, 2017), and the ones signed by Ghizela Cosma (and her collaborators) focusing on retracing the features of women's status in Romania and the evolution of their political and civil rights, etc. (Cosma 2002; Cosma, Magyari-Vincze and Pecican, 2002; Cosma and Țârău, 2002a, 2002b), these historians dismantled this bias and drew the main research coordinates for women's history.

As a highly useful contribution, also at the beginning of the 2000s, Ștefania Mihăilescu retraced the feminist movement in Romania, from 1815 to 1946, using archival sources and offering researchers a very helpful tool to study women's history and gender relations in our country (Mihăilescu, 2002, 2006). In addition, *Lexicon feminist* [Feminist Lexicon] (coordinated by Otilia Dragomir and Mihaela Miroiu), published in 2002, has the merit of uniting "terms,

outstanding personalities, movements and institutions", being according to Mihaela Miroiu:

> "[…] probably the most important collective theoretical work because it is a service provided to all those who initiate feminist studies, irrespective of their field and interests" (Miroiu, 2020, p. 4).

More recently, Luciana Jinga published a very well-documented book focusing on retracing the women's situation during communism and the way the Communist Party and its affiliated institutions generated serious gender inequalities (Jinga, 2015). The topic of women's daily lives and gender representations in state policies during socialist Romania were the focus of Jill Massino's book (Massino, 2019), an established researcher of gender and its representations in East European societies.

In 2018, Maria Bucur, one of the best-known researchers of gender history and of the eugenic movement in the Romanian society for the first half of the 20th century published an excellent study on how Romanian researchers wrote, after the fall of communism, about the history of women in Romania. One of her conclusions is that although in Romanian historiography after the 2000s one can notice an increase in the number of books dedicated to subjects about women's history, still:

> "[...] the proportion of books that make women's achievements visible while situating their lives in the larger historical context of their time in terms of gender norms is rather small" (Bucur, 2018, p. 52).

Along the above-mentioned names, Mihaela Miroiu, Maria Bucur, Jill Massino, Liliana Popescu, Aurora Liiceanu, Mădălina Nicolaescu, Ionela Băluță, Enikő Magyari-Vincze, Adriana Băban, Reghina Dascăl, Susan Gal, Gail Kligman, Sorina Voiculescu, Margareta Lelea, etc. contributed to the promotion of feminist studies and gender research in Romania. The diversity of perspectives foregrounded in books and articles signed by the researchers above underline the multitude of ways to explore feminism and gender studies in the Romanian space. For instance, Maria Bucur and

Mihaela Miroiu coordinated the first book about the history of Romanian political thought focusing on women and gender roles (Bucur and Miroiu, 2002), while Susan Gal and Gail Kligman studied how gender-related discourses and practices played a major role in shaping the process of reconstructing states and social relations in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 (Gal and Kligman, 2003, p. 11).

Ten years after the fall of communism, around the year 2000, the general climate for and situation of research about women's history and gender studies was encouraging. At that moment, there were courses and research on gender studies in four universities in Romania (National University of Political Studies and Public Administration – Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative – SNSPA, Babeș-Bolyai University, West University of Timișoara, and University of Bucharest – English Language and Literature Department) (Dascăl, 2003; Nicolaescu, 2003; Popescu, 2003; Vincze-Magyari, 2003).

One successful study programme is the Master's dedicated to gender studies (at present called *Politici, gen, minorități* [Policies, Gender, Minorities]), set up by Mihaela Miroiu in 1998, at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration). Under the aegis of the Faculty of Political Sciences, its contents focused on the study and research of feminist political theories. Mihaela Miroiu and her team developed several research directions that materialised in the publication of a series of seminal books on feminist political theory (Toderean, 2003; Miroiu, 2004; Popescu, 2004; Băluță, 2013). A significant research direction at SNSPA was the gender-education relation (Grünberg and Miroiu, 1997; Ștefănescu, 2003), as school education is "the first organised and formalised source of gender culture" (Miroiu, 2020, p. 5).

At Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, in 2000 was set up the Interdisciplinary Group for Gender Studies within the Institute of Anthropology belonging to the Faculty of European Studies. It developed courses in the respective field and provided students with a certificate on "Gender, Society and Culture" (Magyari-Vincze, 2003,

pp. 214-215).[3] At present, at Babeș-Bolyai University, there is no study programme in gender studies.[4] However, the interest in gender studies is still present. For instance, at the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences there is available an optional course titled Studii de gen [Gender Studies], at the Bachelor's level.

In the late 1990s and the next decade, the published works, most of them in the collection *Studii de gen* [Gender Studies] of Polirom Press in Iași, were complemented by thematic issues dedicated to gender studies in journals with high scientific visibility. One such example is volume 5, number 14 (2006) of *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* titled *What Does Feminism Need? Challenges and Developments in Gender Studies*. Among the approached subjects were the following: the evolution of gender policies in Romania, women's situation during communism, a quantitative analysis concerning the perceptions of gender discrimination among the Romanian youth, differences between women and men related to their free time, etc. (*Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 2006).

The subject of gender policies also caught the attention of Romanian sociologists, such as Laura Grünberg (Grünberg and

[3] The names of the participants, as well as the key research themes are listed in Magyari-Vincze, 2003, pp. 216-217.

[4] Starting with 2022, Babeș-Bolyai University, through the University Cultural Heritage Unit and Territorial Identities and Development Research Centre is partner to *The Network for Women's History Research and Promotion of Gender Studies in Romania* (IFSGen), together with "George Emil Palade" University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Sciences and Technology, in Târgu-Mureș and "George Barițiu" History Institute of the Romanian Academy. IFSGen Network focuses on becoming a discussion forum, an online hub with a catalysing role for researchers studying women's history and gender studies. Equally, this network means to contribute to increasing people's awareness concerning the need to introduce topics about women's history in school and university curricula.

Miroiu, 1997a, 1997b; Grünberg, 2003). During the first decade after the fall of communism, the asymmetry characterising men's and women's participation in public life and decisional levels in Romania was contested. Researchers argued that it was high time for official declarations that focused on women's and men's equal participation at all levels (political, civic, economic, social, and cultural) to be "doubled by appropriate strategies that could change traditional attitudes and practices" (Băban, 2002, p. 61). *Barometrul de gen* [Gender Barometre] realised by Open Society Foundations (2000) illustrated a Romanian traditional society, characterised by a patriarchal mentality and the persistence of a series of gender stereotypes both in public and private areas (Băban, 2002, p. 62). The data of this research were interpreted by sociologist Vladimir Pasti in connection to data about gender from communism and published in *Ultima inegalitate. Relațiile de gen în România* [The Last Inequality. Gender Relations in Romania] (Pasti, 2003).

In 2018, a team of researchers led by Laura Grünberg completed new research and published *Barometrul de gen. România 2018* [Gender Barometre. Romania 2018] (Grünberg, 2019). Many of the perceptions about gender relations and roles remained similar to the ones in 2000. On the progressive part, there was registered a decrease in the perception that men were more able to lead than women and an increase in women's trust in their strengths and capacity to be socially and financially independent (Miroiu, 2020, pp. 5-6).

Knowledge about gender policies in Romania was advertised through works with interdisciplinary content (Political Sciences and Sociology). Among these are the ones signed by Oana Băluță as editor (2006, 2007) or coordinator together with Alice Iancu and Alina Dragolea (2007). After the economic crisis of 2008-2009, there were identified "new phenomena with specific gender influence" (Miroiu, 2020, p. 5) and this prompted research and editorial activity in connection to the new societal situation (Băluță, 2011; Păunescu, 2012; Tăriceanu, 2014). Researchers' interests also focused on subjects such as the relationship between the construction of body,

gender, and ideology in communist propaganda (Teampău, 2008, 2016, 2017), the correlation between national identity and gender (Fodor, 2013, 2014), or the production of gender and space in socialism and post-socialism (Lelea and Voiculescu, 2017; Ilovan, 2020, 2022).

In 2020, according to Ionela Băluță, although the number of gender studies is higher than in the 2000s, this is still small in comparison with studies in other fields and with the international literature concerning this subject (Băluță, 2020, p. 36). Besides individual initiatives, the author mentions four editorial projects that contribute to promoting research in this field: the journal *Analize – Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies*, *Studii de gen* [Gender Studies], a collection from Polirom (the oldest) and two more recent collections at Tritonic Publishing House (*Studii feministe* collection [Feminist Studies]) and at Editura Universității din București [University of Bucharest Press] (*Gen, politică și societate* collection [Gender, Politics and Society]) (Băluță, 2020, p. 36).

## 2. Gender and development in the Romanian society

In Romania, development disparities, along with the trivialisation of differences, impact people's daily lives (Columban et al., 2022). Although relevant from a demographical, social, cultural, economic, and political perspective, in Romania, some groups tend to be ignored or are not mainstreamed when decision-making bodies are considering development (Ilovan and Muntean, 2021). Research on the relationship between culture, gender and development is therefore highly necessary because of the inequality and injustice in the Romanian society. These are caused, among many factors, by a mainly diversity-blind development practice, ignoring individuals' features.

In this context, one of the most unfavourable preconditions for implementing gender-sensitive development practices is the officials'

lack of or poor education/information on the topic. Another very significant unfavourable precondition is most of the citizens' perceptions about their role: as passive receivers of development results, where the state takes care of the citizens in an authoritarian and knowledgeable manner, and this is strongly related to the socialist heritage (Copilaș, 2015).

Therefore, in Romania, the post-socialist argument is still very powerful. The proof is in the present official discourse and in people's perceptions: because the country's transition (from socialism to capitalism, from totalitarianism to democracy) is not over and debatable in relation to its success/failure and sustainability. Moreover, officials and regular citizens constantly take the socialist period as a reference (good or bad) for (a) present decision-making that affects development and for (b) citizens' system of values impacting all their spheres of life.

In times of transformation, when many societal processes, like privatisation, individualisation, illegitimate appropriations, etc., seem very confusing, this type of rationality can still be very attractive to people who hold on to "old" values. Thus, parts of the population may support diversity-insensitive development, as well as the related arguments and procedures, because they are afraid of subjective, diverse norms. This is a brief description of the cultural background of today's Romania, where territorial development should pay more attention to and critically discuss the socialist heritage, the post-socialist state of mind, and the socioeconomic and cultural transitions.

To achieve territorial cohesion, diversity-sensitive development should be a long-term binding strategy, supported by a shared perspective, according to the plurality of the involved subjects. In 1997, the *Treaty of Amsterdam* declared gender mainstreaming a compulsory top-down strategy in the European Union and gender knowledge has been advocated for, to be part of the expertise in territorial planning, because it helps deal with gender together with other structural inequalities. Under such conditions, although unstable, the complex practices of planning and developing

place should consider at their centre the individuals and their features. This led to triggering awareness of the gendered social roles that asked for reconceptualising employment, care activities and leisure if aiming to plan for resilient settlements, where the spatial and social structures responded to people's needs and interests, through reconciliation and empowerment strategies (Potter et al., 2012; UN-HABITAT, 2012; Sánchez de Madariaga and Roberts, 2013; World Bank, 2020).

Successful place-making in relation to the topic of gender involves discussing knowledge and practices about decreasing gender inequalities (intersected with other structural ones), and also offering solutions to remove barriers (induced by gender, age, class, sexual orientation, etc.). In addition, to construct thriving places means adapting developmental solutions to the cultural environment of those places (symbols, values, attitudes), and to their territorial identities (Banini and Ilovan, 2021). This is because place is a meaningful location, which embodies people's values, emotions, and experiences (Ilovan and Markuszewska, 2022) and these can support or hinder development (Raagmaa, 2002).

Considering for development people's daily routines (women and men, young and old, etc.), and their different experiences, a holistic approach to gender-sensitive territorial development should be promoted, alongside a more sustainable spatial development and social resilience. This ultimately means democratising development decisions and thus creating more humane settlements (Sánchez de Madariaga and Roberts, 2013).

In Romania, gender-sensitive territorial development and the intersectional approach to development are still under-explored topics (Ilovan and Muntean, 2021; Voiculescu and Lelea, 2023). Although critical analyses of the relationships between society and space, between socio-economic reforms and spatial processes have been done for several post-socialist countries (cf. Stanilov, 2007), the research and knowledge gap on diversity-sensitive development is far from being filled in. Because development is context-dependent,

we consider that diversity-sensitive approaches to it could provide a holistic framework for building resilient places and communities in the Romanian post-socialist society.

Moreover, the production of sustainable settlements requires much attention to the diverse resources used. The human resource, its values, motivations, cultural background, etc. are relevant in creating the strategy to develop sustainable urban and rural areas. The Romanian case is a particular one related to the issue of citizen-centred development because the Romanian society has a short tradition in democratic practices of power use for societal development (Asociatia Komunitas, 2015; Medeșan and Panait, 2017). Therefore, research and practice should aim to identify the proper mechanisms that enable social inclusion, equality and justice, in the frame of participatory gender-sensitive development and a fair shared Romanian post-socialist society.

The cultural heritage of post-socialist Romania and its gender features during the country's transition period (from 1990 to the present) need to be revisited, re-interpreted and informed by new local, regional and global trends for present and future development. Under such circumstances, the approach of gender-sensitive development could bring original solutions, where innovation is more frequent and popular and where diverse actors negotiate change. There were present such processes that activated both communities and places, really contributing to a remodelling of the Romanian physical and social spaces during the transition period, while underlining an alternative approach to development (Asociatia Komunitas, 2015; Medeșan and Panait, 2017).

But, this trend needs to be continued as it has shown that because of cultural resistance to change, long-term transformation can be achieved through mainstreaming short-term strategies and improvements, through identifying catalysts for change. In such a manner, results of scientific research and good practice examples will eventually enter policy documents and gender-sensitive develop-

ment will become a structural element of policy and implementation in Romania.

With little focus on gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive development and on intersectionality studies, the Romanian society finds itself at a moment of crisis (politically, economically, of its system of values). Among the most imminent needs that ask for solutions, there is the one related to the appropriate mechanisms to approach development where all stakeholders should participate, be heard, and make decisions in a democratic manner (Asociatia Komunitas, 2015; Medeșan and Panait, 2017; Potluka and Špaček, 2019). Gender mainstreaming and a committed approach to diversity could facilitate the cooperation between different forces (institutions, civil society, regular citizens, etc.) in participatory gender-sensitive development (Damyanovic, 2013).

Otherwise, grassroots development and empowerment are marginalised, and "systematically dispensing with the integration of the 'other' point of view is equivalent to dispensing with a greater insight" (Damyanovic and Zibell, 2013, p. 31). Therefore, considering that gender is still a key factor to discrimination, "the most resistant to change across time and space" (Sanchez de Madariaga, 2013, p. 330, quoted in Damyanovic and Zibell, 2013, p. 28) and because "planning systems and planning cultures are context-dependent" (Damyanovic and Zibell, 2013, p. 29), we underline that gender can become a cross-sectional topic in the post-socialist territorial development culture of Romania. By now, for instance, the gender perspective long debated in foreign literature (Massey, 1994) has not been integrated in Romania in urban planning either as a top-down strategy or as a bottom-up approach.

Lack of gender-sensitive or gender mainstreaming in the practice of development, and lack of real public administration support for civil society's incipient initiatives marginalise a perspective that has a real integrative value. However, there is a recent vivid discussion in Romanian society about gender issues, questioning the professional and cultural assumptions of the Romanian people. Further research

will increase chances to start changing the public culture and decision-making processes for local development, to mobilise the inhabitants more easily for participatory activities and more sensitive attitudes and practices towards the Other (different as gender, age, health, race, class, sexual orientation, etc.).

Citizens' participation can contribute to a sustainable society, promoting social equality and justice (*cf.* Treaty of Amsterdam, European Communities, 1997), where the intersectionality discourse becomes relevant also for post-socialist spaces, cultures, and lifestyles. Gender-sensitive aspects should be integrated into participatory processes where public-private-people partnerships enable sustainable development. Thus, gender mainstreaming is a way of creating or boosting the needed social capital for community development.

Only processes can help in changing structures and institutions. For instance, Zibell (2006, quoted by Wankiewicz, 2013) argues that gender equality can be supported in territorial planning. According to Zibell's method – *product, process, structure* – there are three core elements that should be changed in order to ensure gender equality in this field, which can enable sustainable development:

> "A gendered 'product' would mean gendering facts and figures, equality goals and strategies, planning objectives and measures; A gendered 'process' would include the equal participation of women and men, transparency in decision-making and would also include advocacy planning and gender expertise; A gendered 'structure' would include capacity building and sensitization within the planning community, institutional change and the integration of the topic into planning policies" (Wankiewicz, 2013, p. 140).

Nevertheless, at present, gender mainstreaming as a methodological approach is practically insignificant in Romanian development practice, as well as the women-centred one.

## 3. Proposing an agenda for further research

Future research should address the following:

(a) *Women's history and gender history* in the Romanian space

(b) *Institutional culture on gender-sensitive development*

(c) *The stakeholders* and their discourses on gender-sensitive development. What are the choreographies according to which these stakeholders successfully cooperate?

(d) Which are *the praxes and the discourses* that can determine that women and men, of all ages, have an active role in community development? How can Romanian women and men become co-producers of diverse visions on development? What are the good practices that enable long-term visions of participatory gender-sensitive development?

(e) How much are the *place attachment and the social capital* strengthened through gender-sensitive development?

In the European post-socialist space, our collective volume makes available a gender-sensitive approach to society and development in Romania. In addition, we want to underline that the gender-sensitive perspectives are just one part of a myriad of intersections and interdependences, out of which we present only a few through a series of case studies. The presented research is relevant and necessary from academic and societal perspectives. It aims to have a formative role as it renegotiates prevailing understandings and assumptions.

It also shows that researchers approaching gender studies are not part of a privileged Ivory Tower from which to observe undisturbed, analyse and discuss societal problems and development. These researchers also perform several moral duties: they raise awareness, using research data, about gender inequality, they help overcome biases (conscious or unconscious), they take action

advocating for respecting human rights (starting with respectful behaviour) and they advocate for change that leads to a more inclusive Romanian society and a better life for all.

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# Chapter 2. Gender and Nation(alism). A Useful and Necessary Historical Approach

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"[…] there is no aspect of human existence that is untouched by gender"
(Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 4)

## 1. Introduction

Gender and nationalism is not a frequent subject in Romanian historiography. Thus, our paper proposes research into the gendered construction of the nations. It has both a conceptual and methodological perspective, as well as a case study to test this theoretical apparatus. The case study examines the gendered dimension of the national movement of Romanians from Transylvanian and how it influenced and was influenced by the gender discourse of Romanian intellectuals. The general aim is to prove that gender and nation(lism) is an important historical subject that should be included in the study of modern Romanian history. What this approach brings new to the state of art is that we also introduced men as an analytical category. We considered them as gendered beings and did not focus on gender as referring to women exclusively.

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Moreover, as there are several years since our major subject of interest has been the intersection of gender and national discourses from a historical perspective, our chapter should be read as a 'summing up' of our findings, as well as a useful instrument for deepening this subject from a conceptual and methodological perspective. It also invites to debates and new fields of inquiry as we cannot pretend to have exhausted it. On the contrary, there are still research directions and themes that need further analysis, and, for sure, they will reveal how complex and generous this historical theme is.

In this chapter, we used some of our previous findings. Moreover, we considered it necessary also to make some general remarks on the state of the art of this research topic, as in Romanian historiography there are few historians who addressed it. Actually, there are few historians who work on gender history at all. The closest to the field are those who have as a primary subject of interest women's history. And we have several valuable historians on women's history, yet gender history is something different. It evolved from the first to become an independent field of inquiry. As for the gender and nation, this subject was later 'discovered' and introduced in historical analysis and when it happened the focus was first on the twentieth century and in particular the post-colonial and post-socialist era, neglecting the crucial developmental phase of modern nationalism when basic patterns were created (Blom, Hagemann and Hall, 2000).

Considering these facts, our study will approach several aspects in order to cover also the conceptual and methodological apparatus it works with. The theoretical part and the case study are approached in the same context.[2] However, for a better understanding of the subject, we first focus on the conceptual one, which includes the basic terms and analytical categories we work with.

[2] The case study is the subject of a monograph to be published soon.

## 2. In search of a conceptual apparatus: gender, gender identity, femininity, and masculinity, gender stereotypes, doing gender, nation, nationalism, national identity

Gender history is the history that takes gender into account (Cott, 2005, p. 1). It represents a relatively new, exciting, and expanding field of inquiry. It is very diverse in research topics. Among these, the analysis of the intersection between gender and nation(lism) is one of the most challenging ones. It can shed new light on the emergence of modern nations and modern notions of masculinity and femininity.

The conceptual apparatus it works with has already been defined by scholars. Most definitions are from related fields of history such as sociology, anthropology, feminism, etc. Sociologists and feminists were among the first who approached the subject. Moreover, there are differences of opinion; thus, we need to choose which definitions are suitable for our historical perspective. So, we work with the notions (and their derivatives) of sex and gender, gender stereotypes, gender roles, nation, and nationalism. These are terms with complex meanings which sometimes might confuse the reader. Historians 'borrowed' the terms and adapted them to historical research. Actually, their definitions, as well as the conceptual and methodological apparatus, proved suitable for historical investigations.

One of the first, and still a landmark in the historiography of gender history, is Joan W. Scott's article from 1986: *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis* (Scott, 1986). Her article was the starting point of what today is gender history. Her essay gained considerable attention because it articulated the centrality of gender, not simply women as a subject of historical inquiry (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 2). Thus, gender history is not an 'updated' women's history but a terser way of saying 'gender-conscious' history (Cott, 2005, p. 1). It works with both femininity and masculinity, with the evolution of human society (this means every aspect and domain of human life) by examining the relations and influences between women and men. As Meade and Wiesner-Hanks defined it, and we

find their definition of gender history the most appropriate: gender history as a field of inquiry is

> "[…] history of women and their interaction with men in a gendered world, to posit notions of the role of gender in shaping human interaction over thousands of years" (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 2).

In fact, from the 1980s, following Scott's article, women's history and historical gender analysis have exploded (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 2). Some assumptions and perspectives were corrected or nuanced. From our point of view, the most important one is the rethinking of the very notion of 'gender' as, for the past decades, scholars brought into discussion men and male experience, too.

Historians asserted that gender was an appropriate category of analysis when looking at all historical developments, not simply those involving women or the family (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011, p. 2). That is why it is also necessary to study men as gendered beings (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011, p. 88). This is just one of the reasons that argue for the importance of a gendered approach to the history of the nation-building process and the emergence of the national identity. For sure it enriches our knowledge of the past, in general, and for understanding the emergence of the national discourse and national identity, in particular.

Thus, in a historical analysis, we treat and understand gender as a cultural construct, referring mainly to the behaviour and attitudes, feelings and thoughts expected from men and women both in private and public spaces. It is to be mentioned that 'gender' is a new term and that for the historical periods we studied (that is the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century), sex is gender. The latter did not exist. Men's and women's roles in private and public spheres were considered 'natural', created by God. That is that women were born as women and men were born as men and expected to act accordingly:

> "God created the woman to be a good mother. God created the woman to be her husband's help and thus, by her nature, and it is the household where she must work and sacrifice all her strength and virtue" (Popu, 1867, p. 102; see also Fodor, 2016, p. 5).

Moreover, any deviation from these norms was considered dangerous and eventually punished by the law or community. For the study of gender roles and gender stereotypes, there is an excellent study by Simona Rodat (2017). It is not a historical approach, yet all the perspectives and definitions the author gives can be applied in any historical research, too. So, this is what we have so far, and any similar research work should consider defining gender as referring to an analysis of both women and men. In addition, there is a recent work that proposes the analysis of Europe's modern history from a gender perspective (Timm and Sanborn, 2016).

It is also to be considered that any society is gendered. Each constructs gender stereotypes which are transformed into norms, and these stereotypes are defined and modelled according to society's needs and imperatives. And they are relational. Masculinity and femininity which are defined as the features of men and women can be understood only if analysed in relation to one another (Dudnik, Hagemann and Tosh, 2004). Moreover, it should be considered that gender – though a category – implies several 'subcategories', differences, for both men and women. This is argued by both historical and anthropological research from around the world that has also provided evidence of societies in which gender was based on a person's relationship to reproduction so that adults were gendered male and female, while children and old people were regarded as different genders (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 3). This difference refers to the fact that children and the older were considered unable to take care of themselves; their incapacity placed them into a different category. Sometimes women were also included in it.

From a historical perspective, and as we will see in our case study too, women and men share the expectations of their sex which

were adapted also according to their age and social status. These are the gender roles Simona Rodat argues that the term refers to, those behaviours that are considered appropriate or acceptable to members of each gender category (men and women, respectively) (Rodat, 2017, p. 273). And which is more important, the fact that what is typical and therefore 'normal' for each gender is learned early in the life of each individual through the process of socialisation which Rodat names the process of 'doing gender' (Rodat, 2017, p. 273). That meant that children were educated to become adults in a gendered world: girls turned into wives and mothers, whereas boys became soldiers, political leaders, peasants, etc. Each was supposed to play and respect a certain way of living.

Moreover, an analytic perspective that is gender-historical should consider the reverse possibility:

> "[…] people's notions of gender shaped not only the way they thought about men and women but the way they thought about their society in general" (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011, p. 2).

This is a very important statement to be considered while researching the national discourse in the context of the emergence of modern nations and national identity.

This imposes the necessity of defining two other terms, as controversial as 'gender': what is a nation and how is national identity defined in a gendered society. Once again, this research direction was mainly introduced by historians from sociology. There is an influential work on the subject, as influential as J. W. Scott's article was for gender history: a volume written by Nira Yuval-Davis: *Gender and Nation*, 1997. The volume provides useful conceptual and methodological references to be applied in a historical perspective. This was relevant to our case study on the nation-building process at the Romanians from Transylvania. According to the author, there are three major dimensions of the nationalist projects where gender and nation intersect and influence each other:

> "[…] the genealogical dimension which is constructed around specific origin of the people or their race (*Volknation*); the cultural dimension in which symbolic heritage provided by language and/or religion and/or customs and traditions is constructed as the essence of the 'nation' (*Kulturnation*), and the civic dimensions of the nationalist projects that focuses on citizenship (*Staatnation*) as determining the boundaries of the nation" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, pp. 32-33).

The book also provides valuable critical analyses of the scholarly literature about nations and nationalism. Thus, we do not consider it necessary to insist on this aspect too, but mention only the most relevant works that determined our perspective on what a nation is.

These are also the works of A. Smith, *National Identity*, 1991, E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1872: Programme*, *Myth, Reality*, 1992 and of B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2006 (Smith, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1992; Anderson, 2006). Based on their assumptions, and mostly that of B. Anderson's, we refer to the nation as a cultural construct, thus an analytical category susceptible to historical analysis. Anderson treats the nation as an imagined community, as a construct of the *intelligentsia*. In his opinion, the elites were those who 'imagined' the basic features a nation should have as well as the roles to be played by each member of the community in the national project. And, these roles are, as other scholars argue, gender determined. So, following Andersons's reasoning, other scholars furthered the gendered perspective on nation and nationalism discourse. They introduced as an analytical subject this dimension of "nation gendered and gendered nations" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 33).

We should also mention, for Romanian historiography, the excellent article written by Enikő Magyari-Vincze who explored the subject, arguing, as Yuval-Davis did, that nationalism nationalises gender (Magyari-Vincze, 2000, p. 121). In her opinion, nationalism has the power to turn a man into a soldier, and a woman into a

martyr's mother or wife (Moran, 1995, p. 79, apud Magyari-Vincze, 2000, p. 121).

## 3. From gender history to the integration of gender as an analytical category for the study of nation and nationalism

Due to all these interdisciplinary contributions, nowadays, the study of the intersection of gender and nation evolved from a useful to a mandatory field of inquiry. As McClintock stated:

> "[…] nationalism is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse, and cannot be understood without" (McClintock, 1993, p. 63).

Moreover, any attempt to understand the emergence of the modern notions of masculinity and femininity should consider it in connection with the nation-building process. And, of course, it should be kept in mind that both men and women need the other to define their gender's identity. Likewise, the nations need 'the other' to define themselves.

Considering all these research and methodological assumptions, our intention for the present study is to prove that the nation-building process and emancipation movement of the Romanians from Transylvania should be examined taking into consideration also gender as a useful analytical category. This is actually the subject of the case study we included in this research.

Our investigation used several assumptions validated by the previously quoted scholars: that all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender (McClintock, 1993, p. 61) and that "no nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state" (McClintock, 1993, p. 61).

Moreover, we also tried to include some of the questions suggested by Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan as the authors considered that 'silence' about gender excluded many questions which are essential for understanding national identity and the

dynamics of nationalism (Racioppi and O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 33). Of these, we mention: what should we examine and pay attention to when researching the subject? If the 'nation' is imagined as a 'deep horizontal comradeship', a 'fraternity', how do men and how can women belong to this 'fraternity'? In what ways is the imagined community of the nation gendered? Who imagines the nation? When and how do women participate in this imagining? Did the nation mean something different to women and men? (Racioppi and O'Sullivan, 2005, pp. 29-30).

## 4. Nation Gendered and Gendered Nations in the context of the national movement of Romanians from Transylvania

This is the aspect that we approached – from several perspectives – in our studies (Fodor, 2011a, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). It evolved from our research interest in women's history somehow logically: while analysing the discourse on women's role in society, the national discourse and women's role in the national project as designed by the elites came naturally. Studying women's roles then evolved into a research effort of understanding how national discourse is affected by gender starting from the premise that nationalism determines a certain human profile for women and men as well.

The gender approach meant including, besides the image and debates on women, also the analysis of the discourse that determined the creation of the modern man and modern masculinity. The challenge arose in finding relevant works on the subject as Romanian historiography scarcely approached it. Indeed, we have a gendered, women-centred direction of such past events as the wars (Wingfiled and Bucur, 2006; Chioveanu, 2009; Bolovan, 2015; Ciupală, 2017); but their research is rather closer to a women's history and not to the gender history perspective.

In addition, we have a very generous literature on nation and nationalism. Relevant here are L. Maior, N. Bocșan, S. Mitu, I. A. Pop,

and K. Hitchins, just to mention the most important ones (Maior, 1986; Bocșan, 1997; Mitu, 1997; Pop, 1998; Hitchins, 2000). S. Mitu is to be mentioned as well for two more reasons. First, he used an imagological perspective, focusing on the nation and national identity (and not on the chronological perspective of events of the national movement). Indeed, his focus is on Romanians' self-representations as Romanians, but this is mainly a men's self-representation. Thus, it helps understand the discourse on masculinity as modelled by the national imperatives. The other reason is that the author also introduced, though not in detail, a gender – women-centred – analytical perspective. For instance, he discussed the views that male elites had about women as guardians of national values and purity. More recently, Simona Nicoară published a paper on women's involvement in the national cause (Nicoară, 2018).

Based on their findings, and using an interdisciplinary approach modelled, methodologically and conceptually, on the research results of foreign scholars, we explored the intersections between the discourse on gender and that on the nation. For this purpose, we delimited several *objectives*. The first one was to see how national imperatives, in the context of the national emancipation movement, determined the role and image of women and contributed to the delimitation of the feminine gender stereotype and the modern notion of femininity. Secondly, we focused on 'the other half', on how the 'ideal man' and modern masculinity emerged (and were influenced) by the national movement.

The research had well-defined chronological boundaries, from 1848 to the 1920s. This time span was deliberately chosen with the aim of showing how gender and national discourses evolve and are adjusted to society's agenda. The quite extensive period was subdivided from 1848 to 1914, with a focus on the debates around 1867 and the beginning of the Austro-Hungarian dualist regime (which accentuated the fight for the national cause as elites faced the

serious potential threat of losing the national identity). During the First World War, specific attention was on 1916 as Romanians living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were confronted with a real 'identity dilemma' because Romanians were supposed to fight against Romanians.

On the other hand, wars are masculine events, so they are compulsory for understanding and testing, all the same, the power and efficiency of the gender-nationalist discourse. We focused also on the interwar period so as to observe changes in gender and national discourse, if any. Moreover, the focus on revolutions and wars allowed us to test the assumption that 'great events' such as wars, revolutions, etc. are important in as much as they bear examining from a gender perspective as well.

So, that sex means gender and it is 'natural', that it is biologically determined, is the perspective of the age. Considering this fact, several aspects can be analysed, and we will focus on these further on. First, the study examines national discourse considering the image of the 'ideal Romanian' (man and woman) based on the assumption that any ideology involves the creation of an 'ideal human being'. Within this discourse, we can delimit the features, turned into stereotypes, of masculinity and femininity. For women's role, we need to keep in mind two aspects: first, that their image was created by male elites, and second, that women, though few in number, also started to write about their role and involvement in the national cause (a feminine, national militancy we could say). For this last issue, we need to keep in mind that the women's discourse on themselves was profoundly influenced by the male elites' perspective.

Another methodological aspect should be stressed. It refers to the historical value of the main historical sources used. These are mainly public speeches, press articles, and books about the nation written by intellectuals of the national movement. They tend to the ideal, thus what we read and see is the idealised vision of men and

women. It is the way the authors “conceptualized their world, hoped things would be, or tried to make them” (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011, p. 84).

Another aspect is to appreciate the extent of the correspondence between this ideal image of man and woman and reality. For instance, one practice was that of using the printed press as a medium of information and dissemination of these ideals. And writers used to publish portraits of personalities, men and women (contemporary and historical figures), to give them as an example of masculinity and femininity infused with patriotism. They function as living allegories, the embodiments of the perfect Romanian man and woman. In this context, we should pay specific attention to the situation within the war and in the interwar period when the cult of heroes was also a form of disseminating the image of the ideal Romanian man and woman.

So, in terms of ‘efficiency’, what we know so far (according to historical sources) is that elites made serious efforts to put into practice this ideal. And we think that they succeeded up to a certain point and, in the first place, for the middle classes. As arguments, we have, for instance, women’s views on their role and responsibilities within the national project. They write and think as the men did. The assumption can also be tested for men. See for instance the war memoirs written by men, who recall their war experience from a male perspective. But, of course, as the subject is new in Romanian historiography, these assumptions might be corrected, and, for sure, nuanced and completed.

Considering our case study, we must stress some theories, tested already in our studies:

- that for Romanian Transylvanian society the emergence of modern masculinity and femininity are closely linked with the national movement;

- that due to the statute of this community in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the modernisation process had a strong national dimension.

And as a direct consequence of this particularity, the ideal of masculinity and femininity fused with the national discourse.

- that the fight for obtaining political rights for Romanians was doubled by the fight and the striving of the intelligentsia to educate the nation. This meant the creation of a "prototype" of the good Romanian man, and, with the second half of the 19th century, of the good Romanian woman, as she had also started to be considered as an important member of the Romanian nation having a specific role to play (Fodor and Tătar-Dan, 2019b, p. 79).

## 5. Women in the nationalist discourse

The two-sided aspects this subject involves should be considered. The first refers to the fact that the image of the idealised Romanian women and their role and place in the national project was designed by male elites, and the second, that women also, though fewer in number than men, constructed, and delimited their own role within the nation and the nationalist project. For the first aspect, we can apply Nira Yuval-Davis's assumptions about the major dimensions of the nationalist projects, where gender and nation intersect (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 33). In what the women's role is concerned this is determined by Romanian intellectuals' view that women are the biological and cultural reproducers of a nation. As argued by Nira Yuval-Davis, women as the biological reproducers of the nation refers to the responsibility they are given for the physical existence of the nation. From her point of view,

> "[…] according to different national projects, under specific historical circumstances, some or all women of childbearing age groups would be called on, sometimes bribed, and sometimes even forced, to have more, or fewer, children" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 33).

There are three theories to be applied in these cases: the 'people as power' discourse, the Malthusian discourse, and the eugenicist discourse (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 33). In the historical sources available for our case study, the 'people as power', and after the Great War,

the eugenicist discourse, can be identified as significant elements in the debates on women's role and place in society. The first refers to the mostly male intellectuals' strong belief that a nation can survive and evolve only if children were born. This discourse sees maintaining and enlarging the population of the national collectivity as vital for the national interest (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 33).

In the Romanian case, there are two reasons for this feature of the national discourse: one is linked with the permanent concern that Romanians might perish in the ethnic conglomerate of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the other one is linked with modernity, with the evolution of society which favours women entering public space, as employees, or with their choice of not getting married. This creates a greater concern: that women will not fulfil their 'natural' role, and by doing so they will jeopardise the nation's future. This concern will be more powerful after the First World War:

> "I admit that the times claim rights in all the fields, yet it would be a catastrophe for a young nation … if we disturbed the family sanctuary and bring the Romanian mother and wife into the social and political fights. A mother and a wife have such power in the household and in the family that no matter how many rights we give to her nothing can overcome the force God gave her" (Vifora, 1921, p. 64; see also Fodor, 2020, p. 282).

Also, after the war, and because of it, the eugenicist discourse emerges and affects women. It aims at improving the quality of the national 'stock' by encouraging those who are suitable in terms of origin and class to have more children and discouraging others from doing so (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 33). In our case study, the interwar Romanian intellectuals promoted the 'natural' roles of women as both biological and cultural reproducers of the nation:

> "Woman and man are different beings due to their nature and role in society. They can never change roles… the role a woman and a man have in the family decides the role, equally important, each must have in public life… who does not respect these… natural laws endanger the nation's future" (Moldovan, 1927, p. 122; see also Fodor, 2020, p. 281).

This takes us to the second 'responsibility' assigned to women by men in the national project: the cultural reproduction. This refers to the nation as an 'imagined community', to what makes people feel like being part of a unity, and it is not the biological ties but the cultural ones. As Yuval-Davis argues 'people's culture and tradition', which is usually partly composed of a specific version of a specific religion and/or a specific language, is another essentialising dimension, which in different national projects acquires a significance higher or lower than that of genealogy and blood (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 34).

Romanians in Transylvania were convinced and concerned that 'national specificity' must be preserved against all the dangers and enemies that existed. What that meant was that women were to be educated so as to be able to educate the future Romanians. What this education meant was: learning the language, using it daily, instead of the foreign ones; and teaching and respecting the traditions (ancestral traditions). Actually, this cultural responsibility of women derives from the elites' perception of the nation. They understood it in the cultural sense: a community professing the same past (common past), history, customs, language, religion, and pursuing the nation's triumph in the future.

In most cases, or at least for the second half of the nineteenth century, all the authors involved in the debate, delimit women's role with a powerful religious dimension. Nation means for them also a community professing the same religion. Quite often the ones who talk and write are priests or have either a religious education or a powerful religious background. See for instance the case of George Bariț, who is one of the advocates of women's right to education but within their 'natural/biological roles', and who has a theological formation and also came from a religious family if we consider that both his grandfather and father were Greek-Catholic priests. His case, which is not singular, reveals another 'challenging' aspect for any research on the gender dimension of the national movement: that the Romanians in Transylvania were either Orthodox or Greek-

Catholic. Did they share the same image on the role of women and men within the national project? As far as we conducted our research, on the printed press, we could argue that there are not too many differences in their views on what the women's role in society and in the national project should be and that this is perhaps explained by the gender perspective all men share in what women were considered.

However, there can be noted at least a quantitative difference which could state for arguing that the Greek-Catholic intellectuals were more preoccupied with women's role and the emerging emancipation movement (some as George Bariț or Nicolae Fekete-Negruțiu wrote in or conducted magazines such as *Familia* or *Amicul Familiei* which were not religious but had a social and cultural orientation). However, the subject needs a further approach before reaching a strong conclusion.

What can be taken as a fact is that women were included in the national project due to their 'natural roles'. As a consequence, their 'burden of representation' was to transmit the national values, religion included, a fact argued by the majority of authors who considered that women should have a religious education which was the only one that could give them an impeccable morality. So, women were seen as the "bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour, both personally and collectively" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 57). And this identity and honour(ability) was modelled on the Christian values!

Moreover, the religious background also influenced the delimitation of gender roles within the Romanian nationalist discourse; this meant a strict delimitation of gender roles. Where women were concerned, they had to stay within the natural boundaries:

> "Women should never aspire to excel in men's-only positions! Instead, there is a holy circle open to every woman, a field of honours where every woman can earn modest but valuable merits, that is the family circle... the child you grow is a human being... is the nation's son. Tell him that his heart beats for the

> nation's future. Tell him these words in your mother-tongue and not in some foreign language as this cannot tell him anything about our nation" (Viritsianu, 1886, p. 176).

Moreover, this also implied controlled marital options, for both women and men, in the sense that neither was allowed, in theory at least, to marry a foreign partner: this meant losing the national identity.

So, the gender stereotypes 'nationalised' imagined women as child bearers, exclusively. They are defined by their body and sexuality. Women must give birth and educate their children in the national spirit and patriotic values. Even the most permissive men, who accepted women taking certain jobs, consider that this is allowed only after their 'natural' roles were fulfilled. This feature is more obvious after the Great War, when more women will challenge these 'natural' roles. As mentioned above, the elites will forge the key responsibilities they have to ensure the nation's future:

> "How should we educate the sons of today and the citizens of tomorrow so that they become good citizens, brave soldiers, and good Christians imbued with true Christian values? The family is the first and the most important element... and the mother [is the most important] for she is asked to form good characters" (Panaitescu, 1922, pp. 10-11).

It is worth noting as well, the fact that there is a tendency for all these authors to use the singular of the noun. It is almost always (the) 'woman' and not 'women'. This is also a valuable indicator of the male-dominant perception of the other/different sex (Fodor, 2016, p. 53). Their common views on women are perfectly integrated in the European trends inaugurated by the Enlightenment:

> "Humans were equals, but men and women were fundamentally different, a formulation of 'separate but equal' that was founded on the proposition that it was nevertheless 'natural' for men to rule and women to obey" (Timm and Sanborn, 2016, p. 28).

This is a general characteristic of the debates on gender during modern times. Educated men, who wrote about women, saw them

as an undifferentiated group about which they could easily make pronouncements and generalisations (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011, p. 86). So, women were treated as a 'category'. However, there is also a certain tendency for differentiation in class and social hierarchy. This is noticeable in the authors when they talk about peasant women who are presented as the most authentic preservers of traditional-national values (this is also part of a gender/nationalised stereotype). They are sometimes placed in antithesis with women of the middle class who were perceived as more frivolous and tempted to be corrupted by the modern way of living which the most conservative men consider to be dangerous for the nation's future.

So, in the Romanian case, we can apply the conclusions outlined by many other scholars (historians, but not only historians) that nationalism used women as symbols, especially in their role as mothers; that they served like talismans; that women's, and especially mothers' deportment, dress, and sometimes religiosity guaranteed the very survival of society which led, naturally, we might add, to the need to control women's behaviour so that their acts do not threaten the survival of the country and of everyone in it (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 170).

However, this is only one side of the story, as we have the (pre)dominant perspective on women and their role and definition within the national discourse. So, femininity has two sides: the one defined by men and the one defined by women. The second one is harder to identify due to the scarcity of historical sources, though it is not impossible to address. We should also state that in gender history studies this paucity of records led scholars to focus on male discourse. This is also visible in approaches to gender and nation.

Thus, in what follows, we outline some of the features of femininity and feminine gender stereotype as defined by Romanian women. They are a minority who, from the second half of the nineteenth century, got involved in the debates on women's role in society and in the nation-building process. Note that they express their opinions mainly in the printed press which became, the main

medium for this type of intellectual debate (Fodor, 2011b). What these articles let us conclude is that women authors tend to copy almost exactly the men's discourse on women's role and place. They think of themselves also as being responsible for the biological and cultural reproduction of the nation. They take, without opposition, the burden of representation:

> "For a nation's health... a woman must have the cult and love for family... it is the sanctuary wherefrom she can contribute to the individuality of the people she belongs to. The Romanian woman aware of her mission will become the matron of a regenerated race. From this cradle will emerge a new brave, hardworking generation aware and proud of the nation" (Baiulescu, 1901, pp. 61-63).

So, women tended, like men did, to treat themselves as a 'category'. Within the national emancipation movement, their own gender's perception is dominated by the 'natural' dichotomy of men-women. Yet, there is noticeable an urge for gender equality understood mainly as equal access to education. Women 'used' the national agenda for asking the right to be educated for the nation's sake, and this is the most important vindication they had during the second half of the nineteenth century.

## 6. Men, masculinity and nationalism: ''Big Boys Don't Cry, or Do They?'' (Fodor, 2021)

Romanians, until recently, used to have a saying 'you are not a man unless you were in the army'. Thus, they associated masculinity with military service. And by masculinity, we understand 'the way men assert what they believe to be their manhood', the 'manly' virtues such as will-power, honour, and courage (Mosse, 1996, p. 4). These were some of the key features of modern masculinity, which emerged, as Mosse argued, somewhere around the beginning of the nineteenth century and it has remained almost unchanged ever since (Mosse, 1996, p. 4). In the Romanian case, the 'ideal man' is constructed within the same context of the nation-building process.

This might not be a very easy subject to address though it might seem so. The reason for this is that there is a lack of methodological approaches.

As previously argued, until relatively recently, gender and nation studies (like gender history) were focused on women, whilst men were not treated as gendered beings. So 'men' like 'women' should be treated as a conceptual category. There are few relevant studies, though some were included in 'men's history'. However, they remain relevant today. There is G.L. Mosse's work: *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* or the volume co-edited by Dudnki S., Hagemann Karen, Tosh J., *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Mosse, 1996; Dudnik, Hagemann and Tosh, 2004). There are also a few Romanian authors: Mirela-Luminița Murgescu, *Între „bunul creștin" și „bravul român". Rolul școlii primare în construirea identității naționale românești (1831-1878)*, Mihai Chiper, *Pe câmpul de onoare. O istorie a duelului la români*, that provide useful insights (Murgescu, 1999; Chiper, 2016).

However, there is no work that deals with men as an analytical category within the national discourse, though there are numerous works on the discourse on nation and male elites involved in the national movement. This fact can be explained by the general perspective on history (as "his-story", namely a male-centred one) and without focus on their identity as men. Thus, for the conceptual and methodological directions, we must rely on the foreign scholars' results.

A working premise for such a research subject might be that the men's gender identity is defined in relation not only to women but also in relation to other men (Meade and Wiesner-Hanks, 2004, p. 88). And that within the nationalist discourse this relation to other men means both the relation to their compatriots but also, and sometimes even more importantly, to the 'others', the foreigners, be they friends or enemies.

Another important assumption is that masculinity and male stereotypes tend to remain almost unchanged over time. It is what scholars refer to as the 'normative' or 'hegemonic' masculinity which is more than an 'ideal', being assumed, widely held, and with the quality of appearing as being 'natural', just like femininity and the female stereotype (Nagel, 1998, p. 247). Within the context of the nation-building process (and this is different from the women's case), men are the ones who define the nation; then the nation-state and their view are, of course, male-centred. They perceive and define themselves according to the predominant perspective of their superiority.

If we consider Nyra Yuval-Davis's third major dimension of nationalist projects where gender and national discourses intersect, man is affected mainly by the third one which is the civic dimension (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 35). This focuses on citizenship understood as "a full membership in the community which encompasses civil, political and social rights and responsibilities" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 35). This definition is nuanced when applied to the past. For instance, Romanians living within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were struggling to gain equal rights. Thus, we understood the notion of citizenship as being the sense of duty to the nation and to the country as well.

For the present study, we limited ourselves to some broad remarks so as to facilitate a general conclusion on why gender and nation is a necessary and enlightening historical theme of research. Up to this point of our research, we focused on two aspects: the Great War and the interwar period and the challenges to 'traditional masculinity' (Fodor and Tătar-Dan, 2019b; Fodor, 2021). The reason lies in the fact that anyone interested in approaching men's history in a gender perspective should examine the discourse within the war years. Wars, in general, are 'an invitation to manliness' and the Great War was a masculine event that turned such features as bravery, courage, decisiveness, strength, and toughness of will into compulsory ones (Mosse, 1996, p. 139). During the war, Romanians

faced this test of masculinity and nationalism, no less. For those living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, citizenship translates as duty to the homeland but, after 1916, it conflicted with the sense of, and duty to the nation:

> "[…] every Romanian in our motherland... should do these days his duty in the spirit of the law and of the demands that are being asked for by these days of sacrifice... One should display a correct attitude, patriotic and prudent, worthy of our nation and our Latinity" (Mihaly, 1914, p. 1; see also Fodor and Tătar-Dan, 2019b, p. 82).

Referring to the masculine stereotype, the features of the 'ideal man' were honour, courage, sacrifice, endurance, and religiosity (Fodor, 2021, p. 1003). Actually, all these features are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness (Nagel, 1998, p. 252). Honour is the most important one, as it was during peacetime, so it was likewise during the war. What is also to be noted is that these features are defined as opposed to those of the enemies. On one hand, there is the need to prove that they are better than 'the other', in a sort of 'competitive manliness', and to prove to each other that they are 'real men'. So, it is not only the personal but also the nation's reputation that defines the male stereotype. Timm and Sanborn talk about men paying a great deal of attention not only to their personal honour and prestige but also to the honour and prestige of their nations (Timm and Sanborn, 2016, p. 160).

In contrast, there can be noticed the fear of such accusations as cowardice. It is "one of the magnets that pulls men towards patriotism, nationalism or militarism" (Nagel, 1998, p. 252). We complete the list of 'motivational' factors that led men to go to war with the masculine allure of adventure that is visible in their anticipation and often excitement, the sense of embarking on a great adventure, on the grand quest that the war represented (Nagel, 1998, p. 252).

However, a scientific endeavour that stays focused only on propaganda and discourse misses the other half of the story: that of

how men exposed to this discourse – which actually modelled their existence, from a gender roles perspective, learned since childhood – reacted and behaved when faced with the cruel reality of war. We called this 'masculinity put to a test'.

Most often memoirs and folklore reveal the shock they actually felt. An example is the poetry of the popular poet Cristofon Purecel, a corporal in the 24th regiment, author of several brochures such as *The Sorrow of the Soldier*, and *The Ordeal of the War* (Fodor and Tătar-Dan, 2019b, p. 85). The poet marked in lyrics the main moments of the leaving for war. First, there is enthusiasm:

> "Leaflet, oak/ When I left for war, I went happy and ardent as you go to a wedding or a dance… And no fear I felt" (Purecel, 1916, p. 65).

Then comes, the shock generated by the contact with the reality of the war:

> "When a grenade near me exploded, how scared I got! Then I saw it was no joke, the grenades are coming, and they do explode, I understood then I was at war. How will I ever get back home?" (Purecel, 1916, p. 65).

And finally, there is nostalgia and the longing for the home, family, and the country:

> "Dry bread at home is better than roast meat abroad" (Purecel, 1916, p. 65).

Considering these points, several questions should be asked in any approach that seeks to investigate the history of gender stereotypes and the discourse and features of masculinity from a historical perspective. How did men react when facing the real war? Did they lay down their guard, acting 'less' manly? Did they show their emotions, and doubts to their comrades, during the battles or only after the war ended and they distanced themselves from the events, but having 'accomplished' their duty? How were men's fighting experience and self-image/individuality affected? How did prisoners feel? We argue that the prisoners were put to a double test: of manhood and pride (Fodor, 2021, p. 1008). Being a prisoner could

be perceived as a confirmation of weakness which was, according to the stereotype, an unacceptable feature. Weakness and acceptance of the enemies' superiority could be perceived as an attack on one's honour, therefore unacceptable (Fodor, 2021, p. 1008).

Moreover, there is another aspect to be considered when, or if, approaching such a research subject. That is the fact that when referring to men and masculinity there is a greater heterogeneity than in the women's case. Some consider that we should use 'masculinities' rather than the singular 'masculinity' (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011, p. 88). This goes, for instance, during extreme times such as wars with the delimitation of men's roles according to their social status:

> "The intellectual gives to the soldier the consciousness of the battle he is fighting, he gives him clearer ideals, a living fantasy, an extended horizon, the choosing of a better and smarter fighting technique. In war, physical resistance is also demanded, the agility of movements, the knowledge of the paths, fields, valleys... the knowledge of scouting and crossing the natural obstacles, and here the peasant is handier, he feels more at home' (Anonymous, 1915, p. 23; see also Fodor and Tătar-Dan, 2019b, p. 86).

So, masculinity, like femininity, has general traits. They were originally based on an idea about the nature of men and women that could be reinterpreted when the social or political context changes (Weisner-Hanks, 2011, p. 99). This is the case of war and revolutions. For instance, after the Great War, the gender discourse registers a certain 'upgrade', adapting to the new context. Women and men were defined and had to act according to their 'natural' roles, which determined actually their mission in life. For instance, for men this meant respecting the 'civic' duties. The honour is now surpassed by duty. Duty to the nation-state was translated into 'becoming a good Romanian': loyal, honest, hard-working, and permanently aware that the enemies were present and constantly working against them and against the nation. Yet, the masculine stereotype also included some new features determined by social changes. But these were also seen as being compulsory for the nation's future: dynamic, efficient,

rational, and above all well-educated and in good physical condition according to the principle '*mens sana in corpore sano*' which tended to refer mostly to men.

## 7. Final remarks

For reconstructing the Romanians' past, there are enough arguments to prove that an approach which considers the intersection between gender and national discourses provides useful insights to understand the nation-building process as well as the still traditional tendency to perceive women's and men's roles in the society. Such an approach invites us to a new kind of reading of the available historical sources. Because there is plenty of evidence that can allow historians to reconstruct historically the dimensions and the importance of gender in the nation-building and emancipation process: they are diverse and generous, consisting of public lectures and discourses, memoirs and petitions, revolutionary manifestos, school curricula, etc. So, the 'traditional' records, but read from a gender-national perspective.

Above all, the most generous historical source is the printed press. Anyone who examines the articles in the journals from the nineteenth century until the interwar period might be puzzled by the complex debate on gender roles from a national perspective. The memoirs were also very important, as important as art representations and even literature (folklore, novels, short stories). All of them reflect the interest of the elites who, in the context of the nation-building process, were preoccupied with constructing an idealised image of the nations' members. Of course, their 'imagined man and woman' emerged from the general perspective of the roles men and women had. These roles, of course, were contested neither by men nor by women, as they were perceived as being biologically determined.

Thus, based on our research, we are able to outline several conclusions which also prove that in the case of the Romanian nation-

building process and emancipation movement of the Romanians from Transylvania, there is a powerful gender dimension to be considered and that this is similar to other European cases (cf. Timm and Sanborn, 2016). First, we should consider the case of the other nationalities living in Austro-Hungarian territories (Romanians from Bucovina included), and this could be another subject to be approached by scholars. But there are also common traits with those societies/nations who registered a similar national-building process. For instance, there are comparable elements with the debates in the context of the Greeks' nation-building process or the Italian one. So, the Romanian case is not unique but completes the list of societies where nationalist and gender discourses intersected and influenced each other.

Thus, we can take as facts that also for the Romanians from Transylvania modern masculinity and femininity emerged in the same historical context as nation and nationalism. At the same time, they included and determined a set of features for men and women that got standardised. These general features were 'upgraded' but only superficial in extreme moments such as wars. The dichotomy, of feminine and masculine, is also visible among Romanians in that women were defined by their responsibilities in the private sphere, in the family, whereas men were defined by their roles in public space, in society, and by their presumed superiority over women.

Their roles within the nation reflect this dichotomy as well. What is to be noted is also the tendency to treat women as a homogenous category. In their case, they are all defined by biology: they are (future) wives and mothers despite their social status. On the contrary, men tend to be a more diverse, heterogeneous category: some are intellectuals and have to act accordingly, and some are peasants, etc. These inner differences in gender categories tend to echo in women's perceptions, too. For instance, women's responsibilities were delimited according to their husbands' social status. Wives of teachers and priests were considered, as it were, as

leaders of the women's community. A subtle change in the national discourse is noticeable after, and as a consequence of the Great War.

This event affects directly the perception of gender roles. As national imperatives changed, so it had to happen with the gender roles. However, the changes are not radical, at least not in the first years after the war. For men, it is rather just a shift in the hierarchy of masculine features. As for women's roles and gender identity, the general features (as designed by men) do not change. Indeed, there is a more powerful debate about their emancipation, not only cultural but also political. But the debate, which will involve more and more women, concerns the same 'natural' roles.

All these remarks can constitute a base for future studies extended either on different chronological spans or on the Romanian society from the two Principalities and the Kingdom of Romania. The research potential is immense and should be treated as such by historians.

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# Chapter 3. Gender, State Policies and Lived Experience(s) Among Roma in Romania During the Communist Regime

Ionela-Maria BOGDAN[1]

## 1. Introduction

At the plenary session of the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee, held in June, 1973, Ceauşescu stated that the greatest honour for a woman is to give birth and raise children; thus nothing more precious than motherhood, may exist for a woman. The communist regime attempted to transform women's bodies into a public matter, by implementing coercive measures to increase birth rates. Other punitive measures followed, such as increasingly complicated divorce procedures and special taxes on those who had no children.

Conversely, the government introduced so-called progressive measures of encouraging birth rates by paying family allowances to those who had many children, celebrating mothers who gave birth to many children with medals and decorations, offering maternity leaves to young mothers, introducing special work schedules for pregnant women, and promising to build modern nurseries and kindergartens. The role of women in "building the new socialist socio-economic order" was presented as foreordained, as if it was decided by faith (Kligman, 1998, p. 43). However, one should not be misled by this romanticised view in reference to the nature of women promoted by the official discourse of the time.

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The communist state, through the pronatalist policies and discourses promoted by official channels, managed to "construct" an ideal representation of who, what and how women must be, "intruding into human sexuality and reproduction, claiming them as and for public state interests" (Kligman, 1998, p. 148). Women were "exhorted by the state to fulfil their reproductive duties" by becoming socialist mothers, a role on which they were supposed to take great pride in (Einhorn, 1993, p. 46).

However,

> "[…] many women in communist Romania tried to end unwanted pregnancies by self-induced abortions or by seeking procedures that jeopardised their health and safety, while facing jail time if discovered by authorities" (Bogdan, 2016, p. 25).

In this sense,

> "[…] women remembered traditional methods of contraception and created new strategies for terminating unwanted pregnancies, including not only 'undesired' pregnancies, but also those impossible for the mother to assume from a socio-economic point of view" (Anton, 2009, p. 110).

Until present time, the "social memory of the pronatalist times" represents a delicate subject to tackle in Romanian society (Anton, 2009, p. 111). Nonetheless, women are willing to speak their mind about this phenomenon and to share their recollections on the matter, whether they refer to personal, lived experiences or they recount experiences lived by others (Bogdan, 2016, p. 25).

This article elaborates on the manner in which the pronatalist policies were experienced by Roma women in Romania, whose accounts on the matter have been mainly disregarded by previous studies. Their personal recollections, which come to complement the narratives of non-Roma on the topic, very often include sensitive details regarding abortion practices and methods, and the reasons lying behind these decisions. Overall, Roma women shared stories of a traumatic past and the mechanisms used to "deal with it".

## 2. State of the art

At the present time, there is a vast amount of bibliography dedicated to Roma and their history, but most of it, even though it refers to them, was not produced by them. In Romania, Roma communities were brought to the fore through the early ethnographical research belonging to Ion Chelcea, in the book *Ţiganii din România. Monografie etnografică* [The Gypsies in Romania. Ethnographic Monograph], arguing that Roma should be acknowledged by placing them into different categories (Chelcea, 1944). In the volume *Ţiganii între ignorare şi îngrijorare* [The Gypsies between Ignorance and Concern], coordinated by Elena Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir, Roma communities are studied from a sociological perspective following the revolution of 1989 (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993). Sociologist Ada Engebrigtsen also brought into attention the lives of Roma people, writing a book about the Roma communities in a village in Transylvania and their relations with the locals (Engebrigtsen, 2007).

Enikő Magyari-Vincze is another scholar who wrote about the situation of Roma communities in Romania, focusing on aspects such as: discrimination, housing policies, and gender issues (Magyari-Vincze, 2006). More recently, anthropologist Cătălina Tesăr wrote about a so-called traditional Roma community in Romania: the Cortorari. Her work *Women Married off to Chalices: Gender, Kinship and Wealth Among Romanian Cortorari Gypsies* addresses specific aspects such as the tradition of early marriage and its rituals, among other topics (Tesăr, 2012). In her article *Becoming Rom (Male), Becoming Romni (Female) Among Romanian Cortorari Roma: On Body and Gender*, the same author tackles gender issues, supporting the reconsideration of the importance of physical bodies for Romani conceptions of gender (Tesăr, 2012).

A preeminent Romanian historian who wrote extensively about the Roma people is Viorel Achim, one of his most renowned works being *The Roma in Romanian History* (1998), in which he gives a historical perspective about the situation of the Roma in Romania. According to this work, the Roma had the same status as the rest of

the population. At the same time, it is suggested that some of the measures were favourable to the Roma, who benefited from jobs and housing. The work under discussion manages to make a brief overview of the situation of the Roma in Romania during the communist regime, as well as their status after 1989.

Among the scholars who researched the experiences of non-Roma women in Romania in the context of the pronatalist policies of Nicolae Ceauşescu, one should consider the work(s) of Gail Kligman who managed to make an elaborate analysis of the "politics of reproduction" during Ceauşescu's regime (Kligman, 1998). When it comes to gender and how gender designated roles developed in Socialist Romania, the work of Shana Penn and Jill Massino (2009) needs to be taken into account.

Among the contributions to the topic made by Romanian scholars, worth mentioning are the studies published by Corina Doboş and Luciana Jinga (Jinga et al., 2010), anthropologist Elena Bărbulescu (1998), and Adriana Băban (Băban and David, 1994). Unfortunately, when referring to the situation of Roma women in particular and the impact the pronatalist policies of the communist regime had upon them, the sources are extremely scarce. Nonetheless, Roma women in Romania and the impact the pronatalist policies implemented during the communist regime had on their lives were brought to the fore in the article *Talk Is not Cheap: Addressing Pronatalist Policies among Romanian Roma Women during the Communist Regime* (Bogdan, 2016). Moreover, the way Roma women relate to work environment and their participation in the labour market throughout communism were tackled in the article *Back then Everybody Used to Work: Empowering Roma Women in Romania through Work Environment. An Oral History Research* (Bogdan, 2017).

## 3. Methodology

Oral historian Alessandro Portelli stated: "oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did" (Portelli, 1991, p. 36). Thus, sharing people's narratives represents "a way of making human experience meaningful" (Scott, 2011, p. 203). Moreover, "stories provide the decorative container of narratives for everyday practices" (Certeau, 1984, p. 70).

Taking into account that the contribution of Roma communities in writing their history has been limited, oral history may be a fruitful method of obtaining coherent testimonies in regard to their past. Admittedly, one has to agree that the narratives recorded are marked by subjectivity and represent:

> "[…] a particular construction of the past and are thus mediated by the discourses to which the subject had access" (Penn and Massino, 2009, p. 15).

These ideas were further developed by Bogdan (2022). Moreover, I share the idea that:

> "[…] subjectivity is a style of oral discourse in the way that it presumes a relationship between the oral historian and the witness" (Radosav, 2010, p. 5).

I draw on the methodology of oral history to support my arguments, making reference to life story interviews mostly recorded with Roma women in different rural and urban communities from Romania. Oral history testimonies are used in a way that emphasises the individuality of each narrator, thus "diversity in interpretation is expected and enriching" (Yow, 2005, p. 260). My goal is to gain understanding on the impact of the communist regime in the lives of Roma women in Romania and highlight the transformations that took place during the time in question.

In order to gain a better understanding of the challenges met while recording oral history interviews, I find it compulsory to reflect

on the field campaigns carried throughout the time. I fully share the ideas of sociologist Ann Oakley who explained that:

> "[…] interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets" (Oakely, 1981, p. 31).

My field work began in 2015 as part of the project "The Untold Story. An Oral History of Roma People in Romania," with the aim of collecting life stories of Roma people living in different communities across the country. At that specific time, I had little knowledge about the Roma communities living in Romania. Since my research is focused on sensitive issues, being mostly based on discussions with women, represented another challenge. Moreover, I was not quite confident whether women would want to address such topics, especially in front of a recording device.

Essentially, my methodology consists of collecting life experiences in the form of stories and transforming them into scholarly work. While conducting oral history interviews among Roma communities in Romania in general, and with Roma women in particular, one should avoid universalising their shared experiences or defining them as a group due to shared dependencies. Throughout my three years of field campaigns within Roma communities and after engaging directly with Roma women, I came to subscribe to Joan Wallach Scott's opinion:

> "[…] the point of feminist inquiry has always been its refusal to accommodate the status quo. Feminism has historically resisted the consolidation of 'women' into homogeneous categories, even as it has launched political appeals in the name of 'women'" (Scott, 1999, p. XII).

## 4. Gender, state policies and lived experience(s). An overview

A new political regime was installed in Romania in 1948, defining itself as both "popular and democratic" and among its early political actions was the adoption of a law which made abortion illegal

(Kligman, 1998, p. 47). Nonetheless, between 1948 and 1957 illegal abortions continued to be performed, very often with the "tacit knowledge of the Romanian authorities" (Kligman, 1998, p. 47). Admittedly, the law was in reality difficult to apply.

In 1957, abortion on demand became legal through a decree which stipulated that "interruption of a normal pregnancy is to be done at the pregnant woman's request" (Kligman, 1998, p. 48). The authorities gave no specific reason for the passage of a law that liberalised abortion, but one of the main factors that influenced their decision was considered to be a so-called "international ideological solidarity," since many countries linked to the Soviet Block started to liberalise abortion legislation (Kligman, 1998, p. 47).

In 1965, the Romanian Ministry of Health released a study emphasising the problems faced by the Socialist Republic of Romania concerning the dynamics of natural growth and identified its three main causes to be socio-economical, socio-cultural and demographic (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 116). When it came to demographic imbalances, the high rate of divorce among couples and pregnancy interruptions represented major factors leading to the decrease in natural growth (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 116).

According to official statistics, the birth rate in the Socialist Republic of Romania had dropped significantly, this decline being directly linked by the authorities to the liberalisation of abortion in 1957 (Kligman, 1998, p. 52). Referring to this situation, Nicolae Ceauşescu, the leader of the Communist Party, emphasised in a public discourse, in 1966, that:

> "[…] throughout the last years the birth rates have decreased. Regarding this aspect, one must admit that the current legislation in our country has several gaps which favour the decrease of the number of births" (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 115).

The same year, while speaking at the National Conference of Women, Ceauşescu pointed out that the Party urged the legislators to make necessary amendments to the legislation, with the aim of

protecting the integrity of the family, increasing the responsibility towards the idea of family and caring for children, and increasing overall birth rates (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 115).

The legal basis of the pronatalist policies promoted by the Ceauşescu regime was the Decree 770 of 1966 which prohibited abortion on demand. In the preamble of the decree, it was stated that:

> "[…] the interruption of a pregnancy represents an act with grave consequences for the health of women, and it is detrimental to fertility and natural growth of the population" (Kligman, 1998, p. 53).

The same day in which the Decree 770 was promulgated, the *Criminal Code* of the Socialist Republic of Romania was revised, by adding a new article, claiming that:

> "[…] the person who by any means causes an end of a pregnancy outside the terms permitted by law commits the offense of abortion" (Bărbulescu, 1999, p. 182).

Thus, to have an abortion became a crime, an offense punishable by law.

The Decree 770 had several exceptions for which abortions were legally granted in the following cases: where the pregnancy endangered the life of the woman and no other measure could be taken, one of the parents had a serious hereditary disease that might be transmitted to the child, the pregnancy was the result of a rape or incest, the woman had severe physical, psychological or sensory disabilities, the woman had delivered and reared four children, and the woman was over 45 years of age. In order for a woman to be granted a legal abortion she had to prove that at least one of the aforementioned conditions applied to her. An interviewee offered her knowledge on the matter and explained how the decree affected her family:

> "Abortions were prohibited and only women who already had 4 children could undergo such procedure. If a woman had three children she didn't have a choice: she had to give birth to the fourth baby as well. After that, after having four children she

> could do abortions legally. Also, if the woman had a child who was over 18 years old and three who were underage she couldn't have an abortion, assuming she was pregnant. So... all four children had to be underage. [...] Take the example of my mother: she already had four children but my older brother was 21 years old and by mistake, my mother got pregnant once more... she was 41 at the time, it wasn't appropriate for her to have another baby but she didn't have a choice, at 41 years old she gave birth again. Trust me, they destroyed many lives because of this law. I think the day when this decree was outlawed in '89, represented the happiest day in most women's lives" (A.Z., 2015).

A woman in such a situation had to have her family doctor complete a form titled "Form for the interruption of the development of a pregnancy" containing details on the woman's personal history, confirmation of the pregnancy and the reasons for which an interruption of pregnancy was recommended. Assuming that the woman was already in hospital, her attending physician would be the one completing the form. After that, the woman had to present herself in front of a medical board formed by a chairman – very often a primary physician or an obstetrician-gynaecologist, or in exceptional cases a surgeon, a primary physician or internist and a secretary which very often was a nurse (Kligman, 1998, p. 55). The committee would record the woman's request and after that, a process of deliberation would begin. The decision of the board would be added to the woman's file; if the decision was positive, the woman would be admitted and scheduled for an abortion. If the request for an abortion was rejected, her file was returned to her family doctor who had to closely supervise the stages of the pregnancy (Kligman, 1998, p. 55). Moreover, the decision of the board was final, as it was impossible to appeal its rulings to a higher court.

A briefing made by the Department of Health from the year 1967, shortly after the Decree 770 was put into effect, revealed that in the first nine months of 1967 the medical boards throughout the country denied around 2,800 requests for interruption of pregnancy

and approved around 4,300 such requests (Berindei, Dobrincu, and Goşu, 2012, p. 334).

One of my interviewees described her experience of requesting a legal abortion:

> "I tried for a whole month to end a pregnancy I did not want. I already had five children, so I was eligible for a legal procedure. Also, I couldn't raise another child, it was too much. I had to go to work to support them. So, I went in Tulcea for the curettage. I'm not exaggerating, for a whole month I kept trying to obtain the permission to do it. I had a bag full of documents and they kept sending me from one place to another. Finally, I arrived in front of that commission [she refers to the medical board]. There were so many of them, I think there were maybe twelve people there. I felt as if I had committed a crime and they wanted to condemn me for it. And they kept asking questions… God, I was nervous. I kept thinking: What if one of these people will say 'No'? What then? How will I manage then? I was a complete nerve wreck. I kept thinking that I already had a small baby at home; he was only three months old. It was impossible for me to keep that pregnancy. I just couldn't do it… Everything depended on what the last doctor would say. I knew his decision is final. Finally, I was lucky. They said 'Yes'. I was finally out of the woods. I was free" (E.M., 2016).

Such a testimony can convey the general feeling of fear and uncertainty women must have felt throughout the process of being granted the permission for a legal abortion. Most likely, the medical board did not comprise twelve people, but her over dimensioned perception emphasises the impact this event had on her life and its long-term effects on it. Moreover, her experience points to the process of transforming one's private life into a public affair or as the interviewee said, into a trial in which someone else was entitled to decide upon her life and future.

Normally, a legal abortion was permitted in the first trimester of a pregnancy in exceptional cases. If a woman opted to end a pregnancy arguing she was 45 years of age or over she had to provide

documents that proved her claim, in this case, identity papers. Women who wanted an abortion claiming they have had delivered and reared four children had to provide, in addition to their identity papers, the birth certificates of their children. In situations of rape or incest, women needed to have certificates issued by the proper authorities verifying the claims (Kligman, 1998, p. 57). In such cases, the bureaucratic procedures of obtaining the justifying documents usually took more than three months which means that even though women were victims of a rape or incest and could prove it, they were unable to interrupt the pregnancy because they had passed the first trimester of pregnancy. This "bureaucratic barrier" was to be overcome by accelerating the procedures through which women could obtain the documents needed to prove their situation (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 138).

The Article 6 of the Decree 770 offered clarifications in regard to practices associated with abortion being at the same time considered controversial due to the fact that the language used was rather ambiguous and left room for interpretations when it came to the correct procedure in cases of emergency. This aspect enabled both women and doctors to use the decree in their advantage, managing in many cases to "justify the legality of terminating a pregnancy" (Kligman, 1998, p. 57). Thus, in cases of emergency when an abortion had to be performed immediately, the doctor was:

> "[…] obliged to inform the prosecutor in writing before beginning it, or, if that is impossible, within 24 hours after having done it" (Kligman, 1998, p. 57).

In cases where the doctor failed to comply with this regulation, he could face a sentence of up to three months in correctional prison.

The Decree 770 failed to coherently clarify the actions to be taken when an underage girl was detected as being pregnant. The decree itself did not offer any guidelines on how to proceed in such cases, but it was decided that the Medical Board had full authorisation to decide if an abortion procedure should be performed on girls who were between 12 and 16 years of age, and

that a special attention should be given to pregnant girls between the ages of 12 and 14 (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 139). In the minutes from a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1966, one of the officials suggested the decree should:

> "[…] provide some stipulations in regard to girls under 15 years old but not make it public since they do not want to promote a loose morality among young people" (Berindei, Dobrincu, and Goşu, 2012, p. 205).

A briefing issued by the Department of Health in 1967 vaguely mentions that throughout the year abortion procedures were performed on women between 15 and 49 years of age, but it failed to clarify how many underage girls were submitted to that procedure (Berindei, Dobrincu, and Goşu, 2012, p. 333). The same briefing stipulated that the decree could offer the possibility of pregnancy termination to underage girls.

The Decree 770 did not carry out any regulations regarding the use of contraceptive methods, but after this law, they became unavailable, simply by being withdrawn from the market (Bărbulescu, 1999, p. 182). The relevant authorities being in control of these issues promoted the idea that modern contraceptives, such as the pill or intra-uterine devices, should be "rationally used" thus being available only when prescribed by doctors and only under special circumstances (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 155). At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from August, 2nd 1966, the subject of contraceptive methods was raised, being characterised as "dangerous" and "full of negative effects" (Berindei, Dobrincu, and Goşu, 2012, p. 168).

Women had the possibility of acquiring intra-uterine devices, birth control pills or condoms on the black market, but the high prices combined with the difficult process of obtaining them, made contraceptives inaccessible for most women (Kligman, 1998, p. 65). Import represented another possibility of acquiring them since they were allowed through the Romanian customs; thus, people who had relatives abroad in countries such as Hungary and financial means

were able to obtain a variety of contraceptives, especially condoms (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 157). Nonetheless, according to testimonies of medical personnel:

> "[…] before 1989 contraceptives acquired on the black market were of poor quality; Russian birth control pills were accompanied by unpleasant secondary effects. The intrauterine device obtained from Poland was one with a loop, so it was a source of irritation and vaginal bleeding" (Kligman, 1998, p. 156).

A Roma woman recalled:

> "Abortions were not allowed back then. But if women had the possibility of protecting themselves it would have been different. They didn't give you those medicines, those treatments. You couldn't find anything. I don't believe these methods didn't exist, I rather think they didn't want people to know about them, to use them. You couldn't find these medicines in pharmacies; they didn't commercialise them, whereas now you can find them everywhere. […] I think women would have used contraceptive methods if they would have had access to them. They would have used them and not resorted to that other stuff" (D.J., 2016).

Illegal abortion became "the most viable method of family planning" (Kligman, 1998, p. 65) as a result of the unreliability of traditional methods of birth control. According to statistics, in the 1970s, the calendar method was very popular being used by more than 40% of the couples while the popularity of temperature curves was lower due to lack of information regarding it (Jinga et al., 2010, p. 164). Women also used "natural methods of contraception," applied locally which included water with vinegar, soap, sponges, aspirin, water with lemon or baking soda. When it came to these types of methods of contraception, an interviewee from a Cortorari community pointed out:

> "There were special things young people used in order to avoid pregnancies, but you had to know about them. Women used this medicine [she refers to aspirin], you would put this medicine down there after you washed. [...] Before and after the sexual

> contact and you were fine, you didn't have anything. But you had to know about it..." (B.Y., 2015).

The rate of success of this type of methods was highly questionable and more often than not they proved to be unreliable. As a result of lack of information and access to real contraceptive methods, women used abortion as a viable method to avoid the birth of more children instead of considering it a last resort option.

At first, the Decree 770 had the expected results, since the number of births increased. According to official statistics in 1967, the number of live births almost doubled compared to the preceding year (Kligman, 1998, p. 58). In a briefing issued by the Department of Health in 1967, the first results of the implementation of the Decree 770 were detailed. Overall, the measure proved to be extremely successful as it resulted in the national population growth index, which increased with several percent in comparison to the previous year. As far as the number of births goes, it almost tripled in comparison to the previous year.

The process of transforming the private life of its citizens into a public matter seemed successful until after the year 1968 when the number of live births slowly started to decline again. Despite all attempts from the communist state to strictly apply the regulations of the Decree 770, people found methods to resist it and regain control over their private lives. Nicolae Ceauşescu's speech at the National Conference of Women in 1973 emphasised that women had a:

> "[…] distinguished role and a noble mission" of bearing children for the nation and assuring "the formation of healthy and robust generations profoundly devoted to the cause of socialism" (Kligman, 1998, p. 59).

The changes made to the regulations of the Decree 770 mirrored the need to preserve the appearance that the communist state viewed the wellbeing of its citizens as a main priority. At the same time, it gave the impression that the pronatalist policies put into place are effective. In reality it felt as if:

> "[…] the body and those who came into contact with it required constant supervision and surveillance" (Kligman, 1998, p. 61).

The conditions for which an abortion was granted remained the same as in 1966, except for the age at which women could be eligible for this type of procedure: if in 1966 women could be granted an abortion at the age of 45, in 1972 the age lowered at 40 (Kligman, 1998, p. 61). Overall, this measure did not affect the goal of increasing birth rates, since:

> "[…] the proportion of live births for women in the over-40 category, weighed in terms of the total number of live births, was insignificant" (Kligman, 1998, p. 61).

A need for improved medical care for women in fields such as obstetrics and gynaecology were also addressed in the new revisions. At a first glance, this may suggest an actual concern on behalf of the communist state for the health of its female citizens while in fact:

> "[…] these measures served as a pretext to extend the State's means of control over the reproductive lives of women" (Kligman, 1998, p. 64).

As an immediate consequence, mandatory gynaecological exams to all salaried women were put in place and conducted periodically.

The pronatalist measures entered into their final phase in 1983, as the government policies became more aggressive and repressive than they had ever been before (Kligman, 1998, p. 67). By this time, the number of live births had dropped yet again, and at the same time the living conditions of the population deteriorated. While Nicolae Ceauşescu restated his desire to pay in full the country's foreign debt, the people suffered the consequences: limited heat and electricity, rationalised food, enormous queues for purchasing basic goods, and the list can easily go on.

In this context of economic hardship, the Decree 770 was revised and the age at which women were eligible to get an abortion was raised again to the age of 45 years. Moreover, the "improved"

version of the decree stipulated that the interruption of a pregnancy could be granted if "the woman has delivered five children and has them in her care" (Kligman, 1998, p. 68). Thus, the conditions in which a woman could ask for the interruption of a pregnancy became stricter by increasing the number of children delivered, from four, as was stipulated in the 1966 version of the decree, to five. If one takes into consideration the living standards of the people at that time, it can be easily presumed that the new demographic policies were impossible to uphold and worked to the detriment of the citizens.

The banning of abortion in 1966 constituted the foundation of Ceauşescu's demographic measures. The family values and so-called desire to provide a safe and healthy environment for women and families had in fact a strong political character and were put into effect by using the force of law. By legislatively enforcing its pronatalist policies, the state legitimised its political will and made the intrusion into people's private lives legal. The manner in which this decree affected the lives of many Roma women throughout the communist regime, it is clearly reflected in the following testimony:

> "I have 5 children: 3 boys and 2 girls. I gave birth to all my children at the hospital. We weren't that uncivilised, we had basic conditions, a midwife would come home to check on the children and so on. [...] Because of that [she refers to the fact that undergoing abortions was prohibited] I had 5 children. Yes, it was mandatory [to have children]. At first, you had to have 4 children, so after giving birth to 4 children I was eligible for a legal abortion which I did, actually I think I had 2 abortions. After that, you had to give birth to 5 children in order to have an abortion afterwards. I gave birth to my fifth child in the year Ceauşescu died. [...] Back then life was so difficult, it was hard to raise 5 children. Nowadays it proves to be easier. We worked a lot during that time, as well as we work today but life was harder. [...] Many women died undergoing illegal abortions, but I didn't do something like that. I was afraid to do it because I didn't want to die and leave my other children alone. If they would catch you, it would have been really bad: you could go to jail, as well as the people who helped you. [...] Even though we were poor, I managed to raise my children.

> Moreover, in the end, it would be useless to undergo illegal abortions: one way or the other you had to give birth, you had to have children. The women in my community used to give birth to 5 children in order to comply with the law. After that, they could do whatever they wanted to" (Stanache, 2015).

## 5. Conclusions

The pronatalist policies implemented during the communist regime in Romania are considered, in the literature on the topic, as abusive means through which the state restricted the individual freedoms of citizens, intervening in their private lives. The basis for the pronatalist policies was Decree 770/1966, which outlawed artificial interruptions of pregnancies with few and very specific exceptions. The decree underwent numerous changes throughout the communist era, its provisions becoming increasingly restrictive as time went by.

A number of punitive measures were added to the decree: a so-called celibacy tax was imposed on unmarried persons; it hindered divorce proceedings and set up regular mandatory gynaecological checks for female workers. At the opposite end, the traditional family with many children was strongly promoted in official discourses and media reports, as well as by providing special childcare allowances or rewarding women with many children with "Heroine Mother" medals and other distinctions.

The immediate impact of the prohibition of pregnancy interruptions resulted in an increase in birth rates, but lasting effects were devastating: a large number of women turned to clandestine abortions under insalubrious conditions, risking their lives and freedom. The situation of Roma women was not much different from that of the majority, many of them opting for illegal interruptions, being unable to raise many children. The liberalisation of abortions took place immediately after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989.

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**Oral history interviews**

A.Z., interview by author, audio file, no. 1357 (OHIA), Craiova, Dolj County, 13.08.2015.

B.Y., interview by Sînziana Preda, audio file, no. 1101, (OHIA), Bîrghiş, Sibiu County, 06.06.2015.

D.J., interview by author, audio file, no. 1550 (OHIA), Toflea, Galaţi County, 21.07.2016.

E.M., interview by author, audio file no. 1597, (OHIA), Măcin, Tulcea County, 09.08.2016.

Stanache Agripina, interview by author, audio file, no. 1355 (OHIA), Craiova, Dolj County, 13.08.2015.

# Chapter 4. Looking Back for the Future. Marriage in Romania

Iulia-Elena HOSSU[1]

"Marriage constitutes the ideological basis of social and sexual relations, transforming them by restructuring identity and social action" (Kligman, 1998a, p. 74)

## 1. Introduction[2]

With a history in which the private life was dominated by the rough policy of the socialist state (see Verdery, 1996; Kligman, 1998b), the post 1989 Romanian society has not succeeded yet to erase its marks from people's mentality. Great attention should be cast on the definitions of marriage, as the past years showed a division in Romanian society triggered by the disputes on the issue of how the word 'marriages' should be defined in Romanian legislation. These polemics revealed the importance of this subject for the present-day Romanian society and the bounding between the political transformations and the private life, the cleavage between tradition and daily practice, and the way in which the legislation influences the practices.

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[2] My thanks go to Alexandru Mihai Burlacu for translating the text into English and to Elena Bărbulescu whose observations and comments helped me reach this final form of the text.

Furthermore, the analysis of the way in which marriage and family, two interconnected concepts in the Romanian social mentality, have been defined, modelled, and formulated over time by the main legislative provisions in Romania is necessary for the actual context, both national and global, increasingly divided on the issue of family and privacy.

Romania is a special case among the former communist states, also in terms of how it used what traditional society provided, namely a deeply patriarchal tradition. As Bărbulescu (1999) illustrates in her work, there are even in nowadays Romanian society a series of clichés and stereotypes that still maintain a certain image of women, an image that proverbs also reflect. Romanian proverbs, as common knowledge, enforce at the level of mentality that women should obey men, that motherhood is their aim in the world, and that the woman is weak and a man should always lead her (Bărbulescu, 1999, p. 484).

Exploiting the strong link that existed in the traditional social mentality, between marriage, family, and woman (Hossu, 2011), the totalitarian state based its interventions at the legislative level supported by this social history, burdening women with the pro-natalist policies it has adopted. As G. Kligman observed, in Romania:

> "[...] women's participation in the national economy, polity, and society, as workers and mothers through forced egalitarianism, as some have labelled it, created the classic double burdens of work in the state sphere and in the home. In Romania, the customary double burdens became triple ones when childbearing was declared a patriotic duty" (Kligman, 1998b, p. 25).

And as the children's birth, from the perspective of the totalitarian state, had to take place only in the formal framework of an existing family, respectively of a marriage, the third burden that women in Romania came to endure influenced and formulated, often at a dramatic level, the way in which marriage was perceived, projected, and experienced daily by social actors.

On the current territory of Romania, till 1864 when the *Civil Code* appeared, marriage was under the protection of the Church which, through local priests, took care of the making and dissolution of marriages. The *Civil Code* will regulate the main aspects related to marriage for more than half of the twentieth century. By adopting Law no. 4/4 January 1954, the "About persons" part of the *Civil Code* is repealed, and the *Family Code* comes into force. The *Family Code* remains in force until October 1st, 2011, when it is repealed with the issuing of the new *Civil Code*. Currently, the *Civil Code* regulates the main aspects related to marriage in Romania. Civil marriage precedes religious marriage, and only the civil marriage entails the legal effects arising from the conclusion of the marriage.

Starting from the premise that in order to better understand the present it is necessary to look back in the past, this study reflects on the most important legal provisions that the state imposed on the social in Romania between 1965 and 2000 regarding some of the issues related to the marriage sphere. Particular emphasis will be laid on the experience of women, as they are the main target of the pro-natalist policies of the totalitarian regime.

Taking into account the main legislation regarding marriage, and implicitly family, the analysis will give a special space to the way in which these legislations influenced and formulated the dimension of the private life of the social actors in the communist and post-communist period. The article reflects on the way in which women in particular were the ones most affected by the policies of the totalitarian regime, a situation perpetuated at the social level also after 1989. The study is based on bibliographic research on the subject, and rounded up with legislation review and analysis.

## 2. General landmarks

### 2.1. Marriage – a heterosexual institution

Marriage in Romania is the basis for creating a new family, in addition to the one of origin. When people[3] are asked about the family, they invoke marriage in most cases. According to juridical doctrine, there are three functions of the family in Romania: the perpetuation of the species, the educative and the economical function (Popescu, 1965). Some authors argue that *familial solidarity* could also be added to these functions (Albu, 1998). In conformity with the juridical and common norms, *family exists only in the parameters of the marriage it is based on.*

Marriage in Romania is a heterosexual institution. Same-sex marriages are prohibited, and marriages outside their scope are not recognised, and there is no regulation at the legislative level that provides an alternative to non-heterosexual couples. On the one hand, this can be an indicator of society's resistance to change. Moreover, same-sex civil partnerships are explicitly unrecognised, by law (a situation similar to Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia):

> "Civil partnerships between persons of the opposite sex or of the same sex stipulated or contracted abroad either by Romanian citizens or by foreign citizens are not recognised in Romania" *(art. 277* Civil code 2011).*

[3] Interviewees consulted during more than ten years of qualitative research dedicated to the subject of marriage and family in Romania. Although I did not use a method of constructing a representative sample (in the sense used by the quantitative literature), the subjects were selected considering the coverage of a wide social field: different backgrounds (rural / urban), different levels of education, age groups, marital status, etc.

## 2.2. Marriage and family: religion and legislation

The history of the institution of marriage on Romanian territory is defined by two major actors: the Church and the state. If for a long time, the Church was the one that had the defining role, currently the state is the one that plays the major role in defining and formalising it, the Church moving into a secondary role. Despite this, the Church continues to exert an important influence on how marriage is defined.

In Romania, family law is a freestanding legal branch, starting from January 1954 (Law no. 4). Family law stipulates the most important aspects regulating the main dimensions of marriage. There are, however, at the level of other legislative sectors – constitutional, administrative, civil or employment law – certain issues that refer to the matter of marriage. Currently there is no single generally accepted definition of family. There is some malleability in the way the family is defined, depending on the social dimension (contracting the marriage, divorce, inheritance, reproductive rights, etc.) it can reach. At the legislative level, however, the concept of family is used in a rather restrictive way, including only the wife and the husband, together with minor children. Quite rarely other categories of people are added to this definition (Bacaci, Dumitrache and Hageanu, 2002). In fact, throughout history, the main social studies regarding the family on the Romanian territory have taken into account only the category of parents and children (cf. Costa-Foru, 1954; Stahl, 1959; Constantinescu, 1987).

In the Romanian Constitution, the family is described:

> Art. 48 "(in-line 1) The family is founded on the freely consented marriage of the spouses, their full equality, as well as the right and duty of the parents to ensure the upbringing, education and instruction of their children."

In the *Family Code*, effective until 2011 and currently in the *Civil Code*, marriage is defined as follows:

> Art. 259. "(1) Marriage is the freely consented union between a man and a woman, contracted according to the law."

This definition clearly stipulates that a legal union, from which rights and obligations derive, can only be achieved by a woman and a man.

Although there are European countries where religious marriage also entails civil effects (Greece, England, Finland, Denmark, Italy, Ireland, Spain), in Romania, only civil marriage entails the legal effects deriving from contracting a marriage (Constantinescu, 2010, p. 53). Despite the fact that the Orthodox Church tried to impose the same model, in Romania, religious marriage cannot be performed without the document certifying the civil marriage, the only type of marriage that entails legal rights and obligations. The Constitution of Romania currently states the following:

> "Religious marriage can only be celebrated after civil marriage" (art. 48 in-line 2) (Constantinescu, 2010, pp. 45-51).

In the *Canonical Code*, marriage is defined as:

> "[…] the alliance of man and woman, a life communion ordered by its nature towards the welfare of the spouses and the birth and education of children" (*Canonical Code*, 1983).

The main provisions regarding civil marriage are given by the family law. In the specific case of the Orthodox Church,[4] the Canonical Collection established at the Ecumenical Synod from Constantinople in 920, together with the legislation of each local church belonging to ecumenical Orthodoxy, provide the rules referring to the religious union of the spouses.

[4] Romania is a preponderantly Orthodox country. According to the 2011 census, 86.45% of the population declares to belong to Orthodox religion. For details about the structure of population in Romania and its religious affiliation, see: http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/08-Recensamintele%20despre%20religie_n.pdf (accessed August 17, 2021).

## 2.3. Marriage, family, and women in the Romanian studies

There are several expressions in the Romanian language in which the terms *familie* (family), *căsătorie* (marriage) and *casă* (house) appear in connection and which demonstrate the connection between them. Examples in this sense: "*s/he formed her/his own family," "s/he has gone to her/his house," "s/he has made sense of her/his life,"* etc. In addition to these expressions, a detail that comes from the history of the language suggests a deep connection at the level of the Romanian language between the term family and that of woman, respectively. As V. Scurtu also mentions, the primary meaning of the term *femeie* (woman), used until the 17th Century, is that of "family; people in a house" (Scurtu, 1966, p. 170).

Nowadays, despite major social processes affecting the Romanian society – among the most important are migration and the transnational experience of family life affecting almost every family in Romania – marriage legislation implemented since October 1, 2011, with the issuing of the new *Civil Code*, is far from covering existing social realities. The reformulation of the legislation remains obsolete as it is ignoring an important part of the present social realities.

With the fall of the totalitarian regime, research on the communist and post-communist periods highlighted the effects that Ceauşescu's regime produced on all dimensions of the lives of people who lived under this regime. The period of the totalitarian regime is recognised for the terror it provoked by means of political and religious persecutions, going so far as to commit crimes in the name of the Party's ideals. But beyond that, the regime will go down in history as the promoter of unprecedented policies, and with visible effects to this day, regarding the history of private life.

A series of studies evokes and analyses how the pro-natalist policies of the Ceauşescu regime affected the lives of couples, the experience of intimacy and the effects that the ban on abortions policy without any other contraceptive education had especially on women (Bărbulescu, 1998; Kligman, 1998b; Băban, 1999, 2000).

Other researchers reflected on the need to institutionalise such studies and research in the Romanian academic sphere (Magyari-Vincze, 2002a, 2002b; Miroiu, 2004; Băluță, 2020).

In recent years, there is also a concern of several researchers in the field of history in order to recover the history of women in Romania, by studying, analysing, and indexing archive materials from different eras. Documents ignored by studies so far are beginning to see the light of day through the efforts of passionate female authors (Vintilă-Ghițulescu, 2004, 2006; Roman, 2016).

In line with the studies mentioned above, this chapter aims to illustrate how the definition of marriage and the main legislation on family life, during the communist period, that added to a patriarchal tradition in the traditional Romanian society, have left their major mark on the lives of women in Romania. At the same time, the analysis will take into account the legislation in force that continues to influence the way in which social actors define and experience their family life in today's Romanian society.

In the following, we will consider the history of this law making, emphasising the need for more future complex analysis that target several dimensions which compose the experience of privacy: daily individual and community experience, couple relationships, social context, policies, and legislation that create the general framework.

## 3. Marriage on the Romanian territory: legislative landmarks in the period 1864-1954

On the current territory of Romania, till 1864 when the *Civil Code* appeared, marriage was under the protection of the Church which, through local priests, took care of the making and dissolution of marriages.[5]

[5] See Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu (2004; 2006), and Nicoleta Roman (2016) authors of some volumes that treat the subject from a historical perspective.

At the beginning of the 20th century (1901-1918)[6], different laws were in use in the Romanian principalities. The *Civil Code* that came into force on December 1, 1865, was also called the *Code of Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, after the ruler under whose governing the code was developed and adopted. This code replaced the *Calimah Code* of Moldova, which had been in force since 1817, and *Caragea Law* in Walachia, which had been in force since 1818 (Dumănescu, 2017, p. 47). With the end of the First World War, the *Civil Code* came into force in the provinces newly annexed to Romania: Bucovina (1938), *Romania across the Carpathians* (1943), and later, in the territories of Northern Transylvania restored to Romania (officially in 1947). (Iordana, 2016, p. 176). The *Civil Code* will regulate the main aspects related to marriage for more than half of the twentieth century.

As Dumănescu demonstrated in her work, the legislation on marriage during this period has a strong patriarchal character, granting few rights to women:

> "Chapter VI of the *Civil Code* referred to the rights and duties of the husbands and proclaimed the authority of the man in the family. Article 195 stated that the woman should obey her husband, while article 196 obliged her to follow her husband wherever he considered appropriate. Also, the woman could not sue anyone without the consent of her husband […]" (Dumănescu, 2017, p. 49).

## 4. Marriage during the communist period

In 1947, the Romanian Communist Party was established in power.[7] The setting of the communist regime led to major transformations in

[6] 1918 is the year of the Great Union of the historical provinces inhabited by the Romanian population and the creation of the national state of Romania.

[7] It has known different names over time: in the period 1921-1945 – the Communist Party of Romania, 1947-1965 – the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR). From 1965 to 1989, PMR becomes the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) again.

society. These changes will also be reflected in the amendments to the *Civil Code*. These are, in the first phase, well received by the majority of the population, and women are the ones who receive equal rights with men and also with regard to marriage. Over time, the Code has undergone various changes and, at least in theory, women have become equal to men in front of the law. In 1948, the new communist regime, concerned about the need for labour for industrialization and the declining population after the war, banned abortion (Băban, 2003, p. 305).

By adopting Law no. 4/4 January 1954, the "About persons" part of the *Civil Code* is repealed, and the *Family Code* comes into force. The *Family Code* remains in force until October 1st, 2011, when it is repealed with the issuing of the new *Civil Code*. The *Family Code* contained regulations regarding three components that defined the family in the communist perspective: I *Marriage*, II *Kinship* and III *Protection of the disabled, those with limited capacity and other persons*. Equal rights and obligations of spouses during marriage are stipulated by this code for the first time:

> Art. 1 "In the Romanian People's Republic, the state protects marriage and the family and protects the interests of the mother and child. The family is based on freely consented marriage between spouses. In the relations between spouses, as well as in the exercise of the rights towards children, the man and the woman have equal rights" (*Family Code*, 1954).

The *Family Code* and a number of decrees (Decree 770/1966; 779/1966, Decree 409/1985, etc.) introduced after this date will be used as tools in what will later be called in the social history literature Ceauşescu's demographic (pro-natalist) policies. Our observation complements this literature and argues that all these provisions must be considered when we analyse the issue of the institution of marriage in Romania and how women, more than their partners, were the most affected by these legislative provisions.

Thus, we consider that the topic of marriage in the period (1965-1989) can be outlined by addressing certain legislative

dimensions that define the experience of the couple's private life under the totalitarian regime. As one researcher points out, the state takes over the authority in the field of privacy, regulating through pro-natalist public policies the sphere of the couple's intimate life (Kligman, 2000, p. 144).

Furthermore, as Bărbulescu demonstrates, the totalitarian regime in Romania based its pro-natalist policy on the very institution of the family. And a large part of the visible actors of the society that glorified the family brought their contribution to this policy, at the same time condemning celibacy, couples without children, and abortions (e.g., the writer Zaharia Stancu) (Bărbulescu, 1999, pp. 178-179).

Of course, we cannot omit the fact that we can contrast these regime-glorifying voices with voices that find in their art an alternative space for the manifestation of different opinions related to these regulations of private life. An eloquent example comes from one of the great poets of the time, Ana Blandiana:

*Children's Crusade*

> A whole people / Unborn yet / But condemned to birth, / Fetus next to foetus, / A whole people / That does not hear, does not see, does not understand, / But advances / Through the writhing bodies of women, / Through the blood of mothers / Unasked. (Blandiana, 2019, p. 317) (in Romanian: *Un întreg popor/ Nenăscut încă/ Dar condamnat la naștere,/ Foetus lângă foetus,/ Un întreg popor/ Care n-aude, nu vede, nu înțelege,/ Dar înaintează/ Prin trupurile zvârcolite de femei,/ Prin sânge de mame/ Neîntrebate*.)

There are several legislative provisions on which it is necessary to focus our analysis when discussing the issue of marriage during the Ceauşescu regime. In the following, we will analyse those that we consider having had the greatest impact on the way in which marriage (family and couple) came to be experienced and reformulated in everyday life in the Romanian society even after the fall of the regime.

The starting point of our analysis consists in what N. Ceauşescu stated in the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party on August 2, 1966:[8]

> "In my opinion, by the decree legalising abortions we legalised prostitution through abortions and by allowing divorce…"

The decree referred to here is 463/1957, a decree approving on-demand abortion in Romania, and that was in force at that time. The transcript of this meeting gives us an important clue as to the 'morals' of the Party leader and the line he will follow from that period in the promoted policies.

As a result, in 1966, by Decree 770, abortion was banned with very few exceptions. Women had access to abortion only under the following conditions:

> "a) the pregnancy puts the woman's life in a state of danger that cannot be removed by any other means; b) one of the parents suffers from a serious illness, which is inherited, or which causes serious congenital malformations; c) the pregnant woman has severe physical, mental or sensory disabilities; d) the woman is over 45 years old;[9] e) the woman has given birth to four children and is taking care of them; [10] f) the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest" (Art. 2 / Decree 770/1966).

Decree 779/1966 amended some legal provisions regarding divorce. The decree also introduced the welfare of the child who

[8] Apud Tismăneanu, Note 15, p. 512 – *Stenograma şedinţei Comitetului Executiv al CC al PCR din ziua de 2 august 1966* [Transcript of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC of the RCP on 2 August 1966]*, Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie, dosar nr. 102/1966, f. 23*.

[9] The age at which an abortion can be performed has undergone changes ranging from 40 to 45 years.

[10] And this number has changed so that in the 1980s the number might have been five children alive under the age of 18.

preceded the welfare of the two spouses by amending Art. 1 as follows:

> "In the Socialist Republic of Romania, the state protects marriage and the family; it supports, through economic and social measures, the development and consolidation of the family. The state defends the interests of the mother and the *child* and shows special care for the *upbringing and education of the young generation.*" (our emphasis)

Article 37 of that decree reads as follows:

> "Marriage shall be terminated by the death of one of the spouses or by the judicial declaration of the death of one of them. The marriage can be dissolved, *in exceptional cases*, by divorce." (our emphasis)

And Article 38 provided:

> "The court can only dissolve the marriage by divorce when, for *valid reasons*, the relationship between the spouses is so severely and irreparably damaged that the continuation of the marriage is clearly impossible for the one who requests its dissolution. *The court will assess with particular care the grounds for the divorce application and the impossibility of continuing the marriage, taking into account its duration as well as the interests of the minors."* (our emphasis)

These provisions have translated into everyday life through obstacles in the exercise of the right to divorce. Thus, the only reasons for divorce that the court found justified are in the sphere of serious mental illness or the emigration of one of the spouses.

These amendments to the *Family Code* by decree illustrate Ceauşescu's conservative moralist vision, a vision he will impose on the population through a series of provisions connected to the legislation in force at the time.

> "Regarding the pro-natalist measures, Ceauşescu argued that sexual activity must take place *during marriage*, with the primary purpose of *procreation*" (Tismăneanu, 2006, p. 512).

There is a vast literature on the effect that these policies of Ceauşescu had on the population (Kligman, 1992, 1998b; Verdery, 1996; Băban, 1996, 2000; Bărbulescu, 1998). All reveal to us that despite these decrees meant to restrict the right to privacy and to decrease the number of abortions, they have made the population to readapt by developing different strategies and the number of abortions continued to increase after the first phase of decline.

Besides these measures, Ceauşescu begins to intervene by sanctioning the young unmarried population, but also married couples without children, regardless of the reason for the absence of children. Thus, Decree 409/1985 increased the tax that married or unmarried people over the age of 25 owed to the state:

> Art. 1 "Fixed monthly contribution due by persons without children, married or unmarried, over 25 years of age, who work in state economic units and state institutions, shall be increased and established as follows […]" (Decree 409/1985)

In fact, the state taxed married and childless couples even before 1985 by Decree 1086/1966, which applied a tax increase for those without children:

> Art. 2 "The tax increase applies to both men and women without children, from the age of 25, regardless of whether or not they are married" (Decree 1086/1966)

It is necessary to mention that in the traditional Romanian society the woman was 'to blame', in the eyes of the others, if the couple had no descendants. There are a number of fertility rituals for young women to help them procreate (e.g., practically almost all the anticipatory rites within the wedding ritual are dedicated to women, to their reproductive capacity; cf. also Kligman, 1998a).

Last but not least, through art. 304 of the *Penal Code* of 1968, adultery was criminalised, sexual intercourse outside of marriage being punished with imprisonment between one month and six months or a fine:

> "Adultery – The act of a married person having sex outside of marriage is punishable by imprisonment from one month to six months or a fine. The penal action is initiated upon the prior complaint of the innocent spouse" (*Penal Code*, 1968, art. 304).

The Ceauşescu regime established in power in 1965 (1965-1989) would promote aggressive pro-natalist policies that will have a major impact on the social history of marriage. No other period in the recent history of Romania would match the influence of the state in terms of the married life of its citizens. As other researchers point out, the demographic policies of the Ceauşescu regime can be considered "out of the ordinary even in the annals of the crimes of communism" (Tismăneanu, 2006, p. 521).

## 5. Marriage in the post-communist period: he beginning of change?

With the fall of the communist regime, transformations in all areas did not take long to appear. A chronological analysis of the changes at the legislative level regarding marriage and the issues associated with the couple's life could be an important indicator of the intensity with which they affected privacy. The speed with which the law lines are repealed and / or amended reflects in my view the extent to which they have affected the privacy of couples.

The first amendment is the one of December 26, 1989, respectively the Decree-Law no. 1/1989 which at number 8 provided for the abrogation of Decree 770/1966 regarding the prohibition of abortion. At number 12, it repealed articles 185-188 of the *Criminal Code* regarding abortion, which starting with 1969 criminalised abortion. The first decree-law after the fall of communism that affected the intimate life of couples repealed legislation banning abortion. What still needs to draw our attention is the way in which this first Decree-Law relates to the abrogation of these decrees, that is:

> "In order to immediately eliminate from the Romanian legislation some of the laws and decrees issued by the former dictatorial regime, normative acts with a deeply unjust character and

> contrary to the interests of the Romanian people […]" (Decree-Law no. 1/1989).

A. Băban asserts in her study:

> "His influence (in the Ceauşescu regime) was so strong in the personal lives and in the private sphere of Romanian citizens, that the first post-communist government, on the first day it took power, revoked all bans against abortion and contraception" (Băban, 2003, pp. 303-304).

In the same vein, the taxes that young bachelors paid if they were 25 years old or older, or those without children, as well as those over 25 years old regardless of their marital status, are also eliminated at the beginning of 1990 by Law 32 of March 1991 regarding the taxation of salaries.

Unlike the legislation on abortion, the intervention in the *Family Code* will be made only in 1993 by Law 59/1993. The changes concern the divorce that can be made from that moment with the agreement of the parties. The law restores the power of the spouses to decide on the fate of the marriage relationship, as such an act is no longer criminalised. In Article 617, paragraphs 2 and 3 are inserted, with the following wording:

> "The decision granting a divorce shall not state the reasons if both parties apply that in court. In the cases provided by art. 38 paragraph 2 of the Family Code, the court shall order the dissolution of the marriage without pronouncing the divorce by fault of one or both spouses." (Law 59/1993)

And art. 8 in-line 1 shall legislate the legality of the divorce:

> "1. Article 37 paragraph 2 shall have the following content. Marriage can be dissolved by divorce."

This eliminates from the law the provision stipulating the dissolution of marriage only in 'exceptional cases'.

As researchers in the field of demography note, it is worth however mentioning that despite the changes and relaxation regarding divorce, it has not seen a significant increase of it in post-

December Romanian society (Rotariu, 2009; Dumănescu, 2017, p. 53). We cannot say the same about abortion, which, after its decriminalisation, has known a substantial increase. In just 2 years (1990-1992) in Romania, there were about 2.4 abortions at a live birth (Trebici, 1994, p. 52). A rate that remained quite high, Romania still being at the world's top of the countries with one of the highest rates of abortion.

Given the troubled history of abortion but also the fact that Romania, along with two other countries (respectively, the Soviet Union during World War II, and Poland at the request of the Polish Pope John Paul II) (Fiala et al., 2022) is one of the three states in Europe which during the last hundred years has shown a somewhat anachronistic behaviour towards this question, could indicate a possible way of understanding the present situation regarding this matter. At the same time, the effect that to this day the prohibition of abortions combined with the lack of sexual education had and continues to have on the private life of Romanian couples is not to be neglected.

As for adultery, it was decriminalised only in 2006 by Law no. 278/2006 – for the amendment and completion of the *Penal Code*, almost 20 years after the 1989 Revolution.

We consider that the influence of the legislation on privacy during 1965-1989 did not end with the fall of the regime. This chapter emphasises the importance of the effects of the policies pursued by the Ceauşescu regime even after 1989. The effects of conservative legislation on marriage can be seen in the daily lives of couples at present. With a history in which the private life was dominated by the rough policy of the socialist state (cf. Verdery 1996; Kligman, 1998b), the post 1989 Romanian society has not succeeded yet to erase its marks from people's mentality.

In this context, the definition of marriage deserves more attention because in the last few years the Romanian society was divided by a series of disputes regarding the way in which the word 'marriage' should be defined in Romania's legislation. These polemics

revealed the importance of this subject for the present Romanian society and the bonding between the political transformations and the private life, the cleavage between tradition and daily practice, and the way in which the legislation influences the practices.

A campaign carried out by the Coalition for Family was initiated at the beginning of 2016, aiming to gather signatures for a legislative proposal to revise the article in the Romanian Constitution which defines marriage [art. 48 alin. (1)]. The revision would stipulate that marriage does not rest of the "freely consented union of partners" but of the union "of man and woman."[11] For that matter, the campaign has been strongly supported by the main churches in Romania (the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, and the Protestant Church), gathering signatures that would effect this change. 3,000,000 signatures were gathered during the campaign in support of the proposal to produce this modification.

The referendum organised in the fall of 2018 proposed a reformulation for the definition of marriage, but it was not successful. Due to a turnout below the threshold of 30% (respectively 20.14%), it was not possible to validate the option of the 'pro-change' of the family definition. Although hotly debated in the public landscape at the time, the subject now seems to have lost its relevance. However, it should be noted that in this context we could notice the strong division of the Romanian society on this issue and, at the same time, the strong 'traditionalist' reading that a large part of the Romanian population still has on this issue.

[11] In the *Civil Code*, Book II, Concerning the family, Title I – General provisions, Art. 259, marriage is defined as follows: "Marriage (1) Marriage is the freely consented union between a man and a woman, concluded in accordance with the law. (2) A man and a woman have the right to marry in order to start a family." This fact reveals the ambiguity with which marriage is defined in Romanian legislation, because it does not take into account the present social realities.

During the communist period, the *Family Code* was adopted for the first time in 1953 (entered into force in 1954, with amendments by Law 4/1956).[12] It will regulate the main aspects of family life until 2011. Currently, the *Civil Code* regulates the main aspects related to marriage in Romania. Civil marriage precedes religious marriage, and only civil marriage entails the legal effects arising from the conclusion of the marriage.

The end of the twentieth century (1989-2000) does not bring significant changes in Romanian legislation regarding marriage, at least not at a level that responds to social realities. At the level of private life, of marriage in particular, major changes took place after the fall of communism, but at the same time, despite this fact, the trend at the legislative level is conservative. The qualitative research reveals the fact that despite the transformations that family life has experienced in Romania, the Romanian legislation regarding marriage fails to keep up with the social reality.

The examples that support this idea are many: even if a large part of the population lives in cohabitation, it is not recognised by the stipulation of civil partnerships, for example – living together apart, a phenomenon that has grown with the increase of mass migration to the West, is not of interest to current legislation, etc. However, maybe we could point out a detail that can clearly reflect the conservative tendency of the Romanian legislation in the new 2011 *Civil Code* that regulates the institution of marriage by repealing the old *Family Code*. It introduces the regulation of the engagement as a pre-marriage stage.

In other words, the new *Civil Code* introduces an institution long abandoned by social actors (none of the interviewed subjects went through this step except as a stage of the religious ritual of marriage) but does not recognise an extended social reality such as cohabitation – which, although it is mentioned in the legislation, it is not in fact regulated. According to the new *Civil Code*, the

[12] http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/39247

*engagement* is a "mutual promise to contract the marriage" (art. 266) (i.e., a stage preceding the marriage, but which does not condition the marriage, because it is not mandatory before the act of the marriage). By regulating the engagement but not the cohabitation, we can claim that the legislation regarding marriage has experienced a legislative regression.

Most of the couples I interviewed only got engaged as part of the religious ritual of marriage and not separately. Now, we can assume that the engagement will somehow evade cohabitation. We cannot help but wonder if this was not the purpose, given that it proposes what, at the social level, the institution of cohabitation proposes: a commitment without formalities, which can be proved "by any means of proof."

Some other evidence that it is intended to circumvent cohabitation is the fact that the engagement is not mandatory before civil marriage. As in the case of marriage, the new *Civil Code* specifically provides that engagement can only be concluded between "a man and a woman" (*Civil Code* 2011). At the same time, it provides for the prosecution, in certain cases, of the one who causes the breaking of the engagement and even the possibility of the other to obtain compensations.

## 6. Conclusions

With a history intertwined between religion and secularism, the institution of marriage in twentieth-century Romania is probably going through the most important period in its history so far. Through the definitions, formulations, and legislations from 1965-1989, it emerges as the most important institution over which the totalitarian state took control in order to implement its policies. The signs of the period will hardly be erased from the mentality of the Romanian society, as the legislation of the *Civil Code* in 2011 illustrated. The recourse to history and the acknowledgment of the main

transformations that occurred, could constitute important tools of analysis that might reveal the future of marriage.

Future analysis needs to capture the difference in how women and men have been treated in the process of legislating marriage and the family. We still believe that a special place should be occupied by research that analyses the effects of these legislations on private life. Given the current global context of the issues under analysis, we believe it is vital to remember that throughout history those who have not learned from the past risk repeating it.

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# Chapter 5. Mothers and Daughters in Post-Communist Romania: Bridging the Generational Gap

Petruţa TEAMPĂU[1]

## 1. Introduction

When communists came to power in post-war Romania, the country had a mostly poor and illiterate population, and women represented more than half of it. The social and political reforms that the new regime designed were, without a doubt, modernising and progressive in this context. The large-scale projects of industrialisation and urbanisation presumed radical transformations in the social and demographic fabric of society. Between 1948 and 1989, almost 6 million Romanians reportedly moved from the countryside to cities, looking for jobs, education, and the promise of a better life (Dobre, 2020, p. 39). The increasing need for labour was also resolved by absorbing women into the work force (Miroiu, 2007). This socio-political movement was supported by an emergent discourse about the equality of all citizens, the importance of education, and social, cultural and political development.

However, despite the promise of a gender-neutral citizenship, the communist regime in Romania has in fact reinforced traditional gender roles for women, highlighting women's reproductive role and the identity of the "socialist mother" (especially after the infamous decree that banned abortion in 1966).

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Penn and Massino argue that post–World War II political leaders in Eastern Europe:

> "[…] officially subscribed to the notion of 'women's liberation through work' as theorized by Friedrich Engels and other early socialist thinkers. According to this reasoning, women's participation in paid labour would facilitate their economic autonomy, which would allow them greater control over their lives. In turn, men's recognition of women as equal workers would abolish patriarchal attitudes and practices as they played out both at work and at home" (Penn and Massino, 2009, p. 3).

However, this kind of revolution does not occur naturally, and men were not very eager to share privileges, incomes, and jobs with women. In real life:

> "[…] pre-communist patriarchy remained intact, with women shouldering the burden of economic and domestic labour. Instead of truly liberating women, state communism turned into a system that doubly exploited women in their roles as producers and reproducers. Their official glorification, represented in propaganda and the numerous statues of strong women proletarians standing beside their male counterparts, unfortunately, did not reflect the reality of women's lives" (LaFont, 2001, p. 205).

As Koenker puts it:

> "[…] men and women marched together into the brave new world of socialism still burdened with the weight of deeply ingrained attitudes about gender roles in the workplace" (Koenker, 1995, p. 1441).

In an analysis of women's public and private roles in the Soviet context and of the paternalistic tone of the ideology in describing these roles, Schwartz argues that:

> "[…] the rights given to each woman to work, to become educated, to participate in politics, are coloured by her natural role of mother and wife. Female physiology is thought to explain, at least in part, lower achievement in science and management,

> and concentration in the humanities. Emotions interfere with leadership. As in all effective ideologies, few stop to examine how socialist institutional arrangements make these allegedly natural phenomena a reality" (Schwartz, 1979, p. 70).

In previous research (Teampău, 2016b, 2017), we illustrated how the magazine *Femeia*, the official propaganda outlet of the National Council of Women, had shaped, for almost five decades, the role and image of the new communist woman: as worker, homemaker, mother and constructer of a new society. Other researchers also emphasised that:

> "[…] gender was an important organizing principle of the state, instrumental in the construction of policy and propaganda and in the refashioning of public and private spaces. […] At the same time, gender was not simply manipulated and mobilized by the state to increase production (and in some cases, reproduction) and secure legitimacy, but was also a basic lens—along with other identities—through which individuals interpreted, negotiated, resisted, and, in some cases, ignored state policies and discourses" (Penn and Massino, 2009, p. 3).

Our research[2] is an anthropological approach of women's lives during the last decades of communism, with a focus on how they perceived their own social, political and civic roles, how they felt as subjects of a "failed emancipation" and how they manage this complex heritage in the new democratic context. Our database encompasses approximately 130 semi-structured interviews. We interviewed two categories of women: those who were socialised and had a working experience during communism (aged 50+ today, labelled symbolically "mothers") and those that were educated after communism (aged between 20-35, the "daughters"). We were interested in narratives about working experiences, family, gender scripts, and political and social roles, and we tried to analyse these

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narratives comparatively, by mirroring the generation of "mothers" and that of "daughters".[3] Are there any radical transformations between generations, across regimes? Were women truly emancipated during communism? If so, how do they account for this emancipation, in their own subjective terms?

Combining social and political pressure with women's genuine need and support for a change of status, the so-called emancipation was rather a mobilising movement (Teampău, 2017), but one that had empowering (intended or not) potential for some categories of women. Compared, at least to the pre-war situation, women's overall condition objectively improved in most socialist countries:

> "Their paid work outside the home contributed to the well-being of the family (at least it helped to make ends meet); their educational advancement and the work outside the home enriched (at least in the majority of cases) their life experience; their status as earners weakened their former oppression within and outside the family and made them (somewhat) less subservient in some walks of life" (Ferge, 1997, p. 162).

Nevertheless, while this is partially true and women's overall situation was indeed improved compared to previous periods, at least in terms of access to free education, health care, paid work, and public recognition, we cannot admit that this was anywhere close to a genuine emancipation of women:

> "All decisions were always taken at the top, and the influence of the citizens (or, rather, of the subjects) was, if it existed at all, weak and indirect. It was in this case 'politics for us, but without us'. […] The totalitarian logic (even when it became milder) rejected micro-solidarities or partial identities, that is solidarities on a lower level than the international or the national, and identities other than the global identity of 'the socialist man'. Hence spontaneous women's movements, feminist or otherwise,

[3] We chose these labels to suggest the possible overlaps between the ideas, concepts and experiences of these generations that grew up across two radically different political regimes.

> never emerged, and women could not identify with each other, expressing collectively, for instance, the wrongs which harmed all of them" (Ferge, 1997, p. 163).

Undoubtedly, women were to play an important part in the new social and political order, and the corresponding ideological scripts would require them to fulfil a complex set of roles as communist citizens. One crucial area in which women had to perform a new role was the labour force. The very concept of work was reconfigured by the propaganda. "Work has become an honorary duty of each citizen", writes the widely-read women's magazine, *Femeia* (Sept. 1965). This quote encloses the very concept of work in socialist ideology, as rather a duty than a privilege (and that goes for women, too, although the Law of social parasitism was not so harsh on them)[4].

In general, it is agreed that employment outside home benefited women in many respects and, in the case of Romania, it became a key component of their identity. The fact that women glorified the importance of work in their lives speaks about a relative, specific and gendered understanding of "emancipation": for most women, having access to education and a job outside the home was a tremendous boost in their self-esteem. Bucur-Deckard's interviews with working women show that work represented an important component of women's gender identity and citizenship:

> "They spoke about working outside of the home as something personally fulfilling – being able to be a full human being by virtue of socializing with other adults during the daytime, as well as doing something that has some public/social utility" (Bucur-Deckard, 2011, pp. 9-10).

Work itself was gratifying in an intimate way, as one reader of *Femeia*, a seamstress, writes, enthusiastically:

> „Loving my job gives me a great joy of life, the feeling of fulfilment, of my utility in society" (National Council of Women, Oct. 1979).

[4] Decree 153/1970, http://www.legex.ro/Decretul-153-1970-454.aspx

The thrilled voices of Romanian women found a counterpart in other socialist contexts; according to Bystydzienski:

> "Russian women, in addition to reporting feelings of self-worth and personal satisfaction, also routinely mentioned a sense of pride in being able to contribute to the wider society" (Bystydzienski, 1989, pp. 674-675).

For many women, waged work represented the promise of a better life, a new identity, along with the more visible improvements.

## 2. "I did like the woman I was then, also, because I was much younger and more naïve". The mothers

For most of our respondents, born in the late 1960s, remembering the last decades of the communist period is, in effect, remembering their youth. Life was good, colours were bright, prospects luminous and people seemed happy and hopeful. Women remember how serene and helpful everyone was (as opposed to nowadays when people are competitive and selfish):

> "People were much more tolerant, kind, calm, they could focus on their own profession. There was much more understanding, patience, acceptance, there was literally love between people interacting with each other" (engineer, 63).

Friendship was extended outside the workplace and solidarity was the key word:

> "We were all friends, outside the workplace, and always helping each other. If your colleague had a problem, you immediately helped, without asking anything in return. There was solidarity at its best. It was a different life, much, much better, and beautiful than the one we have now. Nowadays children are not educated patriotically, to have a consciousness, a dignity. But back then we were helping each other…" (weaver, 61).

People were kind to each other because there was no real competition, incomes were more or less equal, jobs were stable and

secure, so they had no reason to envy each other. Things were not great, but they were predictable:

> "Given the fact that salaries were the same in the same line of work, there was no envy. You worked in the same place, you did the same thing as your colleague, your colleague was paid the same way as you. And then we all knew how to spend and save our money, how to use it for what you wanted, in the family or if you wanted to buy something… There was no such envy and there was a general friendship; it was much, much more beautiful" (weaver, 61).

People truly enjoyed the predictability and safety of their lives:

> "Compared to any other period, it was better, because if you graduated, they gave you a job, then they offered you an apartment, a house. And you had that security, you know, salaries were fixed, you could have a credit and know that in a few years it stays the same, you had no fear. While nowadays the interest rate can go up, the salary can go down and you do not feel at all stable" (nurse, 60).

This feeling of security and safety that all the nostalgic narratives recreate can also be explained by the way professional careers were designed and managed. The fact that someone could work an entire life in the same workplace meant that that person's evolution could be seen and validated by an entire community: the factory. One respondent (now 63) exclaimed, visibly proud:

> "[…] it was there, in the factory, that I grew, I was shaped, my entire professional evolution was seen there!"

Women recollect in a positive light that fact that young people received a job through *repartiție*/job placement, and they started their professional lives in a safe and controlled environment:

> "No, it did not feel difficult at all, the first three years of my profession I worked directly in the factory, in three shifts. It was really nice, a lot of youth, we all ended up there through repartiție, it was quite wonderful. We were not worried about what tomorrow might bring, whether we will have a workplace or

> not, there were no interviews, nothing. You were trained in that field, you had a profession, you entered through the gates of the factory, and went directly to your workplace where you were supervised by front men, and your income was fix. And it was connected to what you learnt in school; our professors prepared us precisely for this. Hmmm, if this is what I wanted? Not really. We did not know any better, coming from the countryside our purpose was to earn a living first of all. To have our own income, to leave on our own" (weaver, 56).

Even social life is seen, retrospectively, as more satisfying:

> "If I regret anything is the peace of mind that people used to have. They were not as stressed as people are today. I remember my parents always had a good time, having fun, going to parties, on August 23rd, May 1st ... they had a good time just being together. Maybe, if you did not know there is anything else, you did not desire anything else. You were quite content with what you had, and maybe you were quite happy" (bank clerk, 60).

Most people perceived the political situation rather less dramatically. For those women who were students in the 1970s, what a city like Cluj had to offer from a cultural point of view was much more important than poverty or politics. Political obligations were mimicked and everything else ignored:

> "I was a Party member, of course, because, you know, if you had good grades they granted you this honour, without asking. But, as a friend used to say, I ate my portion of shit, but did not say it was good and did not ask for another one. And at the Party meetings I used to sit in the back row and knit, and nobody minded me. What can I say? You had to write some summaries, every 2-3 months it was your turn, so you went there with your paper, read it, but in the meantime, everybody was talking about something else, what they did lately, what they read, what they cooked... We did not talk politics; we did not care. I cannot say that I suffered. I had music, I had theatre, I had the Philharmonic. Books! The best and most wonderful books I read back then. Think about Dostoievski, Tolstoi!" (doctor, 56).

Urban intellectuals could find their satisfaction in a parallel life, while factory workers had their own strategy of mimicking civic participation:

> "It was kind of like water off a duck's back with me. I had to become a Party member because I was a UTC[5] secretary in the factory. And I had to be in UTC because I wanted to attend a course. So… one thing led to another… I held meetings because I had to. And we talked… I do not remember about what. I do remember we had to. Generally, it was about women's problems, that women's work should be improved, and more women promoted. Back then, whoever was more shameless, was promoted, who was not, just stayed put" (worker, 61).

Most of our respondents, aged from 50 to 65 years, were socialised actually in the last part of the communist period (late 1970s – early 1980s). The effects of the intense propaganda for promoting women were already perceived and most women were ready to take it for granted:

> "The fact that I had an education was mine and my family's choice. Indeed, higher education was free in my time. But still, it is my merit and my family's that I earned a scholarship for all my school years. Yes, it was important that I received housing and meal tickets and other facilities, and I managed to get a good grade for the final job placement. So, I ended up having this salary… my husband was a prosecutor, and I was working in the factory (Cement) and I had a salary comparable to his. That is something, right?" (engineer, 63).

Truth be said, there was a completely different scenario for women born and raised in the cities versus women leaving behind their native village, to find work:

> "I remember I had an aunt that came from the countryside to work in the factory. And for her, the city and the factory were an upgrade. She woke up at 6 a.m., went to work, came home and she was really content that she did not have to tend to pigs or

[5] Union of the Communist Youth.

> something. Also, my colleagues at the Music School, that were selected from among rural children and for them, even if life was tough at the boarding school, it was the promise of a better future, they were about to become a mister, not comrade, you know?" (dentist, 61).

The topic of emancipation is rather puzzling, even for women who were its subjects back in the day. For some, it is equated with independence and freedom, but in the framework of the prescribed opportunities of the era:

> "I think we all liked to be… emancipated. It began way before I graduated from college, in 1980. I only worked for 9 years during communism, but women already had leadership positions, participated in the political and social life of our country, were already seen in a better light, and for me it was something normal. We were all emancipated women. Well, for me emancipation begins when you have a job, you have your own money, and you are free to live as you please. Emancipation is also not depending on anyone else, not even materially. I can say for myself that, personally, I am now much more confident than I was, I enjoy a lot of freedom in what I do. But I did like the woman I was then, also, because I was much younger and more naïve. Women in the past relied a lot on the help of parents, husband, in-laws, friends, relationships, acquaintances. Nowadays we are used to rely on our own force, on what we ourselves can achieve, alone" (math teacher, 59).

Others were more sensitive to the limitations and the boundaries of what was possible and desirable for women back in the day:

> "The whole idea of woman's emancipation was not very well understood in that period. If a woman was emancipated, in the sense of dressing more daring or in the sense of having her own opinions and the courage to express them, that was very rare. Women were afraid during the communist regime. A woman should mind her own business and stick to her place. If, however, she wanted to be emancipated by becoming an aviator or parachute jumper – that was indeed seen with admiration by the Communist Party and other women encouraged to practice such

> profession unusual for them. But if a woman dared to have other ideologies but the official one, that was not good for her. And many women ended up in prison or worse because they opposed the regime" (bank clerk, 60).

The term 'promotion' is much more adequate to describe the realities of women's mobilisation during communism, rather than emancipation.

In most of our interviews with the mothers' generation what is clearly shining through is a genuine pride in having had an education and a profession. Especially since some of them had to change their jobs or field of work after communism, often to something inferior to their education.

> "I did not go to work stressed or something, oh my, I have to go to work. No. But there was no stress compared to nowadays. It was something normal to work, to have a job…." (chemical engineer, 64).

Moreover, there seemed to be a strong work ethic, that was shaping women's public and private life:

> "Never in my life have I used the words: 'oh, I am tired'! No even now, that I am old, I can barely walk and work, but I do not say it. I used to be very sick, but I never told anyone, I went to work with a smile on my lips" (seamstress, 62).

Another example:

> "My poor mother never had spare time, because after 8 hours of work she came home to four kids and a grandmother to take care of. But she never ever complained. Never said anything like 'I can't anymore' or 'I am tired', never said she did not have enough time, like we do today. If our day had 48 hours still wouldn't be enough… Well..." (primary school teacher, 35).

Interesting enough, these same women who worked hard and did their duty and were so proud of themselves professionally, never really questioned domestic inequalities (or if they did, they did not have any kind of support from the regime or the community):

> "The woman in the house was responsible for everything: shopping, cooking, taking care of children, going to meetings, everywhere... Husband's role? He was the main provider, maybe because he was older, but he earned more than his wife. That was the system. Sometimes the husband would take care of children, also, but in most families the mother was in charge of everything. Husbands also worked very late and when they came home, they were tired, so they took a nap or lift their feet up so that the wife can vacuum around them" (kindergarten teacher, 75).

Asked directly how come only men received children's allowance although mothers took care of them, one respondent (64) was genuinely surprised:

> "Only men received it. That was the custom, I don't know. Only mothers with children outside marriage received the payment themselves. Well, that was the system, this was how we inherited it and we took it for granted" (engineer, 64).

Almost none of our respondents noticed any discrimination (or were able to label some situations as such).

> "I can't really say it was discriminatory… Most of the times it was considered that a woman could not handle a responsibility like a man and very few women actually had leadership positions back then. Most of them were meant to obey, to work, to do things, not necessarily rule" (primary school teacher, 55).

> Also, "there was no prejudice. There was so much simplicity, and we were all so basic that we never thought about these things" (kindergarten teacher, 75).

Consequently, this generation of women, who managed to assume a new identity (the working woman) and felt gratified and valued in a way no other previous generation of Romanian women did, it was a generation of women that took domestic inequalities for granted, for lack of support or opportunities for renegotiating them. Moreover, women assumed all these identities (mother, wife, housemaker and employed woman), and displayed a very strong sense of self-efficacy in various realms:

> "I have always felt very strong as a woman. I always felt that women can do anything. So, I never refrained from anything. I can dig the land like the next man. I don't think there is something that women cannot do. I worked my whole life and earned a living as much as a man, and plus I took care of children, which is something that a man cannot do. So, I always had the impression that a woman is stronger than a man. I still think like that. A woman could handle life without a man, but a man could not" (chemical engineer, 68).

Besides working hard, side by side with men, and taking on the responsibilities of a home, women's gender roles also included being nice, delicate, beautiful, kind, and elegant. Women embodied the image of the perfect woman promoted in the pages of *Femeia* magazine:

> "[…] at work I noticed that women were very stylish. Always going to the seamstress for a new dress or costume, buying a new pair of fashionable shoes, reading fashion magazines… Seamstresses always had work and made beautiful clothes, women were very elegant, taking care of themselves, even if they worked very hard, at the job and at home, doing everything. A woman was supposed to be nice, clean and elegant at the workplace. At home she had to be impeccable, to cook, wash the children, send them to school, and be a loving wife to her husband. I have no idea how they managed everything, but back then women were very stylish and elegant and fashion and personal care were really important to them" (bank clerk, 60).

Three decades later, younger generation sees ideal women in a similar manner:

> "I think the ideal woman should be confident, smart, beautiful, not easily influenced, ambitious, delicate and at the same time rough, funny, sociable, kind, prudent, she knows how to dress and act decently, think twice before she speaks, not trust a lot of people, knows how to act in any situation, patient, outspoken" (student, 23)."

With the regime collapse in 1989, everyone had to cope with the unpredictable social, political and economic changes. But the most visible and fragrant one was probably the long-desired freedom.

> "Now there are women who want to be lead, to see the world, to study and have a career, to leave the country – these things were not possible back then. Young people have a lot of freedom. But the life of the working woman and of the poor woman did not change so much. On the contrary, I think it is much harder for them now" (bank clerk, 53).

> "The most positive change is freedom. Now women can do anything, if they really want. Maybe the mentality of men also changed: a woman should not be confined to the kitchen. But back then if you wanted more you could not get it. Unless you made all kind of compromises. You should have wanted what they wanted, not what you wanted for yourself. Now you can do anything you want in life, even if you have to work harder than we did then" (68, chemical engineer).

This quote seems an adequate read of current reality, as freedom and independence are indeed key words for the new generation.

### 3. "Our mothers were satisfied with less; we won't take that anymore". The voice of "daughters"

Younger generations of women have a rather ambiguous image of what happened during communism, an image that is influenced mostly by parents' recollections and, in the case of educated women, by what they have read or learnt about it:

> "My parents told me mostly about the last part of communism and how difficult it was to get food and have a decent life. They were not very happy about that. As for the work, my mother at least was quite happy with her job. My father, on the other hand, never spoke about it. My mother told me that if it wasn't for the ugly parts of communism, she might still have a constant job

> today. Meaning she would work in the same place, which she really enjoyed" (student, 21).

Sometimes, young women have the impression that during communism most women were homemakers and housewives. However, as Luminița Dumănescu argues, in 1970, according to the General Direction for Statistics, 75% of women were employed (Dumănescu, 2015, p. 127). I suggest that this idea might be shaped by the very strong sex roles for women and their less visible presence in the public sphere:

> "Well, back then I think that the number of housewives was much bigger than today, at national level. I mean the women who did not have an education and could not be sent directly from high-school to work. I think women's emancipation happens nowadays, when is no longer fashionable to stay at home and cook. Any job that a woman can have is considered important, I don't know, manicurist or clerk or anything… any woman now tries to find a path in life and be as independent as possible, without a man's help. As for domestic chores… I remember my grandfather brought the biggest income in the house, and my grandmother was working for him, he hired her. And at home she was doing everything, and this was already an internalised role. There was no way a man cooked or came home and cleaned the house. She was also working, at least the same number of hours as him, but at home, she was in charge with everything" (area manager, 23).

Occasionally, the voice of the younger generation (18-21) becomes quite critical, in an attempt of distancing themselves from the 'loosing' generation:

> "Our mothers were satisfied with less; we won't take that anymore. I mean our mothers agreed to go and work in a factory for a minimum wage, to wait in queues because it was normal, to make as many children as possible. We are not like that anymore, mentalities have changed a lot. We want more: to advance our careers, to put family on the second place, well, not really, but at least think about children or marriage later in life. If they were already married and with a baby at 20-21, us at 20 years old we

> can't even imagine it. Women had such a progress compared to our mothers and grandmothers, we are no longer content with just being a mother and we want more in life, we have a goal, an aim in life" (student, 19).

The grandmother of one of these young students once told her:

> "My generation had the family, your mother's generation had the family and the workplace. You, your generation, you have something more: you want to change the world".

Probably as a result of constant exposure to feminist ideas, the younger generation tends to take for granted the equality between the sexes:

> "We young girls tend to see everything in terms of equality. After all, we have the same number of chromosomes. Maybe we are physically different, but other than that we are equal!" (student, 22).

Young women and girls become more selective in choosing not only careers, but also partners.

> "We have become more independent. Maybe our mothers chose their partners easily, but we, the girls nowadays, we analyse the boys and think of how to test them before we decide if they are good enough for us" (student, 20).

Young women want to see the world, to travel, to enjoy as many experiences, to volunteer.

> "In 10 years, I probably see myself with a family, with a career... I see myself very strong and independent even if I have a family. And with many experiences that shaped and helped me" (student, 19).

> "I see myself traveling. Even if I had a family, I would like to have as many experiences as possible" (student, 18).

> "At 60, I see myself in a house with a big garden, sitting on a bench, listening to music, smoking, drinking coffee. I like this idea" (student, 21).

They also benefit from the support of families, especially mothers, in an attempt to compensate for lost opportunities:

> "My mother always tells us: 'go everywhere and commit and do things and read, and get involved in a lot of activities. In my time I wish I could, but I just stayed in the courtyard all day and read a book'. She only had one book and read it several times throughout the summer. So now she encourages us to do everything we can" (student, 21).

As mentioned, sometimes young women do have a more accurate understanding of women's lives during communism, based on family recollections, and are able to better appreciate their own opportunities:

> "I know that my grandmother worked the land, she worked at C.A.P. and had a schedule, my grandfather was a driver and my mother, and her sister basically grew up alone. My grandmother worked her entire life there. I asked her how it was, to work there. What could she say? All she did was to go there and basically work, dig the land and it's really hard for women. She cannot compare because she had no idea how her life could be any different. But the worst part was when she retired and had a small pension, around 100 lei, 50 lei, it was completely useless, luckily, she lived in the countryside. Then, my mother really struggled to escape this vicious circle, to escape the countryside, she came to the city, finished high school, started working as a typist, went through a lor, and it was very difficult for her" (MA student, 25).

Where there has been a dialog between generations, as in the case of this mother-daughter conversation, younger generations manage to have a more emphatic reading of their mothers' experiences:

> "I know that in their spare time women knitted, went to the cinema, organised parties, or went out in the city to coffeeshops. My mother told me that she enjoyed traveling but there were many restrictions for leaving the country. And she would have liked to have more films and programmes on TV" (clerk, 26).

As mentioned before, the image that daughters have about their mothers' experiences can be sometimes puzzling. On the one

hand, they tend to think that the latter did not enjoy any kind of freedom and perceive their roles as wives and mothers as oppressive.

> "I think there was prejudice about women back then because women were associated with the private environment, they were first and foremost mothers, wives, homemakers and even if they had a job, they still had this mark on their forehead: you're a woman so stay in your place" (25, works in a firm).

> "Back then they were marginalised. There was this mentality that women have to make children, stay at home, cook and clean. A man can do anything and can make mistakes, but women are always accountable for what they do. I say there's a difference between urban and rural. In the city, women, poor them, managed to evolve somehow, get a job, have options. But in the countryside women still face a lot of restrictions" (cook, 34).

On the other hand, an alternative reading of communist life sees women as respected and supported:

> "During communism there were no such prejudices as now, regarding women. Women were respected and everyone knew what they were capable of, there was this confidence. I heard women were better treated back then. I know the only women who were not regarded well were those who got a divorce" (stomatologist, 28).

Also, the confidence related to job security that most mothers mentioned in their narratives appeared to be a positive point in daughters' evaluation of the communist past:

> "Back then if you graduated from college, you got a workplace and an apartment. That was the best part about communism, that they did care about young people, because they carried the burden. My parents and my grandparents benefited, even if it was difficult at first. They knew how to work the land, anyway, so they wouldn't have starved. Like we would today if technology failed. But now? Young people graduate from college and work at the mall or have to leave the country for a better life" (stomatologist, 28).

However, a critical voice reminds us that:

> "[…] during communism, by offering everyone a place to work, I think that they took away a person's responsibility, I mean we are each of us responsible for our jobs, for our persons, for our well-being. That was not the case here, the state gave you a job, a house, an income" (student, 22).

Mothers' and daughters' understanding of a woman's gender roles comes full circle in the description of the ideal woman who can do anything that a man does, but preserves her beauty and femininity:

> "Women nowadays can do a man's job, but they do not forget their femininity, they don't become a rigid, strict man. They are stylish, preserve their beauty and femininity. They remain a woman in the function of a man. So, a woman today can manage a household, do all the chores, have a job, take care of children. Of course, ideally, both man and wife should share responsibilities, and then there is harmony and understanding in that family and children are raised with other ideas and perceptions about life, not the idea that women are subordinated, and men can do whatever they want" (cook, 34).

## 4. Conclusions

In this chapter, I approached a topic that is at once delicate and crucial: how do we study communism? Is it still possible to research these topics after almost three decades, with a fresh and unbiassed approach? How can we reconcile the discursive dimension (archives or mass media) with the praxis of subjects' lived experiences? In particular, what happened to women in the past half of a century in Romania, between the grandmothers' generation, who had limited or no access to education and worked the land, the mothers' generation, who took access to education and profession for granted and were proud of it, and the granddaughters' generation, who no longer have a gratifying profession, but a job (or more) for mostly pecuniary satisfactions.

I suggest that the differences are not so radical, but rather structural and contextual and the generation of mothers, those mobilised through work, without a feminist project, and the generation of daughters, who want everything in life and speak of feminism as something slightly outdated, still have a lot in common.

I chose to discuss these women's experiences by giving them a voice, without any *parti pris*, identifying the common ground between two generations with completely different life experiences. I tried to understand how a real emancipation is possible and what would it mean, not in theory and discourse, but in the real world, where real women work and live.

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# Chapter 6. Visual Images and Romanian Public Space Thirty Years After Communism. A Gendered Perspective

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## 1. Introduction

The Romanian post-socialist city represents an arena of fertile research, encompassing dialogues associated with its obvious historical, political, economic, social, and cultural complexities. The way in which these cities evolved thirty years after the fall of communism is a product of the ideological transition from totalitarianism and its dark universe, often repressive, to cities that manage functional complexities into spaces of freedom of expression, of inclusion, to complement the most diverse urban, economic, and political aspects.

In Romania, studies of transformations of post-socialist cities have taken into account a wide range of topics that can be divided into two major categories. The first refers to urban transformations that have occurred as a result of the transition to a market economy such as suburbanisation, peri-urbanisation, brownfield and urban dereliction, and housing geographies. The second tackles aspects of cultural geography that relate to the personality of cities that shape

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their post-socialist culture, opening them for protest, inclusion, and diversity. Analyses of their changing patterns of space, place, and power offer a much-needed contribution to recent urban studies.

Urban sprawl is a broader topic addressed in Romanian post-socialist urban geography studies. For example, Grădinaru *et al*. (2006) asses the beginning of urban sprawl and urban shrinkage in twenty-nine municipalities in Romania using urban form indicators. Bănică, Istrate, and Muntele (2017) discuss internal and external peripheralisation processes due to either urban sprawl or urban shrinkage. Sandu and Groza (2017) identify different types of urban sprawl generated by ambiguous and inconsistent post-socialist laws that largely reflect Chelcea and Druță's (2016) 'zombie socialism' concept, as well as the comprehensive study of urban growth in post-socialism authored by Ianoș *et al.* (2016).

Inner cities are also subject to urban post-socialist change or failure. For example, Roșu (2015) presents a GIS analysis of socialist relicts in the centre of Iassy, with an important accent on urban dereliction. *Centrul Civic* in Bucharest is analysed by Light and Young (2018) from the perspective of the urban cultural landscape and the emerging post-socialist national identity of Romanians. Petrovici (2012) offers a class-based analysis of geographies of power, using the municipality of Cluj-Napoca as a case study to show blue-collar nationalist appropriation of space as part of the process of post-socialist middle-class formation.

In the same vein, Troc (2019) analyses the middle-class imaginaries in Cluj, in the process of creating suburban homes. Bădiță and Popescu (2012) aim to add the perspective of public participation in the urban revitalisation process of Craiova. Șoaită makes an important contribution to the geography of housing in Romania from various perspectives, such as in situ improvement of housing estates (2012), suburban owner–building strategies (2013), housing inequalities generated by overcrowding and under-occupied spaces (2014), political agenda and housing stratification (2021). Teodorescu (2018) brings important insights from the housing market of

Ferentari, the ghetto in Bucharest, in what he calls the '*the modern mahala*'.

The emergence of industrial brownfields – parts of the post-socialist Romanian urban landscape – have been illustrated through controversial cases of privatisation and re-privatisation in the chemical industry (Voiculescu and Jucu, 2016) and exemplary cases showing how they can be transformed into creative spaces (Potra *et al.*, 2020) in Timișoara. Jigoria-Oprea and Popa (2017) compared brownfield redevelopment practices in Reșița, Romania, with those in Pancevo, Serbia. Jucu (2015) discusses how post-socialist restructuring and neoliberal policies generate urban spatial patterns in the municipality of Lugoj – also in the Romanian Banat.

There is an increasing and much-welcomed body of literature on Romanian cities that tackles aspects of cultural geography and its intersectionalities with different aspects of life. For example, Lelea and Voiculescu (2017) explain how the production of emancipatory (public) spaces in Timișoara and Bucharest can offer inspiration for societal change. Voiculescu (2017) explains how fatalism is exacerbated in the public space of Timișoara through gambling facilities, with gambling as part of the adolescents' social capital.

There is also a growing body of literature that brings justice to the repressive Romanian socialist city by showing how protests are part of urban culture. Crețan and O'Brien (2020) and Ciobanu and Light (2018) emphasise the geometries of the protests in Bucharest after the fire at the nightclub *Colectiv* (October 2015) that eventually led to the resignation of the Romanian government back in 2015. Crețan (2015) places more than human geographies as part of the urban public debate and protest on street dogs. O'Brien and Crețan (2019) analyse the success of shepherds' protests in Bucharest in 2015 as part of the struggle to preserve their identity and traditional grazing methods. Vesalon and Crețan (2013) analyse anti-mining protests generated by the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation project that intended to use cyanide in the process of open-cast gold extraction. An important aspect of cultural geographies of post-

socialist cities that has not received sufficient attention is public space and gender.

Public space is a shared space of social production that is continuously shaped by power, politics, ownership, global-counter-actors, as well as participatory cultures (Hristova and Czepczynski, 2018). Such is the case of University Square in Bucharest, a space of repeated anti-governmental protests in Romania, the locus of "inter-connections between public space, the state, civil society and democracy in Romania" (Young *et al.*, 2018, p. 75).

The focus of this chapter is specifically on gendered visual representations and their intersectionalities with urban public space thirty years after state communism in Romania. We argue that this research adds to recent gender, cultural and urban studies in Romania. Building on the Lefebvrean concept of the right to the city, we interpret this *rightness* and *citadinship* from a gendered point of view. It was previously argued that Lefebvre's concept is:

> "[…] blind to the effects of gendered power relations on the fulfilment of women's right to the city" (Fenster, 2004, p. 218).

Lefebvre (1996) considers the city as a work of art and the artist is represented by the daily routine of people. Visual imagery is also part of the daily routine, needs, and activities of people where power and, in our case, gender intersect. This chapter is about what people see in their everyday journey through public spaces and how visual imagery is an expression of power, gender relations, gender mainstreaming, and gender stereotypes that permeate *the personal,* and which become *political* or instrumental in urban practices and policies.

*Research problematics:* In Romanian cities, women are glaringly under-represented in visual imagery in public spaces – imagery preserved from the past and that which is more recent – due to the construction of power relations which very often excluded them and their right to be respectfully represented. The symbolic

predominance of masculine visual representations shows the absence of gender mainstreaming policies and practices.

Our research revolves around four questions: 1) What kind/type of visual representations of women are there in the Romanian cities? 2) Who are the women fit/suitable for statues? 3) Is there a gender awareness of visual representations? 4) What are the places that people consider to be masculine and feminine?

In order to answer these questions, we focus on two main objectives: 1) to determine the public spaces of inclusion and exclusion of women through visual imagery and the perception of masculine and feminine characteristics; 2) to determine the gender awareness and conceptions (of men and women) about representations of women in the urban public spaces.

## 2. Theoretical aspects

In his seminal work, *The Right to the City*, Lefebvre (1996, first published in 1968) explains how people's needs should be reflected in urban society. There are *anthropological needs* and *social needs* which either oppose or complement themselves. Also, there are *specific needs* that are overlooked or parsimoniously considered by planners such as:

> "[…] creative activity, for the *oeuvre* (not only of products and consumable material goods), of the need for information, symbolism, the imaginary and play" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 147).

Therefore, the *urban* is in a continuous process of transformation in which past, present and possible cannot be separated and this process calls for new approaches. Art is important for the urban society, giving meaning to the *oeuvre* (i.e., masterwork) and – as in the case of sculptures and paintings – the appropriation of space (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 148, p. 157). In very many circumstances, the right to the city is more like a cry demanding "an integrated theory of the

city and urban society, using the resources of science and art" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158).

Seen as a continuous struggle of urban dwellers "against the property rights of owners," which in most cities of the world "outweigh the use rights of the inhabitants," Lefebvre "initiated a radical struggle to move beyond state and capitalism" (Purcell, 2013, p. 142). However, there are contemporary initiatives that add new perspectives on the right to the city like those in Brazil (against the discrimination of the slum dwellers, gender discrimination, gender mainstreaming in public policies, and planning, the Charter for Women's Right to the City), in Montreal (Montreal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities), as well as other charters connected to human rights (European Charter for Safeguarding Human Rights in the City, World Charter of the Right to the City, Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City) (Purcell, 2013).

Visual imagery or visual culture represents both an instrument and an object of research for geographers. According to Bartram, under this category fall:

> "[…] different visual forms from cinematic film and photography to promotional materials, art, and computer games" (Bartram, 2010, p. 150).

Geographers interpret how power relations are expressions of social meaning and understanding that intertwine both in the production and in the reception of visual imagery. Cultural meanings are produced and reproduced with each generation in various shapes and forms. Also, visual imagery is a manipulative instrument that power can operate with. While interpreting visual imagery, the researcher should ask questions that – since the Cultural Turn in geography – geographers are familiar with: 'who produced the image', 'what do we know about the producer', 'for whom was the image produced', 'who paid for it', 'when was it made', 'on what occasion'. There is also evidence that visual imagery affects our senses, determines "how we think, feel and act and that we produce distinctive geographies accordingly" (Bartram, 2010, p. 138).

Visual imagery and gender are closely connected in public space. Space as the 'public' realm has been privileged with a more masculine coding, representing "one single view of space rather than acknowledging its diversity" (Möller, 2009, p. 24). Gender, as a social construct is indispensable to the politics of place-making and place naming that very often and in most cultures of the world "reinforce claims of national ownership, state power, and masculine control" (Berg and Kearns, 1996, p. 10). It is constructed according to and speaking about the values of the individuals and of the community. In this respect, gender is not only constitutive but also indispensable to the configuration of place (Yu, 2014).

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women defines Gender Mainstreaming as:

> "[…] a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality" that is "not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality" (UN Women, 2022, para. 1).

Therefore, it places gender perspectives and gender equality in the centre of all activities such as:

> "[…] policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects" (UN Women, 2022, para. 1).

To sum up, this chapter is an analysis of the right of women to be represented in urban public spaces, as subjects of visual imagery, in ways that affirm their participation in a democratic society.

## 3. Methodology

This study is an approach to critically assess visual imagery and implicit aspects of justice in Romanian post-socialist urban public space by looking at gender as the main category of analysis:

> "At a populist level … geography is as much about the quality of visual representation as textual or cartographic detail" (Bartram, 2010, p. 131).

The city can be interpreted as a text with landscapes, encoding information and narratives (Duncan, 1990). Our focus is to decipher those narratives and their meanings in relation to public awareness of those meanings. In doing this, we engaged a mixed-mode methodology. The first author conducted ten semi-structured interviews with women and men aged 20-82 in Timişoara's public spaces in 2019. Our interviews were conducted in May 2019, in the Revolution Square that was adorned with flowers during *Timfloralis* – the flowers festival in Timişoara. Respondents were chosen randomly.

Interviews were complemented by two sets of different questionnaires that were delivered: face-to-face and online. The first set was answered by geography students who were attending the Gender and Geography class at the Department of Geography, West University of Timişoara, in 2019. It focused on gendered perceptions of places in Timişoara and the feelings of urban (in)securities once gender attributes were given to those places. There were twenty-five respondents aged 22-24 of which only two were permanent residents of Timişoara.

The second set of questionnaires was related to gendered representations in public spaces throughout Romania, specifically referring to statues. It was applied online through Facebook and e-mail listserv of geography students at the West University of Timişoara. The answers were collected through Google Drive. This increased the response rates to sixteen, their geographical distribution adding important information collected through secondary data.

Participant observation (by the first author) rounded out the above-mentioned methods, with a time span of over forty years in the public space of Timişoara. However, public space was also assessed through participant observation in many key sites of the city of Timişoara, such as the student campus, Iulius Mall, and important shopping areas in the city. Over fifty representative photos were

taken and analysed taking care of codes, conventions, gender, and social meanings embedded in visual imagery.

## 4. Results and discussions

### 4.1. Public spaces, gender, and visual imagery

Our daily journey through cities, as Lefebvre (1996) explained, encounters the art generated by people that expresses their everyday routine, their needs, and activities. There are symbols of men and women that are part of the symbolic landscape of cities (Yu, 2014). Symbols serve:

> "[…] the purpose of reproducing cultural norms and establishing the values of dominant groups across all of a society" (Cosgrove, 1989, p. 125).

With symbols and meanings, there are codes that transgress places and induce certain types of behaviour, attitudes, and impressions. There is a certain type of 'moral symbolism' in the design of landscapes that transgresses societal changes with codes of behaviour that preserve their legitimacy inscribed from the very beginning by those who created those landscapes, based on the values and norms of the society at a certain point in time. Our understanding of a particular landscape and symbols should be contextualised to a particular time and space:

> "The text of a geographical landscape interpretation is the means through which we *re-present* those meanings" (Cosgrove, 1989, p. 127).

In the end, there is an obvious connection between our own beliefs and values and the ways in which we decipher those codes inscribed in the landscapes of our daily journeys.

The dominant culture in a city can be enhanced, pondered, enriched, or diminished by new meanings and symbols attached to its landscape:

> "In general women represent the largest single excluded culture, at least as far as impact on the public landscape is concerned". "[…] the organization and use of space by women presupposes a very different set of symbolic meanings than by men … the maleness and femaleness of public landscape remains largely an excluded subject for geographical investigation, for no other reason than that the questions have never been put" (Cosgrove, 1989, p. 133).

Our research focuses on those parts of visual imagery that are relevant to the gendered right to the city, mainly female images and landmarks that we encounter in our daily journeys. Besides images, there is a certain type of cultural landscape that offers beauty and inclusion and our goal here is to decipher what places women consider attractive and implicitly safe.

We first focused on statues. They are important elements of the cultural landscape that witness the values, ideology, politics, and memory that people share during certain periods. Very often they are not ephemeral both ideologically and materially. They represent the most appreciated personalities either at the local, regional, national, or transnational levels. Statues mark places, show how the minds of people are set, and at the same time educate. Historically, they are promoted by public authorities and individuals as a public form of remembrance in which women's roles should be (re)considered (Fodor, 2022). In this regard, Fodor (2022) makes a comprehensive analysis of World War I monuments according to the female representations and presence and concludes that they fall into five classes of representation: victory, living allegories, the Motherland/Victory, other allegories (49 representations).

This research does not intend to be an inventory of statues in Romania and their gender representation. Rather, we use a gender lens to assess how people (men and women) relate to the possibility of placing statues and busts of women in the Romanian public space and what is their gender awareness in this regard. In other words, 'are we aware that there is a gender dimension of statues in our cities and towns?' and 'who is fit for a statue?'

The results referring to statues representing women and the gender awareness of the population in this respect are highly connected to the gender roles of women in contemporary Romanian society and their presence in public places around the country. Both interviews and the online questionnaires showed that more than 60% of those interviewed did not question the absence of statues of women in our cities.

'If you do not know of any female representation in the public space of your locality, why do you think this is happening?' The answers to this question of both men and women clearly underline the gender roles in our society, as well as the power relations. On one hand, women answered this question in a more elaborate manner covering a wide span of themes such as power relations and prestige, gender roles, and a certain patriarchal way of life that transmits prestige through patrilineal pathways. All these maintain the status quo of keeping women solely responsible for social reproduction, producing a certain feminisation of activities that deem them to be less important. Finally, the size of a locality seems to matter with more gender inequality in smaller locales (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1. Excerpts from women's answers:

| |
|---|
| *"Being a small town, there were not many personalities."* |
| *"Because the merits of women have always been less or hardly recognised. Another reason would be, I intuit, the fact that those who decided to place a statue were in the vast majority of cases men."* |
| *"Because success has always been attributed to men, they were the ones who had access to education and higher classes of society, and women were housewives taking care of the family."* |
| *"Lack of initiative."* |
| *"Women were not appreciated enough to be honoured in public."* |

| |
|---|
| *"From ancient times the people who could read and write were the representatives of the church, so the first printed books from our lands came from them. Then the royal courts needed scholars such as philosophers, artists, treasurers, etc. The sons of the well-off and even merchants followed, who were sent to other countries for education in various fields. The women, on the other hand, got married, took care of the house and the family, and supported their husbands. Mostly, these were the duties of women. The riots, the wars, all the important events were led by men. I think these are the main reasons why the statues in our country illustrate mainly men."* |
| *"There are two causes: 1. Those who decide the way the public space looks are mostly men / only men. By default, I choose representations of my own genre. As there is no gender education in Romania, they do not pose any problem or reflect on their choices. 2. The fields from which the female figures that could be represented may come are dominated by men, their perspectives, and discourses (e.g., national history, science, literature, etc.). So, women are underrepresented from the start, and it is difficult to be represented in the public space."* |

Table 2. Excerpts from men's answers:

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|---|
| *"Societies were male-dominated."* |
| *"Due to unfavourable locations."* |
| *"Women were in charge of raising children and doing housework and did not have time to assert themselves to make a statue."* |

Even if the previous answers regarding power structures, gender roles, and social reproduction show that the Romanian public understands these gender inequalities, the answer to the question "What female person do you think would deserve to have a statue in your city or town? How about in Romania? What motivates your answer?" shows that only when you succeed and are successful in a patriarchal society you can be rewarded by being dedicated a statue.

The examples given by the respondents include political figures and women who have made careers in the army, medicine, and art. Of these, the queens of Romania - Regina Elisabeta (married to King Carol I, she named herself a poet - Carmen Sylva) and Regina Maria/Queen Mary (Queen of Romania who was married to King Ferdinand I). Ecaterina Teodoroiu was a Romanian soldier who died in WWI. Arethia Tătărăscu was the president of the National League of Romanian Women in Gorj. From this position, she managed the donation of the most famous statuary ensemble in Romania by the sculptor Constantin Brâncuşi; she donated it to the city of Târgu Jiu in the memory of the soldiers who died during WWI.

Veronica Micle is a famous woman that the national poet Mihai Eminescu was in love with, being inspirational for his love poems. Sylvia Hoișie and Ana Aslan are two Romanian scientists. Hoișie is the inventor of Polidin, an immunity booster that was produced in Romania between 1966 and 2012 and was successfully administered to many generations of children and adults. Ana Aslan (1897-1988) was a scientist and gerontologist, a member of the Romanian Academy of Science, who discovered what was called the 'the fountain of youth' and called it Gerovital – with the Romanian Society of Gerontology channelling her product into clinics. Lastly, Nadia Comăneci, the famous Romanian Gymnast, and Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu (1887-1973), the first Romanian engineer (and the sister of Gheorghe Leonida who is the creator of the head of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil).

In Table 3, we excerpted the answers and thoughts shared by the respondents on the characters presented above.

Table 3. Impressions on female personalities who are either presented by or deserve to have a statue

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|---|
| *"Ecaterina Teodoroiu, Arethia Tătărăscu. They are real characters, for example Veronica Micle (fortunately, due to its past, Iași has many such personalities),"* male, aged 51-65. |

| |
|---|
| *In Timişoara; In Bucharest, The bust of Queen Maria in the Opera Square in Timişoara, and in Alba Iulia, The statue of Queen Maria in Oradea. "Queen Mother Elena deserves to be represented in the country as well,"* female, aged 36-50. |
| *"In the town of Năsăud there is a bust of Veronica Micle. She was born and lived in Năsăud for a while. But she is defined by her relationship with Eminescu. Her bust is placed next to Eminescu's,"* female, aged 36-50. |
| *"The bust of Arethia Tătărăscu, recently inaugurated in Târgu Jiu, is a controversial one (due to the breasts of the bust considered too 'sexy' by the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture), placed next to her husband to associate the woman with the achievements and social influence of her husband. Locally, without the knowledge of other female personalities, I consider that the bust of Arethia Tătărăscu deserves to be remade and relocated,"* female, aged 18-35.<br><br>*"Irina Burnaia – the first woman to fly over the Carpathians – the first woman acrobatic pilot; at the national level, there are too many 'first woman who' in our country, in many fields, which are very little credited, especially through sculptures or other artistic monuments (Florica Maria Sas – the first woman explorer, Cecilia Cuțescu – the first woman teacher in Europe, Ana Aslan, etc. Just because there was a man before them ... I don't remember learning at school of any important female personality, because knowledge in Romanian culture is based on male personalities, and by a simple google search, only controversies and men bibliographies; there are only data about their marriage and how they entered society due to their husbands,"* female, aged 18-35. |
| *"Brăila… A possible answer is the statue of Ecaterina Teodoroiu, as in other cities,"* female, aged 18-35.<br><br>*"Ecaterina Teodoroiu who also appears on the 20 lei banknote, both in my locality and in Romania,"* female, aged 18-35. |
| *"I think that Sylvia Hoișie, the inventor of the drug Polidin, would deserve a statue in Iași. There is enough space in front of the Antibiotice SA headquarters. In Romania, keeping the register, a statue of Ana Aslan (if it did not already exist) I think is very necessary. In both cases, their efforts to create life-saving remedies can be a compelling reason,"* man, aged 51-65. |

| |
|---|
| *"In my locality I don't know exactly, but in Romania it would be worth all the women who brought value and fame to the country, which are not few, such as Ștefania Mărăcineanu, Nadia Comăneci and many others. Outside my locality, Ana Aslan highlighted the importance of procaine in ameliorating age-related dystrophic disorders, widely applied in the geriatric clinic. Iulia Hasdeu, due to her boundless genius,"* man aged 18-35. |
| *"Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu, the first female engineer in Romania. Although in the country she was rejected at the Polytechnic due to the fact that she was a woman, in 1909 she became a student at the Royal Technical Academy in Berlin,"* female, aged 36-50. |
| *"In my locality I don't know, in Romania Nadia Comăneci would deserve a statue because she took Romanian gymnastics to another level and Ștefania Mărăcineanu,"* man, aged 18-35.<br><br>*"Emilia Eberle, a gymnast from Arad, double silver medallist at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Writer Rodica Ojog-Brașoveanu, from Bucharest, because she is often called 'Romania's Agatha Christie'",* female, aged 18-35. |
| *"In Cluj-Napoca, a statue/bust should represent Doina Cornea. She was part of the anti-communist resistance. There is a street in the city with her name, but it is not enough,"* female, aged 36-50.<br><br>*"Livia Cernenski – sculptor and ceramist – passionate in her works of national history,"* female, aged 36-50. |

None of the online responses included the possibility of symbols for future statues. Some women suggested that statues should be made to show "women in traditional costumes" and representing "gender equality". Some other women brought up fatherhood and friendship after reflecting on their own relationships – one with the poignant and disturbing quote "my father for being kind and gentle and never beating me". However, half of the women did not see the need for more statues of women with responses such as, "I don't know anybody who might deserve this".

These answers raised issues of gender and violence, gender roles, but also internalised patriarchal subjugation that hinders

gender equality. For example, a man, aged 65, a retired welder said "There is equality between men and women. Women should have their statues, too". A man aged 80 said: "A statue, they (women) would deserve. My idea is that there are intelligent women. Intelligence is not important if they are beautiful". Another man, aged 33, reported on the symbolism of women statues: "they should represent something connected to prosperity … on the monument of heroes there are women".

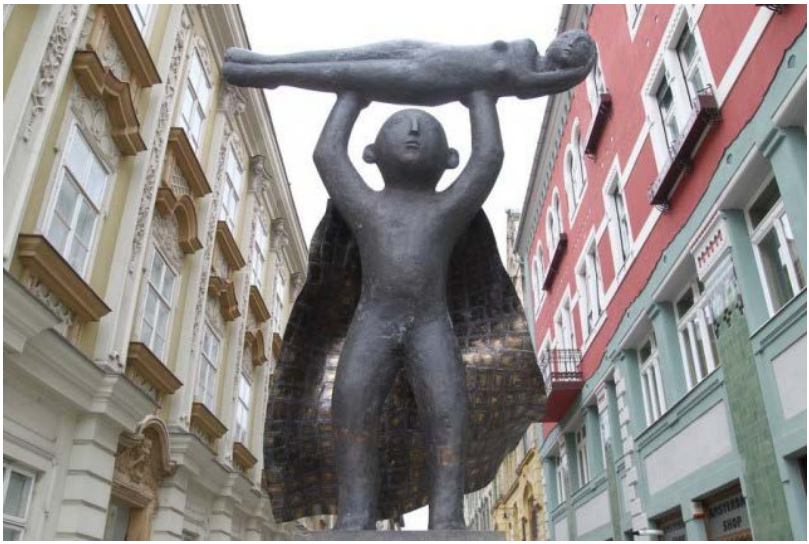

Fig. 1. Supermom by the modernist sculptor Virgil Scripcariu, placed in the centre of Timișoara. It celebrates motherhood

Source: Sorina Voiculescu, 2019

Fig. 2. A statue representing femininity was placed at the entrance of a Contemporary Artists Union building in Timişoara. It has been placed here since the communist period

Source: Sorina Voiculescu, 2019

During the interviews, women and men associated parts of the cultural capital of the city (Figures 1, 2 and 3a) of Timişoara with gender representations that accompanied them in their everyday journey through the city. For example, flowers are highly associated with femininity. Festivals that celebrate flowers attract unusual numbers of visitors, especially women, couples, and families in the display areas – i.e., the city centre (Figure 3). However, these occurrences are ephemeral, leaving the same masculine representations behind (statues, ads, graffiti, names of streets).

Fig. 3a. *Timfloralis*, the flowers festival in Timișoara

Source: Sorina Voiculescu, 2019

Fig 3b. The Roses Park, one of the most visited places in Timişoara

Source: Margareta Lelea, 2011

Cornelia and Ioana, aged 82 and 80, who had not come to the Revolution Square (downtown Timişoara) for a long time, had the chance to reclaim this space during the Timfloralis festival which triggered memories. They remembered the times when they used to come and enjoy the view while eating cakes at two famous feminine landmarks in the city – the “Violeta” and the “Crinul” dessert shops:

> "[…] now [at the moment of the interview] we do not go on terraces to have coffee. Now it is so beautiful to linger between these flowers. We drink coffee at home. We used to go at the famous confectionery Violeta (i.e., Violet) and Crinul (Lily); they had a long tradition, but they are closed now, they all get closed."

They shared the fate of most such shops that were part of the social capital of each district during communism – first privatisation and then closure. Eventually, "Violeta" was closed in favour of short-lived (shoe) stores.

Closing these places restricts the motivation of this generation to go to the city centre, the place where we met them while they enjoyed the festival of flowers *Timfloralis*. When unmotivated by attractions, this generation of women is removed from the urban public space:

> "I don't feel scared to go in the parks because I only walk in the parks during daytime and in the bigger parks there are policemen… you could be exposed to some kind of danger… in the evening I wouldn't go to any park. I used to be accompanied by a man when I was young. Then I used to go in parks in the evening… only."

## 4.2. Women's and men's perceptions of public spaces, feminine and masculine representations and the city

People pattern their perception of places according to the significance of certain perimeters, categories, and codes; these influences how people inhabit the world and also how they cope with problems that are generated by the existence of certain boundaries (Ardener, 1981). Places can be restrictive to some and inclusive to others. In order to be crossed or occupied, there are certain rules and defining features that people are aware of.

Gender is the category that adds to the diversity of particular spaces which cannot be seen but deduced from the relationship of men and women to particular places and their experience of those places. Women can act like mediators or determinants of physical

and social space (Ardener, 1981) and so does the perception of gender characteristics of certain places. In our case in point, gender acts as a mediator of safety in most public spaces that respondents mentioned in the questionnaire. Once feminised, they generate feelings of safety and inclusion.

The questions were open, so the respondents formulated their own choices on gendered public spaces/masculine and feminine representations according to their own experiences (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Most men perceived shopping malls as the most feminine places) and parks, open-air cafes, and swimming pools as feminine. In the same vein, they considered masculine sites: the pubs and bars (majority), the gambling and sport bets areas, as well as the stadium areas, and the statues (these were also considered masculine symbols generating masculine dominated sites). Men considered gyms to the both masculine and feminine sites.

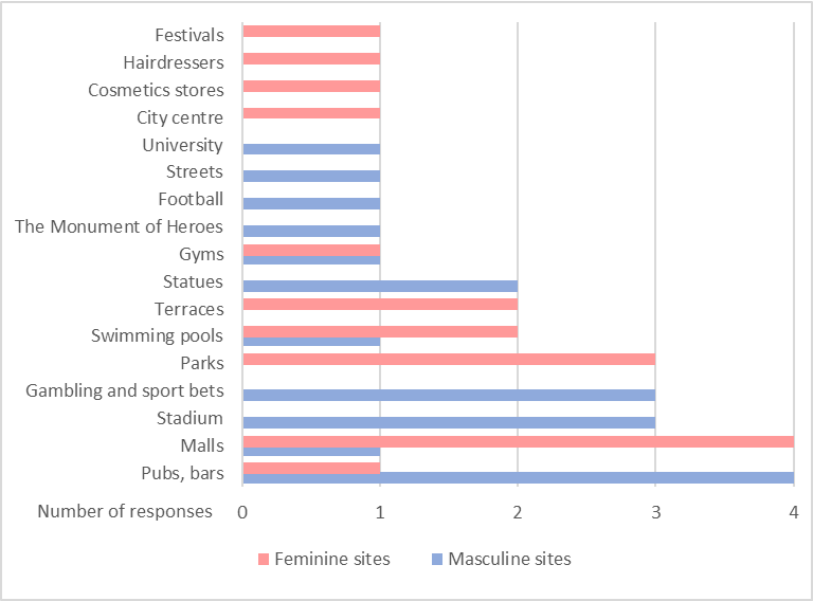


Fig. 4. Men's perceptions of masculine and feminine sites in Timişoara

Women mentioned 26 variables of masculine and feminine representations (as opposed to men – 16), being more analytical in defining the masculine and feminine characteristics of public spaces. The feminine representations as perceived by women are: The Roses Park (being a park of flowers, Fig. 3b), Carmen Sylva High school, shops in the city centre, the children's park, the ads representing women placed in different locations (presenting women as housewives and fashionistas).

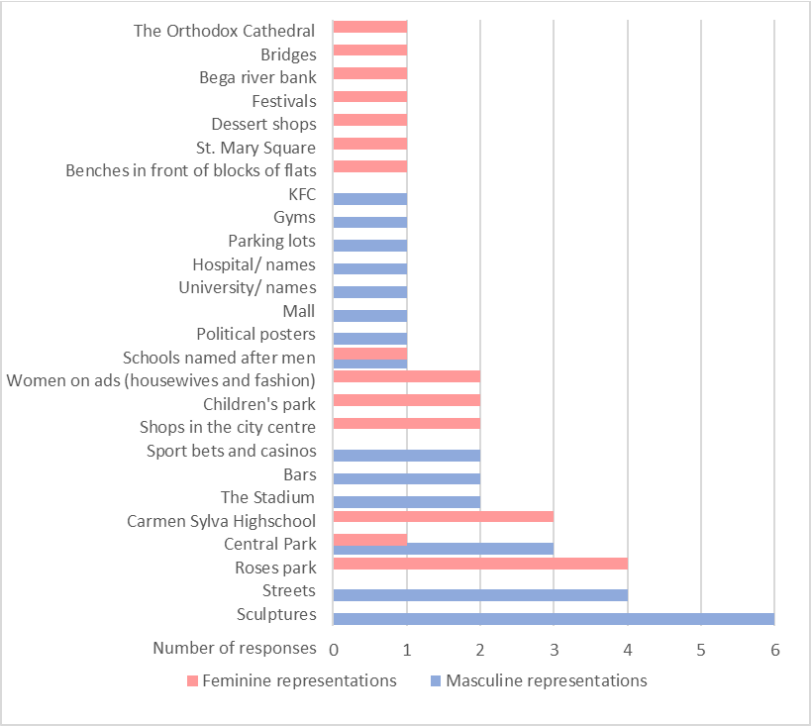


Fig. 5. Women's perceptions of masculine and feminine public spaces in Timișoara

The masculine representations as perceived by women are: sculptures, streets, the Central Park (because of the sculptures representing famous men in the history of Timişoara – the park loses its perceived femininity for women – not for men though!), sports bet shops and casinos, bars, and the stadium. One first comment women made is about the power of visual imagery that imprints gendered characteristics to the spaces where they are exhibited.

Combining the results, gendered perceptions of femininity and masculinity are as follows: the interviewed women feel most comfortable in the city centre (majority), in parks and at the mall; women feel uncomfortable in neighbourhoods located on the outskirts of the city, in parks (at night), in sites where buildings are constructed, and in areas with stray dogs. The interviewed men feel uncomfortable at night in the outskirts of the city and in parks, and also in some pubs and bars.

If visual imagery has a lot to do with the perception of femininity and masculinity, it does not seem to relate to the feeling of security or insecurity. However, once perceived as a masculine space, pubs and bars can increase the feeling of insecurity of both men and women. In parks, daylight has the same effect; the absence of it creates a feeling of insecurity for both men and women. If parks are symbols of femininity during the daytime, they prove repulsive during the night for most of the respondents (women and men) (Figures 6, 7, and 8).

Men feel comfortable in most public spaces. A few respondents made exceptions: in the outskirts at night, in parks at night, and a few in pubs and bars; however, most men did not express any issues of insecurity.

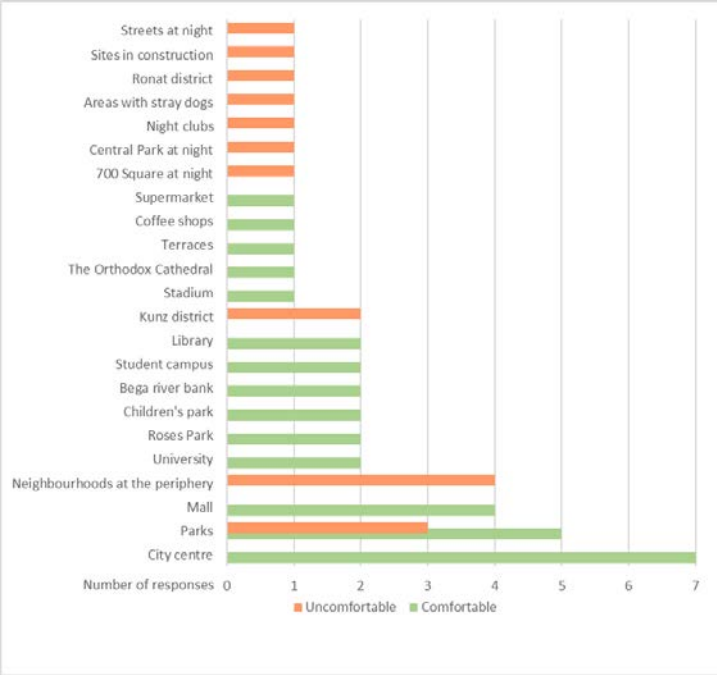


Fig. 6. Comfortable/uncomfortable public spaces for women in Timișoara

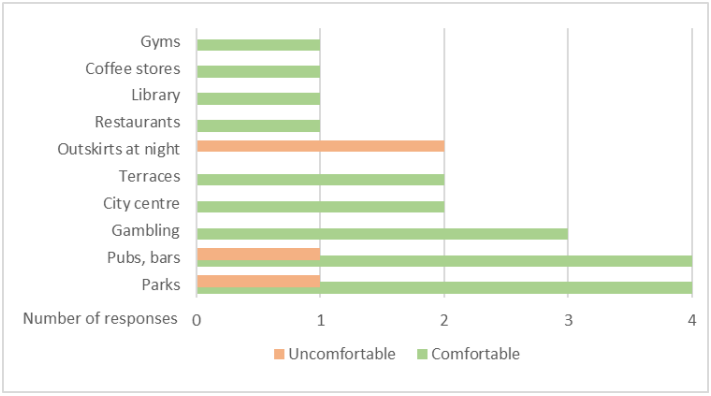


Fig. 7. Comfortable/uncomfortable public spaces for men in Timișoara

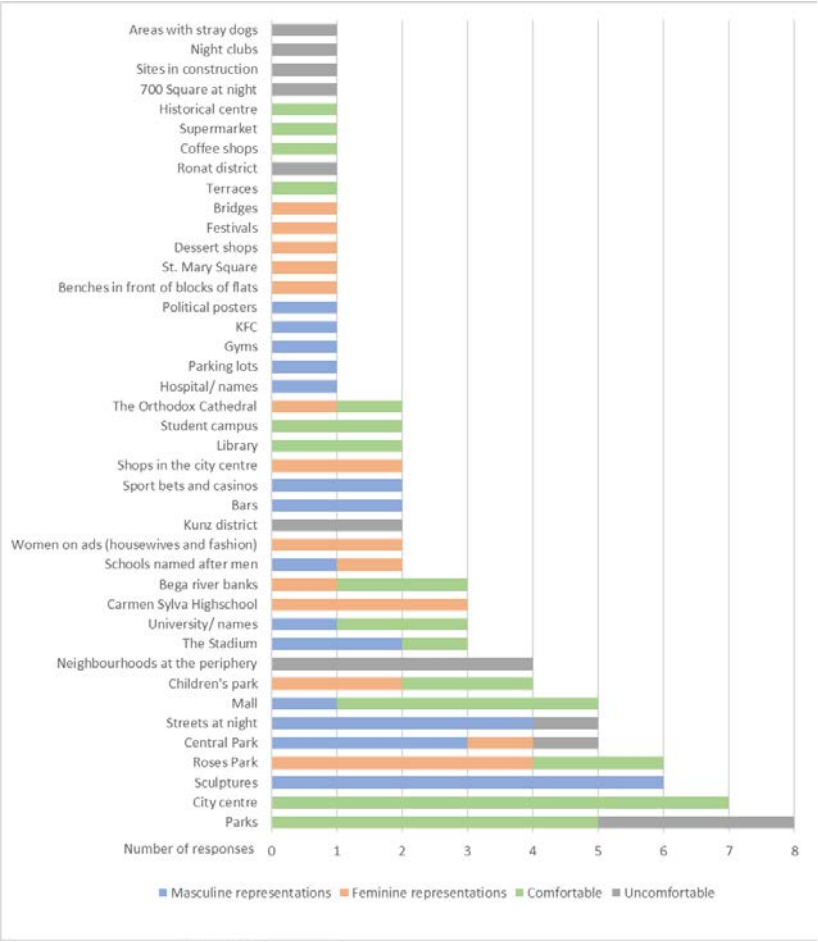


Fig. 8. Comfortable/uncomfortable public spaces for women and men in Timișoara – combined results

## 5. Concluding remarks

Feminist geography offers a spatial perspective to feminist theory and gives gendered meanings to places and spaces. According to Doreen Massey (1994), feminist geography connects the categories of space, place, and gender and gives a spatial context to (in)equality between genders. Spaces and places are gendered in many different ways, with subtleties decoded by the societies in which individuals live. Gender mainstreaming becomes a necessity for more inclusive public spaces, public policy and for the right of women to be visually represented. Visual images which depict women should also present women from lived history. Their stories do not need to be invented, but discovered. Or paid attention to. Or mainstreamed. Their stories are with every generation.

The content of visual imagery is responsive to our vision of the world, to the "individual and collective empowerment" (Bartram, 2010, p. 133). New symbols of women should be incorporated in the existing symbolic landscape. In our cities, it is essential that socialist symbols of power are not replaced with other symbols of power (the patriarchal power relations) amplifying the masculine control over city planning and enforcing the exclusion of women. All this information should be considered with new and inclusive urban policies and practices.

Gender, as an analytical category, should be highly considered when rethinking public places and urban geographies. Visual imagery outdoors exposes individuals to their messages, leaving them little choice to avoid them (Rosewarne, 2005). Sometimes the way in which they are perceived can limit women's movement. Gender stereotypes have been multiplied and preserved, from early urban planners and architects to present managers and developers, very often as cultural practices. It is important to understand this when planning our cities in order to intentionally move towards greater justice and inclusion, for all.

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# Chapter 7. Mobility Patterns and Behaviours from a Gender Perspective in Alba Iulia Metropolitan Area, Romania

Emanuel-Cristian ADOREAN[1], Ana Rita LYNCE[2], Sofia KALAKOU[3]

## 1. Introduction

Women's mobility patterns and behaviours differ from men's regarding accessibility to the various transport services, transport safety, and personal security while travelling. These differences are explained by local transport supply, economic status, income, education level, perceptions, and personal aspirations (Monteiro et al., 2016; Singh, 2019; Pirra et al., 2021). Consequently, women's daily movements are often disrupted by the perception of insecurity due to unsafe travelling conditions and the fear of verbal, physical or sexual harassment in public spaces, or while using public transport systems (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014; Gauvin et al., 2020; Kalakou et al., 2021). Thus, at present, women's mobility needs should require more attention.

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Similar to other regions (Thynell, 2016; Queirós et al., 2017; Arguello et al., 2021), Romania has no tradition of carrying out systematic studies on transport gender differences (Ilovan and Muntean, 2021). Although at a slow pace, this gap tends to be filled in by academic research (Queirós et al., 2017; Singh, 2019; Kalakou et al., 2021; Arguello et al., 2021) or European transport development projects from a gender perspective, such as TInnGO,[4] DIAMOND[5] or EIT Urban Mobility.[6] Nevertheless, the lack of gender-disaggregated data currently limits understanding of gender aspects in urban mobility solutions. It affects the ability to design efficient gender equality policies and measures (Gauvin et al., 2020), thus affecting the transport systems and women in particular.

During the last years, Alba Iulia and its metropolitan area have struggled with serious transport difficulties because of lack of parking within the core city, corroborated by increased heavy road traffic and motorisation rate (CIVITAS SUMP-PLUS, 2019). Efforts to tackle congestion and other transport-related issues have led Alba Iulia metropolitan area to try new mobility and transport planning solutions, including the Smart City 2018 pilot project and the elaboration of its first Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) in 2017. These actions connected the city's three main spheres: mobility, tourism, and education. Nonetheless, no solutions were designed to implement efficient gender equality policies.

Against this background, the city aimed at filling this gap and joined a European Project named TInnGO – Transport Innovation

[4] TInnGO – Transport Innovation Gender Observatory. https://www.tinngo.eu/

[5] DIAMOND Project – Revealing actionable knowledge from data for more inclusive and efficient transport systems, November 2018 – January 2022. https://diamond-project.eu/

[6] EIT Urban Mobility - Women in Urban Mobility – Promoting gender equality and female empowerment. https://www.eiturbanmobility.eu/women-in-urban-mobility-promoting-gender-equality-and-female-empowerment/

Gender Observatory, developed to analyse and improve people's mobility experiences from a gender perspective, in ten European hubs. Within this context and focusing on the Romanian experiences within the EU Project, this chapter aims to analyse the mobility patterns and behaviours with an intersectional approach in Alba Iulia metropolitan area. Therefore, disaggregated data was collected to investigate the main gender differences between men's and women's behaviours and mobility patterns without restrictions or limitations associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

GIS techniques, Python coding, spatial analysis, descriptive statistics, and statistical analysis were used as the main research methods for the data analysis. Thus, the analyses hereafter presented are based on the 254 answers obtained from Alba Iulia metropolitan area hub within the TInnGO project.

The chapter is divided into five main parts, namely (i) Introduction, (ii) Methodology and case study, (iii) Theoretical background (iv) Results and Discussion and (v) Conclusions. The second section presents the case study, and the methods used are presented and explained. The third section consists of a literature review that illustrates the gender gap existing in today's mobility systems and within academia. Further, the fourth part highlights the results focusing on mobility patterns, behaviours, and satisfaction models. Finally, the research conclusions and further recommendations are drawn in the last section.

## 2. Theoretical background

Mobility is a human right essential to the citizens' well-being and quality of life (Hanson, 2010). This sector may lead to equity and social cohesion, fostering economic development simultaneously (Hanson, 2010; Lee and Sener, 2016; Harumain et al., 2021).

Complex mobility experiences take place on various temporal and spatial dimensions, and they can both reshape the relationships between individuals and places and create new ones (Manfredini and

Dilda, 2012). For instance, mobility research includes studies mainly on migration, tourism and daily mobility (Gonzalez et al., 2008). Daily mobility refers to people moving among places daily, so the sum of their journeys defines it, the time spent travelling, and the chosen transport mode (Manfredini and Dilda, 2012).

Nonetheless, transport systems present gender discrepancies not only in developing areas, but also in the developed ones. Women's mobility differs significantly from men's, and this situation is particularly reflected in their everyday mobility patterns (Monteiro et al., 2016; Singh, 2019; Pirra et al., 2021). Gender differences exist regarding accessibility, safety and security perceptions, and labour market participation. These differences are explained by a series of factors, such as demographic characteristics, labour feminisation rate, education level, income, personal aspirations, perceptions, as well as social and economic status, and local transport systems' offers (Cunha et al., 2014; Queirós et al., 2017; Campisi et al., 2022; Carboni et al., 2022), or demographic structure (e.g., having or not children or a partner) (Scheiner and Holz-Rau, 2015). It often leads to discrepancies in the quality of life, unequal opportunities and mobility segregation (Thynell, 2016; Boisjoly and Yengoh, 2017; Singh, 2019; Arguello et al., 2021).

Mechakra-Tahiri et al. (2012) assessed the mobility gender gap in 70 countries. They discovered that the gender gap in mobility is caused by health factors, behaviours and sociodemographic features, while the gender discrepancies are more evident in less developed regions as a consequence of the existing gender inequality.

On the other hand, although women travel less frequently and cover shorter distances per day, their journeys are more complex, consisting of a larger number of stops (Monteiro et al., 2016; Queirós et al., 2017; Ng and Acker, 2018; Arguello et al., 2021; Campisi et al., 2022; Carboni et al., 2022). Additionally, Ng and Acker (2018) found some evidence regarding women's preferences in using public transport systems and shared taxi services rather than cars when compared with men.

The overall experience also differs in the sense of security. Studies have shown that women feel more insecure in transport, especially in the evening and at night, with the emotional aspects of travelling varying between anxiety, stress and fear (Campisi et al., 2022). Therefore, they further limit their mobility due to insecurity perceptions and to avoid dangerous situations (Thynell, 2016; Singh, 2019; Kalakou et al., 2021; Goel et al., 2022). Additionally, Stark and Meschik (2018) found that women who experienced harassment acts during their trips were more likely to exclude certain destinations and travel modes from their daily itineraries. Consequently, at the present moment, women are less satisfied with the existing transport services (Arguello et al., 2021; Kalakou et al., 2021; Carboni et al., 2022), and they generally have travel restrictions due to personal security concerns (Stark and Meschik, 2018). Under these circumstances, studies assume that urban transport solutions have mainly been designed to accommodate men's mobility patterns and behaviours (Singh, 2019; Uteng, 2021).

Thus, the gender perspective is a fundamental aspect of the current urban mobility agenda, as it can influence the vitality of citizens' public life (Carboni et al., 2021; Goel et al., 2022; Valera and Casakin, 2022). When the entire image of reality is absent, the possibility of bridging the existing gender gap is limited (Scheiner and Holz-Rau, 2015; Cresswell and Uteng, 2016, Gauvin et al., 2020). Therefore, to achieve more gender-neutral transport and mobility solutions, there is a need for mobility policies that consider women's particular needs. Despite the increasing number of public institutions being more aware about the importance of women's experiences, patterns and behaviours while travelling, women's mobility needs are rarely taken into account by urban and transport planners (Stark and Meschik, 2018; Bilin Han et al., 2019; Gauvin et al., 2020; Hidayati, 2020; Carboni et al., 2022). The main reasons are the entrenched gender hierarchies in most modern societies. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the literature by analysing mobility patterns and experiences through the gender lens in Alba Iulia metropolitan area.

## 2. Methodology and case study

### 2.1. Case study

Alba Iulia metropolitan area includes Alba Iulia municipality (the largest city in the county), Sebeş municipality, Teiuş town and eight adjacent rural localities, namely Berghin, Ciugud, Cricău, Galda de Jos, Ighiu, Meteş, Sântimbru and Vinţu de Jos (see Figure 1).

The city of Alba Iulia is a medium-sized municipality in Transylvania with a total area of 102.5 km² (Nicula, Stoica and Ilovan, 2017; Botiș and Strîmbu, 2019). According to the National Statistics Institute of Romania (2022), the city of Alba Iulia is estimated to have approximately 74,653 inhabitants in 2021, while the metropolitan area with 938.3 km² is expected to have nearly 143,630 inhabitants. Women represent 53% of the total population in Alba Iulia municipality and 52% at the metropolitan level.

In 2012, Alba Iulia was the first metropolitan area in the country to introduce a metropolitan transport service. Since then, the municipality of Alba Iulia and its adjacent zones have made large investments in transport and derived infrastructures, currently having a modern public transport system. The Alba Iulia Public Transport Company (STP) is a private operator which provides public transport services in Alba Iulia metropolitan area. STP Alba has won several national and international recognitions that position Alba Iulia as the city with one of the best local public transport systems in Romania (STP, n.d.). As can be observed in the photographs in Figure 2 and Figure 3, to preserve the Alba Carolina Citadel,[7] the municipality has banned public transport inside the historic area, allowing only active modes (SMARTA, 2019).

[7] Alba Carolina Citadel is the largest medieval fortress in South-Eastern Europe and, at the same time, the second largest Vauban fortification in Europe. It is considered the “engine” of economy in Alba Iulia and its presence turns the tourism into a reference activity for the city.

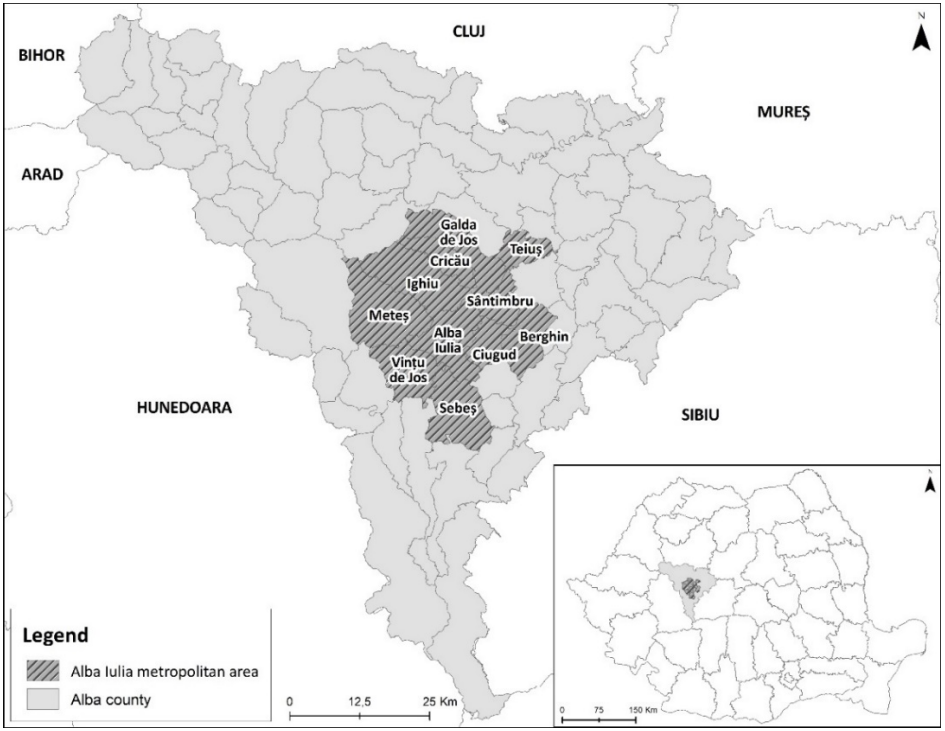


Fig. 1. Geographical location of Alba Iulia metropolitan area

Source: Authors, December 2021

Fig. 2. Soft modes and infrastructures inside Alba Carolina Citadel

Source: Authors, December 2021

Fig. 3. Soft modes and infrastructures outside Alba Carolina Citadel

Source: Authors, December 2021

The total length of bike lanes in Alba Iulia municipality currently is around 19 km, and, in the metropolitan area, it is approximately 26 km.

Even though the municipality has made efforts to boost greener transport modes, Alba Iulia continues to have a high car ownership rate, as 55% of its inhabitants use the car as the main transport mode within the city, while the percentage in the metropolitan area is even higher (CIVITAS SUMP-PLUS, 2019). For this reason, this study attempts to provide evidence for the societal aspects of sustainable transport and insights for policymakers to consider in planning sustainable services.

## 2.2. Methodology

In the TInnGO project, an intersectional approach has been adopted to analyse people's mobility experiences in 10 TInnGO European Hubs in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece, Germany, Baltic States, Scandinavian Countries, United Kingdom, and Romania. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and limitations, data was only collected online through a mobility survey disseminated on TInnGO's social media channels, platforms, and networks and by using, when necessary, specialised companies to collect the data.

It should be highlighted that people were asked to answer the questions without COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and limitations. Within this context, the Alba Iulia metropolitan area survey was available in English and Romanian, and the data collection went between August 2020 and June 2021. Two hundred fifty-four (254) replies were collected, with women representing 64% of the metropolitan area sample, as illustrated in Figure 4.

GIS techniques and Python coding were used to conduct a spatial analysis of passenger behaviour, while descriptive statistics and statistical models were employed to assess the passenger experience and identify differences in the perceptions of men and women.

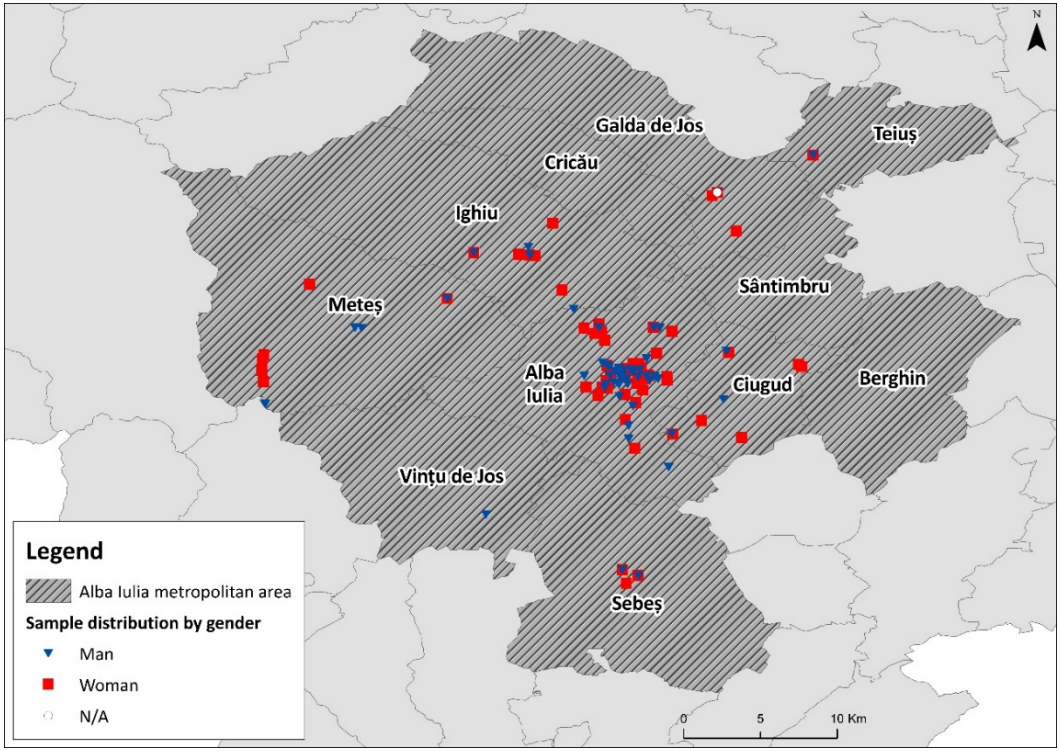


Fig. 4. Sample distribution by gender within Alba Iulia metropolitan area

The analyses were divided into two main parts: mobility patterns and behaviours characterisation and mobility satisfaction models analysis. Firstly, in the stage of mobility patterns and behaviours characterisation, Python codes were primarily used to obtain the geographical coordinates of the surveys' origin-destination (O/D) points, while the GIS techniques allowed to validate data, with users' sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, and ethnicity (when available) assisting in the validation process of the sample. At the same time, the representation of aggregated flows and the density of destinations for the most common journey was carried out through GIS techniques and spatial analysis, while the assessment and characterisation of the sample's most frequent trips were performed through descriptive statistics. The software used for both GIS analyses and Pyhton coding was the ArcGIS Desktop 10.9.

Secondly, in the section regarding mobility satisfaction models, customer satisfaction questions using a 5-point Likert scale were employed to evaluate transport infrastructure and mobility services satisfaction levels regarding the transport mode used in the most frequent journey. Additionally, parametric and non-parametric statistical tests were conducted through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences – SPSS to determine which variables influence each agent's daily mobility and users' perceptions. The data collected in this section helped identify user satisfaction levels, determinant aspects and how these vary in gender and age. This section also explored the passenger experience focusing on the perceptions regarding security aspects, integration, space availability, public transport services and infrastructure characteristics due to their relevance to mode choices.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1 Sample characterisation

After data validation, women represent 64% and men 36%. It is noteworthy that this gender distribution does not represent the metropolitan area demographics, as here the gender distribution is much more balanced (48% are men, and 52% women). From the entire sample, one person did not indicate gender. Thus, due to statistical significance, only specific genders of women and men were studied.

As shown in Figure 5, 72.7% of the population from the metropolitan area lives in the cities of Alba Iulia and Sebeș, and Teiuș town, while 27.3% live in the surrounding suburban and rural areas. It should be noted that the distribution by gender shows a higher percentage of women living in urban areas (74.0% compared to 70.3% of men).

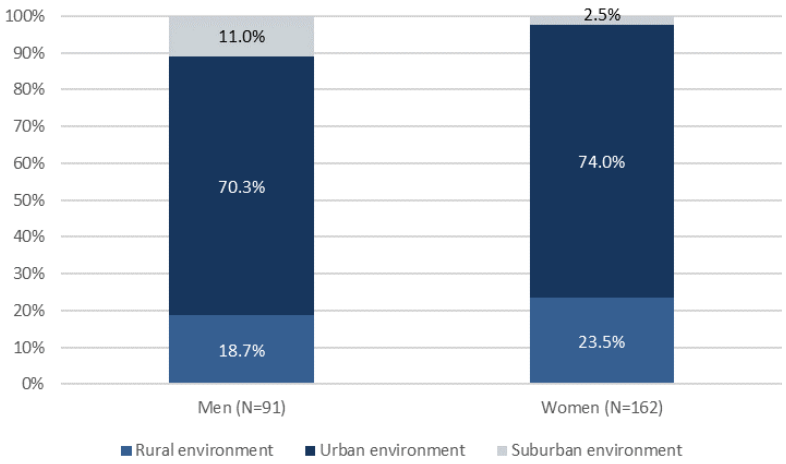


Fig. 5. Distribution of respondents by living environment

Regarding the age factor, the presence of the younger population (18-34 years old) is 21.7%, while the more senior people (+65 years old) represent 16.6%, as shown in Figure 6. The age groups between 35 and 44 years old represent 28.1%, those from 45 to 54 years old constitute 18.6%, and those between 55 and 64 years old account for 14.2% of the total. Thus, as expected, the young and adult group had a greater weight than the elderly population in this data set.

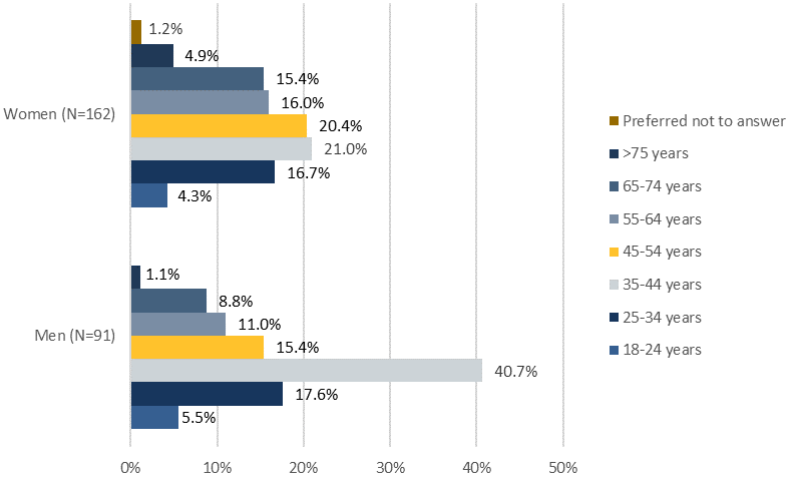


Fig. 6. Distribution of respondents by age

Regarding the sample's education level, the predominant groups hold Bachelor's and Master's degrees (61.7%), followed by post-secondary and short-cycle tertiary education with 25.7%, and 2.8% have a PhD degree (as illustrated in Figure 7). More than half of the women have a Bachelor's degree (35.2%) or a Master's degree (22.2%).

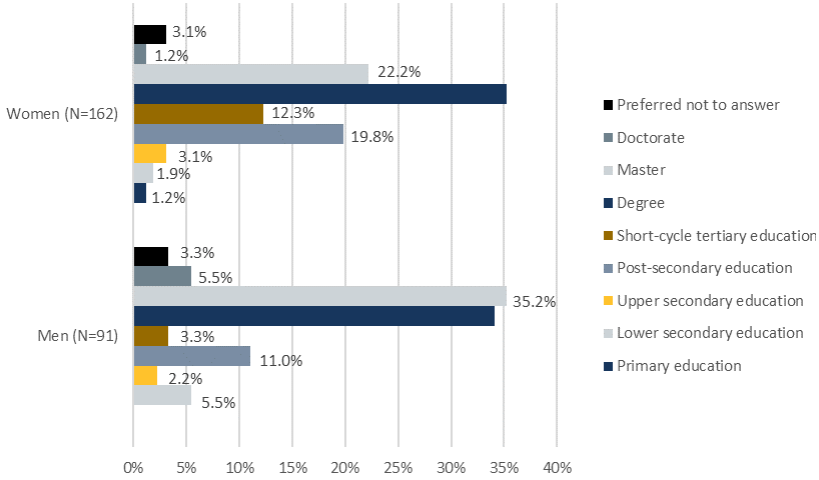


Fig. 7. Distribution of respondents by education level

Considering the distribution by working status (see Figure 8), 60.5% of the respondents are paid employees or office or plant workers. The percentage of retired people is also relevant, with 15.0% of the total, while 13.0% of the sample are students. The distribution by gender illustrates a higher number of retired women (18.5% of the women sample) and a lower representation of student females (2.5% of the women sample compared to 5.5% of the men sample).

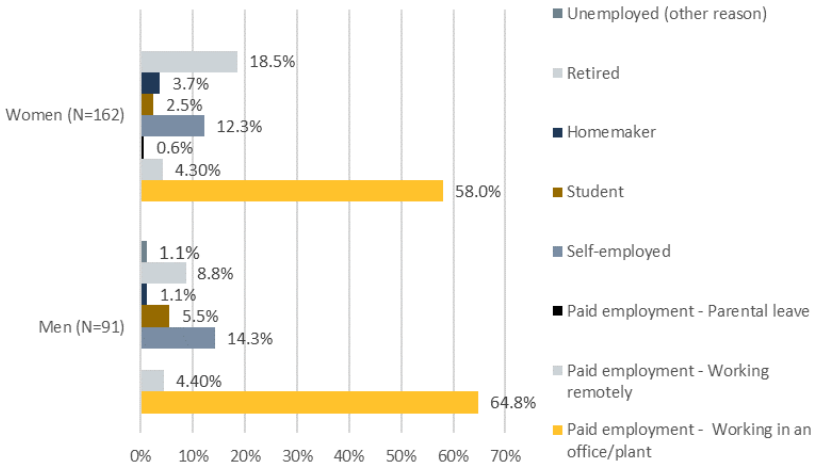


Fig. 8. Distribution of respondents by professional status

Figure 9 shows that 41.1% of the sample have monthly incomes below the average national salary, 43.2% women and 37.4% men. In contrast, only 15.0% earn above average, of which 23.1% are men and 10.5% are women.

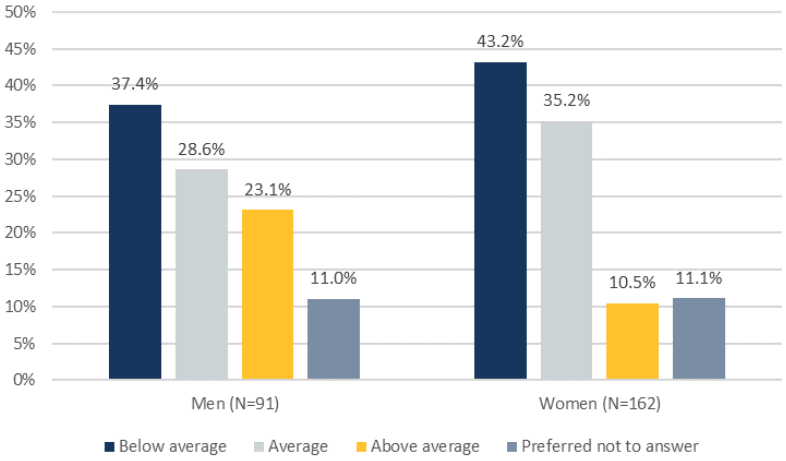


Fig. 9. Distribution of respondents by monthly income regarding Romanian's national salary

32.8% of the households analysed are composed of two members, 32.8% of three, 21.7% of four people, and only 6.7% of the sample's households consist of five or more elements. Nearly 5.9% of the surveyed live alone. In the case of women, the data set shows a predominance of households with two people 37.0% (compared to men – 25.3%), while households of four people are half the men's percentage (16.7% *versus* 30.8%), as shown in Figure 10.

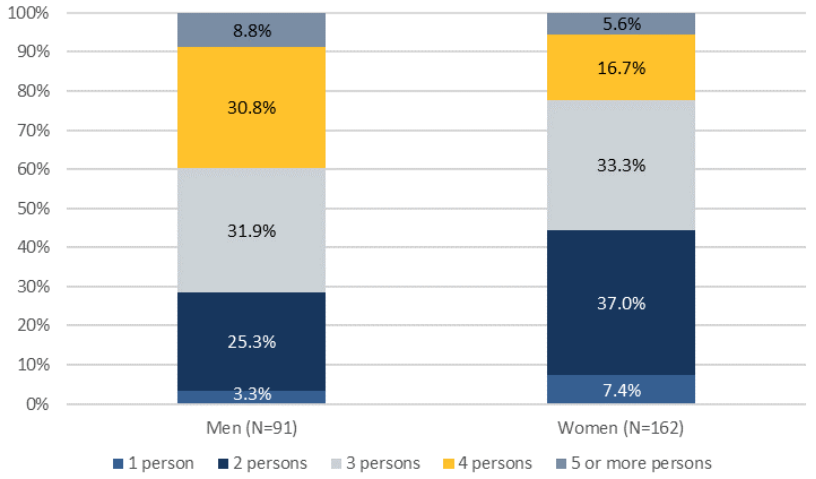


Fig. 10. Distribution of respondents regarding the number of family members per household

In this sample, 51.8% of the respondents (59.9% of women and 37.4% of men) do not have children in their households. In contrast, 25.2% of the sample (29.7% of men and 22.8% of women) have one child in the household, while 23% (33.0% of men and only 17.3% of women) have two or three children, as illustrated in Figure 11.

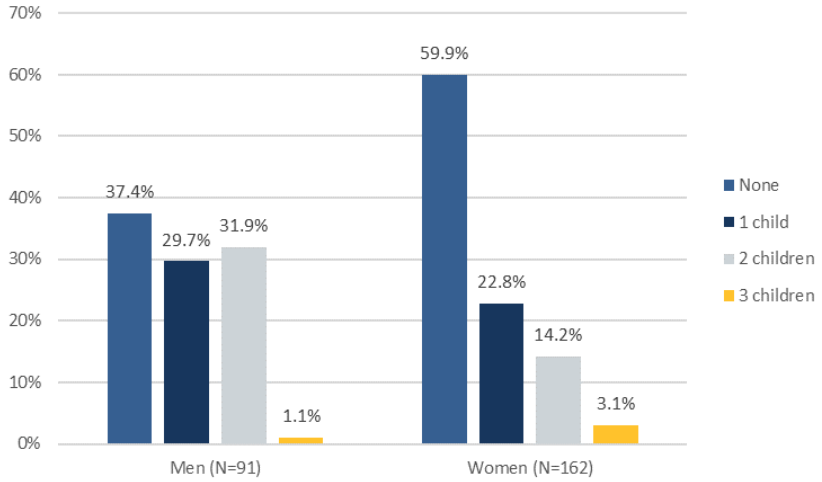


Fig. 11. Distribution of respondents regarding the number of children per household

According to Tiikkaja and Liimatainen (2021), men have access to the household car more often than women, influencing the trip modal share, trip frequencies, travel time and trip lengths. In this sample (see Figure 12), only 8.7% of the households (10.5% of women and 5.5% of men) do not have a driving licence. 58.1% of the respondents (73.6% of men and 49.4% of women) have more than two people with driving licences in their household, while 33.2% (40.1% of women and 20.9% of men) have only one person with a driving licence in the household.

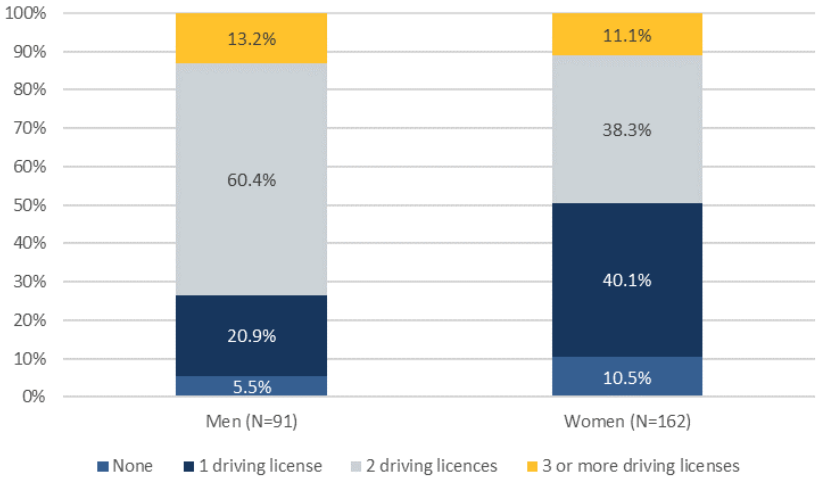


Fig. 12. Distribution of respondents regarding the number of driving licenses per household

Regarding the number of cars per household, 11.1% of women and 7.7% of men do not have any vehicles, as shown Figure 13. Additionally, 55.6% of women affirmed having two cars in their household, and 6.2% said they have three or more cars. In the case of men, 44.0% stated having two cars in their household, 40.7% one, while 7.7% have three or more vehicles.

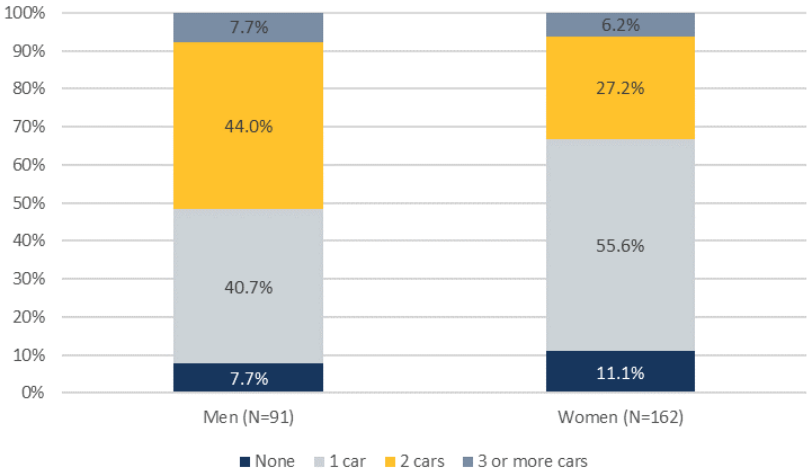


Fig. 13. Distribution of respondents regarding the number of cars per household

## 4.2. Assessing mobility patterns and behaviours from a gender perspective

During the data collection, the respondents could choose more than one transport mode to characterise their most frequent journey, as most trips are multimodal. In this context, 57.5% of the respondents travel by car for at least one leg of their most regular trip, as drivers (40.2%) or as passengers (17.3%), which other similar studies have confirmed. Regarding car usage as drivers, the values are quite distinct between genders, as 63.7% are male drivers and only 29.4% are women. These statistics demonstrate a strong preference of men toward private modes. In contrast, women are more prone to use the car as passengers (22.3%) than men (6.5%).

Generally, women are more likely to walk and use public transport, while this proportion reverses in cycling, as women are less likely to cycle, except in mature cycling cities (Pollard and Wagnild, 2017; Goel et al., 2022). In Alba Iulia metropolitan area, walking comes second with 21.1%, with women (25.3%) stating that they walk more than men (12.1%), confirming the evidence of other international studies demonstrating that women mostly choose walking, as shown in Figure 14. Public transport weighs only 12.5% in the overall sample, with only 6.5% of men using public transport on their regular trips in at least one leg. Taxis and bicycles have lower scores, with 4.1% and 3.6%, respectively.

Generally, women's trips are shorter in distance and longer in terms of time travelled when compared to men (Queirós et al., 2017; Ng and Acker, 2018; Arguello et al., 2021; Carboni et al., 2022). In Alba Iulia metropolitan area, the average distance of the most frequent trips is around 23.5 km for both genders. As expected, women travel shorter distances than men, as shown in Table 1. It should be highlighted that only 69 respondents from Alba Iulia metropolitan area answered this specific question.

Table 1. Average distance travelled during the most frequent trips

| **Gender** | **Average distance (km)** |
|---|---|
| Women (N=31) | 22.0 |
| Men (N=38) | 25.0 |
| **Sample (N=69)** | **23.5** |

The average time respondents spend on their most frequent journey is 27 minutes. In line with the literature, women spend more time travelling than men. When travelling by taxi, men spend approximately double the time (41 minutes) as women.

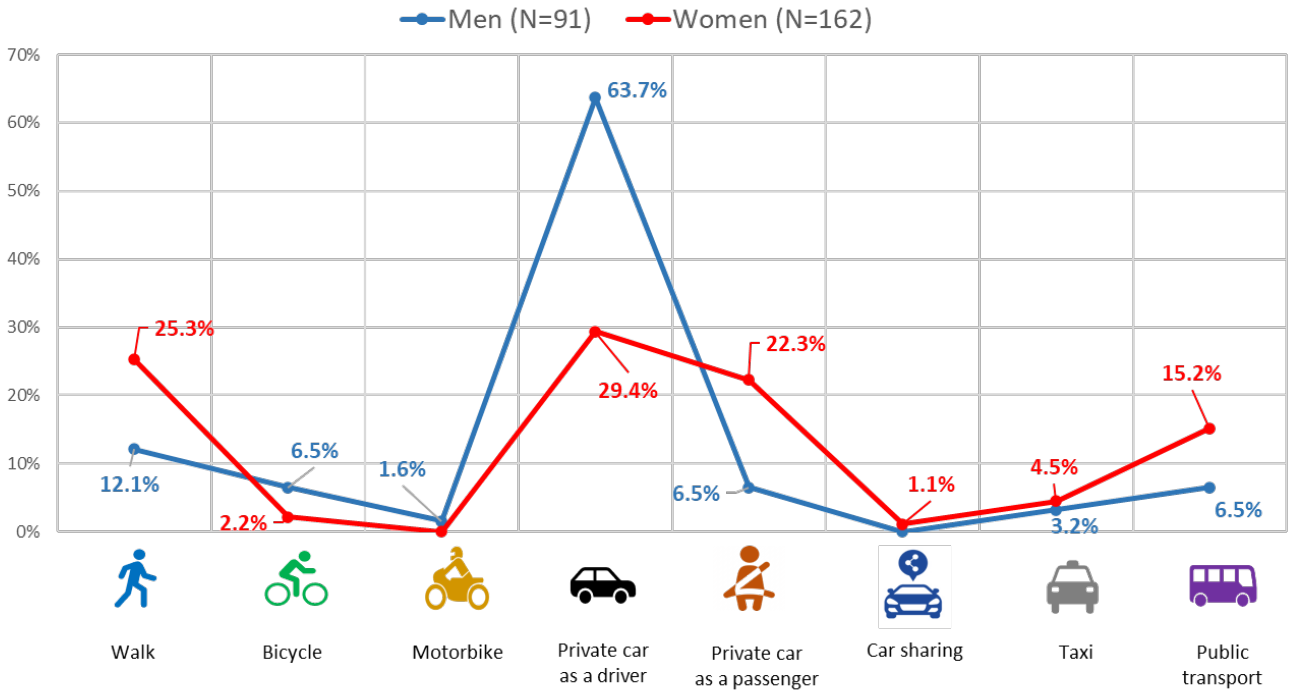


Fig. 14. Transport modes used in the most frequent journey by popularity

Men spend more time travelling by car (driver or passenger) and on active modes on their most frequent journey. On the contrary, women take more time travelling on public transport (31 minutes) than men (25 minutes) on their most regular trip (Table 2).

Table 2. Average time spent by modes of transport per gender

| **Modes of transport** | **Men (N=91)** | **Women (N=162)** | **Sample (N=253)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Walk | 39min33 | 24min02 | 28min42 |
| Bicycle | 34min38 | 13min33 | 29min04 |
| Motorbike | 10min00 | | 10min00 |
| Private car as a driver | 29min08 | 27min20 | 27min36 |
| Private car as a passenger | 39min38 | 28min41 | 30min22 |
| Car sharing | | 20min00 | 20min00 |
| Taxi | 41min25 | 23min33 | 28min21 |
| Public transport | 25min00 | 30min35 | 29min14 |
| Average time | 26min42 | 27min43 | 27min13 |

Concerning the origin and destination of the respondents' most frequent trips, it was possible to determine an aggregation of flows mostly towards Alba Iulia city centre, as shown in Figure 15 and Figure 16. No relevant gender correlation was found in the origin and destination of flows.

According to some researchers, women stop more than men during their daily journeys (Ng and Acker, 2018; Bilin Han et al., 2019; Carboni et al., 2021). In Alba Iulia metropolitan area's sample, 23.3% of the respondents (26.5% of women and 17.6% of men) affirmed that they stopped at least once during their most frequent trips. The reasons for the stops are related to shopping (22.8%), work (11.9%), medical/social care appointments (11.9%) and leisure (7.5%).


Fig. 15. Aggregated origin-destination flows for the most common journey in Alba Iulia metropolitan area

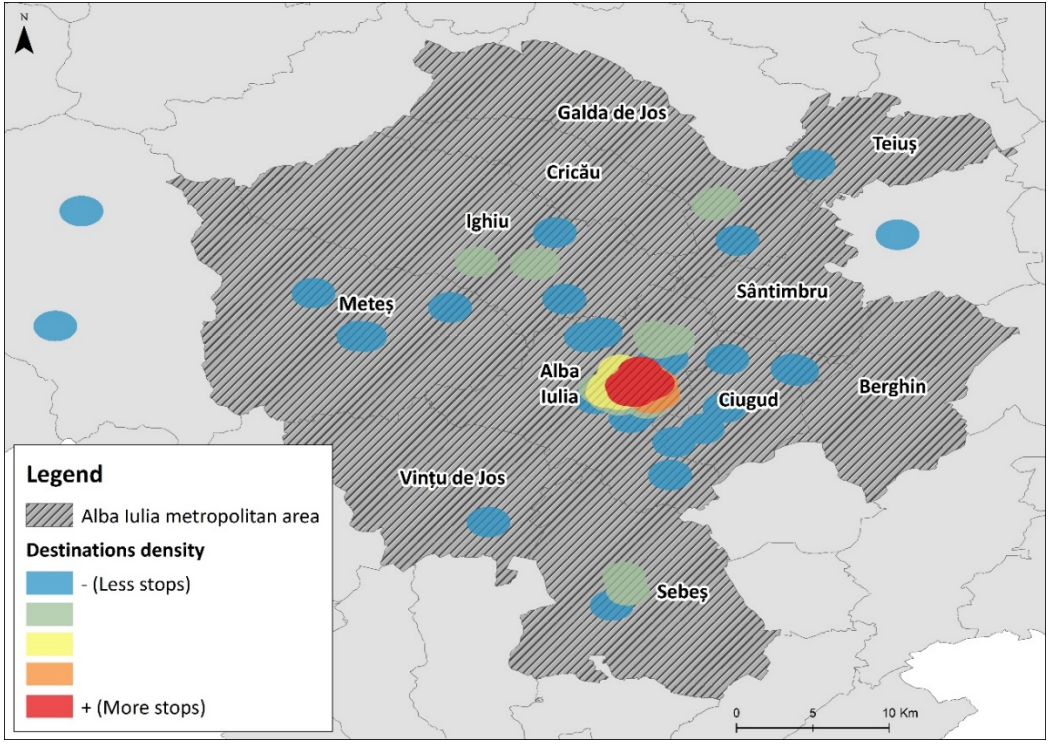


Fig. 16. Density of destination locations for the most regular trip in Alba Iulia metropolitan area

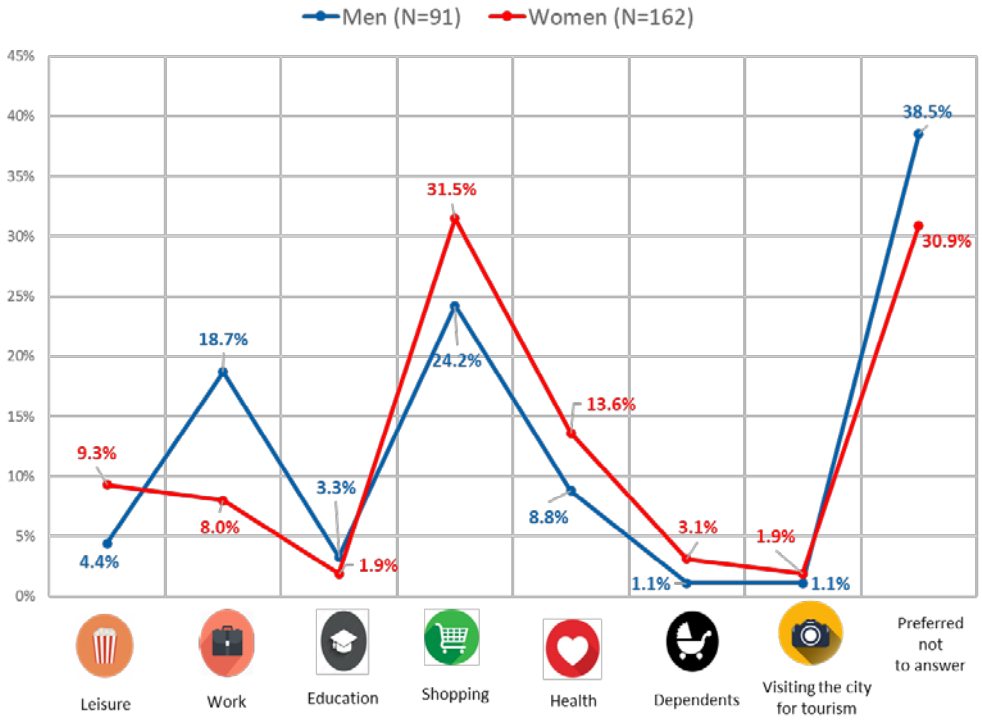


Fig. 17. Reasons for stops during the most frequent trips

Women stop more for shopping (24.2% of women compared to 20.0% of men), medical/social care appointments (10.4% of women compared to 7.3% of men), and leisure (7.1% of women compared to 3.6% of men), as shown in Figure 17. On the contrary, men are more prone to stop during their regular journeys for work-related motives (18.7% of men compared to 8.0% of women) and education (3.3% of men compared to 1.9% of women).

92.1% of the respondents (93.8% of women and 89.0% of men) do not travel with dependents. Women were more prone to travel with dependents (Bilin Han et al., 2019; Goel et al., 2022); however, in this sample, 9.9% of men and 4.3% of women affirmed they normally travel with dependents on their most frequent trips. This situation could be related to the sample's education level and the fact that a high percentage of women and men stated not having children. As mentioned previously, in this sample, approximately 61.7% of the respondents hold a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. According to Bilin Han et al. (2019), gender equity in escorting is possible only if both parents are in full-time employment and have completed university-level education. Otherwise, traditional gender roles are dominant, with mothers being the main caregivers of their children.

### 4.3. Assessing transport satisfaction from a gender perspective

The TInnGO project analysed the satisfaction levels with the transport modes used in the respondents' most frequent journeys across the 10 TInnGO European hubs. Overall, the Romanian results showed significant differences between genders regarding perceptions of their most frequent journey depending on the mode of transport used. In this context, the tendencies observed in the entire hub should be of value for Alba Iulia but require further research.

In general, all 10 hubs' results showed lower levels of public transport satisfaction for women when compared to men. Nonetheless, in the Alba Iulia metropolitan area sample, men always showed lower levels of satisfaction with public transport compared to women, particularly in the following aspects: services, safety, security, and infrastructure. In addition to the gender differences, there is evidence that satisfaction also changes with age. Younger men tend to be less satisfied than older men and younger women tend to have lower levels of satisfaction than older women.

Regarding pedestrians' perceptions, Carboni et al. (2022) have found that women are less satisfied than men with the safety level during walking. Additionally, women do not appreciate sharing space with other motorised vehicles, so they are more concerned about their own safety while walking or cycling (Carboni et al., 2021). Nonetheless, and despite the opposite tendency in other European cities analysed in the TInnGO project, men in Alba Iulia metropolitan area are less satisfied with all aspects such as accessibility to public stations or stops, safety, security, maintenance, and quality of the pavement. Future work could further analyse these aspects and the impact these results have on the final mode choice.

In contrast, when assessing private vehicle indicators per hub, women living in Alba Iulia metropolitan area are less satisfied than men in almost all aspects, namely park and ride locations, parking conditions – availability, safety, security, costs, and congestion levels when using a private vehicle. Furthermore, when assessing satisfaction levels between men and women related to owned bicycles indicators, the analysis showed that women are less satisfied than men in 12 out of 13 aspects surveyed: the easiness of connecting to modes and carrying bikes in public transport, the behaviour of drivers and overall safety, the conditions of cycle lanes and the sharing space with pedestrians, the coverage of cycle lanes, the bike parking availability and the availability of information for bikers. Additionally, no significant differences between the two genders in Alba Iulia metropolitan area hub regarding shared modes indicators

were found. Finally, when comparing the walking experience, women indicated that they were more satisfied with the coverage of pedestrian areas, their connectivity to transport stops, and the pavement condition compared to men. This result has been surprising as other studies showed the opposite; thus, further research is necessary.

## 5. Conclusions

In recent years, Alba Iulia has been transformed into a touristic attraction pole due to the valorisation of the Vauban fortification and many other historical buildings and monuments inside the Alba Carolina Citadel. These transformations have led to improvements in transport and mobility services within the metropolitan area. Despite the efficient mobility measures implemented during the last few years, no solutions to mitigate mobility gender segregation have been implemented.

In line with the literature, namely in Alba Iulia metropolitan area's sample analysed in this study:

- Women travel shorter distances but spend more time travelling than men;
- 2/3 of men and 1/3 of women use the car on their most frequent journey, with women more prone to use the car as a passenger;
- Women walk more than men and most likely use public transport services on their regular trips;
- Women stop more for shopping on the most frequent journey and men for work-related motives.

In contrast with other studies, results showed that men are less satisfied with public transport than women, particularly regarding services, safety, security and infrastructure indicators and pedestrians, especially concerning the accessibility to public stations or stops, safety, security, maintenance, and pavement quality.

Nevertheless, when assessing private vehicle indicators per hub, women are less satisfied than men in almost all aspects, namely park and ride locations, parking conditions – availability, safety, security, costs and congestion levels when using a private vehicle. A similar situation was observed regarding owned bicycle indicators, where women are less satisfied than men in almost all aspects analysed, in line with other studies.

The lack of gender-disaggregated data limits the understanding of gender requirements in the urban mobility systems and affects the ability to design efficient gender equality policies and measures. The tendencies observed in Alba Iulia metropolitan area should be of value for the municipality but require further research. However, the results achieved may be useful for policymakers and transport planners to develop guidelines for sustainable gender smart mobility with an intersectional approach.

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# Chapter 8. Romanian Women in and out of Development. From Ideological Pressure to Freedom of Speech in the Local Press on International Women's Day (1979-2000). Case Study: Bistrița-Năsăud County

Oana-Ramona ILOVAN[1], Claudia Septimia SABĂU[2]

## 1. Introduction and theoretical background

This research aimed to identify the key themes related to representations of women in Romania (a case study on Bistrița-Năsăud County) and in the mass media discourse on International Women's Day, a decade before (1979-1989) and one after 1989 (1990-2000), the year of the Romanian Revolution, using the theoretical and methodological framework proposed by the concept of *representation* (as a cultural product) and by the field of gender studies.

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The key concept of our research is that of *representation* as defined and researched in the New Cultural Geography and in Cultural Studies (Rose, 2014). Representations are cultural products imbued with power and they guide our reading and understanding of the world and of the context we live in (Hall, 1977a, 1977b). They construct discourses and are built by (already existent) discourses. Through *discourse*, we understand "a particular knowledge about the world" that creates the structure for understanding the world and people's actions (Rose, 2014, p. 190).

Gender representations regarding Romanian society have already been analysed in close connection to the political, social, economic, and cultural realities of the historical periods of socialism and post-socialism (Miroiu, 2010, 2020; Jinga, 2015; Teampău, 2016, 2017; Cucu, 2019; Massino, 2019; Asociaţia COMMA, 2021; Fodor, 2021; Ghionea, 2021; Ilovan, 2022).

The written press was part of the mass culture and of culture under socialism (cf. Verdery, 1991). Previous studies on gender representations especially in communist Romania showed that mass media products reflect the meanings of social life (a patriarchal perspective on women's roles in Romanian society – cf. Jinga, 2015; Massino, 2019). This patriarchal mentality was called "the multimillenary totalitarian regime" by M. Miroiu (Miroiu, 2020, p. 2). However, representations of women in post-socialist Romania have not been studied in comparison with the ones in socialism and this is a gap this research begins to fill in.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research material

The research material consists of representations of women in articles and congratulations on International Women's Day, as they were published in two newspapers of Bistrița-Năsăud County: *Ecoul*

[The Echo][3] (1979-1989) and *Răsunetul* [The Resonance][4] (1990-2000). Probably the public was mainly male like the ones who wrote the articles. On the first page of each journal, there is a description: *Ecoul* – "organ al Comitetului Judeţean Bistriţa-Năsăud al PCR si al Consiliului Popular Judeţean" [organ of the County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and of the County Popular Council in Bistriţa-Năsăud] and *Răsunetul* – "cotidian democrat independent al judeţului Bistriţa-Năsăud" [democratic and independent newspaper of Bistriţa-Năsăud County], the latter also starting with two lines from the national anthem "Deşteaptă-te române din somnul cel de moarte/În care te-adânciră barbarii de tirani!" [Wake up Romanians from your sleep of death/Into which you've been sunk by the barbaric tyrants].

We selected these newspapers for two reasons. First, *Ecoul* was the only newspaper published in Bistrița-Năsăud County during the communist period (it appeared from 1968 to 1989). It was the propaganda newspaper of the county and thus the only one and best for an analysis of representations influenced by communist propaganda. Second, after December 1989, *Ecoul* changed its name to *Răsunetul*, having almost the same editorial team. Thus, *Răsunetul* continues *Ecoul*. In Bistrița-Năsăud County, another newspaper would appear only in December 1996: *Mesagerul* [The Messenger]. The strength of this choice of research material is exactly the possibility to comparatively analyse the perspective of the editorial team (the same, before and after 1989) on celebrating the 8th of March and implicitly on women.

[3] On Saturday, the 24th of February 1868, appeared the first number of the weekly *Ecoul* (Tanco, 2004, p. 235). Starting from number 185, of the 1st of July 1971, its status shifted to a daily newspaper (Tanco, 2004, p. 239), until the 4th of May 1974 when it starts its weekly appearance, on Saturdays, 8 pages long, in small format (Tanco, 2004, p. 242).

[4] The first number of *Răsunetul* was published on a Thursday, the 4th of January 1990. It appeared on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays (Tanco, 2004, p. 251).

We selected only materials published for celebrating the 8th of March, International Women's Day, one decade before and one after the Romanian Revolution. These materials were mainly congratulatory messages in the advertising section of the journals. Besides these, they published editorials, short accounts, poems, crosswords, etc. and all these helped us identify the official portrayals of women in the local press of Bistrița-Năsăud County. In addition, we briefly analysed articles on the topic of women in these newspapers to create an image of the general context (political, economic, and social). We also interviewed one journalist[5] who worked for both newspapers, and we performed a literature review on the history of International Women's Day in Romania and abroad, considering both mass media and scientific articles.

## 2.2. Methods

We focused on the process of constructing representations of women through written text. Therefore, in our study, we use *qualitative research methods*, centred on descriptive analysis and discourse analysis. As such, we first identified key topics in the representations of women and analysed them in connection with the political, economic, and social context of the period (Rose, 2014; Mattissek, 2018). We analysed the written text of both articles and congratulatory messages in the two newspapers. Besides the two above-mentioned methods, we also used the comparative one. Analysing these sources, we aim to explain the process of ideologically constructing the image of women, as well as to present the legitimation of their role through the socialist discourse, and the post-December 1989 period, respectively.

[5] Interview by phone, in November 2022, with journalist Traian Săsărman. All journalists in the early 1980s and with some exceptions in the late 1980s, for *Ecoul*, were men. A situation similar in the 1990s, for *Răsunetul*.

## 3. International Women's Day. Its history and some insights

In this section, we present the steps taken to institutionalise the 8th of March as International Women's Day. In the USA, New York, women started their mass protests in 1908, asking for improved work conditions, better wages, and the right to vote. The first Woman's Day was celebrated on the 28th of February 1909, at the initiative of the Socialist Party in the USA in remembrance of women's strike and protest in 1908, in New York. It was the first official National Woman's Day (Pruitt, 2022).

International Women's Day has socialist origins, as in 1910 it was proposed for the first time in Copenhagen, where the Second International Socialist Women's Conference was held, by the German socialist Clara Zetkin, a leading member of the German Social Democratic Party (Gaido & Frencia, 2018, p. 277; Gissi, 2018, p. 433). It was approved by 100 women from 17 countries. In 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, the day was celebrated for the first time. This was on the 19th of March, and it was a symbol of the need to improve gender equality (i.e., to achieve basic rights for women, such as the right to vote, fair access to the labour market, education, health services, to have public functions) (Wood, 2017; Gissi, 2018).

Socialist proletarian women were the backbone of the Socialist Women's International and fought to overthrow the oppressive capitalist regime, according to a Marxist perspective on society and development (Wood, 2017; Gaido & Frencia, 2018, p. 3). After World War I, women's advocacy for peace became stronger and the feminist movement of the end of the 19th century was relaunched.

After Russian women went on strike for bread, peace, and the right to vote, on the 23rd of February 1917 (8th of March according to the Gregorian calendar), overthrowing the Tsarist regime – the Russian Revolution – the Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai convinced Lenin to turn International Women's Day into an official holiday in the Soviet Union (Wood, 2017). The day provided a sense of community to all those who

celebrated it and obeyed the institutionalised practices on the occasion (i.e., giving gifts); it also enforced socially constructed gender norms (who is celebrated, who gives gifts, for what reasons, who receives them) (Wood, 2017, p. 735).

In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was signed and affirmed gender equality. This may be considered a first steppingstone for the internationalisation of International Women's Day (Yogurtcu, Toker & Ozkan, 2020). Then, the United Nations declared 1975 International Women's Year.

Despite feminists' appeals for equal rights for women and men, gender parity in all areas of life has not been achieved yet and gains in leadership and economic participation are not as great as those in health and education (Anonymous, 2015). In addition, International Women's Day was adapted and therefore nowadays it has different ways of being performed in different countries and cultures. For instance, it was employed to develop public services for women (for childcare, food, laundry) and to attract them into political organisations in 1920s Russia (Wood, 2017, p. 737). In Romania, it was used by communist propaganda to legitimise the political system as a democratic one, respecting human rights and emancipating women. In this country, it has always been a regular workday, but with celebrations for women.

In Romania, International Woman's Day[6] was celebrated starting in 1945, after the accession to power of the first communist government (led by Petru Groza) (Aoşan, 2022). In 1946, women gained their political identity through the right to vote (it became universal for all those being 21 years old or older) (Law no. 560 concerning the elections for the Assembly of Deputies, decree no. 2,219 from the 13th of July 1946).

Supplementing this, two years later, through Article 16 in the Constitution of the Popular Republic, published in April 1948,

[6] Singular is used in Romania when referring to this day.

legislators stipulated the equality of all citizens of the Republic, irrespective of sex (i.e., gender), nationality, race, religion, and cultural level. Article 21 reinforced Article 16 and gave women, explicitly, equal rights with men:

> "The woman has equal rights with the men, in all fields of state, economic, social, cultural, political life and concerning private law. For equal work, the woman has the right to be paid equally to a man" (Dumănescu, 2012, p. 47).

The woman's equality with the man concerning her rights represented during socialism an axiom of economic, social, and political life. According to Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech, given during the meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party on the 18th and 19th of June 1973, referring to the creation of conditions for the complete equality of sexes, he asserted that people should be treated "not as men and women, but in their quality of Party members, of citizens, whom we assess exclusively based on their work" (Deliman, 1977, pp. 10-11).

During communism, this day was celebrated also as Mother's Day or by foregrounding the woman's role as the mother. It was a day when women and mothers received flowers and gifts. The first celebrations of the 8th of March are more visible starting in 1950 (Vrînceanu, 2016). Women were especially praised for their success in the workplace.

Protest and political activism were associated with the meaning of the 8th of March worldwide and in the Soviet Union, too, but these meanings were perverted in time and replaced with the ones suitable for domestic propaganda during the Romanian communist regime. For instance, starting with the 1970s, women tend to be equally praised for their role as mothers, which was in line with Ceauşescu's pro-natalist policy. Thus, the Romanian woman was celebrated for her multiple roles in the production and reproduction of the socialist society (i.e., worker, homemaker, mother).

Moreover, Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu's cult of personality starts at the beginning of the 1970s and the 8th of March serves this purpose (Bunghez, 2021; Ţiu, 2022). The day also turned into a homage to Elena Ceauşescu, the perfect socialist woman,[7] while "the masses" of other women were anonymous and perceived as having one voice when praising her, being grateful to her. In the same vein, the socialist consciousness of women was to be developed through the celebrations (especially political-educational and cultural-artistic activities) and propaganda characteristic of the 8th of March, where the political system and the Romanian state are to be depicted as promoting a deeply humanist politics.

The 8th of March in socialist Romania was an occasion to improve the working people's patriotic culture, and for them to show their love for the Communist Party (Ţiu, 2022). Women had responsibilities for "production, family and society". To sum up, International Woman's Day was politicised. In mass media, people were reminded of it in the following manner: International Woman's Day in the year of the 35th celebration for the liberation of the country and the 12th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (*Ecoul*, 1980) and a "joy for all working people of our country" (*Ecoul*, 1979). Related manifestations contributed to the appearance of a shared memory for Romanians during the second half of the 20th century and its representations were passed down through generations to the present day.

[7] Poems for Elena Ceauşescu: "Fiica patriei" [Daughter of the Homeland] (*Ecoul*, 1987) and "Primei fiice a ţării" [To the First Daughter of the Homeland] (*Ecoul*, 1989).

## 4. Women during the 8th of March in *Ecoul* and *Răsunetul* (1979-2000)

### 4.1. An overview of women's representations in articles from *Ecoul* (1979-1989)

During the communist period, women became more and more present in the public space, and the 8th of March celebration was a perfect pretext for this. In fact, it seemed a good opportunity, similar to other national holidays "chosen with care and emptied by their true significance" (Preda, 2014, p. 289), to render homage to Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife.

Celebrations for the 8th of March were close to the ones of a significant day from the contemporary history of the Romanian people, the 6th of March 1945, the day when the first communist government led by Petru Groza came to power. At the beginning of spring, celebrating the 6th of March was a serious competitor to celebrations on the 8th of March in the pages of *Ecoul,* because it provided the former with generous space on its pages.

On the 8th of March, in *Ecoul*, besides congratulations, which we analysed in a separate section of this chapter, they published editorials, articles, special columns, short accounts, poems, etc., signed either by journalists in the editorial team or by external contributors. These materials started on the front page of the newspaper and continued usually on pages 3 and 4. Sometimes, these materials were illustrated with photographs. Women are represented working in industry and agriculture, together with men, participating in cultural and political activities (e.g., in folklore assemblies, and studying in educational and cultural institutions). They are considered "builders of a happy life" (*Ecoul*, 1981).

Women are photographed at their workplace, talking about how much they loved their job. Or they are photographed with children (e.g., holding their babies after giving birth, receiving flowers from their children). These women are mostly young. To learn about Romanian women, in *Ecoul*, thematic crosswords are published on

the occasion of International Women's Day: "Ode to the women", "On Woman's Day".

The woman is considered "a remarkable presence in the most diverse sectors of activity" (*Ecoul*, 1984), especially in education, scientific research, and health, but also in industry and agriculture (*Ecoul*, 1989) and her essence is portrayed by images with and poems for the first woman of Romania: Elena Ceauşescu (*Ecoul*, 1986). Moreover, women are organised and are part of the "Women's Commission" in institutions, factories, etc. that establishes with them and for them "the most efficient modalities for action" (*Ecoul*, 1988).

Analysing these materials we identified several *recurrent topics in the representation of women*, endorsed by the political regime for a propagandistic aim: the woman is equal to the man; the woman is a "life comrade" and mother; the woman as a symbol of the nation; the woman wearing overalls and coats during work (tractor driver, welder, doctor, engineer, teacher, etc.) and the woman working in agricultural cooperatives, all contributing to the works of constructing the multilaterally developed socialist society.

***The woman being equal to the man*** was "one of the biggest promises of communism" (Massino, 2004, p. 137). In *Ecoul*, 1979, in an article titled "Tovarăşele noastre de muncă, de viaţă şi ideal" [Our Comrades of Work, Life and Ideal] (Moldovan, 1979), we read that the woman is a worker, she is a dignified life comrade, in factories, labs, and cornfields. She participates actively in the building of our multilaterally developed socialist society.

Women and men in Romania have the same rights given to them by the homeland and the Party:

> "Our party wanted to be fair because the number, the force and her qualities qualify her for a free and dignified life; she is capable of having success in many fields which were taboo for her in the past" (Moldovan, 1979, p. 1).
>
> "Our communist party steadily took care of ensuring the economic, social, cultural, and law framework favourable to the

> promotion of the woman, to her equality with the man. Thus, an entire chain of biases perpetuated for hundreds of years crashed down, when all fulfilment paths for the woman's personality were closed to her" (Moldovan, 1979, p. 3).

Women have access to the political, economic, social and cultural life:

> "Today we admire the tractor driver woman, the welder woman, the medical doctor or engineer woman, the educator woman, women that give sense to the present, they give pulse and new thrill to the present on this huge construction site which is our country" (Moldovan, 1979, p. 1).

> "Capable of high human feelings, wishing world peace, caring for the happiness of future generations, the mother of our children, the woman nowadays is appreciated for the effort she makes for the development of our homeland" (Moldovan, 1979, p. 3).

Subjected to long discrimination from a legal point of view, but not only this, women were perceived as a social group that needed to be emancipated. Even though this emancipation materialised at the legislative level by giving women the right to vote, through the new codes of family and work, in actuality this legislative emancipation was embezzled by the functioning of institutions and by "the Party people's misogynistic mentality" (Dobre, 2015, p. 157). Women's emancipation during communism was "a duplicitous and distorted emancipation", which did not improve personal autonomy or women's status, and when communism fell apart in 1989, in Romanian society there were three realities that controlled gender relationships: traditional patriarchy, gender egalitarianism and state patriarchy (Hurubean, 2015, p. 19).

Apparently, the communist society offered women the chance of multilateral emancipation, but in reality, it translated to slavery in the name of a series of utopian ideals:

> "Equality in rights for all citizens of our country, adopted in the years of socialist construction, emancipated the woman, giving her absolutely equal rights among the other members of the society,

> opening for her large possibilities for affirmation in the economic, social and political life of our country" (*Ecoul*, 7 March 1989).

***The woman being a "life comrade" and mother***. In the communist society, the woman is presented in a double hypostasis, having to fulfil a double task: to contribute to the economy of the country and to contribute as a wife and mother. She was encouraged both for her productive and reproductive function: "a trustful ally of our conquests", the woman was present in factories, on construction sites, in the fields for agricultural work, in schools and labs, in the family and society (*Ecoul*, 7 March 1981).

On the occasion of the 8th of March, "the work and life comrades" received congratulations, flowers and good thoughts. But, more than this, it was the perfect occasion to render homage to their realisations, to their involvement in accomplishing Party objectives and the ones in the work plan of the County Committee of Women (*Ecoul*, 5 March 1983).

The mothers in the county were the main characters of the poems published on this occasion. The authors were either students or external collaborators of the newspaper, not necessarily literary people. For instance, they were workers, like Traian Andronesi, a worker who signs a poem dedicated to all women, titled "On Your Day" and published in *Ecoul* on the 3rd of March 1984.

***The woman – symbol of the nation and of world peace.*** In several numbers of *Ecoul,* the woman is represented allegorically, together with flowers, a white pigeon, and the terrestrial globe. For instance, in the number of the 8th of March 1986, they publish a drawing with the face of the woman next to the terrestrial globe and three pigeons and, from the stalk of a snowdrop, artistic writing is emerging to form *8 Martie* [8th of March]. This allegorical figure, unrelated to the regular woman of the period, is represented almost identically in *Scânteia* newspaper [The Spark], on the 8th of March 1983 edition (Massino, 2004, p. 155).

***The woman in overalls or coats*** (tractor driver, welder, crane operator, scientist, medical doctor, engineer, educator, etc.) and the woman working in agricultural cooperatives. For instance, in *Ecoul* from the 7th of March 1981, short accounts are published about some model women: the cooperative worker Ana Ujlaky from Șintereag and the handicrafts woman Maria Tomi from Bistrița. Along these are presented the women who work at the Greenhouse for flowers in Șieu or the ones employed at the embroidery section of "Unirea" [Union] Cooperative from Bistrița.

From the pages of the newspaper, readers find out which were the official festive events organised to honour women on the occasion of the 8th of March. A yearly traditional event, with the same script, was the festive meeting organised by the City Culture House in Bistrița. Among the participants were the members of the County Party Organisation, the Executive Committee of the County Popular Council, Party and state activists, persons from the factories and institutions of the city, many working people, and "other women comrades distinguished at work" (*Ecoul*, 7 March 1981).

The unfolding of the event was the same every year. The president of the County Committee for Women would give a speech concerning the significance of the 8th of March and the event culminated with the announcement that a unanimous decision was reached by the participants to send a telegram to comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, expressing the attachment of the women from the county to the leader. Also, the themes of the discourse were the same as in previous years: the privileged situation of women in the socialist society, because they enjoyed complete equality of rights with men and had a significant contribution as "comrades of work, life, and ideal" (*Ecoul*, 10 March 1979), constructed the multilaterally developed socialist society. It was a good opportunity for thousands of women in the county to express their trust and attachment to Nicolae Ceaușescu, the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, whose care and support led to the creation of a "fertile framework for the woman's complete participation in the

economic, political, social, and cultural life of the homeland" (*Ecoul*, 10 March 1979). After this discourse, a cultural-artistic programme would follow.

Comrade Elena Ceaușescu was paid homage to for her contribution to the development of Romanian science and culture, among other of her contributions (*Ecoul*, 13 March 1982). She was portrayed as a world-renowned academic, the first woman of the country, "who together with the brave and bold man", nobody else than Nicolae Ceaușescu himself, "contributes through her complex and multilateral activity to the progress of contemporary Romania" (*Ecoul*, 12 March 1983).

Homogenised and depersonalised, the women in Bistrița-Năsăud County were presented like a mechanism that actioned "diligently, generously and skilfully" in all activity fields, their purpose in life being to translate into reality the programmatic decisions of the Party and comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu's ideas (*Ecoul*, 10 March 1979). They had to act for the rhythmical exceeding of the plan tasks, to increase the national wealth and the general development of the county as well as of the country (*Ecoul*, 8 March 1980).

Besides organising this festive meeting, the newspaper mentions cultural-artistic programmes dedicated to International Woman's Day that took place in kindergartens and schools, the main reason for these events being to pay homage to the woman-mother and to Elena Ceaușescu, the first lady of the country and the protector of childhood (*Ecoul*, 8 March 1986). Other categories of events mentioned by the county newspaper were: the opening of painting exhibitions, lectures, watching films, festive shows (for instance, the one with the title "A Song, a Flower … All Sunrays" (*Ecoul*, 13 March 1982) or symposia (like the one organised on the 1st of March 1984, with the topic "The Conception of the Romanian Communist Party, of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, General Secretary of the Party, Concerning the Role of Women in the Economic, Political and Social Life of the Country, and in the Leadership of the Society").

In most totalitarian states, the main aim of the political rhetoric was the creation of a community of anonymous and isolated individuals, an assertion proved very well by the contents of the analysed newspapers:

> "In contrast to their life partners, the men, who were simple anonymous workers, women were anonymous both as workers and mothers" (Massino, 2004, p. 151).

Only one woman was neither anonymous nor invisible in socialist Romania: Elena Ceaușescu. Even if we could think that Elena Ceaușescu was the main actor in 8th of March messages, the articles of *Ecoul* contradict us. The Ceaușescu family is paid homage to as a couple, even on the occasion of the 8th of March Elena Ceaușescu sharing with her husband both the cultural and political space (Massino, 2004, p. 151).

## 4.2. Congratulations on the 8th of March in *Ecoul* (1979-1989)

### *4.2.1. The context: inviting congratulations*

The greetings on the 8th of March, International Woman's Day, were published on dedicated pages of the newspaper, in the advertising section. That is because those who wanted their congratulations published had to pay for the space in the respective journal. Those who congratulated the women of Bistriţa-Năsăud County were diverse, but most were representatives of institutions (not persons but organisations, committees, etc.): the County Committee of Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud, the Party Committee of a certain institution, a factory, agricultural cooperative, the labour unions and the councils of the working people, the Union of the Communist Youth, and the editorial office of the newspaper itself (the one in charge with communist propaganda by means of mass media in the county).

Usually, the journalists asked women's organisations, managers of factories or state institutions whether they wanted to

have published their 8th of March congratulations. This questioning took place either by phone or in person (journalists had a list of all of them at the county level and they would meet them at their respective workplaces). It was the journalists' initiative to invite congratulations; there were fewer initiatives coming from institutions, factories, etc. During the last period of *Ecoul*, journalists had a pattern. Some units would send a text and wanted it to be published as it was, while others asked the journalists to write the text for them the best they could. In some other cases, the journalists would only adjust the texts. In *Ecoul* the text had to be a sober one.

According to our respondent, the journalists in Bistriţa-Năsăud County were pioneers in congratulating (also for Christmas time or other celebrations during the year, not only for International Women's Day); other counties took over their model for this practice of congratulatory messages on the occasion of International Women's Day.

### *4.2.2. Reasons to congratulate: celebrating women's roles*

The messages conveyed by all the above-mentioned stakeholders have *the general theme that women contribute to the construction of socialist Romania* and that is why they are congratulated. Although *congratulated as a group*, the women of the county are not homogenous in their symbolic capital, as the official discursive practice is reflected in the congratulations and women are placed in the rigid ideologically-laden hierarchy:

> "On the 8th of March, International Woman's Day, we address to all women, workers, peasants, intellectuals – Romanians, Hungarian, Germans and belonging to other nationalities in Bistriţa-Năsăud County, our warmest congratulations, wishing them good health, happiness and complete satisfaction in their work of building socialist Romania!" (The County Committee of Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud) (*Ecoul*, 1980).

Next year, the County and Municipal Committees of the Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud wished women of all nationalities, irrespective of their workplace, "the warmest congratulations for their activity and results" considering "the women's scope and fate". These bodies wish women "satisfaction, happiness and good health" in order:

> "[…] to contribute also during the next stage with more efficiency to all their duties as mothers, producers of material goods, constructors of our socialist society" (*Ecoul*, 1981).

This message conveys to women that their *main role is as a mother while that of a worker is only a secondary one*. One can therefore understand that in the 1980s, *the Communist Party underlined the traditional role of women*, ignoring its other propaganda message that stated the fact that women were equal to men. One may think that women have already been emancipated through education, training and work, and they can now return to do their duty to the homeland: to give birth and raise children, the future workers and mothers of the nation. However, such messages are rather an exception in the congratulations on the 8th of March, because the *institutions emphasise the role of the working women*.

Nevertheless, *a hierarchy of women* is used by the editorial office of the newspaper in their congratulatory message, reminding the readers of the order of preference enforced by the Communist Party: workers, peasants, and intellectuals. However, women are culturally constructed first based on their gender and then on the identity given by the type of work they perform (in industry, as workers, on the agricultural field or as intellectuals). They manifest at work features that are naturalised as feminine in the Romanian society: "abnegation (or sacrifice), conscientiousness and exemplary dedication" for the realisation of the "bright future of the homeland" (*Ecoul*, 1980).

Women are defined as "work comrades" and they are congratulated for their:

> "[…] substantial contribution to work and the civic activity [activitatea obştească] for the progress of our beloved homeland, the Socialist Republic of Romania" (*Ecoul*, 1980).

Again, good health, happiness and luck are among the most frequent wishes for working women. Women are "warmly congratulated" more precisely for their contribution to the achievement of the task included in the factory plan, for their "special results obtained when solving the tasks of the plan" and, besides happiness, they are to have "new successes in their work". Their contribution is also politicised because much impetus is wished upon them so that women can accomplish "the great tasks of the 12th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party" (*Ecoul*, 1980). This type of message repeats itself in the next years, naming other congresses. All women are congratulated, but young women are especially congratulated by their organisation: the Union of Communist Youth.

These congratulations have a common topic, besides *the overarching idea of work; they include a perspective on the recent past* (women are congratulated for their achievements in the previous year; these achievements are mostly measured economically) and another one on the future (not the next year, but an undetermined spread of time).

The message of the County and Municipal Committees of the Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud, in 1982, is identical to the one in the previous year. In 1983, the County Committee of Women comes with a new message where women are no longer divided based on nationality or the type of work they do (workers, peasants, intellectuals). The Committee:

> "[…] warmly congratulates all women in the county for their special contribution to the development of the material production and for the good management of the towns and villages of our country, to the realisation of the Party's programme, wishing them, at the same time, new and remarkable success in work, best of health and happiness!" (*Ecoul*, 1983).

Usually, the 8th of March is a "wonderful occasion" that all these institutions consider to:

> "[…] sincerely and warmly congratulate work comrades for their enthusiasm and dedication when working", especially in factories. Workers are congratulated for their contribution "to realising and exceeding the plan" (*Ecoul*, 1983).

Wishes and congratulations share the same features, but there are some characteristics that depend on the type of activity. However, irrespective of the diversity of activity fields, the messages are in line with the political ideology and the official political discourse of the period:

> "[we congratulate] all women who deposited their money at the CEC, wishing them growth in their activity and a larger manifestation of their thriftiness, using with trust and more and more multiple forms for saving up that CEC offers!" (*Ecoul*, 1983).

Or

> "[…] we warmly congratulate the whole collective of the education system, wishing them new and new successes in increasing the instructive-educational process, in raising and educating the young generation in the cult of work and of love for the material and spiritual values of our people" (*Ecoul*, 1984).

Congratulations emphasise the women's duty to solve *their production tasks and the civic ones*.

### *4.2.3. Women and their families*

Prosperity is also wished for women and their families. In 1984, good wishes are addressed to both women and their families and, besides health and happiness, they include also wishing women to "realise all their aspirations" (*Ecoul*, 1984).

Women are described as "industrious and worthy workers" (*Ecoul*, 1982). However, women are congratulated for their last years'

achievements on their international day, but also on the coming of spring. Besides work comrades, congratulations are addressed also to:

> "[…] all mothers and wives for their continuous endeavour manifested while realising the tasks in the plan and the collective ones [obşteşti], wishing them and their families the best of health, happiness and strength for their work in order to accomplish the great objectives of the quinquennium of quality and efficiency" (*Ecoul*, 1982).

According to the congratulatory message of the editorial office, women:

> "[…] bring a substantial contribution to the great achievements of the socialist present, laying lasting foundations to the bright future of our homeland" (*Ecoul*, 1982).

In 1987, the County Committee of the Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud congratulates women for their fruitful work in all fields of social and economic life, wishing them achievements in their family life, "in their noble mission of raising and educating the young generation" (*Ecoul*, 1987). Again, we perceive here that this women's committee conveys a political message, and it is different from the other congratulations where the emphasis is on work, not on motherhood and on women as educators, as part of Ceauşescu's harsh pronatalist policy and propaganda.

### *4.2.4. Women in the urban and rural areas: economic and civic tasks*

In 1984, women are congratulated for "their achievements in the socialist competition, wishing them to have good results also in the future" (*Ecoul*, 1984) or for their contribution "to realise new industrial capacities and accomplish new objectives" (*Ecoul*, 1984).

Women in the rural area are congratulated for "putting into practice the objectives of the agrarian revolution" (*Ecoul*, 1984) and for their double role: to supply the market with products and to buy

products. When women in the urban area have the role of buyers, they are represented as "the housekeepers from our city" (*Ecoul*, 1984).

Women are congratulated by certain companies if they are the buyers of products that are useful in their activity as homemakers. It seems that this is a role that women do not share with men and that certain products are more associated or only associated with women buyers.

Besides congratulating employees, some of these messages also congratulate the beneficiaries of their products and services, wishing them: "much good health, happiness and success in work and life" or "new and beautiful achievements in work and life", "new successes in the activity they do each day in all activity fields" (*Ecoul*, 1981). The meaning might be *personal life*, with the wishers thus separating between *work* and *life*.

In 1985, congratulations also include mentioning women as mothers and wives. From the messages, we understand that *the tasks in the plan are accomplished by the women as workers, while the civic ones are accomplished by women in their roles as mothers and wives.* Another novelty is in the congratulations addressed by the editorial team as we find out that they also consider their women collaborators, besides women readers as it has been so far.

In 1986, there are more frequent mentions of the coming of spring as well as wishes for harmony and good health in the women's families. This year, the County Committee of Women also congratulates them "for their special contribution to accomplishing the social and economic tasks". In congratulations, there is mentioned the specific political and economic timeframe, besides the occasion of the 8th of March (e.g., the first year of the quinquennium, the first two years of the five-year plan, the last year, etc.). Women are not only industrious but also skilful. They contribute to:

> "[…] realising and exceeding the main indicators of the plan, wishing them, at the same time, the best of health, strength for

> work in order to accomplish and exceed their tasks in the present quinquennium" (*Ecoul*, 1986).

This type of message repeats itself in the congratulations addressed by many institutions, factories, organisations, etc. in the respective year. In addition, one year later, in 1987, the women who work in commerce are congratulated for their activity of "supplying and serving the population in a civilised manner" (*Ecoul*, 1987). It should be mentioned that the austerity policy enforced by Ceauşescu to pay Romania's foreign debt was during the 1980s at its height, having a dramatic impact on Romanians' lives.

In 1989, a wood processing factory in the county congratulates their "women work comrades" for "their endeavour in realising the economic tasks for export" (*Ecoul*, 1989). In 1989, women are no longer peasants when congratulated, but "women workers in the agricultural units, who act for realising the great objectives meant for them [RO, ce le revin]" (*Ecoul*, 1989).

The school inspectorate and a few other organisations from the educational system employed a rather political discourse, different from what they had used so far in the 1980s:

> "[…] we bring a warm homage and full of gratitude to all women involved in the noble mission of forming the New Man and we wish them the best of health, happiness and new achievements in the educational area!" (*Ecoul*, 1988).

In 1989, women in the education system have "a noble mission, entrusted to them, to educate and train the new generation for work and life" (*Ecoul*, 1989).

### *4.2.5. The focus on personal happiness*

In 1985, we see that some women in production are congratulated (without saying the reason, which was often for their work achievements) and wishes would consist of the usual prosperity and new successes in activity, but "best of health and strength to work" are

needed "in order to achieve their personal aspirations!" (*Ecoul*, 1985). Such a message is atypical because usually, the wishes are related to future work first of all, besides personal happiness. The message of having much strength for work in order for women to realise their wishes is more frequent in the late 1980s than in the first part of this decade. However, *success in future productive work* remains a common trope for those congratulating women during this period.

In 1987, the editorial team of *Ecoul* thanks women readers and women collaborators, wishing them and their families health, happiness, and *great achievements in work and life*. One can identify a change of tone and of message that comes from the editorial office of this propaganda newspaper. The change is visible if comparing the late 1980s congratulations on the 8th of March with those from the early 1980s. Some of these congratulations become warmer, and more humane, which is true also of the bulk of the other congratulations this newspaper publishes. The *wish for personal happiness* is more frequent. It is true that there are also messages that remain the same both in form and contents.

In 1988, identical congratulations with 1987 are published on behalf of the editorial team and the County Committee of Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud. Women continue to be congratulated for their achievements in production, in the case of women workers (and most of the congratulations are addressed to them due to the large participation of factories and similar economic entities), as well as wishes for *future success in activity and "personal happiness"*. Some messages addressing congratulations recycled the earlier ones. Other congratulations take a poetical turn: "with our joy which sprung from the first rays of spring, we warmly congratulate …" (*Ecoul*, 1988).

Nevertheless, achievements in the socialist competition, and new successes in work remain part of the congratulating discourse of the late 1980s, although *personal and family prosperity and happiness* (i.e., "realising all personal desires" – *Ecoul*, 1988), not only the collective one, entered the wishing well practices.

### *4.2.6. Women in the discourse about social and economic development from 1979 to 1989 – final remarks*

One can see that congratulations were influenced by both censorship and propaganda and tend to be a reflection, in just a few words, of people's wishing well, and of understanding the significance of the day (i.e., 8th of March), and of women. Exactly because of this, the readers find out how women are represented in the discourse about social and economic development. In this discourse, there is little space for praising femininity or for poetically expressing the context of celebrating this day (features of the discourse after 1989):

> "[…] now when the flower buds announce a new spring", "with the flowering joy caused by the snowdrops of a new spring", "a day when spring gains its soul warmth with which it carries us to the seasons of achievements", "the 8th of March 1989, a day with bright sun rays and gentle snowdrops, symbol of the spring that fills hearts with optimism and joy" (*Ecoul*, 1989).

The readers can see in the last year of Ceauşescu's dictatorship that some of the congratulations are more humane; descriptions of the season of spring are meant to beautify the dry format of the congratulations. At the same time, wishes for personal happiness are more frequent. Women continue to be praised for their work, done "seriously and with solicitude" (*Ecoul*, 1989).

In congratulations from their workplace, they are solely defined as persons through their work in the socialist collectives, praised for their work achievements that contribute to realising or exceeding the plan and to the overall achievement of the Party's economic goals. This construction of the women's identity is due to the fact that most of the congratulated women in this newspaper are active in the economic sector, with fewer institutions in the social and cultural fields of activity.

However, for all of them, addressing congratulations seems to be a duty, one written according to the propaganda pattern. In this discourse, *women are always "contributing to accomplish", not*

*accomplishing the task*. This could be understood in two ways: women do not accomplish the task by themselves and are able only to contribute, or that women are part of a larger collective (be it that of the factory, of the working people of the county or Romania). We believe that the latter interpretation is closer to the meaning attributed by those writing the messages, in their majority men (they have most of the leading or management positions, except for the County Committee of Women).

In *Ecoul*, it is difficult to ascertain who wrote the message (man or woman), because these messages have as the author mentioned an entire collective or council, etc. However, we can easily infer that the authors are men because most of the managers during that socialist period were men (cf. Jinga, 2015, pp. 255-276; Cucu, 2019). In addition, this was confirmed to us during the interview we had with our respondent, a journalist of both newspapers: most of the ones paying for congratulations to be published were men. And obviously, when women are described "our comrades in work and life", the messages are written by men.

One can see some differences and continuities when comparing these messages to congratulations from the beginning of the 1980s. Except for the reference to work (i.e., congratulated for "the good results accomplished each year during the socialist competition"), some of the congratulations published in 1989 do not reveal the interference of socialist-promoted topics, on the contrary, congratulations tend to be more and more carefully written, with epithets, comparisons and metaphors, revealing care for their beauty:

> "Having the satisfaction of the well-done work, when nature wakes up to life, when the first rays of the sun announce joys and new accomplishments, we address warm congratulations to all our female work colleagues on the occasion of the 8th of March, International Woman's Day, wishing them much good health, happiness and the accomplishment of all their desires for the better" (the organisations of the Party, workers' labour union, the

> women's union, and the council of the working people [in one factory of the county] (*Ecoul*, 1989).

The same County Committee of Women in Bistriţa-Năsăud identifies *the key features of women's identity* in the 1989 message:

> "On the occasion of the 8th of March, International Woman's Day, the Bistriţa-Năsăud County Committee of Women addresses warm congratulations for women's contribution to realising the task of the county in all activity sectors, wishing all women of the county good health, strength to work, so that they can also combine in the future their professional tasks with their noble responsibilities to raise and educate the young generation, achievements and happiness in their personal life. Many happy returns of the day!" (*Ecoul*, 1989).

To conclude, during the Romanian socialism, the woman was a "comrade", but gender was still a defining feature of her identity and state policy concerning women. The latter introduced discriminatory measures in the name of protecting the women and the nation, ensuring Romania's future and vigour based on family values and harsh reproductive policy (cf. Kligman, 1998; Jinga, 2015; Massino, 2019).

### 4.3. An overview of women's representations in articles of *Răsunetul* (1990-2000)

The revolution of December 1989 eliminated the syntagm of the "comrade" woman and brought to the fore the one of "representative of the beautiful sex" (Mrs., Miss, wife, mother, daughter, and friend). The woman–mother and the woman–wife/lover were the main recipients of the texts written for the 8th of March, while the focus was no longer on wishes that aimed for the common good and the progress of society in a predictable framework, but the individual good and personal happiness in an unpredictable world. Texts no longer glorified the woman who contributed to the progress of the socialist society, but the woman –

mother, wife, and daughter that cared for the wounds of the Revolution heroes.

The place of Elena Ceușescu was taken by the Virgin Mary which is "shining", because by "giving birth to the God–human, she spread on all women the great gift of procreation" (*Răsunetul*, 8 March 1990). One constructs thus the representation of the woman as the "holy bearer of the grace of maternity" (*Răsunetul*, 6 March 1993). Thus, one of the new elements of the texts after 1990 is the religious one.

The texts are humanised, and warm, they recall gestures of affection, caressing and kissing. If before 1989 women were only paid homage to, after the fall of the communist regime, women were kissed on their hands and cheeks and hugged. The 8th of March is no longer exclusively a day of paying homage, but it is also a day to express gratitude towards women. This is the central idea that appears in all editorials signed by Adrian Mănarcă and published each year on the 8th of March, on the front page of the newspaper. On the International Woman's Day of 1996, this journalist writes:

> "We should be grateful to this eternal miracle, which is the mother, who recognises her face in the holy one of Virgin Mary and in those of all women on the Earth capable (yesterday or tomorrow) of being mothers" (*Răsunetul*, 8 March 1996).

In the number published on the 6th of March 1998, on the front page of the newspaper there was written with large letters:

> "8th of March – For the Women in the County and in the World, a Beautiful Thought of Gratitude" (*Răsunetul*, 6 March 1998).

The text of an epigram for the 8th of March illustrates in a comical but true manner the way some men relate to women in post-socialist Romania. The well-chosen title is "The Woman in Actuality":

> "The woman has the right to vote / In Parliament and everywhere, / And many senators would like / To be in the same room with her" (*Răsunetul*, 6 March 1993).

A male journalist advises that, on the 8th of March, men should "look at [their] work colleagues with more respect and love" (Mănarca, 1994). The perpetuation of our species depends on the woman, "the beautiful sex". The roles of women signify different stages in their life, but the image of the mother dominates:

> "The woman, this real wonder, beautiful and delicate, giving life, she deserves all our respect, especially for what she undertakes for all of us and what she means for the family" (*Răsunetul*, Mănarca, 1994).

An article written by a woman journalist shows that women as well interiorised and normalised the male-dominated discourse on traditional gender roles. The article is titled "Dumneavoastră, femeile …" [You, Women …] (Poenar, 1991). This woman journalist lists the qualities of women. They have the necessary strength and power to adapt. They plan the entire day and they think about their family and others, they wake up very early in the morning, take medication to chase away headaches; always worried, they telephone their children at home, and they call their husbands to guide them throughout their day (they remind them of certain things on their to-do list), they shop for the necessary food at any time during the day, they long for clothes, shoes, and jewellery they cannot afford. They solve problems at their job, sometimes with ardour, but without malice.

A few women go astray from this model and society suffers because of this. Then, the journalist describes the household chores of women when they come back from work and what they do to spend their free time: they read newspapers (and "not that much books"), they drink coffee with a female neighbour, they try to find out any news, they keep an eye on the children when they do their homework. Many times, women have a hard time finding happiness, gratefulness is rare for all they do (for their family roles, and as friends and colleagues) (Poenar, 1991).

Articles written by the two women journalists we identified in *Răsunetul* are not the only ones authored by women. Other women who publish in *Ecoul* are the president of the County Committee of

Women in Bistrița-Năsăud (for instance, "Înaltă cinstire a femeii din societatea noastră" [High Respect for Women in Our Society]), the secretary of the Union of the Communist Youth Organisation from a high school in Năsăud, the secretary of propaganda of the Municipal Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in Bistrița; women teachers start writing about quality teaching. A journalist wrote an article with the title "Let's Get to Know Our County", on the occasion of the 8th of March. The two women journalists who started writing in the late 1980s on economic subjects in *Ecoul* continue to publish in the 1990s in *Răsunetul*.

Seven years after the Romanian Revolution, the teacher Nina Mangu writes about the purpose of the woman – to offer love and "to take care of the pulse of the entire planet":

> "We ask to be useful without any trace of selfishness or interest. Our interest is affection, the need for love. Yes, this is the right word and we don't want to be anything else" (*Răsunetul*, 8 March 1996).

And a year later, the primary teacher Paraschiva Trifu compares women with:

> "[…] the waters that move the heavy turbines of hydropower plants, providing us with light, and that fuel the springs engendering power, smooths the stones in order to give them certain forms, always different" (*Răsunetul*, 8 March 1997).

The structure of texts, their position within the newspaper (on the front page and page 3), and the type of the published materials (articles, editorials, special columns, poems, etc.) do not differ too much from those published before 1989. Not at all surprising if we think that the editorial team was almost the same. What is different, starting with 1994 is publishing on the front page of the newspaper congratulations addressed to the women of the county signed by political figures: the president of Bistrița-Năsăud County Council and the county prefect.

In *Răsunetul*, a page dedicated to women (*Femina*) reflects the journalists' perceptions of the topics most interesting for women to read about. For instance, on the 12th of March 1991, the headlines on the *Femina* page are: "From the Secrets of Eternal Beauty", "Taking Care of Clothes", "What It Means to Have a Mentally Healthy Child" or in 1998, in *Femina*, women should read about taking care of their teeth and mouth and the type of man a woman should look for. These headlines reinforce stereotypes: women are interested in their beauty, clothes, and they should be caring for children. They are paragons of beauty and love (especially maternal love). The two main reasons why they deserve to be happy are listed: because they beautify the others' lives and take care of children, who are the future of the country.

The series of allegorical representations of women surrounded by pigeons continues after 1990. Women no longer have the terrestrial globe nearby, but vegetation, flowers and they hold children (*Răsunetul*, 6 March 1998). Also, the poems dedicated to mothers are provided with generous newspaper space. These poems were no longer signed by factory workers or drivers, but by the regular collaborators of the newspapers, students, etc.

Concerning the organisation of certain events, in this county, on the occasion of the 8th of March there are presented accounts of the following: symposia (*Răsunetul*, 5 March 1994), shows of music and poetry organised by students, modern dance shows, traditional dance shows, literary contests and diverse activities organised in schools. In 1999, a new event is advertised for women: on the occasion of the 8th of March, with the slogan "Don't be sad, *Răsunetul* makes you glad, we announce a tombola offering a set of *Farmec* cosmetics".

In the same post-socialist newspaper, women and men are asked what the 8th of March means for them: a primary grades teacher, a woman working in optics, a commercial worker, a student, as well as women from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and a man training

to be a soldier (*Răsunetul*, 1991). All want to celebrate the day with their loved ones, in their families or at school, sharing gifts.

But how are the women of Bistrița-Năsăud County at the beginning of the new millennium? They are gifted and blessed by God, according to the words of Dorina Manu:

> "God put in the woman boxes with unique gifts, for all those she is living with. He gifted her with a big heart, as big as her body, and from this, she gives a love drop every moment to her children, husband, parents, and colleagues; a pot of patience which never empties and from which she takes out a drop for every stumble; a bottomless sack full of kindness that she shares daily, otherwise wars will never end and the sky will remain dark" (*Răsunetul*, 8 March 2000).

## 4.4. Congratulations on the 8th of March in *Răsunetul* (1990-2000)

### *4.4.1. New roles for women*

The congratulations published during the first decade after the Romanian revolution display a great variety in their contents and form. This *diversity in contents* consists of the roles attributed to women by the writers of the congratulations (all men, with only a few exceptions). There are no longer only the women (workers, peasants, and intellectuals) who contributed to the social and economic advancement of the Romanian society, and in a secondary place, the mother (despite the propaganda's fierce promotion of motherhood, the congratulations published by *Ecoul* mentioned this role rarely).

In *Răsunetul*, the new newspaper with the same editorial team, we see that new roles are mentioned for women. As confirmed by one of the journalists of this newspaper, the congratulations written by men (managers of institutions, SMEs, organisations, political parties, religious groups) mentioned women as *mothers (as grandmothers only rarely),* congratulated *wives, daughters, lovers, and friends*.

When women are the ones congratulating their employees, they address them as "Mrs. and Miss" or "all women", or to "our female colleagues". There are a few mentions of roles within the family or in relation to a male partner – this is how male authors wrote their messages. For instance, when women write or contribute to wishing well, they do not consider the relationship with men:

> "Mr. manager … and Mrs. chief accountant …, on behalf of the management, wish all their women employees, best of health and happiness, complete understanding in their family" (*Răsunetul*, 1991).

### *4.4.2. Change and optimism impact representations of women*

The tone of most of the congratulatory messages is an optimistic one in *Răsunetul*. In contrast, the tone in *Ecoul* was a neutral one, like that of people doing their duty. Now, women are encouraged to be joyful, to believe and hope for better days (especially in the mid-1990s when also in congratulations it is mentioned the hard time that people were having economically):

> "God let them know a change to a better life, for the peace and well-being of their families"; "[…] a life with fewer and fewer worries"; "May it be that the spring of 1993 brings women more satisfactions and much prosperity" (*Răsunetul*, 1993); "God help us all with the strength needed to get over this hard period!" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "Look how at [name of company] everything has changed! The management council, though the general manager, Mr. …, knew how to fight and succeeded in people keeping their jobs during this transition period" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "[…] having the certitude that after a cloudy sky, the beauty of the azure will appear" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "We wish you happiness, health and strength to work, should you be always beautiful and smiling, thus being able to win over more easily the present hardships of life" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).

> "[…] we wish them an easier and richer life" (*Răsunetul*, 1994), "[…] the power to live honestly" (*Răsunetul*, 1996); "[…] to ennoble their condition through new possibilities, more long-lasting and more hopeful" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "May God give all [of them] the strength needed to get over this difficult period" (*Răsunetul*, 1998).

In *Răsunetul*, many state their wishes that life is easier and more joyful starting with that spring. At the beginning of the 1990s, congratulations included the theme of hope: "spring is the season when life renews" – celebrating International Woman's Day at the beginning of spring impacted how Romanians interpreted the significance of the day and they borrowed from the meanings attributed to spring for the representations of women and the construction of related stereotypes (*Răsunetul*, 1993). Although spring is associated with rebirth and hope, this association is due also to the general state of mind of Romanian society that, despite many hardships and ambiguities of the transition period, was also represented as one of hope for a better life:

> "[…] a spring of hope", "May the snowdrops of this hurried spring bring us the peace in our souls and the wealth in houses, something we all hope for" (*Răsunetul*, 1998).
>
> "Let's hope that the life of all women, and not only them, will change for the better and that hopes will turn to reality only together with [the name of the party]" (*Răsunetul*, 1999).

In the first years after the Romanian Revolution, people also introduce *the topic of freedom* in their congratulations:

> "From the threshold of spring, in our free Romania, we plait a trinket for the ladies and girls, for our mothers, wives, and daughters, together now, on the 8th of March, with the most beautiful thoughts and feelings that would bring them again the smile of happiness on their cheeks and the warmth of the sun in their glances" (*Răsunetul*, 1990).

Women are among:

> "[…] the best and most aware workers, whom the fate of the company depends on now when look, we can decide by ourselves about our work and our results" (*Răsunetul*, 1991); "The snowdrops of spring should bring you only joy and happiness […] in this spring of freedom and dignity" (*Răsunetul*, 1991).

### *4.4.3. Religious messages and representations of women*

Another change in congratulatory messages after 1989 is *the introduction of religious mentions*. Women should either be blessed by God in all they do, or they are themselves bestowed with sanctity because of their motherhood:

> "May it be that the 8th of March 1991 finds you [our esteemed women colleagues] with your hearts full of divine grace for all the beloved ones and close to you" (*Răsunetul*, 1991).

In fact, the entire newspaper is hosting articles about religious subjects, either by the journalists themselves or by collaborators (among whom are also priests), insisting on the sanctity of the woman and her being honoured by the Church. On the first page, the newspaper prints quotations from the Bible and mentions the saints celebrated on the respective day.

Of course, these subjects were forbidden during the socialist period, so the reader can perceive the freedom of speech and faith also through the pages of this newspaper:

> "God give them joy!" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

> "[…] in spring, when agriculture has its rebirth, the mayor's office [of a commune] is together with our wonderful women peasants who toiled on past agricultural fields, offering them now, on the occasion of the 8th of March, a bouquet of field flowers, to honour their work and endeavour, for general prosperity and happiness. So help us God!" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

Another mayor congratulates women and is grateful:

> "for all they do for their families and town. God give you good health, peace in your souls and the accomplishment of all your pure wishes!" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

The topic of motherhood, together with the traditional image of the woman, is reiterated in the congratulations addressed by religious groups, other than the Orthodox Church which has most of the believers in Romania. For instance, the Jehovah's Witnesses consider the 8th of March as a "celebration of feminine beauty and fragility, of freshness" and:

> "[…] it is a good occasion to be grateful to their mothers, wives, daughters, fiancées, to all those who, receiving life from God, give life themselves, having their rebirth with each new generation" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

Like the other congratulations in the newspaper, this one enforces stereotypes about women and does not align with the significance of this day at the international level. In fact, all these congratulations construct a meaning of the 8th of March that resonates with the Romanian society of the period (i.e., especially with its political imperatives).

### *4.4.4. Women and their families*

The wishing well is addressed usually to both women and their families, thus underlining their roles and close connection to family in the Romanian society. The fact that traditional roles are being reminded and defined in relation to men is proved also by messages that add to the usual congratulations to women colleagues, the ones for:

> "[…] the wives, the mothers, the daughters and nephews of our male colleagues" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

> "To you all, who with the kindness of the mother, the sacrifice spirit of the wife and the unselfish love of the sister and daughter, embody in a great and unique truth the eternal femininity [eternul feminin]" (*Răsunetul*, 1993).

Women are beautiful, full of life, and they give love and deserve love: "your mission, not an easy one, but so pleasant of being always the meaning and light of life"; women "give meaning to our lives – wives, mothers, daughters, girlfriends"; "we offer them a symbolic bouquet of snowdrops, a sign of our love, sincerity and pleasure to have you beside us as daughters, wives and mothers", "should you be always beautiful so that you beautify our life" (*Răsunetul*, 1994). Men are "grateful for all that represents beauty and femininity" (*Răsunetul*, 1993), "wishing you good health and much love from your parents, husbands, children and dear persons" (*Răsunetul*, 1994). In their turn, women offer "peace of soul to their families" (*Răsunetul*, 1993). Political parties congratulate all women who trust their doctrine and appreciate women "for their efforts for the peace and warmth of their families, for a wealthy living" (*Răsunetul*, 1996).

One of the most vivid examples of how women were perceived and represented in most of the congratulatory messages is given by the president of the Party "Alianţa pentru România" [Alliance for Romania], who was a public figure at the national level. According to his message, the major worth of women consists in assisting men on their way to success – women are defined through their relationship with men:

> "The 8th of March is the day when all our thoughts are toward You, those who are our mothers, wives and fiancées.
>
> First, I begin by thinking of the woman–mother, of her noblesse, of her daily sacrifice, even when her children are adults and they become parents themselves.
>
> Please allow me to invoke on this special day the woman–wife, the one that is beside us for better and for worse, who listened to our troubles more than once, who understood and helped us in everything we did, or were about to do. Nobody can forget that the woman beside us is our life partner. I trust that you ladies help us not only to cope but also to win.

> I wish to address today, on the 8th of March, a symbol of femininity, a good thought to all women beside us" (*Răsunetul*, 2000).

Or the candidate of a political party for the mayor's office in Bistriţa:

> "Mother, grandmother, wife, sister, mother-in-law, daughter, lover, girlfriend. Woman! Today is your day! I will do everything necessary so that your life be more beautiful. Like a spring … Respectfully, many happy returns of the day!" (*Răsunetul*, 2000).

### *4.4.5. Women out of development?*

A big change can be seen in the *almost disappearance of women in their role as workers*. We know, as readers of these congratulations, that women workers, peasants, and intellectuals exist, as they are congratulated by the management of their workplace, but they are seldomly congratulated solely for their work, as in the previous decade, in *Ecoul*. In *Răsunetul*, women are congratulated for their traditional roles and most of them in relation to men: mothers, wives, daughters, lovers, friends, and colleagues.

This almost effacing of women as working people is also characteristic of the articles in the newspaper *Răsunetul*. The interviewed journalist told us that, during the socialist period, the editorial team would meet and, knowing that the 8th of March was approaching, would decide to include more articles discussing women and their activities in the county. This editorial policy did not change after 1989, we were informed, and we see pages with poetry and articles about *the role of women as mothers and their femininity*, but it seems that *the topic of women and development was no longer of interest to these journalists*; there was no more ideological pressure, so journalists were free to decide what subjects to approach and our respondent underlined that, in those years after 1989, new priorities appeared with political issues being a hot topic.

In addition, the economic problems (especially agriculture) were treated extensively (as mentioned also by our respondent).

From our interview, we understood that there was no conscious decision to leave out women from the development discourse. As in the case of *Ecoul*, the editorial team of *Răsunetul* was a male-dominated one, with only a few exceptions: one or two women out of twenty and later forty employees and also some women collaborators. Without an ideological pressure to insist on "women's contributions" and on the equality between women and men, where work emancipated women, the new newspaper – *Răsunetul* – would reflect the editorial decisions and perceptions of the free male journalists.

### *4.4.6. Women and work in the rural and urban areas*

We see that women in agriculture still toil, in contrast to women in the other sectors, which may mean that the women's condition in the rural area was not much improved by the claimed modernisation of agriculture during socialism. Or, at least, the people's perceptions did not change as women in the rural area are still toiling – a feature of their lives:

> "[…] the wonderful workers in growing vegetables, the women specialists, the women employees, all who toil in this sector" (*Răsunetul*, 1991); "[…] we congratulate sincerely all women, from the woman peasant in the field to the woman specialist", we wish "sufficient crops"; women work "the ancestral land from dawn to night" (*Răsunetul*, 1993).

Managers also express their hope that women's work "will be better rewarded, as a recognition of their worth, talent and sacrifice" (a message transmitted by a woman manager) (*Răsunetul*, 1998); they address "thanks for their efforts and loyalty," for "the responsible manner in which they work" (*Răsunetul*, 1996). Women are thanked for the activity of making the company more prosperous. Women are

industrious and skilful and make the company "more and more looked for by its internal and external exchange partners" (*Răsunetul*, 1991).

Congratulations are also used by managers to advertise their business or to announce difficult moments in their activity that have been surpassed with the help of their women employees:

> "The management of […], a company that is at the crossroads in its activity is extremely sensitive to the substantial work contribution of all its women" (*Răsunetul*, 1991).

Women are "the ones that beautify our daily life", they are "our work colleagues that are always beside us as an affectionate promise of our existence" (?!) (*Răsunetul*, 1991). As teachers, they are described by the County School Inspectorate as attentive and sensitive; teachers "take care of our children with the warmth they have always done" (*Răsunetul*, 1996).

Those who congratulate express their "feelings of special appreciation and respect", which is also new compared to the congratulations before the 1990s, when feelings were not freely expressed in the official statements, although women were perceived to "work shoulder to shoulder with men" (*Răsunetul*, 1991). Love for women is expressed in the context of the nation (the colours of the flag are mentioned to embellish the day).

Women are compared to bees: "we wish them to be always economical and industrious like bees" (a wishing from a banking institution) (*Răsunetul*, 1991). Women ennoble what they do, due to their ingenious minds and hearts. Authors of congratulations wish women "great successes in their work and in life", as part of "a discreet and warm homage" (*Răsunetul*, 1991). Strength for work is also mentioned in the wishes to women on this day, as well as wishes for "complete professional and personal satisfactions" (*Răsunetul*, 1991).

Women, while working, create beauty and gentleness. Women are flowers:

> "[…] among the spring flowers, you are the most beautiful. May you be, with each day, more and more beautiful and healthy" (*Răsunetul*, 1991); "Be always like the flowers of the spring of 1994" (*Răsunetul*, 1994); women "should always be young and beautiful, healthy and happy in order to accomplish all their aspirations" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

"With delicate faces, beautiful souls and hearts full of affection" are the women colleagues in one of the messages (*Răsunetul*, 1992); "women colleagues are understanding", "their chest offering godly wonders" (?!) (*Răsunetul*, 1994); colleagues "who are and will be by our side, for better and for worse"; women colleagues are also "friends and devoted to the general interest" (*Răsunetul*, 1994); they have a "generous and warm soul"; they are "the guardian angels, protectors and advisers" (*Răsunetul*, 1996).

One can wonder about the inappropriateness of such a description for colleagues, but it seems that women colleagues are defined mainly by their gender identity (and related stereotypes) than by features that should be related to their work (e.g., competence, skills). As such, this type of discourse undermines the condition of the women as trained professionals and reduces them to decorative and affectionate elements in the workplace. The communist propaganda discourse proved to be ineffective in changing the traditional mindset about gender relations in Romanian society.

Nevertheless, the contents and tone of some of the messages remind of the socialist ones (the same words/phrases and tropes are used). "Colleagues of work, of ideals and aspirations" (Răsunetul, 1993) calls back to a phrase often used by communist propaganda (see also Moldovan, 1979), "grateful for all that women do for the flourishing of our county", "we congratulate the women in our unit for their effort" (*Răsunetul*, 1994). In 1992, women are still congratulated for "their contribution to realising the tasks of the yearly plan", as in socialism. Wishes are for their soul's peace.

In *Răsunetul* of 1999, there are also some congratulations that depart from the traditional ones published so far:

> "[…] we are very glad to wish all women employees happiness and good health on the occasion of International Woman's Day, and we express our trust that women will continue to contribute to the prosperity of our company" (*Răsunetul*, 1999).

Or

> "[…] the mayor's office and the Local Council … warmly congratulate all women in our commune for their substantial contribution to enriching the economic dowry of our commune and wish them now, on the 8th of March, International Woman's Day, much joy and personal satisfactions" (*Răsunetul*, 1999).

Women are "appreciated and admired" for their industriousness, "for the beauty and gentleness of their souls", "for their noble face", "for their delicate face", "young and beautiful, joyful and glad all the time" (*Răsunetul*, 1992), for being "always delicate, beautiful and distinguished, like the most beautiful flowers of the earth" (*Răsunetul*, 1993).

Women,

> "[…] through their grace and beauty, delight us and make our life more beautiful, bringing us each day enthusiasm and happiness, joy and hope" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

In the same message, it is emphasised the economic contribution of these women, praised for their beauty and charms:

> "[…] their substantial contribution to realising the production of our unit, to creating the basis for the transition to the market economy" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

Luck is a wishing well that appears more often by the end of the 1990s congratulations:

> "[…] we wish them luck in life […]. Let's make our city cleaner and better cared for" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).

One can see that women continue to be congratulated and appreciated for their work, like in socialism, but, at the same time, a new patronising tone is used when congratulating women using stereotypes, which although existing in the socialist period were not voiced in the published congratulations at that time.

### *4.4.7. International Women's Day as a pretext for advertising business*

The partial privatisation of the Romanian economy is reflected in the messages concerning the competitiveness of the SMEs and even of the large companies. Their managers use the space they paid for to congratulate their women employees and underline the strength and attractiveness of their businesses:

> "We congratulate all women colleagues for accomplishing the production tasks, the almost 500 women – ladies and girls, because through their daily activity they made possible the obtaining of certain advantages and based on these our unit increased its fame, it was able to get over the hardships of the last two years and laid the foundation for future prosperity" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

After being congratulated, women are invited in a business manner to:

> "[…] do their shopping only through our shop which is supplied with a large array of food and industrial products" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

One such company lists in more than half of its message the products they offer for sale (more than ten such types of products). The management of a beer company:

> "[…] transmits to all women employees congratulations for the quality beer they produced during the last period, beer which is more and more appreciated by the consumers of the city and of the county" (*Răsunetul*, 1996).

Some of the companies even give their full address so that possible customers can reach them easily.

Women are invited to buy products and services advertised in the congratulations on the 8th of March through a variety of messages:

> "[…] we address warm and sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 8th of March to all those who frequently stepped over our doorstep, and we announce that we deliver en-gros and en-detaille English cosmetics of unreproachable quality for very good prices!" (*Răsunetul*, 1993).
>
> "[…] the well-known and hospitable company" (*Răsunetul*, 1993), "a company serving you is …" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "[…] we invite women to visit us to find the desired food products for reasonable prices" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "[…] the invitation to always be our clients" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "[…] to all those who benefit from services of this modern commercial complex" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "[…] where they can buy the most valuable gifts for the dear ones, long-use products from the most renowned European companies" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).
>
> "[…] we shall offer you products that make you happy" (*Răsunetul*, 1996).
>
> "[…] health, long life and successes in business. You should know that in our bank, women customers have priority" (*Răsunetul*, 1993).

### *4.4.8. Defining the 8th of March and women*

The 8th of March is "a celebration of the youth and femininity that surrounds us at the beginning of each spring", "is dedicated to the greatness and gentleness of the femininity" (*Răsunetul*, 1993). In 1991, in *Răsunetul*, "on the occasion of the 8th of March, a day which symbolises, each year, together with the perfume of spring, the

feminine beauty and gentleness" (*Răsunetul*, 1991), congratulations are sent "to all representatives of the beautiful sex that work in our unit" (*Răsunetul*, 1991). Spring brings "hopes and trust in the future" and these have a "fiery ray" (*Răsunetul*, 1991). Others know that celebrating the 8th of March in spring is only a coincidence, while hope is characteristic of both.

The 8th of March is "a day for women to be appreciated and respected", it is "when we celebrate women's purity and beauty, those of our wives, mothers and girlfriends" (*Răsunetul*, 1992), when men bring "a holy homage" in "a new spring of their lives". To congratulate, to bring "a splendid homage" is "a special honour" (*Răsunetul*, 1999). Therefore, women colleagues are addressed:

> "[…] the most sincere and pure thoughts, good health and happiness congratulations so that they remain always gentle and beautiful, like all the flowers of spring" (*Răsunetul*, 1992).

All the good things in life are "more than deserved by women", the prefect of the county declares in his congratulations of 1993. Readers thus see that this political figure, invested with the greatest managerial authority at the county level, certifies women's merits, their worth. This type of attitude, although benevolent on the surface, in actuality places women in subaltern positions from a gender perspective and normalises their subservient condition (i.e., a traditional approach to gender roles and relationships in Romania).

Women are to spread happiness and love, "to be always in a good mood and happy" (*Răsunetul*, 1996). Women are advised:

> "[…] to manifest love, industriousness and wisdom in order to make their life beautiful and prosperous" (*Răsunetul*, 1994).

We can but wonder if the same advice about love, industriousness and wisdom would be given to men in order to be successful, or whether this is a gendered perspective on success in life. Benevolence is shown explicitly by the message of two male managers:

> "On this day, let's all enjoy the love of our colleagues, wives, and daughters. Let's love and respect them as we should" (*Răsunetul*, 1999).

In *Răsunetul*, one identifies unintended bias in the coverage of the 8th of March and a masculine perspective on the day dominates the media discourse, which is an unintended heavily sexist discourse; cliché words and messages are used (e.g., to be a woman means love, beauty, and eternity) and International Women's Day is represented as a "networking event" (cf. also Yogurtcu, Toker & Ozkan, 2020, p. 164). The main expressed feeling is that of gratitude and the image of the mother dominates the discourse:

> "You deserve our gratitude and love for the fate of being mother and wife and lover and colleague" (*Răsunetul*, 1999).

## 5. Benevolent sexism – discussions

The ideas celebrated in the last decade of socialism and in the first decade of post-socialism in Romania are different. If in the socialist newspaper *Ecoul*, reporting about the International Woman's Day and women's achievements was included in the discourse on the social, political and economic emancipation of women, of their contributions to the modernisation of Romania, in the post-socialist newspaper – *Răsunetul* – the 8th of March is part of the soft news.

In *Ecoul*, International Women's Day was used by domestic propaganda to picture the socialist system as the saviour of women and the one who emancipated them (especially through work) (cf. also Vrînceanu, 2016; Florea, 2018; Bunghez, 2021; Aoşan, 2022; Ţiu, 2022). After 1989, women are represented as mothers, articles are written on the relationship between women and the Church and the woman as always significant in the Orthodox religion and in the Bible. This influences the representation of women. The 1990s also showed

a celebration of women associated with spring, the rebirth of nature, and flowers.

The research material from both newspapers showed the perception of femininity by people adhering to a patriarchal mentality or being influenced by representations constructed in such a society. Previous patriarchal mentality and stereotypes are present and reinforced during the communist period in Romania, as well as in post-socialism, instead of recognising women's rights, achievements, and the ongoing struggle for these. These messages through both congratulations and articles, in actuality further emphasise gender differentiation – women are praised for qualities that define traditional gender roles and social status.

The main topics correlated with representations of women are the following:

- in socialism, economic development, and correlated with the economy are the topics of maternity, the emancipation of women through work and the woman as a political being;

- in post-socialism, family and maternity, the connection with religion;

- the successful woman: in socialism, Elena Ceauşescu and many examples of women from the rural and urban areas who succeeded in finding a balance between work and life; a meteoric appearance in post-socialism (for instance, a woman surgeon appreciated in an article for the quality of the provided care and empathy; a successful sportswoman).

In socialism, the roles of women are diverse (she works in the national economy, she has political power, she is a mother), while in post-socialism, the woman is represented in a rather monolithic and passive way: she is the mother or the symbol of femininity – a flower. One can notice the scarcity of roles attributed to women in post-socialism, and their representations. Her economic and political roles are secondary to her identity.

Moreover, the high prevalence of benevolent sexism is supported by the fact that this feature is shared by most congratulatory messages and articles in *Răsunetul*. Furthermore, benevolent sexism tends to be higher on International Women's Day (Quiroga et al., 2021, p. 11). As such, well-spread benevolent sexism (an indication of a highly sexist environment) may do more harm than hostile sexism (Quiroga et al., 2021).

These congratulations are vivid examples of the ideas that dominate a Romanian masculine culture. Benevolent sexism manifests through an attitude of protection towards women, appreciation for their subordination towards their husbands, for the sacrifice that motherhood implies. The tone of benevolent sexist statements is kind towards women who are models in traditional roles (e.g., wives, mothers):

> "[…] it may represent women as superior to men, but only with regard to traits or attributes that are not relevant to changing the social status of women" (Quiroga et al., 2021, p. 5).

Therefore, benevolent sexist attitudes are well-established and taken for granted mostly in *Răsunetul*. The benevolent sexist contents in the two newspapers points out the gap between the use of a celebration that should mark the emancipation of women and the ongoing struggle for their rights, on one hand, and the naturalisation of sexist attitudes in a Romanian conservative society by making use of International Women's Day, on the other hand. The original motivations for this celebration have been lost on the way.

The tradition (discourses and practices) in celebrating this day in Romania promotes stereotypical images of women, reinforces bias against women, their traditional roles and unequal power relationships with men. These are reflected in sexist attitudes which perpetuate the structural inequality based on gender. The communist regime imposed protectively justified restrictions on women (based on conventional gender roles) that created and maintained inequality in the labour market (cf. Jinga, 2015; Cucu, 2019; Massino, 2019).

In *Răsunetul*, gender stereotypes highlight a discourse based on benevolent sexism and this reinforces inequality between men and women. Gifts and congratulations acknowledge women's importance in men's lives. Such a perspective on the 8th of March celebratory practices actively supports the maintenance of structural inequality between women and men.

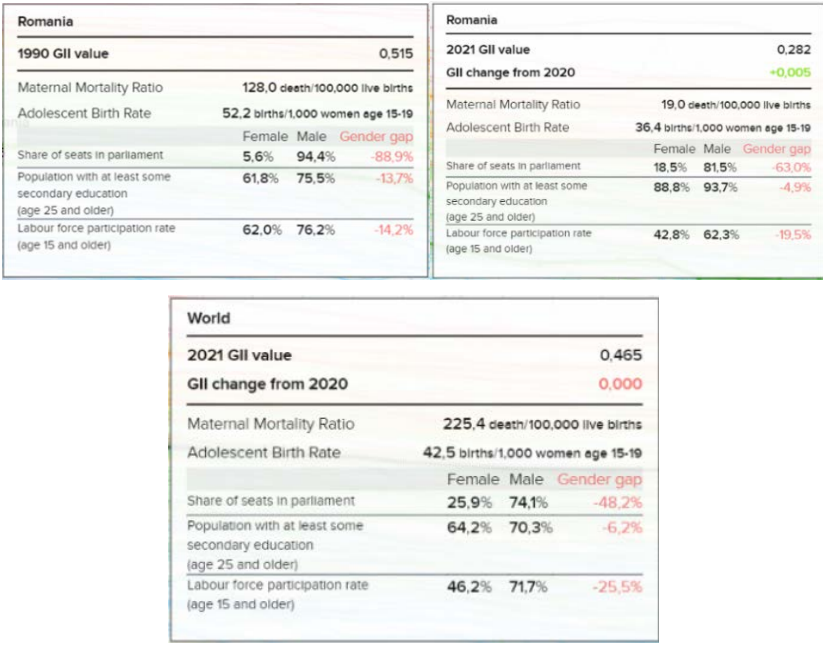
Benevolent attitudes are a manifestation of benevolent sexism. Such messages naturalise instead of recognise gender inequality in the Romanian society (Ilovan, 2022). Party members or regular citizens do not confront, or raise awareness about such issues when organising demonstrations, lectures, and workshops. None of the two reasons for which the 8th of March as International Women's Day was established are mentioned in the congratulatory messages.

These reasons are *the acknowledgement of women's achievements* and *the underlining that gender equality was still to be attained* (Quiroga et al., 2021, p. 2). In such a context, previous research argues that all changes matter in order to fight gender inequality (Wojdemann, Benedetto & Grenman, 2017). Therefore, the mass media discourse should focus on discourses and actions for gender equality, but benevolent sexism (a form of maintaining gender inequality) (cf. Quiroga et al., 2021) dominates.

As discussed in previous research, access to education and participation in development can improve women's status (Potter et al., 2012; Ilovan & Muntean, 2021; Muntean & Colcer, 2021). However, as shown by the Gender Inequality Index (measured on three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market), Romania still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality. High values of the index indicate high inequality between women and men.

As displayed in Figure 1, the values of the GII improved from 1990 to 2021 in Romania (the lower GII values represent a better performance regarding gender inequality), but further efforts are needed for structural change.

Education is needed not only to empower women but also to identify and thus be able to avoid benevolent sexism and all its negative consequences: it undermines collective action for social change in what gender inequality is concerned; it deceives and demotivates women in their performance in, for instance, the workplace or at school, because it masks patriarchal attitudes and behaviours under the guise of protection and benevolence; it induces feelings of incompetence for women (cf. Dumont, Sarlet & Dardenne, 2010; Columban et al., 2022).



**Romania**

| 1990 GII value | | | 0,515 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maternal Mortality Ratio | 128,0 deaths/100,000 live births | | |
| Adolescent Birth Rate | 52,2 births/1,000 women age 15-19 | | |
| | Female | Male | Gender gap |
| Share of seats in parliament | 5,6% | 94,4% | -88,9% |
| Population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) | 61,8% | 75,5% | -13,7% |
| Labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) | 62,0% | 76,2% | -14,2% |

**Romania**

| 2021 GII value | | | 0,282 |
|---|---|---|---|
| GII change from 2020 | | | +0,005 |
| Maternal Mortality Ratio | 19,0 deaths/100,000 live births | | |
| Adolescent Birth Rate | 36,4 births/1,000 women age 15-19 | | |
| | Female | Male | Gender gap |
| Share of seats in parliament | 18,5% | 81,5% | -63,0% |
| Population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) | 88,8% | 93,7% | -4,9% |
| Labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) | 42,8% | 62,3% | -19,5% |

**World**

| 2021 GII value | | | 0,465 |
|---|---|---|---|
| GII change from 2020 | | | 0,000 |
| Maternal Mortality Ratio | 225,4 deaths/100,000 live births | | |
| Adolescent Birth Rate | 42,5 births/1,000 women age 15-19 | | |
| | Female | Male | Gender gap |
| Share of seats in parliament | 25,9% | 74,1% | -48,2% |
| Population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) | 64,2% | 70,3% | -6,2% |
| Labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) | 46,2% | 71,7% | -25,5% |

Fig. 1. Gender Inequality Index in 1990 and 2021 in Romania and in the World
Source: UNDP, 2022

## 6. Conclusions

This chapter presents a chronological route of representations of women during socialism and post-socialism in Romania in the press on the 8th of March, International Women's Day, and analyses the representations of women and the ideas that motivate the construction of gender in a certain way (ten years before and after 1989): from "our comrades of work, life and ideal" to "the woman – love and eternity". Women are represented in *Ecoul* and *Răsunetul* newspapers (1979-2000), mainly by men, but our research, as previous studies (Teampău, 2016, 2017), emphasises that also some women contributing to the newspaper were reproducing the ideological canon.

Our research shows the main topics according to which women were represented. Most of these representations were constructed by men and normalised also by women journalists. The respective topics are closely connected to the official political, economic, social, and cultural discourse of the Romanian society, but there are also several representations that remain the same, irrespective of the historical period. The focus on a theme or other is what differs. At the same time, we discussed the possible impact these representations had on the relationships between women and men at present, from the perspective of gender equality (i.e., benevolent sexism).

A feastful approach to the 8th of March, "an authentic pleasure", triggered the loss of the initial political meanings and activism for women's rights and, discursively, was partially changed to Mother's Day (Columban et al., 2022, p. 157). Traditional representations about gender roles were set free once the freedom of speech was achieved after the Romanian revolution and they are reflected in the newspaper: the 8th of March is a "pleasant", "happy" and "sublime" occasion for congratulating women. We witness a swift turn from a fight for basic rights (social and political, a symbol of their progress) at the international level, to a celebration of femininity and beauty in post-socialist Romania (Redacţia Descopera.ro, 2022).

Because in Romania, this day of the 8th of March is still very much welcomed with great stir, excitement and effort put into gestures and practices that reinforce stereotypes and are supported by benevolent sexism, our research is relevant as it shows the continuity of the present representations on the 8th of March with *a socialist tradition* and *a patriarchal mentality*, two factors that do not support women's emancipation, gender equality, lack of discrimination and fight to eradicate violence against women in the contemporary world. In such a context, it should be stated that, unfortunately, the occasion of International Women's Day in Romania has been lost on reinforcing gender stereotypes and bias and on benevolent sexism, instead of raising awareness about and acting for women's rights.

The day should be an occasion for critical reflection about past and present, a recognition of gender inequalities and what needs to be done to redress problematic issues. However, even today it is a celebratory event attracting limited attention in mass media, which has, in some countries, a negative contribution through the recycling of gender stereotypes, not questioning gender inequalities and injustice based on deformed representations about women in soft news and trivialisations (Yogurtcu, Toker & Ozkan, 2020). Moreover, it is not a forum for critical debates, as mass media should host.

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This collective volume contributes to a better understanding of gender, gender roles and relations in nowadays Romania and in its recent past, highlighting women's position in society, analysing the cultural stereotypes related to them, the political and cultural mechanisms through which they had been put apart, the pressures they faced, their daily patterns and behaviours.

It is a successful attempt to gather studies on gender in Romania, analysing it through various lenses, valuing perspectives and domains in an inspired interdisciplinary manner: gender perspectives and insights are present in the historical, anthropological, anthropo-geographical, legislative approaches the volume contains, as well as in those from mobility studies and visual arts. This frame proves to be extremely necessary to understand gender relations, in their connection with cultural facts, processes, and developments.

The volume is addressed to different categories of readers, to specialists with research interests in these topics and the fields involved in the proposed approaches, as well as to a broader public.

**Alina BRANDA, Ph.D.**

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