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Introduction: Complex Interrelations of Gender Politics in Eastern Europe¹

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Following 25 years of democratic transformation in Eastern Europe, we are still confronted with ambiguous results regarding gender relations. Democratisation was neither synonymous with gender democracy, nor did the transition to a „free“ market economy produce economic gender equality. This introduction to our special issues surveys new research on gender relations in the Eastern member states of the European Union. We then evaluate the structural impact of EU mandates in these domains, i. e., on the architecture of Women’s Policy Agencies and on the role of women’s Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). We present a case study on gender developments in Ukraine as a non-member state to further illustrate the contradictory nature of evolving gender relations in the region as regards women’s roles, social policies and female activism. The introduction closes with reflections on the types of research and political activities that could further the pursuit of gender equality.

Keywords: gender politics, European Union, eastern enlargement, women’s activism

Ambivalent developments in gender relations in the region

When we at Femina Politica published our first special issue about Eastern Europe in 2006 the gender-political consequences of the milestone that was the Eastern European enlargement were visible, yet not very contoured. A decade later trends and constants are clearly visible. Following 25 years of democratic transformation in Eastern Europe, we are still confronted with ambiguous results regarding gender relations. Democratisation was neither synonymous with gender democracy, nor did the transition to a „free“ market economy produce economic gender equality. The transformation has resulted in consequences that are judged to be Janus-faced and controversial. The state has moreover used the field of gender politics to fight fundamental battles about the relationship between state, economy and society, resulting in welfare retrenchment, the marginalisation of women in pub-

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lic life, the remodelling of the welfare regime and the feminisation of civil society, to name only a few controversial transformations. Despite the reinstatement of (neo)-traditional women's roles, the downsizing of social services and subsidies has simultaneously rendered it impossible for most people to live according to the older male breadwinner model and thereby the liberal dual-earner model flourishes. As everywhere else in the world, the democratization of gender relations has not been realized. On the contrary, redistribution processes involving work, time and money have led to a return to traditionalism and stereotyping, as well as to rising intersectional social exclusion. We can see major differences in gender politics among the states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), not least along the new material and discursive boundaries that have arisen in the wake of EU enlargement. Enlargement boosted compliance with European gender equality standards across the region, at least temporarily, by linking accession to the adoption of the gender acquis. The actual transposition of EU gender directives turned out to be more difficult, and implementation is still limited.

Correspondingly, gender equality scholars have recently noted a standstill concerning further efforts to advance gender equality policies across European Union. Discussions over the reasons behind this development are rather controversial. While some scholars point to the altered composition of the European Parliament since 2014, others locate the causes within the new Eastern European member states themselves. Some have identified a persistent, endemic economism, blamed for severely limiting "the nature of EU gender strategy itself"; the latter is now forced to operate within the confines of liberal individualism, which does not permit efforts to tackle the broader structural aspects of gender inequality in different spheres (cf. Špehar 2012). Economism is a constant in political developments but simultaneously the contribution to political economics of gender relations in the region are sparse – this is a gap which we will also not be able to fill with this issue.

With this special issue we want to take a look at the complex interrelations between the three-fold transformation of state/nation, democracy and economy and gender relations in Eastern member states. For this purpose we will give an outline of the field of research and position the articles in the context of the respective research desiderata as well as of the new findings and knowledge regarding gender relations in the Eastern member states. Building on this background, this introduction will outline the contributions of feminist state theory to our understanding of East European transformation processes and their ambiguous effect on the area of gender politics in that region, based on a systematic review of recent academic publications. We start with an assessment of the EU's impact on gender equality policies in Central Eastern European countries. Transposition and implementation of EU gender directives are discussed as a first step, followed by an impact assessment in regard to two fields: preventing violence against women and social policy. We then evaluate the structural impact of EU mandates in these domains, i. e., on the architecture of Women's Policy Agencies and on the role of women's Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). We present a case study on gender developments in Ukraine as a non-member state to further illustrate the contradictory nature of evolving gender relations in the region as regards women's roles, social policies and female activism. The introduction closes with reflections on the types of research and political activities that could further the pursuit of gender equality.

Feminist state theory and Eastern Europe

A substantial perception and recognition of the findings of Gender Studies in transformation research is still missing (see Kollmorgen/Merkel/Wagener 2015). Conversely critique is being voiced that femi-

nist researchers have not presented social theory based analyses of gender and post-socialist transformation. (Dölling 2015, 551). This is only partially true for the political sciences, as can be seen in the following about the work towards European integration. Moreover, feminist state theory approaches that are based on (neo-)Marxist theory tradition interpret the post-socialist transformation as a variation of current worldwide transformations of statehood. They emphasise the contingency and political malleability of the transformation of statehood. (Löffler 2012). With the move away from patriarchy and the notion of a monolithic actor „the state“ feminist state theory developed the concept of masculinist statehood.. This term enables the analysis of gender identities and gender interests that are highlighted in state discourse and state action. ² This is a promising perspective in order to understand and analyse the redefinitions of nation, state and gender in the region. Within our focus Brigita Malenica investigates the relevance of post-socialist feminist critique of the state. How is the diagnosis of retraditionalisation of gender relations in Croatia to be evaluated today after structural change? Using the example of the election of Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović as the Croatian President of the Republic in January 2015 she reveals the reformulation of „state building“ masculinist notions of state and family by a woman.

The impact of the European Union on gender equality policies in CEE member states and candidate countries

By setting clear requirements for accession such as the adoption of the *acquis* the EU has presented itself as a community of laws and values with regard to gender aspects (Fuchs/Hinterhuber 2006, 9). There was hope that this would have a long term positive influence on new member states; these hopes did not seem to be without reason: Researchers often characterize gender equality as one of the most advanced, “elaborated” policy fields within the EU, seeing the emergence of a supranational gender order as a cause for celebration (cf. e.g. Fuhrmann 2005). Despite the persistent rhetorical praise (especially in comparisons with non-European countries such as Russia), gender equality no longer seems to be a central pillar of Community activity. The developmental trends of the last decade are ambiguous at best ³ (see Ahrens/D’Agostini/Woodward 2014, 2f.): Whereas some progress has been made in relation to the battle against gender-specific violence, the focus on more equitable participation in decision-making and in terms of gender aspects foreign policy labour and social policies have been subject to stagnation. Feminists moreover evaluate the gender-sensitivity of new regulatory instruments such as ranking and benchmarking in negative terms (cf. Van der Vleuten, Anna/Verloo 2012).

Although the term “Gender Equality” has been included for the first time in the name of an EU Directorate-General, the Commission’s “Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010” marks a less positive turning point: “Gender political goals have been plaited into other policy fields and their aims” (ibid.: 3; our translation, GF, EMH), most often subsumed under the primacy of economy. This development finds its parallel in processes that have taken hold in the EU’s newest member states: During the ten years following Eastern enlargement, gender equality policies in the Central and Eastern European countries have witnessed a remarkable slow down (see Galli-

² We thank Brigita Malenica for her suggestions from an earlier version of her article.

³ General assessments of the EU gender policies range from an optimistic view of innovation of politics (soft law, velvet triangles) and policy outcomes like the development of the position of women (Mushaben/Abels (2015)) to more fundamental critics of the economic profile of these policies and its focus on „equal opportunities“, where their specific chances for democratic gender relations are rather doubted and interpreted as a „new form of neoliberal governmentality“ (Wilde (2015); our translation, GF, EH)

gan/Clavero/Calloni 2008). Whereas candidate states were required to adopt the gender *acquis communautaire* and relevant legislation beginning the pre-accession period – under the pressure of conditionality, sometimes even preempting other EU regulations – the actual transposition of specific equality directives has often been protracted or skewed; consequently, their post-accession implementation and enforcement at the national level have been very inadequate .

„Europeanization“ may be defined as the construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles of doing things and shared beliefs and norms, that have first been defined and consolidated at the EU level and then incorporated into national settings (we refer to Chiva 2009, 193). Europeanization requires states to transpose, implement and comply with both hard and soft law mandates. Ideally this results in a high level of compliance.⁴ There is a clear focus on this area within the entire research on this topic. Many investigations have focused on legislative compliance with the gender *acquis* and relevant directives, on the mechanisms and logics of transposition, on formal implementation and on everyday enforcement following the admission of new member states. Research on the actual implementation and enforcement are much more seldom than research on the transposition of regulations. The impact of the EU gender policy on different policy fields has been analysed more profoundly in domestic violence policies, anti-discrimination and social/family policies, which are explained in depth below. In order to reach valid explanations in the future as to why there is a large gap between the formal transposition and inadequate implementation or rather deficient everyday enforcement the following section looks at the process of the adoption of the *acquis*.

Compliance, transposition and implementation

Eastern enlargement has proven to be a predominantly technocratic, elite-governed process (Schimmelfennig 2004, 261f.), bringing to light pronounced asymmetries in power relationships between the EU and the former socialist countries, whose new political elites basically wanted „to return to Europe“. This situation left little time or space for negotiating adequate transitional periods (Kantola 2010, 189f.). However, EU pressure to adopt the gender *acquis* was not very strong during the negotiations (Bretherton 2001); as a result, the Commission’s willingness to sanction countries for their subsequent non-compliance has been limited (Fábián 2010, 59). The transposition of directives nevertheless produced a quicker, more uniform and more comprehensive process than seen in the old member states (Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier 2005, 225). Yet, there were differences in speed and in timing among the accession states: whereas in Poland, adoption was delayed by heated, polemical debates until autumn 2001, transposition amounted to a rather technical process in the Czech Republic (Seppanen Anderson 2006).

Generally, external and domestic features were identified as necessary for transposition: Equally important, pre-accession conditionality functioned as a positive incentive, as did conducive domestic political conditions; the latter included political pressures from below, often in cooperation with transnational actors (Kantola 2010, 193 and/or women’s movements Steinhilber 2008, 263). After accession, the degree of „fit“ and „misfit“, coupled with fortuitous domestic opportunity structures, seemed to be responsible for correct transposition and meaningful implementation. Not surprisingly,

⁴ „Transposition“ refers to the adoption of legislation e.g. directives, in national law. „Implementation“ describes the creation of an appropriate procedural framework for implementation by the authorities. Enforcement is the control over the implementation and ensuring that the rules are respected. Compliance can be defined as public and private actors acting in accordance with rules of conduct, laws and guidelines.

nearly all gender policy analyses have found a gap between transposition, on the one hand, and effective implementation and enforcement, on the other (e. g. Gerber 2010, Havelková 2010, Havelková 2010; Špehar 2012, see also Steinhilber 2008).

More recent research tries to explain variations in implementation and institutional reforms, focusing more on domestic factors, like the national gender regimes and dominant policy frames. Europeanization has played a key role in altering gender equality policy across the post-communist CEE countries by exerting pressure to conform. Differences in the adoption and implementation of policies are due to diverging rates of mobilization among civil society actors. Avdeyeva's comparative study (2010) found that policy adoption has depended on "a strong women's movement and female parliamentarians mobilized in support of legislative reforms." Institutional reforms prove more successful when: "(1) social movements are strong enough to pressure for policy implementation and (2) there are supportive political actors within government elites." Furthermore, "women's movements were more successful in influencing governments' decisions when left parties dominated national parliaments" (Avdeyeva 2010, p. 215). Overall, the strength of a country's desire, along with incentives to join the EU, contributed positively to women's substantive representation. "In simple terms the findings suggest that the EU has initially created a broad incentive structure for candidate states to adopt gender equality policy, but its adoption and implementation success are mediated by domestic facilitating actors" (Bego 2011, 220).

Europeanization of the Yugoslavian successor states has produced divergent assessments as well. In general, however, processes seen there seem to be more effective than those seen during the first Eastern enlargement. Many studies underline the relevance of domestic institutional and structural features for further development (e. g. Dobrotić/Matković/Zrinščak 2013, Ignjatovic/Boskovic 2013, Špehar 2012). Key factors include: the actual situation of women in society, grassroots and citizen support for gender equality and institutional capacities are crucial for the impact that EU gender equality policies can have. Where civil society is weak and Europeanization is uncertain or slow, scholars are not very optimistic.

However, as Roswitha Kersten-Pejanic shows in this special issue, women's movements serving as „norm entrepreneurs“ were well prepared and networked to exert influence on the process of drafting, initiating and adopting of innovative gender policy in Croatia. Women's organizations in Croatia – including the extent of domestic feminist mobilization and theorizing that had occurred prior to 1989 – were more successful than their counterparts had been ten years earlier in Central Eastern Europe (see also Rošul-Gajić 2014).

This can be understood as further confirmation of the stated thesis (e.g. Avdeyeva 2010), that the transposition, implementation and enforcement of the gender *acquis* is not least dependent on influential women's movements, which campaign for the corresponding legislative reforms. Challenges are not only on the national level, but as already mentioned also on the EU-level because of the far-reaching stagnation in the area of gender politics. The following sections show the extent to which this varies in different political fields.

Impact on policies: Addressing Violence against women

Despite the ostensible gender political stagnation seen in recent years, the attempt to address domestic violence against women is one EU policy domain that has witnessed remarkable advances over the last decade. Policies against domestic violence introduced in post-communist member- and candidate states under the auspices of the EU belong to the better explored issues regarding gender and enlargement. From the very beginning of the CEE accession process, the Commission exerted pressure on governments to address violence against women. Prior to that, the way had been paved by gender political NGOs which quickly emerged, after the collapse of state socialism, reaching their heyday in the middle of the 1990s. Despite manifold differences, CEE countries were unified by an “official rhetoric on gender equality and women’s emancipation” invoked under the state socialist tradition, as well as by “a culture of denial” (Fábián 2010, 62) involving the prevalence of domestic violence under communism. Through the NGO campaigns, domestic violence became “an issue with an identifiable extent and character throughout post-communist Central and Eastern Europe” (ibid. 65). Here, “[t]he EU has been explicitly and unexpectedly helpful in strengthening NGOs’ position in the new Central and Eastern European member states and candidates with its acknowledgement of domestic violence as a human rights violation and a threat to women’s participation in employment and in a functioning democracy” (ibid.: 58). This policy field serves as an example the positive impact of interdependence, supranational pressure, the reciprocal influence of EU and member states, plus the involvement of International Organizations (IOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) in promoting gender equality issues, although one should not ignore the implicit and explicit hierarchy among the actors (cf. ibid.: 55). By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, legislative and policy changes had taken place in all CEE states, with the exception of Hungary and the Baltic countries. Some even exceeded European Union expectations concerning laws on domestic violence (e.g. ibid. 62). Here again, despite differences, one finds striking similarities among the CEE countries regarding the introduction of policy processes and instruments against domestic violence; unfortunately this is true of their limited implementation (ibid. 62). In the words of Fábián: “[L]egal changes related to domestic violence may not effect actual behaviour in people’s daily lives or the conduct of the police or judiciary” (ibid. 64).

Impact on policies: Social policy

Democratization, marketization and the EU accession process in Central and Eastern Europe overlapped with the rise of neoliberalism, the deregulation of markets and the retreat of the state worldwide (Auth 2009, see also Centeno/Cohen 2012). Thus, transition countries and their citizens not only had to cope with the deconstruction of socialist welfare systems but also with neoliberal experiments in the field of social policy. What we defined as desiderata in 2006 – research into the transformation of the welfare state – has become a broad field of research. The fact that welfare regimes and gender regimes are closely intertwined has once again been verified by studies considering the impact of EU accession on social policy from a gender perspective. Contrary to widespread assumptions, however, the CEE states do not comprise a homogenous group, nor do they display uniform patterns with regard to social and family policies as supported by several studies (Javornik 2014; Ciccia/Verloo 2012). Assessing gender equality in an enlarged Europe, Ciccia and Verloo, for example, conclude that EU countries cluster into five models, only partially coinciding with the geographical proximity of these countries.

The multifaceted picture of CEE countries and the gender differences reflected in their national social policies drawn by Velluti (2014) and others render the issue of EU impact even more complex. Not surprisingly, other studies underline additional influences. Szikra and Szelewa (2009), for example, argue that post-1980 developments affecting welfare and family policies are highly path-dependent. They also stress that different paths were followed under state socialism, in combination with different political and economic measures; this led to diverse results in social and family policies. According to these authors, EU influence has been limited, as the lack of before and after standardization shows. Velluti (2014) goes one step farther, naming what she sees to be the main cause for this limited influence: “The main reason for this is the lack of coherence and consistency at the EU level and the increased invisibility of coordination processes, which fail to inject a stronger gender approach in the adoption of Member States’ social as well as economic and fiscal policies” (Velluti 2014: 87). Although Velluti also takes into account that the “economic crisis and opposition to forced ‘socialist emancipation’ is hindering the adoption of any real transformative gender equality measures in CEECs” (ibid.), she holds the EU itself responsible for insufficient progress in gender equality in its member states.

The architecture of Women’s Policy Agencies

The architecture of women’s policy agencies (WPAs) is another important, though less broadly analysed facet of assessing gender equality policy in the region. WPAs are defined by McBride Stetson/Mazur (2013) as structures established by government whose main purpose is to improve women’s social status. Generally speaking, WPAs usually have difficulty securing sufficient funding; correspondingly, they are often understaffed and thus lack the stability necessary for continuous, effective work. Gender equality plans are often formulated under pressure, with the result that they risk becoming uncoordinated, arbitrary and, ultimately, weak. The shift in CEECs from women’s protection and favourable treatment, to legislating equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men and actively promoting equality poses additional challenges to WPAs (Steinhilber 2008, 259). Legal reforms took place mainly without strong national debates and as part of broader social policy reforms (ibid, 260). Andrea Krizsan (2012) studied the emerging gender equality architectures within the new member states, developing a threefold typology (for details cf. ibid.: 552): First, she describes a “layered model,” in which gender equality machineries exist alongside mostly integrated anti-discrimination bodies (ibid.: 564; Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia, Bulgaria until 2005). The second entails a “hierarchical model”: Here, “gender institutions were amended to respond to the multiple inequalities focused equal treatment agenda” (ibid.). In practice, this type rests on a hierarchical relationship between gender and other inequalities such as age, disability or ethnicity (Estonia, Lithuania, and Slovenia). Third, the “integrated model” involves an all-encompassing shift “from a focus on gender to an integrated focus on multiple inequalities” (ibid. 565; Bulgaria since 2005, and Poland).

Steinhilber comes to the conclusion, that „at the policy level there are greater structural similarities than differences among countries regardless of the timing of their EU membership.” She names “challenges to establishing and maintaining effective gender machineries” as well as “problems in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in public administration”, “barriers to meaningful democratic participation of women’s organizations” along with “difficulties in building and sustaining gender

competencies within state bodies" (2008: 269f). Krizsan (2012) adds to the set of challenges to gender equality policy posed by the increasing necessity to address intersecting inequalities, on both the practical and analytical level. From what has been presented it can clearly be concluded that more concrete research on implementation that does not focus on programmes and the wording of laws but instead on an analysis of actual local happenings is necessary.

The role of women's movements and NGOs

Early analyses of women's activism determined that weak movements had difficulties in developing a post-1989 feminist agenda. The reasons for this included the socialist paternalist nature of earlier gender policies, denunciation of feminism and the lack of public debate and contestation (see (Fuchs/Hinterhuber 2006), (Jalušič 1997)). As women's movements nonetheless began to form across the region, partly filling various gaps in social provision left by the retreating state, a kind of "imperialist criticism" emerged (see Funk 2006 with relevant references). Newly founded organizations were blamed – albeit implicitly or unconsciously – for serving as the agents of neoliberal change. Most accounts of efforts to develop a meaningful policy agenda during the enlargement process were differentiated, yet not very optimistic (Sloat 2005, Roth 2007). The admission of ten new members in 2004 led to processes of "NGOization" among women's movements (cf. Lang 1997) (see for example Forest 2006, Fuchs/Payer 2007, Guenther 2011, and Steinhilber 2008). Financing gender equality activities depended predominantly on foreign funds, including EU money. This dependency influenced organizational agendas and contributed to their bureaucratization; yet, many smaller organizations (especially those in remote areas) could not adapt to these preconditions. Some women's NGOs were dissolved, while others adapted successfully to new funding possibilities (see also Lang 2014).

Interest formation, aggregation and representation became important at the national and supranational levels, but it was very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve these aims. Although some studies refer to new possibilities for women's substantive representation (e. g. Bego 2011), it is not yet clear how this can be attained. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) has served as the main organisation for representing women's interests. Despite its significance, research on the EWL is scarce (Strid 2009, Lang 2014, 164–202); the same is true for more specialized networks like Karat – coalition for gender equality, Women in Development Europe WIDE or the Network of East-West Women, NEWW.

A characteristic of the institutionalisation of women's movements is often their involvement in the process of state policy formulation and the adoption of certain implementation tasks, for example in the area of welfare which increases the deradicalisation of movements. This development is also visible on the EU-level: Strid characterizes the EWL as part of a corporatist policy making model. The Commission initiated and continues to finance the network but it does so in the context of a traditional trade-off: the EWL has gained influence with regard to gender equality issues at the EU level, while the Commission has gained legitimacy. Organized civil society functions as a provider of input, but it also participates in monitoring output and collecting feedback. The EWL became successful, accepted and well integrated due the special political opportunity structures provided by the Commission. The EWL "has come to be accepted as representing the political and social interests of European women" (Strid 2009, 253), but it simultaneously restricts the representation of other women's organizations and of non-majoritarian demands and issues such as reproductive rights (legal abor-

tions). For newcomer organizations based in the CEE member states, this may pose systematic difficulties and delay participation in EWL campaigns because women's interests are still hotly contested in the home country

Generally speaking, women's emerging activism and the development of academic feminism in this region through the 2000s was mainly concerned with cultural feminism, recognition and social issues, as well as with a struggle for political and civil rights. It did not engage in developing a critique of the new economic system, however. This is because women's groups faced a type of popular antifeminism linked to the commonly rejected "emancipation from above" under state socialism. In order to gain some credibility, they had to mark their distance from the old state socialist regime, including a break with the women's policies and emancipation rhetoric of the former authoritarian state. This is why a deeper economic critique remained almost completely absent from their strategies (for an early account, see Miroiu 2006). This has only slowly changed (for Poland, see Fuchs 2012).

Recent movement research has become more optimistic and even more differentiated. Studies by Korolczuk and Saxonberg (2014) and Sudbery (2010) show how Polish women's organizations and activists have used EU political resources and domestic political opportunity structures for both contestation and advancing gender equality; for example, more contentious strategies are used if they are institutionally and politically available. Legislative gender quotas for Parliament were introduced in 2011, thanks to the launch of a „citizens' project“: 100.000 citizens have the right to introduce a legislative project into the Parliament. (Śledzińska-Simon/Bodnar 2013, Gwiazda 2014, Millard 2014)⁵

O'Dwyer's study of Poland (2012) points in a similar direction in answer to the question: "Does the EU help or hinder gay-rights movements in post-communist Europe?" He concludes with a plea to supranational bodies to provide an opportunity structure similar to the imposition of the gender *acquis*. He argues that "political backlashes provoked by international pressures can in fact strengthen rights groups [...] thus, there is an important rationale to apply the full pressure of conditionality on applicants [...] to live up to their minority-rights obligation" (ibid. 348-349).

Overall we see a consolidation and differentiation of civil society in the region. In some cases organizations and movements can push through projects against government policy. The legal Polish election quotas demonstrate this. Implicitly this shows a consolidation of democracy – nevertheless populist setbacks like in Hungary are always possible.

Civil societies (in this context the gender political part) are becoming stronger due to strong transnational networking in the past few years and also through overcoming boundaries between members and non-members of the EU. The alleged one way street (in terms of money, ideas, theories) running between Western and eastern feminists throughout the 1990s has given way to mutual exchanges, thanks largely to new media.

Today, the most provocative, international movement impulses seem to come from Eastern Europe, especially from Russia and Ukraine (Femen and Pussy Riot): Femen claims that it not only liberates Ukrainian women but also their Western sisters from oppressive patriarchy. Pussy Riot's more theoretically grounded activism has found Western copycats as well as a broad academic reception (see

⁵ Basis for this is Article 118 of the Polish Constitution.

Hinterhuber/Fuchs forthcoming with further references). *Nina Seiler's* contribution of in this volume looks at the development of such "indigenous" feminist approaches. Her review of feminist studies in shaping post-socialist societal discourse in Poland links theory with practice, as feminist academia provides a rationale for gender political activism. Polish feminist studies evince a self-confident adaptation of impulses and theory traditions from abroad, without giving up their own specific characteristics while taking internal needs into account. In this approach, Seiler's analysis of Polish literary studies reveals both strategies of assimilation and subversion.

In the Eastern European member states there are, as presented, explicit influences. Yet the gender policy of the EU also diffuses to non-member states. We present these indirect influences by using the Ukraine as an example.

Gender relations in non-member states

New material and discursive boundaries have been established in the wake of EU enlargement, i. e., between member and non-member states. The EU gender regime forms a significant point of reference for policy makers and civil society actors in Eastern Europe, leading one to ask how these indirect influences, as well as the impact of EU gender policies and laws are manifested in non-member states. We take Ukraine as a fitting example: a country with no realistic chance of joining the European Union is caught up in a destructive (proxy) military conflict may also be redrawing new and old frontiers between East and West. From a gender perspective (cf. Hankivsky/Salnykova 2010), contemporary Ukrainian society is characterized by its neo-traditional patriarchal values and stereotypes.

National machineries charged with addressing gender equality issues here correspond to what has been said about WPAs above – they are afflicted by frequent structural changes and poor finances, weakening their capacities. As in so many other countries, Gender Studies have been marginalized. Although there is no doubt that Ukrainian Femen activists offer one of the more visible feminist movements worldwide, the women's movement per se and other equality-seeking organizations do not form a coherent force capable of effective action. During both in the Orange and Euromaidan revolutions, gender roles of the activists oscillated between affirmation and empowerment. In her contribution focusing on gender relations in the Euromaidan protests, *Anja Lange* shows how both men and women contributed to this revolution, albeit by playing different roles. Euromaidan was perceived as a place where people could act beyond the narrow limits of traditional gender role stereotypes. Still, the author doubts that one can speak of the Euromaidan as a "gender revolution", insofar as perceptions of women as the helpers of male revolutionaries dominated public discourse.

EU gender equality policies do not stop at the borders of non-member states: For Ukraine, both "autonomous adoption" via policy learning and affirmative and critical framing of the EU equality discourse by social movements, civil society actors and gender experts do apply. This includes efforts to address violence against women and human trafficking, two issues that have been promoted by international actors. Following the Beijing Platform for Action 1995, EU incentives and donors' priorities induced Ukraine to adopt relevant legislation (cf. Hrycak 2012). Hrycak notes that whereas authoritarian post-soviet states have lacked legal reforms in this context, and while some new EU member states are still lagging behind, all countries with "colour revolutions" have adopted laws

along these lines (ibid.). The success witnessed by gender political activists has been linked to their ability to "mobilize shame" (presuming no suppression of civil society). This can be best explained by domestic political opportunity structures: Here, a certain level of awareness, combined with new elites striving for a "Western appearance" in hopes of distancing the country from the previous authoritarian regime via progressive legislation, plays a crucial role. Broader political opportunity structures reduce the costs of mobilization, so more can be achieved with less effort. However, in combating violence against women and human trafficking, implementation has remained uneven and scattered; resources are volatile, and practical problems occur in relation to the existing legal definitions, for example, concerning trafficking. Overall the orientation towards the European Union is unabated and feminists often refer this to critically (cf. Hankivsky 2013).

How to move forward in research and politics?

The cited research results show several constants: the structural similarities between Western and Eastern Europe, the substantial successes in several policy fields and the continued orientation towards gainful employment and the economy. What can we conclude from the research results presented here, and how we should move forward? Research conducted during and after accession processes underlined similarities among the new member states in relation to the older ones. Meanwhile, the lack of convergence among the new members in the gender field also became clear (Chiva 2009, 195). Silke Steinhilber concludes that at the policy level, structural similarities outweigh the differences between new and old member states, such as challenges to establishing and maintaining effective gender machineries, problems in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in public administration, and barriers to meaningful democratic participation of women's organizations (Steinhilber 2008, 269f.). This calls for the systematic pursuit of "thick" comparisons of domestic conditions shaping the implementation and development of gender equality agendas in the tradition of regional/area studies (cf. Segert 2013, 19–26). Voices and expertise "from the region" have gained necessary visibility.

Looking at specific policies, we note some important and substantial successes. Measures addressing violence against women were successfully incorporated into the conditionality of EU accession, leading to a favourable political opportunity structure. Non-candidate countries like Ukraine followed the path of "autonomous adoption".

Still, compliance often amounted to no more than window-dressing, and implementation fell short in many cases. Thus, a successful implementation depends on domestic policy dynamics, where, in the ideal setting, advocacy by domestic women's movements backs up the state's gender equality policy and vice-versa (cf. Krizsan 2015, 2f.). This calls for future research on capacity, resources, strategies and the building of alliances among women's movements, on the ways in which they frame collective identity and, finally, on the issue of domestic violence against women. Social policy development and its gendered implications in Eastern Europe turn out to be more varied and more path-dependent than formerly assumed, yet all such policies are being shaped by a general move towards neoliberal conversion. Women's Policy Agencies have developed in all countries; here again, one finds structural similarities to Western Europe. However, we still need more comprehensive analyses of the characteristics that decide the success or failure of WPAs. This gap will hopefully be closed by ongoing research collaboration as seen within the Gender Equality Policy and Practice Working Group (GEPP, cf. Mazur n.d.). Women's and feminist activism in the region have increased, becoming more sustainable. Furthermore, such research has become more differentiated.

In our assessment, the substantial challenge for future research lies in the endemic economism of gender politics, past and present: some authors have noted a striking similarity between state socialist policies, grounded in Marxism-Leninism, and neoliberalism, which both offer economic solutions to social problems: both link economic problems to the persistence of gender inequalities in society (see Havelková 2010, 28, also Gerber 2011). This economism is not confined to EU policies but is rather a feature of the triumph of neoliberalism. This constriction needs to be left behind and a fundamental piece of knowledge from feminist science – the mutual interlocking and interdependence of social spheres – should be incorporated into future research strategies.

As Nancy Fraser observes, the practice of second wave feminism has unwittingly contributed to this economism, although it set out to achieve recognition, representation and redistribution. The cultural changes jump-started by second wave feminism legitimated a structural transformation that runs directly counter to feminist visions of a just society (Fraser 2009, 99). The feminist movement paved the way for post-fordist capitalism: feminist cultural critiques and identity politics prevailed over a more fundamental socio-economic critique. Efforts to fight androcentrism with grass-roots organizing and anti-hierarchical rhetoric fit in well with the neoliberal ideas of horizontal team work and envisioning liberation in terms of individual creativity. Undercutting the ideal of the family wage (that assumes a male breadwinner) unwittingly promoted a key ingredient of neoliberalism, namely, the dual-earner model. A concrete focus on labour market participation prevented the reconceptualization of care work. Finally, neoliberal anti-statism dovetailed with feminist critiques of the paternalist welfare state; progressive ideas regarding citizen empowerment in civil society legitimated retrenchment and marketization.

Thus, one central question for future research on the complex interrelations defining gender relations in Eastern Europe involves the need to explore the interaction of the following three factors: firstly the earlier stress on the economic aspects of gender (in)equality under state socialism and secondly in neoliberal economic doctrines in the EU, and thirdly the unintended consequences of feminist support for economism. All these factors contribute towards maintaining and even strengthening intersecting gender inequalities and their intersection with other categories of inequality.

Feminist research is not only about analyzing hierarchical gender relations and intersecting inequalities but also about envisioning possibilities to overcome these conditions. The question is also how to move forward politically. The time has come, again, for the rise of social movements, both in the EU context as well as in domestic settings. According to Fraser (2009, 2013), the task for contemporary emancipatory movements in the face of the economist challenges described above is to identify, criticize and challenge hierarchies and domination, regardless of which actors are promoting domination and hierarchies, wherever they occur – be it in politics, culture or, last but not least, in the economy (Fraser 2013). The complex interactions defining gender relations in Eastern Europe moreover show that successfully promoting gender equality in a changing Europe, on levels simultaneously ranging from the domestic to the supranational, requires at least two-way cross-national cooperation that bridges old boundaries between East and West and instead makes use of the potential of the corresponding actors.

We will continue this line of thought beyond this core area in the next *Femina Politica* – the topic of issue 2/2016 is “20 years Amsterdam – European gender equality policy revisited”.

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