

## Sociology of a new field of knowledge: gender studies in post-communist Eastern Europe

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### Abstract:

A new research field named “gender studies” or “feminist studies” has emerged during the 1990s in East-European and post-Soviet countries. The scientific productions in that field often function as experts’ studies and aim at contributing to improve women’s condition. Established by agents who simultaneously act in several social spaces (scientific, associative or political), feminist studies are at the crossroads of academic and activist, national and international dynamics. Therefore, we consider them as a new discipline at the core of the social and political programmes of recomposition after the collapse of communist regimes, and as an indicator for the rebuilding of social sciences, the emergence of new academic topics, the international circulation and importation of scientific concerns, the reconstruction of intellectual elites in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE). The paper offers some guidelines for a sociology of this new field of knowledge production.

**Keywords:** Countries of Central and Eastern Europe, postcommunism, feminist studies, gender studies.

### Résumé :

Un nouveau domaine de recherches, intitulé gender studies ou « études féminines », a émergé pendant les années 1990 en Europe de l’Est et dans les pays post-soviétiques. Les productions scientifiques relevant de ce domaine font souvent office d’études d’experts et ont pour but de contribuer à l’amélioration de la condition féminine. Créées par des agents qui agissent simultanément dans plusieurs espaces sociaux (scientifiques, associatifs ou politiques), les études féminines se situent au croisement de dynamiques universitaires et militantes, nationales et internationales. Nous les considérons donc comme une nouvelle discipline qui est au cœur des programmes sociaux et politiques de recomposition après l’effondrement des régimes communistes, et comme un indicateur de la réédification des sciences sociales, l’avènement de nouvelles problématiques universitaires, la circulation internationale et l’importation des problèmes scientifiques, la reconstruction des élites intellectuelles dans les pays d’Europe centrale et orientale (PECO). Le présent article ouvre quelques perspectives pour une sociologie de ce nouveau domaine de production de connaissances.

**Mots-clés :** pays d’Europe centrale et orientale, post-communisme, études féminines, genre.

## Sociology of a new field of knowledge: gender studies in post-communist Eastern Europe\*

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### East-European women and the feminism in the 1990s-2000s: an overview

Transitology studies usually present the social aspects of postcommunist transformations as a secondary matter and tackle them in a schematic manner emphasising the apparition of underprivileged categories and the deepening social gap between “winners” and “losers” of the reform processes.<sup>1</sup> That literature generally describes women as “victims” using arguments such as the degradation of their condition, manifested by financial instability, decline of the social protection systems, discrimination in the job market, decrease of the political representation, proliferation of discourses treating women as sex objects, resurgence and strengthening of the traditional conceptions of the masculine/feminine social division.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Among others, F. Bafoil, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> A few rare researchers criticise the stereotype of “women losers” and consider it as the result of generalisations that are insufficiently rooted empirically (A. Spehar, 2004, 2005; Weiner, 2004), or contradict it using national case studies (J. Szalai, 1991; 1996). The idea is however a topos of the sociological literature on post-communist transformations in Central and Eastern Europe (N.

These negative evolutions have not inspired huge mobilisations of Eastern-European women to defend their rights<sup>3</sup>. Many explanations for this have been proposed referring mostly to the recent history of those societies: either reactions of rejection due to the over-investment of communist regimes on women; or weakening of women’s mobilisations because of the early adoption, within the context of socialist egalitarian policies, of the majority of the rights claimed by the Western feminist struggles.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the widespread disinterest in feminist ideas, intellectual circles publicly expressed the claim for women’s emancipation during the 1990s-2000s: in Romania, for instance, as a part of a broader philosophy of the post-communist “transition” seen as a moment of historical modernisation and as an opportunity to reorganise society and therefore to question gender relations and rethink the social roles of women. Consolidated through associations and nongovernmental organisations (NGO) and supported by international democracy promoters, it became institutionalised towards the end of the 1990s when centres of gender studies appeared, sometimes offering higher education degrees and the professional qualification as “gender expert”. The first Master’s curriculum in gender studies was created in 1998 in Bucharest; other courses have been available in other main cities since the beginning of the 2000s.<sup>5</sup> Feminist studies centres created during the 1990s exist in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as well as in the former USSR countries.<sup>6</sup> When they are not attached to universities, they present themselves as “independent” and they generally are NGOS

Funk, M. Mueller, 1993; B. Einhorn, 1993; G. Waylen, 1994; Joan W. Scott *et alii*, 1997; T. Renne, 1997; S. Gal, G. Kligman, 2000a; 2000b; S. La Font, 2001; *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 23, 2, 2004; *Transitions*, XLIV, 1, 2004; J. Lukic *et alii* (eds), 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Some authors use expressions such as “antipathy” or “allergy” to feminism (B. Einhorn, 1993, p. 182).

<sup>4</sup> See works cited in note 2 above. See also L. Occhipinti, 1996; S. Roth, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Cîrstocea, 2004; 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See S. Zimmermann, 2007 for an overview.

funded or even founded by international donors: philanthropic foundations, international networks of organisations, Western chairs of women's/gender studies.<sup>7</sup>

### For further research: gender studies as an academic innovation

The paradoxical coexistence of the rejection of feminism in the CCEE with its fast and successful institutionalisation in the scientific spheres of these very countries is worth considering. An in-depth comparative

<sup>7</sup> The Soros Foundation is among the actors most involved in the promotion of women's rights and support to women's mobilisations in the ex-Soviet space during the 1990s: as part of its Women's Program, set up in 1997, the organisation spent 9.8 million dollars before the end of 2000 on grants to associations working in the following areas, ranked by amount of funding: "women's human rights", "violence against women", "gender and education" (see Open Society Institute, Network Women's Program, Documentation and Evaluation Project, Appendix 3 (Quantitative Data), Open Society Archives, Budapest, fund HU-OSA 127 1-2-137 (CD-ROM)). While the degree of institutionalisation and research capacity of these groups vary widely, a few numbers give an idea of the proliferation of places for reflection and research on women and gender. According to the information available on the website of the *Women's/Gender Studies Association of Transition Countries* (created at the initiative of the Soros Foundation in 1998), there were at the end of the 1990s: 3 academic programmes and 2 "independent" centres in Bulgaria; 1 academic programme and 2 "independent" centres in Croatia; 6 academic programmes and 3 "independent" centres plus a *Gender and Culture* department in the *Central European University* of Budapest in Hungary; 6 academic programmes and 2 "independent" centres in Poland; 1 academic programme and 2 "independent" centres in the Serbian Republic; 3 academic programmes and 2 "independent" centres in the Czech Republic; 3 academic programmes in Lithuania; 4 academic programmes in Ukraine; 12 academic programmes and 4 "independent" centres in Russia (<http://www.zenskestudie.edu.yu.wgsact>, last accessed on 28.12.2004). In 1999, 140 students had followed the advanced studies program on gender, created in 1996 at the University of Warsaw (M. Fuszara, 2000, p. 1074). S. Zimmermann (2007) describes this phenomenon as a "victorious march" of gender studies towards Eastern Europe.

study based on several national cases should consider, first, the issue of the political exploitation of women and gender within the ideological construction of post-communist "transitions", in which social sciences are full-fledged actors, and, secondly, the relationships between present-day feminist claims and old preoccupations about women's condition, formulated differently by socialist regimes.

Many apparent elements differentiate the national situations: the existence or absence of women's civic mobilisations outside the universities, the NGOs or the "state machineries" aimed to harmonise national institutions with the international norms of "women human's rights" and "gender mainstreaming" set during the 1990s;<sup>8</sup> the existence or absence of forms of participation of feminist groups to politics in the narrow sense (parties, etc.); the existence or absence of concerns for "academic feminism" and women's/gender studies prior to the fall of the communist regimes. Many examples show the existence of contrasts that could be taken into account. In some countries, women's mobilisations with variable dimensions and effects were provoked by threats against the right to abortion at the beginning of the 1990s, since in other cases, women-only political parties went sporadically into existence.<sup>9</sup> The very history of gender studies centres varies greatly according to national cases: in Moscow, one of the most dynamic centres of women's studies was founded after a State initiative which partly financed it; in Prague, the Centre of gender studies first functioned as a professional association and feminist teachings integrated the university space later, in the absence of feminist claims at the grassroots level. The German case represents

<sup>8</sup> See Mintrom, True, 2001 ; S. Jacquot, 2006; *Social Politics*, 12, 3, 2005 ; *Politique européenne*, 20, 2006 ; *Cahiers du genre*, 44, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> See A. Posadskaya-Vanderbeck, 1997 on the Russian case; True 2003 on the Czech Republic; V. Litrichin, L. Mladenovic, 1997; M. Susnic, 2004; Z. Lorand, 2007 on ex-Yugoslavia; A. Peto, 2001, on Hungary; M. Fuszara, 1997 on Poland.

another type of situation, as the Centre for interdisciplinary women's studies was created as early as 1989 in the Humboldt University in Berlin, to materialize old concerns for women's studies.<sup>10</sup> It also bears pointing out that some feminist conferences were organized in the 1970-1980s and that the intellectual circles had already had a significant experience of feminism in Yugoslavia during the socialist regime.<sup>11</sup>

## I – A heteronomous discipline

In the USA and in Western European countries, the women's liberation movements of the 1960s-1970s progressively led to critical questionings on social sciences and to the elaboration of theoretical paradigms liable to include gender. Different comparative studies concerning Western European countries shed light on similarities between the various national cases, despite some differences. Feminist studies appeared as grass-roots initiatives, in the continuity of women's movements, first as research, then as teaching, following a few distinct phases: "militant", "institutionalisation", "professionalisation", "autonomy".<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, the rapid emergence and institutionalisation of feminist studies in the CCEE seem to derive from occasional initiatives embedded in international logics, and from an importation of political and scientific concerns. A Croatian researcher went so far as to describe the Eastern European pattern as an "imposition" of feminist studies from the outside, by scientific authorities, exchange programmes and Western initiatives.<sup>13</sup>

In this light, we can posit the hypothesis that the emergence of these studies in the CCEE is chiefly due to a process of internalisation of the transnational norms on

gender. This process involves a very bureaucratic dimension that consists in pushing for the adoption of legal measures and creating administrative departments focused on non-discrimination towards women. But it also assumes a dimension related to social sciences, seen as a useful tool to fight stereotypes, to produce "good" representations of male/female relationships and of gender roles.<sup>14</sup> Recently introduced in Eastern-European universities, feminist studies intertwine several levels (militant, academic, national and international) and several social spaces (scientific field, associations, and politics). Each of these spaces is defined by its own hierarchies and classificatory struggles, but their boundaries can overlap, as the multiple allegiances of social agents engaged in feminist studies show: in Romania, for instance, feminists in NGOs, gender studies teachers at the university and gender experts in politics are, at least partially and temporarily, the same people.

Studying the creation of this new field of research and teaching as an academic discipline means to understand if and how it transforms the national scientific spaces of the CCEE; it also entails the sociological analysis of, first, the classificatory struggles that are typical of these spaces and, second, of the resources mobilised by agents promoting the new field of gender studies.<sup>15</sup> The Romanian case shows that feminist researchers bring exogenous resources into the national

<sup>10</sup> See the series *The Making of the European Women's Studies* and S. Zimmermann, 2007 for further details.

<sup>11</sup> Z. Lorand, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> M. Andriocci *et alii*, 2003; G. Griffin, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> B. Kasic, 2004a, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> The text of the Women's Convention (CEDAW), for example, recommends in its article 10, paragraph c) "the elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods" (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>). Other manifestos define gender education as "training for democracy", "major factor in building social cohesion and democratic respect for human rights" (R. Braidotti, 2004, p. 10), or "re-education of a whole culture, to help it move away from discriminatory practices" (R. Braidotti 2002, p. 303).

<sup>15</sup> See P. Bourdieu, 1984; J. Heilbron *et alii*, 2004.



academic space; Western associations, political and scientific institutions appear as legitimising authorities competing with the indigenous ones, which sometimes integrates, but with many reservations, gender-related subjects and their new specialists. However, as it fits with the democratisation policies and the institutional reforms engaged in the name of the international fight against “discrimination towards women” as well as in the name of the harmonisation of the university system with the European “*acquis*” in the field of higher education, this new form of teaching finds its place in the national professional context and contributes to its transformation. In the process, transnational dynamics contribute in structuring the national professional academic fields of the CCEE, enabling the emergence of new agents.

Looking to the strictly political dimension of the institutionalisation of gender studies in Europe, other complex relationships appear at national, international and transnational levels. Indeed, gender studies are meant to be a unifying intellectual and political project within the framework of European construction, they are conceived as a tool for the construction of “European identity” and as a support for cross-national scientific communication. This representation appears in the intention of certain key agents of the institutionalisation of the field to build a “European dimension” of the discipline, rooted in “specifically European” issues, conceivably different from its North American tradition.”<sup>16</sup> In this perspective,

studying the emergence of women’s studies could also be a way to study the construction of “Europe” as a transnational project.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the proliferation of publications dedicated to the development of women’s studies in Central and Eastern Europe, we need to underline the fact that the systematic and relational reflection on their insertion in academic spaces has barely started. Most of the works available were made by the very actors of the institutionalisation; generally, they are flattering reviews of the knowledge accumulated or reports conceived in terms of number of centres, curricula, publications, and students.<sup>18</sup> The champions of women’s studies generally do not criticise their links with authorities outside the academic sphere, to which they aspire by claiming an identity as scientific discipline. Extra-academic agents intervene in the definition of the themes and issues tackled by the gender specialists and the development of women’s studies is supported due to what is seen as their mission and pragmatic orientation: the connection between women’s organisations, policy-makers and academics appears as the genuine key to the emancipation of women and the equality of opportunities.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of such arguments, the hypothesis to be tested on different empirical grounds could be that the new discipline is a doubly “heteronomous” one, as shown by the fact that both its themes and its legitimising authorities are originally from outside the national east-European academic spaces.

## II – Global feminism in the making

Since in Central and Eastern Europe women’s/gender studies are developing in a transnational and international context, a comparative analysis on the emergence of this

<sup>16</sup> The European support to the institutionalisation of gender studies, with the creation of the European research area and European higher education area, developed in the late 1990s and made official with the Bologna Declaration, consists in promoting interuniversity exchanges and creating multinational interdisciplinary networks focused on the development of common teaching and research programmes (see ENWS, 1993; R. Braidotti, *et alii*, 1995; R. Braidotti, G. Griffin, 2002; E. Magyari-Vincze, 2002; G. Griffin, 2005; *Making European Women’s Studies* (yearly published since 1999 by the ATHENA international network of women’s studies, based in the Utrecht University).

<sup>17</sup> M. Werner, B. Zimmermann, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See the *Making European Women’s Studies* collection, and the *Women and Politics* collection edited by the Zenska Infoteka centre in Zagreb.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. R. Braidotti *et alii*, 2004, pp. 141 et 144.

new academic field can also shed light on the ins and outs of the “global feminism”. Even if this new field of scientific inquiries is now rapidly developing, not much has actually been studied in terms of interactions between the social agents who make it possible.<sup>20</sup> Since, according to Pierre Bourdieu, intellectual life is not spontaneously international and every transfer is a social operation of selection and interpretation,<sup>21</sup> it is therefore important to take into account the social conditions of possibility of these acts and to understand their cognitive and political effects. Now commonplace in gender studies, phrases like “nomadic subjects”,<sup>22</sup> “travelling concepts”,<sup>23</sup> “feminist reverberations”<sup>24</sup> suggest that movement, circulation and transfers are at their core.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, many arguments reinforce the idea of an international vocation of gender studies in the CCEE. The involvement of international democracy promoters in publicising gender issues in the region has already been stressed.<sup>26</sup> The demands of international organisations (United Nations Development Programme, European Union, World Bank) led to the gathering of quantitative data and the production of “gender-sensitive”<sup>27</sup> statistics. Numerous publications show the boost given by Western feminist circles to the

introduction of feminist preoccupations, as certain organisations were created following the initiatives of Western militants or associations, or international networks of NGOs<sup>28</sup>. At another level, eastern European departments of gender studies develop network research projects and use English as *lingua franca* in their scientific exchanges, some of them even going as far as to offer a course in “English for women’s studies”.<sup>29</sup> The use of new information and communication technologies by feminist researchers answers to the same logics, as the proliferation of virtual libraries of women’s studies, online databases and message boards shows. Even the individual “conversions” to feminism and the recruitment patterns of scientific militants are often part of international circulation processes. In Romania, the case of the main champion of “academic feminism” is a paradigmatic example: her first contact with feminist political theories and philosophies took place during a stay in the US and through exchanges with Western colleagues.<sup>30</sup>

How do transnational women’s mobilisations work in practical terms? What social relations structure the communication between transnational agencies and national women’s organisations, between militant associations and the groups targeted by their actions, between Western professionals in gender studies and their Eastern-European peers (often disciples)? Among the studies that have addressed these aspects of globalisation’s feminism, we can mention, for instance, a work focused on training seminars organised by American professors for women’s associations in a Russian town. The study of the processes of ideological transfers and social relationships established through this interaction shows that the transmission is neither uni-linear nor deprived of tensions

<sup>20</sup> N. Naples, M. Desai, 2002; P. Antrobus, 2004; E. Gubin *et alii*, 2004; M. Desai, 2005; M. M. Ferre, A. M. Tripp, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> P. Bourdieu, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> R. Braidotti, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> U. Narayan, S. Harding, 2000; M. Bal, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> J. W. Scott, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Allaine Cerwonka pleads in favour of a similar analysis, in a recent text, where she emphasizes transnational processes of “migration” of concepts and introduces the notion of “transculturation” to study intellectual exchanges on feminism (A. Cerwonka, 2008). See also Gal, 2003 on the translation of feminist texts in Eastern Europe contexts.

<sup>26</sup> See N. Funk, 2006; 2007 and S. Zimmermann, 2007. As for the origins of foreign support, S. Zimmermann (2007) makes a difference between the “Americans’ time” (the 1990s) and the “time of Europe” (the 2000s).

<sup>27</sup> In Romania, for instance, the National Statistics Institute in Bucharest has led since 1998, with UNDP support, a project called “Engendering Statistics”.

<sup>28</sup> See also S. Lang, 1997; L. Grunberg 2000; J. True, 2003; M. Missiorowska, 2004; A. Sloat, 2005; K. Ghodsee, 2004; 2006; A. Bagic, 2006; S. Roth, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *The Academic Year 2001/02 Annual Report of Belgrade Women’s Studies Center* ([www.zenskestudie.edu.yu](http://www.zenskestudie.edu.yu)).

<sup>30</sup> I. Cîrstocea, 2004.

(hierarchical relationships, competition for resources, etc.).<sup>31</sup> Another similar work, in quite a different setting, focuses on the philanthropic practices of international associations targeting black women from the South African lower classes during the period of democratic reforms of the 1990s.<sup>32</sup> The historical analysis of their practices and representations sheds light on the reproduction of social relationships following a colonial pattern, under the pretence of “development aid” and support to “women’s emancipation”.

The interactions between feminists from the CCEE and their Western peers have not yet been extensively studied in this light, although from the early 1990s, many scholarly works published on both sides of the Atlantic have tackled the question of the importation and adaptation to the East of issues, concepts and explicative paradigms elaborated by Western feminists.<sup>33</sup> The “misunderstandings”<sup>34</sup> between Western and Eastern-European feminists, and on a broader level the criticism of “ethnocentrism” levelled against the Westerners and their analysis of “Southern” and “Third World” countries have even become somehow obligatory in works on women’s condition in the CCEE.<sup>35</sup> They describe phenomena of imposition of ideas and of symbolic violence, which have yet to be systematically analysed through a detailed ethnography of the contacts between groups and a systematic observation of transnational networks and academic forums.

<sup>31</sup> M. Marx Ferree *et alii*, 2001. See also J. Hemment, 2004; A. Hrycak, 2002; 2006.

<sup>32</sup> D. Mindry, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> For critical synthesis of these debates, see N. Funk, 2007 and I. Cirstocea, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> N. Funk, M. Mueller, 1993; L. Busheikin, 1997; A. Snitow, 1995, 2006; M. Frunza, E. Vacarescu, 2004; R. Muharska, 2005; K. Slavova, 2006; N. Funk, 2007; A. Cerwonka, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Among others see B. Kasic, 2004b, who engages in Central and Eastern European countries a reflection inspired by classic works of postcolonial feminism, or K. Slavova, 2006, who presents some possible points of agreement with positions expressed by black North American feminists. On the ethnocentrism of Western feminism, see also J. W. Scott, 2004.

In order to illustrate the theoretical feminist “acculturation” processes, let us quote a Romanian researcher who, whilst making efforts to appropriate the conceptual tools of gender acquired during the frequentation of Western circles, vividly expresses the difficulty of using them to describe the immediate social reality: “far from being victims of transitions, women manage them”,<sup>36</sup> or: “We [feminist intellectuals] develop strategies for equal opportunities; we suggest legislative changes [but] a cleavage has appeared between Bucharest, with its plethora of seminars on human rights, democracy, equality of opportunities for women, and the rest of the country (...). We often speak in the name of the others (...) we develop strategies (...), we often pass on non-interiorised messages, we use terms and concepts that we feel are not ours”.<sup>37</sup>

The sociological study of mechanisms and relays through which the themes that are deemed to be priorities for research on gender in the CCEE entails the discussion of the social processes and political stakes related to the selection of issues and theoretical approaches used in order to interpret national experiences and specific empirical realities. The approach we design here aims at studying the social conditions that lead to the definition of possible scientific objects of research in the context of post-communist countries, knowing that, along with themes such as minorities, ethnicity or nationalism, gender is one of the most popular fields. Works on democratisation studies show that social sciences can function as domination tools and contribute to global norms’ imposition.<sup>38</sup> An ethnographic approach, centred on the analysis of concrete cases, could be able to accurately describe the relations established within the framework of the implantation of women’s studies inside the CCEE.

<sup>36</sup> L. Grünberg, 1998, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem*, 1999, p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> N. Guilhot, 2001; 2004; 2007; M. D. Gheorghiu, 2004; S. Zimmermann, 2007.

### III - How gender becomes commonplace<sup>39</sup>

Studying the emergence of the academic concerns centred on “gender” in the CCEE implies a theoretical and epistemological inquiry on the uses of the concept. First, as “gender” is morphed into a global political agenda and included in development programmes in the 1990s,<sup>40</sup> the key question is if and how it can continue to work in a heuristic way as a critical concept and avoid “normalisation” when it becomes subjected to bureaucratic uses and it is appropriated by agents outside the scientific space<sup>41</sup>.

The gender paradigm seems to be imported in Central and Eastern Europe both through scientific communication and bureaucratic relays. For these two reasons it is legitimate to wonder if it always works in the reflexive manner it did when it was introduced in social sciences. Doesn't the urge to “take gender into account”, with a universal and global pretention, result in hiding the historical and geographical specificities of the claims and struggles of women and/or feminists? How could a unifying approach account for the particularities of national cases and the diversity of social situations and mobilizations? Furthermore, we have to question the relevance of some of the analyses undertaken as expertise on “gender”, which only use fieldwork to look for arguments corroborating preconceived ideas on women's

<sup>39</sup> See I. Cîrstocea, 2009 for further developments on this topic.

<sup>40</sup> S. Roth, 2004, pp. 20-21, who refers to “gender as political agenda”.

<sup>41</sup> In its critical sense, the concept aims at describing the relationships to power within the scope of the gender social relations and to integrate this dimension in the production of knowledge on the society, cf. J. W. Scott, 1988, N.-C. Mathieu, 1991. See also J. W. Scott, 2001; 2004 on the distinction between gender as analytical tool and gender as measurable object. See J. Butler, E. Fassin, J.W. Scott, 2007 on Eastern Europe as a ground for the “academic McDonaldisation” of gender.

victim status, and end up occulting all phenomena that do not fit this perspective.<sup>42</sup>

Some specialists have pointed out misappropriations and pitfalls linked to the inclusion of gender in the agendas of development. Beyond the loss of the concept's critical meaning, its “lobotomisation” and transformation into a “cash cow”, they pointed out unwanted effects such as bureaucratism, weakening and depoliticization of militant women's claims, standardization of problematiques, neglection of the spontaneous protests and mobilisations which do not fit in the pre-established categories for understanding the social world of political management programmes.<sup>43</sup> The Romanian case yields such an example of an infra-political and even political movement originating in the “problem page” of a women's publication, whose claims cannot be heard in a public space monopolised by abstract discourses of “democratisation”, “civil society” or “equal opportunities”.<sup>44</sup> Comparing the themes tackled by research centres in different countries and forms of spontaneous women's manifestations which do not pretend to be feminist and stay outside of “women's movements” recognised as such in the framework of international programs,<sup>45</sup> it could become possible to understand if and how the unwanted effects of gender internationalisation manifest themselves in the CCEE.

<sup>42</sup> See testimonies on the ex-Yugoslavian field in Walsh, 1998 and A. Bagic, 2006, which show that, breaking with the local social and cultural context, the rhetoric of the vulnerable woman, victim of the war, was for a long time the only discourse that resonated with international aid agencies.

<sup>43</sup> J. Bisilliat (ed.), 2003 ; B. Kasic, 2004a ; J. W. Scott, 2001 ; 2004 ; H. Hirata *et alii*, 2000 (especially the chapters « Mouvements féministes », « Mondialisation », « Développement »); A. Spehar, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> I. Cîrstocea, 2002; I. Cîrstocea, A. Heemeryck, 2005.

<sup>45</sup> There are other similar examples to be found in the Czech Republic or Russia, where women get organized outside the framework of feminism, as mothers of handicapped children or soldiers, in order to solve immediate practical problems. See J. Siklova, 1997; A. White, 2000; R. Kay, 2000; A. Hrycak, 2002.



## Instead of a conclusion

This is not a conclusion *per se*, but rather a brief summary of the main dimensions of a sociological object focused on the emergence of the new field of knowledge entitled “gender studies” or “women’s studies” in the CCEE. With critical sociology of gender as a background, a multidisciplinary approach should be carried out, relying on the theoretical and methodological tools of the sociology of scientific spaces, the history of feminism and the sociology of the international circulation of ideas. Subjected to

a reflection on, first, the historical legacies of communist regimes and the socialist emancipation of women, secondly, the practical logics of international transfers of feminism’s political and scientific experience, and third, the factors which enable the apparition and consolidation of new fields of production of knowledge, “academic feminism” – in the CCEE and elsewhere – will certainly lose some of the heroic aura attributed by its champions. This will lead to a less “enchanted” vision of the social sciences, and a new perspective on the functioning of the fields of intellectual production.

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