Reconsidering Gender and Women in Politics

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Abstract: *The most common problems that are placed in the center of the study of political representation are related to the following questions - why do not more women in legislative bodies always result in a policy that is gender sensitive and receptive to women? Why does the statistical presence of women not facilitate their cooperation and coalition among representatives of different political parties? The key issue is that higher inclusion of women in political bodies, has to result in changing the masculine way of doing politics and modes of representation. The low level of women's participation in political and public life resulted, primarily, from socio-economic conditions, gender segregation in the labor market, the gender wage gap and the feminisation of poverty. No less significant group of factors is the level of education, professional affiliation, and social capital of the family, which determine the level of interest and women's individual capacity building to involve in politics. Political factors have a major influence on the level and scope of the political participation of women. In the first place, it is the manner in which the issue of gender equality is interpreted and treated in political parties. When we look at politicians in Serbia, we omen to the conclusion that women in politics have a problem with a lack of presence in the media and lack of notoriety. They are represented in the Assembly and in several executive positions, however, the impact of the "glass ceiling" as a form of vertical segregation is clearly recognizable. Informal and unwritten rules that prevent women to enroll in the most responsible executive functions and achieve greater power in political life are still present.*

Keywords: *Women, gender, political participation, political representation, Serbia.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Politics has always been viewed as men's struggle to win power. The levers of power are designed, managed and controlled by men. However, the twenty-first century demonstrates a more common perception advocating for an increased women's participation in political institutions that might significantly change the nature of representative democracy, revive and improve the system of management and decision making. Women's participation in political institutions makes a complex and multidimensional process that, at the institutional level, may be deemed as promotion of gender awareness and formation of women-appropriate representative bodies. Given the field of representation, it may be considered as a continuous appointment of women in parliament, encouraging their candidacies and promotion of gender equality in the electoral legislation.

This text deals with the issues relating to the factors that determine the rise of the number of active women participants in the political life and the results of the latest research in this regard. Over last two decades, the number of women representatives in parliament has been growing steadily on a global level, consequently leading to a specific transformation of the position of women's population from all walks of life. The first assumption made was that the presence of a women candidates at the time of elections or women designers of a public policy, affects at least in two ways the level of women's political involvement. Firstly, the political issues relating to the status of women, debates and campaigns, as well as the enactment of the law, may be sooner accomplished with greater numbers of women in parliament. Secondly, women candidates and those already participating in the government make a role model and serve as a powerful symbolic tool or confirmation that politics is not just a man's game. The second assumption says that women's participation in political campaigns, seeking for office, causes greater interest in the election race in the female public, demonstrating better efficiency and ability to win the votes of the female electorate.

2. PATTERNS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In the last two decades, a sudden raise of interest in research on political participation of women has been recorded, which is partly driven by the increase of their participation in political institutions. In the middle part of previous century, European socialist countries registered the highest level of female parliament representatives in the world. The primacy was upheld till the 80s when the participation equaled the number registered in Scandinavian countries. The percent was drastically reduced to mere 8.4% in the 90s, at the time of post-socialist transition, whilst Scandinavian countries record the rise to 35%. Nowadays, the number of women elected in

parliaments in Eastern Europe equals the number in Asian, African and Latin American countries and it is substantially lower comparing to some EU countries.[1] Regional differences in the female percent participation are largely due to contextual factors impacting directly on the creation of the model of political participation. Economic, social, political and cultural barriers are present in all environments, and the impact thereof is determined by the type of political organization, electoral system, and political culture, level of economic development and cultural heritage of the country. Low-leveled female participation in political and public life is primarily the consequence of socio-economic conditions, gender segregation in the labour market, differences in earning and feminization of poverty. It is followed by the imbalance between professional and family obligations, unpaid work and economic aging, women's involvement in the "gray economy" and "triple" burden on women, as well as the reduction in state welfare support. Another group of factors, of no less significance, is educational background, professional affiliation and social capital of a family that define the level of interest and establishment of women's individual capacity to engage in politics.

According to some authors, the lack of self-confidence, ambition and competence make decisive psychological factors affecting women's decision to join electoral competition and candidacy for political office. [2] When assessing the performance of the candidates, both men and women rely upon the same factors, but women more rarely consider meeting these criteria. Women doubt their capacity, knowledge and experience and rarely enjoy party allegiance. These findings are significant ones since they suggest that women, despite equal qualifications, education and social capital they possess just like men do, are primarily of low self-confidence and lack the wish to risk and compete. [3] Even women with good political connections in parties are not ready to repeat candidacy and win the support of voters. [4]

Political factors have a major influence on the level and extent of women's political participation. First of all, it is the manner in which the issue of gender equality is interpreted and treated by political parties. Contextual and ideological factors are the most common ones and they refer to different definitions of the status of women within a party agenda, prevailing stands on the issue of gender equality and respect for human rights, the level of social development and political freedoms. It is followed by organizational factors, as the most widespread ones, relating to internal organization of a party, the way of management appointment and female groups to exert pressure and lobby and whether female party leaders are visible when making decision. Institutional-legal factors come next and include the type of electoral system, legislative and constitutional frame and prescribed quotas, either in national and/or party level. Quite often women are active in political parties during election campaigns, but when it comes to the nomination of candidates and mandates sharing, they are not represented in adequate numbers. Informal relations deeply rooted in *masculinized political culture that help maintain constant low-level female political power, are considered to impact the most the selection of candidates*. After all, throughout history, political parties have been patriarchal structures that ignored the interests and demands of women, undergoing the slowest change out of all actors on the political scene.

Three inter-party factors: Candidates' selection, party magnitude and party ideology and two non-party ones: party competence and presence of women in public- are of key importance for the establishment of gender balance. Large parties may include women on electoral lists since them, though not top-positioned, run the chance to be elected. In addition, only left-wing and Green parties nominate more women for the representative functions, thus contributing to put the issues relating to women status and gender equality on parliament agenda. However, in most countries, political parties exist as conservative organizations, not engaging too much in promotion of gender balance in representative institutions. Political parties in Scandinavian countries are the only ones that satisfy consequently their function by use of a quota system as a measure for raising the level of female political participation. Some authors believe that the model of supply and demand in the political market is of crucial importance in understanding the process of political recruitment of women, whose offer includes individual resources and motivation and demand relates to party selection and nomination.[5] Required qualifications include level of education, party work, and legal experience, speaking skills, financial resources, political connections and organizational skills. The ensuing result is equilibrium between two groups of factors; women are the ones that are to provide *impetus* for greater motivation and resources, whilst party elites are expected to acquire and apply the measures intended to increase both women candidates and the women placed at the top of a party hierarchy.

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[1] Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in National Parliaments. World Average and Regional Averages,* 2014, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm, 15.03.2014.

[2] Jennifer LAWLESS, Richard FOX, *It Takes a Candidate. Why Women Don't Run for Office?,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 148.

[3] Richard FOX, Jennifer LAWLESS, "Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidacies: A Central Barrier to Women's Equality in Electoral Politics", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 55, No. 1, 2011, pp. 59–73.

[4] Richard FOX, Jennifer LAWLESS, "If Only They'd Ask: Gender, Recruitment, and Political Ambition", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, No. 2, 2010, pp. 310–326.

[5] Joni LOVENDUSKI, Pippa NORRIS, *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995.

However, contrary to the economic market, the political market does not operate by the simple establishment of equilibrium between demand and offer. Gender ideology exerts strong influence on the political offer and demand; female nomination has been artificially repressed and further reflected through under-representation of women at all levels of decision making. For example, family relations may substantially facilitate female candidacy but, as a rule, these women are daughters and wives of high-profile politicians that once were or are still in power. In this way they make up for the lack of resources and various support networks that men have, especially for funding political campaigns in pre-election run.

When it comes to leadership positions, only 11% of leadership positions are held by women in worldwide political parties. Undertaken research of behavior of political parties in Europe confirms proportional correlation between women leaders of political parties and the number of women in parliament.[1] More women in leadership positions in a party allow for greater mobility towards leading positions in decision-making institutions. However, it should be pointed out that the capacity for mobility plays a very important role and represents a comparative male advantage, since it allows better access to resources. Women enter politics at an older age, being rarely in professions relating to Law and Economics. Therefore, their resources and opportunities to advance are rather limited. Progress of women in chosen careers is held back by specific "glass ceiling" in the professional life. The "glass ceiling" syndrome implies an invisible, but almost impermeable border, dividing women from the positions of influence and makes a major reason for their sparse presence at key political functions.[2] Women are prevented in their career advancement due to artificial barriers based on stereotypes and prejudices in attitudes and they do not relate only to the top of a power pyramid, but also to the central control position, especially when it comes to minority groups. The career path usually begins with participation in lower political levels, leading to the accumulation of knowledge, experience and resources indispensable for further progress, but often ends here, with no possibility for women to continue progressive stepping upwards on the political scale.

3. REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

Political representation is a complex process that encompasses the representation and negotiation of identities, interests, ideas, values, perspectives and experiences of a group within the political institutions. The presentation includes a symbolic argumentation, status, aspirations and legitimacy to participate in political decision-making. The gender in negotiation has a special role in political representation and includes two key issues: what women do represent and how are they to be represented? The first issue contains an ideological dimension, ideas and beliefs including an interests-related functional dimension and a social one relying on identity. Female representatives have a twofold role, acting on behalf of the women they have been elected by and on behalf of certain political parties that nominated them.

Key political, economic and ideological factors contributing towards the insufficient representation of women in political institutions include female lack of interest in politics, challenged by the double burden of professional and home-related activities, conservative ideas about the role of women in a society, created the negative public image of women politicians, the masculine character of the political institutions and the lack of support for women aiming to engage in politics. The absence of women from the political and public life shall be understood both as part of a global discriminatory process and the result of the prevailing stereotypes and prejudices about female candidates for political functions. Cultural representation of women's participation in politics undergoes a process of evolution, exhibiting an ever-increasing number of female politicians over the previous 20-year period. Women are still facing systematic biases present in the context of the electoral bodies and the structure of political parties. Based on comprehensive reference sources in this part, it may be concluded that the influence of political factors on female underrepresentation in this field, is the most studied one.[3] A study of female participation in politics in 110 countries across the world, in the period from 1975 to 2000, confirms a number of key assumptions.[4] Firstly, a positive influence of proportional elective systems to greater numbers of women in parliaments has been established. Secondly, the stability of democratic procedure makes a factor of no influence initially, but works in the long run, leading to an increase in women's political representation. And thirdly, national gender quotas, being applied in many countries, reach positive effect on female presence in political institutions. The number of women in parliament is higher in countries with greater district magnitude and closed

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[1] Miki Caul KITTILSON, *Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe*. Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2006, p. 37.

[2] Judith LORBER, *Paradoxes of Gender,* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994, p. 227.

[3] Richard MATLAND, "Women's Representation in National Legislatures: Developed and Developing Countries", *Legislative Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 23, No. 1, 1998, pp. 109–125.

[4] Lane KENWORTHY, Melissa MALAMI, "Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis", *Social Forces,* Vol. 78, No. 1, 1999, pp. 235–268.

electoral lists, enabling parties to get their better positions in the election race and the chance for women to win their political opponents. Some researchers state that a higher electoral threshold is more appropriate for women i.e. the one that reduces the number of parties in parliament and provides, for incoming parties, a wider space for inclusion of their respective candidates, either on a voluntary basis or by way of quotas.[1]

A proportional election system is considered a crucial factor in political theory, leading to the recruiting of greater numbers of women in assembly.[2] These election systems are characterized by the list candidacy nomination and election of greater numbers of MPs in one constituency, resulting in more realistic prospects that the composition of parliament is to reflect equal representation of both sexes. Also closed and strictly structured lists of candidates, with reserved third place, followed by each subsequent third place, in the case when the quota is set to a minimum of 30% for candidates of the under-represented sex (double quota on the list), provide greater prospects for women in the game to win the parliamentary mandate. The processes of selection, nomination and run for political office by side of political parties and allegiance of party leaders, make the last important steps in the promotion of women's political participation. Based on so far accepted practices, the question is whether it is easier to convince the voters to elect a female candidate or to encourage parties to place more women in front positions of the electoral lists. A minority position of women in politics, relates directly to the minority status of women in a patriarchal society.[3] Specific mechanisms of change stand in an initiative, aimed to change the minority position. They comprise selections, nomination and candidacy of women, introduction of electoral quotas and the existence of laws and institutions on gender equality. They depend upon the minority's willingness and capacity to mobilize resources, organize themselves and institutionalize in the struggle to improve their status. The efforts to improve political representation are commonly focused to system-related barriers and constraints determining proposed female candidates to political function. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the methods and character of a party selection. Many political parties start at a local level that is a springboard for entry into the major channels of political promotion. Participation at the level of local authorities, for women makes an indispensable precondition to progress towards higher political offices. Therefore, the method of the local-level party selection directly affects women's empowerment. Based on the extensive longitudinal study about the influence of 68 political parties in the representation of women, conducted in 12 developed industrial countries across the world, completed in three time points, i.e. in 1975, 1985 and 1989, four key factors have been identified: the organizational structure of the party, the party ideology, the party activities and the rules relating to the gender of the candidates.[4] The latter two factors exert direct influence, while the party organization may operate in three ways - through centralization, institutionalization and localization of nominees.

The organizational structure of a party makes a key factor for the successful application of gender quotas and the method of their implementation.[5] However, effectiveness of quotas depends largely upon the type of electoral system. A quota places priority to the number, not to the position of the candidate on the electoral list. Hence, quotas function best in closed lists in proportional systems in which offices of elected female candidates are set legally. These mandates require parties to position women high on the list, not in the backside where they have no chance of being elected. Quotas operate better in large constituencies with more candidates, since in units with either one or two candidates, only those ranked highest on the list, and these are usually men, are the ones to be elected. When compared to the national level, quotas are easier to be accepted and applied at party level. As for higher levels, it is still unclear what may be done to achieve and actually accomplish parity. It may serve the purpose, the example of France that through legislation obliges parties to an equal inclusion of women and men in the run for the elections. Or Great Britain that since 2000 has introduced a bill requiring the parties to adopt measures against gender discrimination. All of which indicates to still modest results achieved. It is obvious that without systemic intervention in the electoral process, it is not possible to achieve the desired proportion of women, and that in less developed areas it is far easier to achieve better results.

The most common problems, being placed in the center of the study of political representation, relate to the following questions: why does an increased number of women in legislative bodies not always result in the policy that is gender sensitive and eligible for women? Why does the statistical presence of women not facilitate

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[1] Richard MATLAND, Kathleen MONTGOMERY, "Recruiting Women to National Legislatures: A General Framework with Applications to Post-Communist Democracies, in Richard MATLAND, Kathleen MONTGOMERY (ed.) *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 21. ; Mercedes MATEO DIAZ, *Representing Women? Female Legislators in West European Parliaments,* ECPR Press, Oxford, 2005.

[2] Mirjana PAJVANČIĆ, "Pravo na ravnopravno (ravnomerno) reprezentovanje žena i muškaraca", in Djordje VUKOVIĆ (ed.) Oko ozbora. Predsednički i parlamentarni izbori: maj 2012, Centar za slobodne izbore i demokratiju, NDI, Beograd, 2012, http://www.izbornareforma.rs/zbornik, 22.05. 2014.

[3] Drude DAHLERUP, "From a Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics", S*candinavian Political Studies,* Vol. 11, No. 4, 1988, pp. 275–297.

[4] Miki CAUL, "Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties", *Party Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1999, pp. 79-98.

[5] Meril KENNY, Tania VERGE, "Decentralization, Political Parties, and Women's Representation: Evidence from Spain and Britain", *The Journal of Federalism,* Vol. 43, No. 1, 2012, pp. 109-128.

their cooperation and coalition between representatives of different political parties? How and whether do women really represent women in parliament? In other words, the greatest number of theoretical discussion and empirical researches has been dedicated to the issue of the relation between descriptive and substantive representation. Does proportional representation by gender mean better representation of women's interests, or does the substantive one reflects the minority demands better? Most studies established a sound link between the number of women in parliament and the policy aimed at preserving women's rights and addressing the issues relating to family and child protection.[1] Quantitative female presence makes a prerequisite for qualitative changes relating to the process of political decision-making, primarily through their greater motivation to promote and fight for the realization of women's human rights and interests. It was found that an increase up to 30% in the number of women in parliament-as much as necessary to reach a critical mass- elicits qualitative changes in the patterns of dominant institutional culture and value-normative social framework.

The role of political parties is of special importance since the parties hold key levers that enable to reach the number and character selection of female representatives in parliament, determining which votes are to be heard and who is to play the role model of female participation. However, it should be borne in mind that women politicians find themselves in a specific, ambivalent position, constrained between two types of expectations. They have to prove themselves and act as males, still preserving differentiation. They are triple representatives- they stand for voters, party and female population. They do not declare automatically, *a priori* in the interest of other women, but represent the ideas and ideology of the party they belong to. Researches confirm that the personal characteristics and experiences of some women representatives are critical in the feminization of politics and, taken by importance, come before party selection mechanisms.[2] These women are characterized by a successful combination of professional experience and political office. It is believed that the specific political socialization within a family, activism potential and a Promethean attitude towards society, form a certain profile of a woman that is interested in an active participation in public life and change the stereotypes about female politicians.[3]

Critical mass studies come to the point that a female percent in an institution makes a key factor in the modeling of their behavior. However, female critics of the subject concept find it insufficiently developed, both in the terms of theory and methodology. It is deemed that even when in minority, women still may protect female interests by way of acting as critical actors.[4] This critique primarily addresses the situations when despite the reached female critical mass number, there are no changes in the ruling politics.[5] The main argument of the critics is the need to modernize the approach to the study of substantive representation, by making micro-level analysis the center of research that relates to the questions of how and in what way representation operates and what is undertaken by critical actors in the subject field. The goal is to make deeper research of the context, identity and attitudes that may motivate and promote substantive representation.

Mapping contents of parliamentary debates, underlines traditionally female topics encompassing the issues of birth and childcare and upbringing, gender division of productive labor and the structural position of women in the society and feminist ones relating to the decision making on childbirth, abortion, domestic violence, sexual harassment and misogyny. There is disagreement between sexes in all these matters relating to the treatment of gender issues, but this cannot justify the priority of descriptive representation. The question is whether the interest concept is an adequate one, since it gives an equal treatment to men and women and reduces gender equality to equality in a labour market. Representation does not mean a mere inclusion of women in political bodies, but a shifting in the male way of doing politics and representation. It is a feminist consciousness, not a gender one that elicits the response of the institutions so that it is more effective to choose larger numbers of feminists, not women.[6] One of the preconditions in the sphere of women representation is to mobilize the widest possible circle of gender-sensible people. Therefore, in recent years it is applied the thesis that the presence of a strategic partnerships or triangle of power by and between representatives in parliament, female activists in the movement,

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[1] Sarah CHILDS, Julie WITHEY, "Women Representatives Acting for Women: Sex and the Signing of Early Day motions in the 1997 British Parliament", *Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No.3, 2004, pp. 552-564.

[2] Paul CHANEY, "Critical Mass, Deliberation and the Substantive Representation of Women: Evidence from the UK's Devolution Programme", *Political Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2006, pp. 671-91.

[3] Lilijana ČIČKARIĆ, *Društvene promene i generacijska politika*, Institut društvenih nauka, Rad, Beograd, 2006, p.165.

[4] Sarah CHILDS, *Women and British Party Politics. Descriptive, Substantive and Symbolic Representation,* Routledge, London & New York, 2008.

[5] Joni LOVENDUSKI, "Change in Women's Political Representation", in Mariagrazia ROSSILLI (ed.) *Gender Policies in The European Union*, Peter Lang, New York, 2000, pp. 87-105.

[6] Manon TREMBLAY, "The Substantive Representation of Women and PR: Some Reflections on the Role of Surrogate Representation and Critical Mass", *Gender and Politics,* Vol. 2, No. 4, 2006, pp. 502-511.

and women in the public administration, make one of the most important conditions for the transformation of passive into an active representation.[1]

The gender differences model of institutionalization in a representative democracy implies a clear strategy and a great number of initiatives to be undertaken on the road leading to the final realization. The first one is to win political parties to nominate women for flagship offices, by way of internal quotas, zipper system or electoral lists and enact laws that penalize the party failing to nominate women on the electoral list, as well as to provide allegiance from party peers, encouraging the women in the run for political office. The second one are active women networks and caucuses of female politicians that are fighting and lobbying for women's interests and provided mentorship by older women politicians. The third initiative necessitates accommodation of procedural parliamentary mechanism, business hours, speakers' lists and debating rules to the needs of women and the introduction of the laws ensuring representation of women's interests and the existence of parliamentary commissions appointed to supervise the topic of gender equality.

4. WOMEN IN SERBIAN POLITICS

In all post-socialist countries, state paternalism and masculine democracy make hallmarks of the dominant culture policy that determines gender identities, both in the public and the private sphere. The absence of feminist criticism of this policy and of a visible feminist culture among upper-class women, appear to be additional factors, hindering the entrance of greater number of women into political arena and the formation of the space for articulation of their interest in public policies. For example, the women's behavior in the parliament of post-socialist Europe is specifically characterized by the lack of a common platform, but as an action in compliance with the instruction of the political parties, subject to either the parties or the deputies' group decisions.[2] Most countries justify this by the fact that there were no feminist movements and women's organizations that could put pressure to political parties to accept gender-sensitive policies as a part of the party's agenda and program.

Following its way to the achievement of a complete, substantive female equality in political life, Serbia has to pass through a process of real modernization, i.e. long-lasting processes of structure transformation and value-committed normative social frames. Changes in society, institutions, political parties, non-governmental sectors, culture, education and the media are still insufficient for the formation of the terrain that would enable greater promotion and integration of women in political life. The lack of will and power structures for the implementation of economic and political changes and careful design of the strategy for social development, in which the issue of female status would be given an equal treatment, just like all the other issues make some of the most visible hindrances.[3] The presence of an authoritarian political culture and a patriarchal value system, non-tolerance, failure to understand diversities, primitivism, sexism and misogyny, both in the public and in private life- impact largely the female status.[4]

One of the crucial factors preventing women's participation relates to the character of the political and party system. Women are often active in political parties during election campaigns, but when it comes to the nomination of candidates and mandates award, they are not represented in adequate numbers. Political parties in Serbia whether social democratic or left-wing, or right-wing and liberal ones have established patriarchal and traditional organizations that do not pay enough attention to the interests and demands of the female population. Under such circumstances, women stand a minimal chance to be nominated for political offices and further advance within hierarchy of their party organization. A major obstacle of female participation is sexism of institutions, enabling public policies to advocate for the needs of one gender, at the expense of the other.[5] Continuous balance of gender relations within an institution-makes one of the key things to be focused on when researching the policy of female participation.

The contours of the specific female model of political behavior of women in Serbia may be defined on the grounds of a synthetic analysis of the results of several studies, having been completed in previous years, addressing

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[1] Beatris HAALSA, "A Strategic Partnership for Women's Policies in Norway", in V. VARGAS, S. WIERINGA, (eds). *Women's Movements and Public Policy in Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean*, Garland, New York, 1998; Amy MAZUR, *Theorizing Feminist Policy,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.

[2] Yvonne GALLIGAN, Sarah CLAVERO, "Prospects for Women's Legislative Representation in Post-socialist Europe: The Views of Female Politicians", *Gender and Society,* Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 149-171.

[3] Marina BLAGOJEVIĆ HUGHSON, *Rodni barometar u Srbiji. Razvoj i svakodnevni život*, UN Women, Beograd, 2012.

[4] Marina BLAGOJEVIĆ HUGHSON, *Žene i muškarci u Srbiji. Šta nam govore brojevi ?,* UN Women. Beograd. 2011.

[5] Joni LOVENDUSKI, *Feminizing Politics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 53.

the problem of participation in politics.[1] Typical patterns are: resignation about the existing state of society and the work of politicians in power; lower rate of voting, less involvement in organization of elections, electoral commissions, electoral boards and observation; marginalization in the process of a party's nomination and representation on the lists for important positions; minor role in the process of decision-making in political parties; exclusion from political campaigns and public appearances; the lack of ambition and self-confidence for professional political engagement and mistrust and lack of cooperation with other women appearing as actors in political process.

Political parties are primarily responsible for an increased female political participation. Consideration of the gender perspective makes an uncommon practice of political parties when creating public policy. Political parties engage declaratively and assume a rather conservative stance when addressing the issue of gender equality, commonly reducing women to their reproductive role. The issue of gender equality has been imposed and acquired within the domain of observance of the regulation, institutional mechanisms, ensuing formal women's participation, but not in the level of solution for gender-conditioned problems or an advocacy on behalf of female interests that appear in day-to-day activities. Within this context, the global concept of gender equality should be accommodated to local needs and current problems appearing within specific environment. If we had we more talks on the topics of women employment, women's health and education, the concept of gender equality would be better recognized and would get more attention. Even politically active women do not often see the need to formulate gender-sensitive policies, expressing the tendency to deny a host of effects of political decisions affecting both men and women.

The position of women in political parties may be seen based on the rank and importance that women's networks and forums have in the organization of political parties, followed by the membership structure and the way of female leader election to lead women organization. The crucial points affecting the status of the female members of the political party are connections with other bodies of a political party, funding, cooperation with non-governmental organizations, trade unions and governmental bodies dealing with the issue of gender equality. In most cases, women's organizations exist only formally, with no active participation and influence in the work of the party, thus remaining quite unnoticed for the media. As for women politicians in Serbia, one draws to the conclusion that women in politics face the problem of their insufficient presence in the media and lack of public prominence. They are represented in the Assembly and hold a number of executive functions; however, the impact of the "glass ceiling" is clearly recognizable, as a form of vertical segregation and the set of artificial, informal and unwritten rules, preventing women from reaching the most responsible executive functions and, along this line a greater power in political life. Women hold more positions in political parties comparing to the ones appearing in public, nominated and running for elections or just performing public functions. The case study in Vojvodina, completed in 2009 showed that only 14% of women, members of political parties, were nominated for elections, mostly at the local level.[2]

The question is whether there is a real willingness of political parties to facilitate female participation in political decision-making? Two-way introduction of interparty quotes: necessitates 30% of female representatives in all bodies of the political party, implying also 30% of women holding executive positions in the political party-making one of the mechanisms intended to encourage proactive female representation in the bodies of political parties. It is believed that the number of women holding positions in political parties, and therefore, elected to representative bodies, makes an act with the message welcoming women in political and party life, confirming their role, rights and responsibilities since the female participation in leadership positions and decision-making is of public interest. For some time, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain had party-based quotas, with 40% of female participation in representative bodies, in majority of the referred countries. At the same time, Belgium, Portugal, Slovenia and Macedonia have party and legally-set quotes; the number of women representatives in parliaments is much worse, but still better, comparing to the countries that do not apply the quota mechanism for the promotion of women in the institutions of representative democracy. However, there are still three problems in the quotes application. It lacks party allegiance and 30% of female candidates does not lead to the same percentage of women nominated.

The Results of the study undertaken on the influence of women in the Parliament of Serbia, conducted in 2013 among the members of "Open Parliament", making a part of a broader study on the issue of the control function of the Parliament, confirms that women tend harder to enter into parliamentary circles, being under-

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[1] Ana VUKOVIĆ, *Potisnute ili samopritajene ? Žene u politici prema mišljenju političke elite u Srbiji,* Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2009; *Žene u parlamentu – samo kvota ili stvarni uticaj?. Rodna ravnopravnost u Narodnoj skupštini Republike Srbije,* OPEN PARLIAMENT. USAID. Institute for Sustainable Communities. Belgrade. 2013. http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/aktuelnosti/zene-u-parlamentu-samo-kvota-ili-stvarni-uticaj-2/, 18.04.2014.

[2] Višnja BAĆANOVIĆ, Ana PAJVANČIĆ, *Kapaciteti političkih stranaka u Vojvodini za ostvarivanje rodne ravnopravnosti,* Pokrajinski zavod za ravnopravnost polova, Novi Sad, 2010.

represented at positions of the heads of parliamentary groups, chairwoman of the board and the members of international organizations, with no participation in the issues relating to security, finance and economy. There is only one chairwoman (SPS) out of 15 deputies' groups; in all other cases, men are holding presiding function. The largest parliamentary parties, the DS and the SNS were attentive to meet the quota requirement of 30% of women on electoral lists, but women still run low chances to enter parliament since it is only after the hundredth position on the list that they increase by number. The study results obtained, confirm the existence of another form of discrimination concerning communication, gender incorrect language, inappropriate conduct and contempt for women based on sex, both in formal and informal practices. Every fifth female deputy complained on the jokes of her male peers and comments made to their account; still, there is no right to object and appeal against such a conduct. In the opinion of a number of women deputies, an increased share of women in parliament is associated with the decline in the power of these institutions, giving rise to the executive power. It is just for these reasons that some women deputies advocate for an increased female participation, not only within the structures of the legislative bodies, but in the executive branch and even beyond, and perhaps most importantly, outside the political institutions in the management boards of companies and corporations, as it is the case in all Nordic and some western European countries.

The influence of women in parliament largely depends on the number and determination of the selected ones to fight for women's interests. Quite often, a very sharp and, we can say, inappropriate remark of feminist movement may be heard that women elected in parliament became surrogate men that they are socialized within parties of male-dominated organization, that they are difficult to tell apart, and apart from personal promotion, there is no use of their work. It is true that women in parliament step on male territory since it is the ground ruled for centuries by gender-related prejudices and stereotypes. However, a large number of factors impact the real influence women are to stand, ranging from political-economic context, standing procedures of assembly operation up to political experience and reached critical mass in parliament. For example, it has been observed that the composition of less than 15% of female deputies tend to assume a rather male pattern of behavior, coming from typically male professions such as Economics and Law. Another generally accepted perception is that women perform better when engaged in boards than at the time of session debates. The practice of the German Parliament makes a good example of a trial to overcome female marginalization and enhance political participation. When a woman applies to speak in discussion, she is automatically shifted to the top of the list of male speakers. This practice is now spreading outside the parliament, which is a good indicator of the impact of women's voice and understanding of women's perspective. The Nordic countries have gone even further in the elimination of discrimination against women's interests by way of a long practiced initiative to address women's issues and support provided by male MPs to women's initiatives in all legal debates. The way of political campaigns management, major topics and style of presentation were changed in favor of a "softer" policy, oriented towards the improvement of everyday living conditions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Greater participation of women in legislative and executive authorities results in faster mechanisms of adopting gender equality. A larger number of women among parliamentary representatives results in accentuation of the issues of social justice; more women in ministerial positions mean significant presence and influence of women's organizations to political parties. However, the de-gendering of institutions should be taken more seriously than mere female placing at higher positions, both in the public and private sector, since it does not warrant the observance of equal rights in the process of decision-making. The de-gendering of institutions primarily implies the de-gendering of political elites and it is implemented via actors in institutions, the programs whereof are focused on women and institution-based broaching of the gender topic.

These issues, to be largely dealt with in future researches in this part, include the methods to reach substantive representation and creation of the conditions for its realization. In addition, one should examine the scope and conditions in which all female political instances operate, within the parliaments, governments and ministries, as a part of the women's movement and civil society and the members of political parties. All actors play equally important roles in the constitution of substantive female representation at local, regional and national levels.

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