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The NGO-ization of social movements in neoliberal times:
Contemporary feminisms in Romania and Belgium

Ph.D. Candidate

Alexandra Ana

Ph.D. Coordinator: Prof. Donatella della Porta

Supervisor: Prof. Donatella della Porta

Co-supervisor: Prof. Lorenzo Mosca

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To all those
who do not have the privilege of education
For education today remains a privilege
– not a right.
To those who quit,
who were compelled to quit,
constantly pushed to the margins.
For education
is not an equal opportunity right,
for all,
But an empty signifier
That embellishes neoliberal governance policies –
Misleading.
To all those people,
LGBTQIA,
Women in heterosexual relationships,
– and me,
Deprived of their freedoms,
In their private and public lives,
Hindered in their academic journey,
by gender-based violence,
sexist violence,
intimate partner violence,
For the law of silence
still reigns.
Solidarity with you all!

Abstract

As women gained access to influence politics through formal official channels, social justice concerns of feminist activists started to be pursued through institutionalized forms of political intervention. Scholars have argued for a shift in feminist activism from participation in political movements to lobby and advocacy within formal organizations. The institutionalization and professionalization of the feminist movement were widely associated with feminist and women NGOs collaborating with governmental gender equality bodies to advance movement goals and achieve policy success. While some insisted on the benefits of infusing feminist ideas and practices within the state, others considered that NGO-ization made the feminist movement susceptible of co-optation, contributing to its demobilization and depoliticization. The financial dependency on public or private subsidies studded the NGO-ization hypothesis and urged scholars to analyse the effects of funding on feminist organizations and their capacity for mobilization.

Despite the general diagnosis of a demobilized movement comprising an overabundance of depoliticized NGOs, contemporary feminist movement reveals as a space in which formal official organizations and informal groups co-exist, which use both disruptive and disciplined strategies, in different political locations, with various material resources, from friends and comrades' contributions, to state funds or private grants. However, the NGO form seems to dominate feminist movement organizations that turned into stable and legitimate partners of the state or international institutions, being more visible in the public space, while the informal groups are more fluid and less conspicuous.

The major shortcoming within the literature that analyses these transformation is the fact that NGO-ization, institutionalization, professionalization and bureaucratization are used interchangeably and the relation between them is ambiguous. Similarly, scholars however do not always seem to agree if there is a causal relation or a co-occurrence regarding the outcomes of these processes – co-optation, demobilization and depoliticization.

By comparing NGOized feminist organizations and *Street* feminist groups in Belgium and Romania, in this research I aim to provide an answer to the question of what is NGO-ization and to trace the development of the NGO-ization process and its entanglements with neoliberal modes of governance and techniques. Drawing both on social movements and NGO-ization literature, by analysing the NGO-ization process, I aim to disentangle the links between institutionalization, professionalization, bureaucratization and financial dependence and bring some clarifications concerning the outcomes associated with them such as demobilization, depoliticization and co-optation.

Introduction

Scholars largely have concluded that the contemporary feminist movements lack the capacity to mobilize large constituencies¹, shifting their tactical repertoires from grass-roots and mass mobilization to lobby and advocacy, as women gained access to participate in formal official politics. This shift in the tactical repertoire was considered to be occasioned by the development of an institutional architecture for gender equality at the level of governments, driven by state engagements on the First World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975. The following World Conferences in 1980 in Copenhagen and in 1985 in Nairobi consolidated the establishment of a global gender equality governance regime and states' engagement in the pursue of gender equality. The establishment of women's agencies and governmental bodies for gender equality and non-discrimination opened a window of opportunity for women and feminists to participate in policy-making through official channels. As women gained access to influence politics and participate in official settings, social justice concerns of feminist activists started to be pursued through institutionalized forms of political intervention, entailing a shift from contentious actions and disruptive protests to lobby and advocacy (Lang, 1997; Alvarez, 1999; Bernal, 2000; Halley, 2006). This opened the path for militants to pursue career paths and become career activists. In order to consolidate legitimacy and recognition from governmental actors and to secure their participation in official politics as valuable legitimate partners, feminist organizations and activists started to professionalize. The newly created gender equality entities made use of the knowledge and expertise of feminist NGOs strengthen by their professionalization. Professionalization is associated with policy success and there is evidence that when it lacks, policy influence of NGOs is low (Lang, 2013, 72). But a move towards advocacy and professionalization requires financial resources, involving organizational costs, dependency on donors towards semi-privatized institutional negotiation environments with business or

¹ Mass protests during recent years such as Ni una menos in Argentina or Czarny Protest in Poland or the #MeToo online movement challenged this view

governments and equating success with policy results rather than public mobilization (ibidem, 93).

Institutionalization and professionalization were thought to be accompanied by bureaucratization. Some social movement scholars viewed bureaucratization as the formalization of social movement organizations in relation to decision-making processes, division of labour and archival record keeping (Staggenborg, 2013). Others, considered that bureaucratic social movement group is thought to possess a written document describing the purposes of the organization and rules for operations, a list of members to distinguish between members and sympathizers, and three or more levels or internal divisions such as officers or executive committees or chapter heads and rank-and-file members (Gamson, 1990, 91). Within the NGO-ization literature, bureaucratization was also related to the shrinking of the welfare states and the externalization of substantial services to outside providers – with social movement organizations being the firsts to receive those contracts (Lang, 2013, 74).

All these transformations within social movements and specifically related to feminist movements have been associated with the process of NGO-ization, as a shift from loosely organized and horizontal structures that broadly mobilize large constituencies, to professionalized, vertically structured NGOs, endorsed by the neoliberal governance that back up efficient and productive organizational structures. NGO-ization as a phenomenon has been theoretically discussed and empirically analysed in Western European countries (Lang, 1997; Paternotte, 2016), Latin America (Alvarez, 1999), Central and Eastern Europe (Guenther, 2011; Jacobson and Saxonberg, 2013), Africa (Britton and Price 2014), Arab countries (Jad, 2007), or South-Asia (Roy; 2015). One of the shortcomings and challenges within the literature that analyses these transformation is the fact that NGO-ization, institutionalization, professionalization and bureaucratization, especially in its sense of formalization, are sometimes used interchangeably or they are not distinguished clearly as they are polysemic concepts. A similar challenge has been encountered in relation to the outcomes of these processes and transformations.

Among the outcomes of NGO-ization and related processes of professionalization, institutionalization and bureaucratization are movements' demobilization, depoliticization and co-optation. Depoliticization as the action of causing a previously or potential political activity or event to become apolitical, to be removed from political influence by managing it

through technical and objective social scientific knowledge is thought to be entailed by professionalization developed in the context of an increase in importance of evidence-based policy-making. The need for expert knowledge and research is thought to be secured in conditions of great organizational stability and expanded funding, driving women's organizations towards professionalization (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 387) and constrains feminist organizations by closing off political spaces that may be considered too politicized or unconventional (Laforest and Orsini, 2005, 483–484). Depoliticization was also thought to be entailed by hiring professional experts for their technical expertise in feminist NGOs that do not consider themselves activists (Helms E., 2014).

Demobilization was another outcome associated with institutionalization, professionalization or the NGO-ization of social movements. Institutionalization favored advocacy and lobby over protest and contentious action. This required professional expertise to increase policy influence, but its growing importance contributed in turn to a diminished involvement with constituencies, popular women, and larger public, leading to demobilization (Lang, 2013, p. 86). Examining the civil rights movement, Jenkins and Eckert (1986) confirm the demobilization effect of professionalization and elite funding on social movements.

The co-optation of social movements is thought to be entailed by challengers' interaction with dominant institutions, state or vested interests, that is very much encouraged by the process of NGO-ization. Selznick (1949) defined co-optation as the process of absorbing new elements into the structure of a hegemonic organization in order to avoid threats to its existence and stability. In social movements studies co-optation was seen as one potential outcome of social movements (Gamson, 2006) that emerges when (1) moderate challengers gain access to the public policy process without producing changes; (2) targets, antagonists, sponsors appropriate and redefine the discourses of the challengers; (3) by financial donors who channel, transform and reorient the mandate of the social movement; (4) through the adoption of empty-forms-without-substance. Other scholars identified co-optation as one of the components of social movement's institutionalization (Meyer and Tarrow 1998, 21). Regarding the feminist movement, the danger of co-optation was associated with being absorbed within policy structures against which the movement has been fighting or when feminist movement and leaders are used to promote the goals of other groups and leaders than theirs (Ferree and Hess, 2000, 141). In general, studies tend to show that co-optation

softens radical demands when moderate challengers join the official authority structures or choose to cooperate with them or when becoming dependent on donors, follow their agenda.

While the literature on NGO-ization, or the social movements' literature on institutionalization and professionalization almost always mentions the effects of co-optation, demobilization and depoliticization occasioned by these processes, scholars however do not always seem to agree if there is a causal relation or a co-occurrence one and what kind of causal relation between these processes if there is one neither do they agree which process entails which outcome.

NGO-ization was also understood as emerging in the context of welfare state withdrawal that increases reliance on civil society organizations for the elaboration and implementation of policies (Paternotte and Meier, 2017) or in the context of an increase in importance of New Public Management (NPM) and evidence-based policy-making (Kantola and Squires, 2012,). The last one favours economic and technical solutions for political problems in an objective and rational way. Accounting for the imperial and racialized history of feminism, and making space for post-colonial feminist critique and for the feminism at the semi-periphery, NGO-ization was understood less as a shift, as a transformation from a previously idealized autonomous and contentious movements, but more in relation to the global political and economic processes, such as neoliberal and postcolonial governance, and to the local practices of resistance, to the politics of location that weave the struggles against global oppression (Bernal and Grewal 2014).

In the context of contemporary transformations of the feminist movement from what have been considered classical social movement organizations (SMOs) to specialized feminist and women NGOs, the present research aims to explain and analyse the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement, informed by feminist epistemologies and methodologies, drawing particularly on standpoint feminism. The research aims to provide an answer to the question of what is NGO-ization and to trace the development of the NGO-ization process and its entanglements with neoliberal modes of governance and techniques. Drawing both on social movements and NGO-ization literature, by analysing the NGO-ization process, I aim to disentangle the links between institutionalization, professionalization, bureaucratization and financial dependence and bring some clarifications concerning the outcomes associated with them such as demobilization, depoliticization and co-optation. For this purpose I will

compare more formal, professionalized organizations – NGO-ized feminism and more informal groups – Street feminism, in Belgium and in Romania.

The dissertation is organized as follows. The first part includes a literature review, epistemological and methodological aspects and an historical account of the feminist movements in Belgium and Romania. The first chapter provides a review of the literature that explores NGO-ization, with a particular focus on the NGO-ization of the feminist movement, but also of the literature on social movements that investigates processes of institutionalization, professionalization and bureaucratization. The second chapter provides an overview of feminist epistemologies and methodologies, with a particular focus on standpoint feminism – approach used in this research and then it explains the case selection, the units of analysis and the methods used. Chapters three and four present an historical account of the development of the feminist movements in Belgium and Romania, from the first waves of feminism until the nineties. The chapters pay particular attention to the forms of organization that characterized the movements and their relation with other actors, such as states and political parties, relevant to understand today's transformations, especially related to institutionalization and professionalization. The following parts are exploring the different components of the NGO-ization process. The second part concerns the process of institutionalization and the following three chapters explore three dimensions of institutionalization. Chapter five concerns an analysis of the political opportunity structure (POS) in the two countries with a focus on the central elements for the process of institutionalization and an analysis of the processes of inclusion and marginalization. Chapter six analyses the routinization of collective action and it argues among others that the normalization of protests contributes to bridging social capital and fostering internal diversity, building larger collective identities, crucial for collective action. Chapter seven explores co-optation in relation to institutionalization, arguing that co-optation can occur in relation to other processes of bureaucratization and precarization through financial dependence. The chapter shows that by engaging with state institutions, other than risking co-optation and instrumentalization, feminist organizations and activists provide alternative discourses to the right-wing and radical right, engage in resistance towards the normalization of the neoliberal consensus, and foster institutional discursive socialization regarding feminist perspectives and values. The third part concentrates on professionalization, neoliberal bureaucratization and precarization through financial dependence. The chapter on eight identifies different dimensions of professionalization (1) the build-up of a profession; (2) the

versatility of work in feminist organizations; (3) the development of expertise; (4) professional distance; (5) the cleavage between paid professionals, activists and volunteers and analyses them in relation to organization, knowledge and power arguments. Chapter nine analyzes the way neoliberal bureaucratization ensures domination within feminist organizations. It analyzes among others the way norms, rules and practices stemming from the market are proliferated within feminist organizations, how they are enforced and the life of organizations monitored through accountancy procedures and its effects, among others, the creation of new subjects or channeling through time misappropriation. Chapter ten argues that financial insecurity became a central issue among feminist organizations related to the fragmentation of subsidies, constantly juggling between activism, searching for funds, complying with the bureaucratic norms and procedures from donors. Financial dependence functions both as a channel through which governmental precarization as a mode of governance is being deployed and as an instrument that helps to hierarchize, classify and distribute precariousness in relations of inequalities. The last part summarizes the main findings and discusses limits and potential for future research.

Chapter I. NGO-ization theory: between opportunities and constraints

Scholars have largely concluded that contemporary feminist movement lacks a mass mobilization dimension, has reduced visibility and impact, and became moderate in its tactics, collaborating with the state institutions and accommodating their agenda. As women gained access to influence politics through formal official channels, social justice concerns of feminist activists started to be pursued through institutionalized forms of political intervention. This implied a shift in the tactical repertoire of the feminist movement, from contentious actions and disruptive protest events towards institutional advocacy and lobbying within NGOs (Lang, 1997; Alvarez, 1999; Bernal, 2000; Halley, 2006). What were considered classical social movement organizations are now specialized feminist and women NGOs.

The institutionalization and professionalization of the feminist movement have been widely associated with feminist organizations collaborating with governmental gender equality

bodies, to advance movement goals and achieve policy success. Militancy opened the path towards career activism through professionalization. The establishment of gender equality professions, like gender experts or technicians proclaimed the apogee of professionalization. Nevertheless, in order to become a professional of civil society, and thus a potential legitimate partner for the state, activists needed to invest substantial time resources and considerable financial means in the organization, in order to train movement activists into professional experts. This paved the way towards the pursuit of funds and the risks of donor dependency. While some scholars insisted on the benefits of infusing feminist ideas and practices first within the state and afterwards also within corporations, others considered the movement susceptible of co-optation, demobilization and de-radicalization.

The shift from rather loosely organized and horizontal structures that broadly mobilize large constituencies, to professionalized, vertically structured NGOs, endorsed by the neoliberal governance that back up efficient and productive organizational structures, is captured by the process of NGO-ization. The NGO-ization thesis unfolds what happens when certain forms of feminism are institutionalized within governmental bodies, supported by the emergence state feminism with employed femocrats, that contributed to an opening of the political opportunity structure for the influence of the feminist movement. The latter becomes enrolled in negotiation in institutional processes and undergoes a pressure to professionalize in order to be considered as valuable legitimate dialogue partners, coming from the civil society. Professionalization, as understood in neoliberal terms, entails the emergency of funds that can be private, either from a desire of the feminist movements to preserve autonomy, or from states lack of interest in financing civil society initiatives. The dependency on private or public funds brings up the risk of channelling and eventually of certain forms of co-optation of some feminist movement actors.

In this context, as women accessed and started to influence the official state politics, scholars became interested in studying the relationship between the feminist movement and various political institutions from governments, parliaments and political parties to welfare regimes and policy-making. Analysing the relationship between women's movement, their social movement organizations, mobilization and institutional actors, academics generally adopted a public policy framework rather than a social movement approach (Bereni and Revillard, 2016, p. 161). However, during the last decades, researchers have acknowledged the current process of combining disruption and routine actions within social movements (Rucht 1990;

Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Thus, while some organizations do target intergovernmental politics through lobbying or participate in policy-making process, in line with the NGO-ization thesis, others avoid traditional political channels and act more like social movements (Gautney Heather, 2012, 92). Protest and contentious action have been considered as the specific trait of social movements, different than routinized and institutionalized ways of political action (Tarrow 1994; Meyer and Tarrow, 1998) of non-governmental organizations or political parties. Nevertheless, many contemporary NGOs, including feminist organizations, engage both with mobilizations and grassroots actions, while also doing institutional advocacy and lobby, becoming professional experts, collaborating with the state or with corporations while trying to infuse movement's ideas and objectives.

While the NGO-ization process is asserted, claimed, sometimes taken for granted, by both scholars and activists, it is also a debated concept and a questioned thesis with difficult challenges to surmount such as to disentangle the related processes or effects of institutionalization, professionalization, bureaucratization and co-optation of social movements. In what follows I will examine the literature developed around the theory of NGO-ization, using social movements lenses. First, I will explore what leads to NGO-ization, the context and incentives that drive this process. I will then define NGO-ization and its intertwined processes. Third, I will focus on the issue of funds in relation to the NGO-ization of social movements, as dependency on financial resources took substantial space both in debates and in the literature and it is a contested issue. In the fourth part I will examine and discuss the effects or outcomes of NGO-ization especially movement co-optation but also demobilization, depoliticization, fragmentation, de-coupling or alignment. Finally, I will present the critiques of the NGO-ization thesis, discuss some of the empirical counterexamples from the literature and I will draw some guiding lines and conclusions that will inform and guide the following empirical chapters.

I. What leads to NGO-ization? Context and incentives

New forms of governance, New Public Management, welfare state withdrawal and neoliberal globalization reflect recent changes in state practices that create opportunities and constraints for feminist activism and women's NGOs by developing new forms resistance or transforming the existing ones (Kantola and Outshoorn, 2007; Kantola and Squires, 2012).

NGO-ization as a phenomenon has been theoretically discussed and empirically analysed in Western European countries (Lang, 1997; Paternotte, 2016), Latin America (Alvarez, 1999), Central and Eastern Europe (Guenther, 2011; Jacobson and Saxonberg, 2013), Africa (Britton and Price 2014), Arab countries (Jad, 2007), or South-Asia (Roy; 2015). Some authors have seen NGO-ization as acclimatizing and adapting feminism through professionalization, specialization and bureaucratization. Others, supported the idea that NGO-ization depresses the advance and preservation of feminist subcultures that are resisting hegemonic gender relations, hinders mobilization and claim-making capacity, and fails to challenge the existing structures of civil society, state and economy that reproduce an unequal society.

Contemporary feminist movement appears as less visible than the plenitude of NGOs addressing the welfare of women or gender equality (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, 1). NGOs are a deeply-ingrained institutional form around the world, especially related to empowerment or women welfare (ibidem). The institutionalization and professionalization of the feminist movement were widely associated with feminist and women NGOs collaborating with governmental gender equality bodies to advance movement goals and achieve policy success. While some scholars insisted on the benefits of instilling feminist ideas and practices within the state, others considered the movement susceptible of co-optation and de-radicalization. Having this picture in mind, feminism seems to find itself at a critical turning-point. Through NGO-ization, parts of the feminist movement have institutionalized and professionalized, including within academia. In this context questions have been asked regarding how can feminism defend women from neoliberalism and what is their role in the struggle for a post-neoliberal, post-patriarchal world (Motta, Flesher Fominaya, Eschle, Cox, 2011). Feminist struggles might have transformed but they continue to grow; some of them shaped, but not exclusively by state, neoliberalism and the rise of NGOs (Bernal, Grewal, 2014), others resisting and challenging the more structural basis of patriarchy, capitalist and colonialist (neoliberal and neo-colonial) orthodoxies. Overall feminist struggles are looking for new ways to redefine the nature of feminism and politics.

The question is what are the defining elements of the context that favoured the development of NGO-ization and what are the incentives to NGO-ize? Both exogenous and endogenous factors affect the NGO-ization process. In what follows I explore the general trends and changes of the social, political and economic context in which NGO-ization evolved. First, I will examine

the institutionalization of feminism at the supranational level that started with the organization of global women conferences at the level of the United Nations, during which states have engaged to create women and gender equality agencies, aiming to enhance legislation and improve policy implementation within national bureaucracies. Transnationalization, favoured the emergence of a global gender equality regime (Kardam, 2005) through the development of international norms and transnational networks that became crucial in the implementation of public policies (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). The process of Europeanization also opened up the opportunity structure for social movements and brought activist groups to lobby at the European institutions (Della Porta and Caiani, 2011; Monforte 2009; Paternotte 2016).

To continue, I will investigate the establishment of the deep-seated neoliberal governance, through the growth in importance of New Public Management (NPM) and the shrinking of the welfare state, with its provisions having been transferred towards NGOs, with or without financial support. Lastly, I will discuss the growing reliance on evidence-based policy-making that tended to encourage women NGOs to provide policy-relevant technical knowledge, framed in objective rather than interest-based terms, ensuring them authority and increased legitimacy (Kantola and Squires, 2012).

The organization of the global women conferences, convened by the United Nations, between 1975 and 1995, opened specific windows of opportunity for the feminist movement (Pereira B.M., 2014). Democratization² after the second half of the 1970s was thought to add to this political opportunity. In this context, a global network of women's rights activists started to crystalize around the United Nations bodies, contributing to the build-up of international gender equality norms embedded in international treaties and declarations or policy recommendations for governments, that have been largely and globally diffused (True and Mintrom, 2001). One of these recommendations, following the 1975 United Nations Conference on Women in Mexico City, was the creation of women's policy agencies, that was adopted by national governments throughout the next three decades. The emergence of these agencies and the adjacent gender equality machineries within state bureaucracies, were

² The third wave of democratization that started with the Carnation Revolution in 1974, continuing with democratic transitions in Latin America during the 1980s, followed by the Asian-Pacific countries, Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union and then transitions in Africa (Huntington, 1991).

framed within the concept of state feminism³, while women working within these gender equality bodies have been referred to as ‘femocrats’ (Franzway, Court and Connell 1989: 133). Women’s policy agencies were supposed to bridge between the feminist movement’s claims and the governmental bodies involved in policy-making, but they, however, were thought to have privileged particular demands that were in line with the dominant state policies and that profited small elite of women (Kantola and Squires, 2012).

Europeanization, as the phenomenon related to European integration, both in member states and accession countries (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003), functions as top-down influence on domestic politics, but also as opportunity structure that supports the development of transnational organizing of activists (Cisar and Vrablikova, 2010). Feminist scholars debate about the role of the European Union (EU) related to gender equality, especially as its competencies have expanded in general, impacting both directly and indirectly on women’s policy agencies (Kantola and Nousiainen, 2009) that are responsible for facilitating the implementation of internationally diffused norms, such as gender mainstreaming⁴ within and across the states (True, 2003: 380). While some scholars insist on the potential benefits of the EU engagement with gender equality, others stress the primacy of the market and the neoliberal ethos that frame the policy and practices related to gender equality, such as gender mainstreaming justified through economic goals (Squires, 2007; True, 2009; Kantola and Squires, 2012).

To sum up, the creation of gender equality governmental bodies and agencies, have increased the capacities of women’s NGOs to influence the legislation and the decision-making process, but also pressured toward professionalization and the strategic adoption of the dominant neoliberal frame, betting on its discursive power to convince. These newly created entities became potential partners that made use of the knowledge and expertise of feminist

³ “‘State feminism’ is a term that has emerged to describe ‘women’s policy agencies’, ‘national machineries for the advancement of women’ or ‘gender equality machinery’ within state bureaucracies that deal with women’s policy issues or gender equality. It refers to any state-based agency, at any level (sub-national, national, regional, international), in any branch (elected, administrative or judicial), that seeks to promote gender equality (often described in this context as the ‘advancement of women’)” (Kantola and Squires, 2012, pp. 383-384).

⁴ The concept of gender mainstreaming appeared for the first time in international documents, after the United Nations Third World Conference on Women that took place in Nairobi in 1985 and it was explicitly endorsed as a strategy by the Platform for Action adopted at the next United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, ten years later. The par. 79 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states that: “Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.” (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf)

NGOs – a way of working more suitable for formal bigger organizations than for smaller informal groups, resulting in increased pressure to professionalize. As a consequence, at the time, a shift in feminist tactical repertoires started to take place, from participation and contentious mobilization within social movements towards lobbying and advocacy in NGOs. If returning quantifiable visible outcomes does not drive activism, it does motivate and stimulate institutional advocacy inspired by the success logic and narratives.

The turn towards the state and institutional advocacy was criticized by some scholars who exposed the pitfalls of working within repressive, regulatory and depoliticizing institutions engrained with patriarchal elements that the feminist movement actually tries to subvert (Brown, 1995, pp. x-xi). While institutional advocacy is thought to be more predictable, directly rewarding and reputation embellishing, it also requires financial resources that encourage the development of governance areas controlled by political institutions, businesses or foundations with particular agendas (Lang, 2013, 204). The move towards advocacy involves organizational costs, dependency on sponsors, moving towards semi-privatized institutional negotiation environments with business or governments and equating success with policy results rather than public mobilization (*ibidem*, 93).

Turning to institutional advocacy, feminist activists, but also femocrats became concerned with movement's autonomy from the state⁵, contributing to the commodification of their resistance and increasing their dependency on markets through corporate sponsorships and grants (Kantola and Squires, 2012, 390). In order to be treated as legitimate partners by donors, business or states, grassroots groups experience the pull to consolidate as formal, professional organizations (Lang, 2013, p. 64). While some scholars argued that the autonomy of the feminist movement proved too costly to maintain, resulting in the NGO-ization of various movements (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 390), others showed that the commodification of dissent critique claims the universality of feminist modes and leaves unaddressed the politics of location (Hodzic, 2014, pp. 226-227). Hodzic (2014) illustrates that opposition to the state has different meanings in different contexts. While in the North it was a privileged form of doing feminism, in Africa, feminist activists do not see collaboration with state institutions as meaning betraying feminist principles (pp. 226-227). Following the same line of argument, Arundhati Roy (2014, p. 60) suggests that the NGO-

⁵ Governments as well exploited the argument about movement's autonomy regarding violence against women in order not to fund shelters (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 390)

ization of the women's movement had made Western liberal feminism the norm of what constitutes feminism.

The thesis that gender equality “increases productivity”, sometimes strategically used by the feminist movement or women's agencies was adopted by governments and transformed to their own goals, using the movement's autonomy argument for example, as a reason not to fund shelters for battered women (Kantola and Squires, 2012). Examining the debate around the feminist movement's autonomy from the state might provide a key to understand the recent transformations of the feminist movement in neoliberal times and its relation with women's policy agencies or governments, but only if examined contextually, taking into consideration the politics of location and not assuming a universal form of feminism. Today, many governments and businesses collaborate with feminist NGOs and embrace the gender equality discourse while adapting it to their neoliberal goals.

The intensification of neoliberal governance shaped the context in which the NGO-ization process developed. The implementation of neoliberal policies, implying an active regulation of the social life for market purposes created complex and often conflicting patterns of governance (Kantola and Squires, 2012, 386). Neoliberalism can be understood as a “technology of government”, a very “active way of rationalizing governing and self-governing in order to “optimize”” and can be conceptualized as “a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are cast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions” (Ong, 2006, 3). While neoliberalism may have undergone uneven geographical developments, and can look differently across the world, it builds up a common, uniform and recognizable framework in which women's NGOs act, even though it does not completely control their actions and agendas (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, 13). Out of this framework, the dismantling of the welfare state coupled with the increase in importance of NPM and evidence-based policy-making, as elements of the neoliberal philosophy of how to technically solve “nonpolitical” issues, laid down the conditions, under neoliberalism, for the proliferation of NGOs, insinuating that there is opposition outside the state – the antagonist civil society seeking for social transformation (Harvey, 2005, 78).

In neoliberal context, women's movements face a “reconfigured state” (Banaszak, Beckwith and Rucht, 2003) that sometimes might open some windows of opportunity to further movement goals, but also threatens their achievements by undergoing risks of constraints,

regulations, and transformation of a work that originally was very political into a technical problem-solving issue. This opportunity structure with its positive and negative aspects is profoundly different from the one feminist movements faced during the 1960s and 1970s (Banaszak et al., 2003, 8). Basically, the multifaceted process of state reconfiguration at the centre⁶ captured by the new neoliberal order – resulting from large scale transformation of the economic structure, includes horizontal and vertical shifts in power and policy responsibility, on the one hand, and state and society relationship, on the other hand (ibidem, 7). Banaszak, Beckwith and Rucht (2003, 5) argue that changes within the state include uploading of power to international institutions such as EU, UN, IMF or WTO, downloading power and responsibility to substate, provincial, or regional governments and lateral delegating responsibilities to non-elected state bodies to make policy. Related to state/society relations, state offloaded its traditional responsibilities to non-state actors such as the family, community, the market or non-governmental organizations (ibidem, 6).

The welfare state withdrawal and offloading involved a greater reliance on third parties for the elaboration and implementation of certain public policies, especially those which are marginal, such as equality policies (Paternotte and Meier, 2017) and also an increase in public-private partnerships (Baznasak et.al., 2003). The state institutionalized certain forms of participation. This resulted into a proliferation of civil society representation within the state (Baznasak et al. 2003, 6) and sometimes financed civil society actors for their role in organizing the interests in the society and for their contribution to public policies (Paternotte and Meier, 2017). Nevertheless, the welfare state retrenchment, but also the structural adjustment programs imposed in the countries of the South as a form of neo-colonialism, or the unabated liberalization preached during ‘transition’ in post-socialist states, resulted in an increased burden towards women in families and communities, who took charge of caring for dependents. Civil society actors that filled in for the withdrawal of social services could not cover exhaustively the needs. As Bernal and Grewal (2014, 10) argue, neoliberalization, fostered the spread of feminist NGOs first, by the cuts in welfare provisions – public roles, that they tried to fill in – from private positions, and second through the fact that those spaces were already ‘sites of women’s paid and unpaid labour and feminist struggles for resources and services’.

⁶ Baznasak, Beckwith and Rucht (2003) examine state reconfiguration in North America and Western Europe

To sum up, the welfare state withdrawal left a vacuum in social provisions, encouraging feminist NGOs to step in and fill the gap with paid and unpaid labour. Called privatization by NGOs, the granted role assumed by these organizations, further accelerated state withdrawal from social provision (Harvey, 2005, 177). The welfare provisions transferred to NGOs are supervised through the use of NPM, as a new form of regulation that involves different tools such as grants, projects and contracting submitted to strict accountability criteria that manage the relationship between the state and the new service providers – NGOs, that limits their capacity to meet the demands of the groups they serve (Kantola and Squires, 2012).

Critical accounts, considered NGOs a form of neoliberal co-optation, embedded in global circuits of neoliberal power, involved in dependent relationships with states, donors and neoliberal practices, constantly facing the dilemma between delivering to the subjugated communities they intend to be of use and the powers that subdue them (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, 4). NGOs were considered to fuel the postcolonial governance, meaning the subjugation of local targeted populations by different non-state actors such as NGOs, in order to subject them “to new technologies of market-oriented disciplinary mechanisms” (Lamia, 2014, 194).

Part of the neoliberal governance is the growing reliance on evidence-based policy-making as a result of the rising in importance of knowledge and research in the production of policies, that further encourages NGO-ization. Gender equality bodies are expected to supply knowledge and technical expertise for the purpose of policy-making and gender mainstreaming across policy fields. At European Union level, the establishment of the European Gender Equality Institute (EIGE) aimed at providing “relevant objective, reliable and comparable information as regards gender equality” to help EU institutions and member states to take informed and evidence-based decisions that consider gender⁷. □ Feminist NGOs are pressured as well to provide policy-relevant knowledge in order to be included as legitimate partners of the government in the production of policies. In this context, gender

⁷ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Institute for Gender Equality, from the Commission, 10 March 2005

EIGE’s strategic objectives for the period 2016-2018 are: (1) To provide high quality research and data to support better informed and evidence based decision-making by policymakers and other key stakeholders working to achieve gender equality; (2) To manage all knowledge produced by EIGE to enable timely and innovative communication that meets the targeted needs of key stakeholders; (3) To meet the highest administrative and financial standards while supporting the needs of EIGE’s personnel (<http://eige.europa.eu/about-eige>).

equality bodies and feminist organizations are first incentivized to provide policy-relevant technical expertise rather than advocate for an alternative political agenda and second they are encouraged to frame their discourses and analyses in economic rather than political terms in order to be justified as economically efficient and appeal to policy-makers (Kantola and Squires, 2012; see also Himmelweit, 2002).

The creation of gender equality bodies or women's policy agencies and the establishment of new forms of governance – the neoliberal, the postcolonial governance, together with the retreat of the welfare state, the growth in importance of NPM and the evidence-based policy-making shaped the context in which NGO-ization emerged. Aside from these two major trends, the pull to NGOize is continuously created and shaped by various incentives acting as endogenous factors, some of them leaving more autonomy and an active role to organizations. First, the political motivations inform that formal organizations have more credibility and legitimacy than informal organizations through their official status in relation to governments, parties or the media, being invited in official decision-making processes rather than loose organizations (Lang, 2013, 64). Second, economic and legal-bureaucratic incentives favour NGO-ization through funders who demand accountability and states that provide a tax-exemption status for non-governmental organizations depending on various forms of registration (ibidem). Moreover, social and career-based considerations motivate civic actors to NGO-ize provided that they want salaries and recognition for their substantial time and engagement (ibidem). Adding to this, the characteristics of the actors in an organization affect its path towards formalization and professionalization. The composition of the founding members, their social status, professional profile and political orientation as well as the personal ties and affinities define if and how NGO-ization unfolds (Cîrstocea, 2017). These factors and incentives will be further considered in the following sections and examined in relation with the NGO-ization associated processes with the aim of disentangling causes, factors and outcomes. But before examining the interrelated processes, the next section will be devoted to an effort of defining NGO-ization and its various dimensions.

II. What is NGO-ization? And related process

In this sub-section I will examine the different understandings and definitions of NGO-ization and its dimensions and related processes of institutionalization, professionalization and bureaucratization.

The NGO-ization literature has been searching to understand the place of NGOs within the feminist movement, crystalizing into a polarized debate with normative concepts, between those who see NGOs as the neoliberal imperial evil and those who see them as the savers of the humanity (Grewal 2017 in Roy 2017). The normative articulations about NGO-ization encompass a nostalgic and romanticized view about a previously “pure” and “autonomous” feminist movement, mainly white and Occidental. Trying to avoid falling into normative substructures, Sabine Lang defines NGO-ization as a sensitizing concept, as “the process by which social movements professionalize, institutionalize and bureaucratize in vertically structured, policy-outcome-oriented organization that focus on generating issue-specific and, to some degree, marketable expert knowledge or service” (2013, pp. 63-64). In her view, NGO-ization is about “managed mobilization”, in the sense of going public without mobilizing constituencies or larger public (ibidem, 66). In general, NGO-ization is also described as a shift from movement politics based on experience to projects that entail goal and intervention strategies (Lang, 1997, 116), more reform-oriented (Kapusta-Pofahl, 2005, p. 3) and translating into “increased professionalization and specialization of significant sectors of feminist movements” (Alvarez, 1998, 295).

Nevertheless, understanding through NGO-ization the passage from social movements to formal, professional vertical structures less interested in mobilizing large constituencies implies the existence of an *a priori* movement, that was informal and non-institutionalized and with a high capacity for contention with a vast public. Accounting for the imperial and racialized history of feminism, and making space for post-colonial feminist critique and for the feminism at the semi-periphery, NGO-ization is understood less as a shift, as a transformation from a previously idealized autonomous and contentious movements, but more in relation to the global political and economic processes, such as neoliberal and postcolonial governance, and to the local practices of resistance, to the politics of location that weave the struggles against global oppression. Therefore, Sonia Alvarez relates NGO-ization to the intense promotion of certain organizational forms and practices among feminist organizations or other parts of the civil society by national and global neoliberalism (2009, 176). Supporting this view Jad (2004) considers as well NGO-ization as the spread of a different form of structure for women’s movement activism that limits the participation of women at local level organizations, the struggle for national causes to projects oriented by international discourses and fragments the buildup of movements for social change.

For Lang, who researched NGO-ization in Germany, European Union and United States, NGO-ization captures the dynamic move between social movement organizations (SMOs) and NGOs, describing a process in which authority shifts from collective to individual, cooperation is replaced by delegation and control, the guiding principles of the group transform into a binding legal framework and personal confidence might be affected by a certain degree of instrumentality within relationships (2013, p. 67). Recruitment is based more on competence rather than shared values, salaries accompany normative and solidarity based incentives, horizontal stratification is replaced by vertical organization and there is a move from a minimal division of labor towards a strong one (ibidem). Lang stresses the fact that these are characteristics that reflect the ideal-type differences between SMOs and NGOs and that within the process of NGO-ization, organizations can display both SMOs and NGOs traits. Lang (2013, 62-63) argued that this shift from loosely organized groups, functioning horizontally and mobilizing large publics to professional NGOs structured hierarchically affects the goals, the management and strategies of organizations but also the constituencies they seek to address and generate.

Unconvinced by the assumptions of a shift from social movements to NGOs, from a contentious feminist movement that was autonomous to paid professionals in NGOs who are co-opted, scholars started to dig deeper into what NGO-ization is and to bring empirical evidence from the Global South where NGO-ization was linked to development both as theory and practice and structural adjustment programs and from the European semi-periphery where NGO-ization was related to transition, in two recent volumes, “Theorizing NGOs. States, feminisms, and neoliberalism” (2014) edited by Victoria Bernal and Inderpal Grewal and, “Beyond NGO-ization. The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe” (2013) edited by Kerstin Jacobson and Steven Saxonberg together with other recent contributions on NGO-ization (Roy, 2017).

These two edited volumes complement the existing contributions to understanding NGO-ization, showing, through different case studies, how this process does not always involve a move from social movements to NGOs, but that NGOs are often co-constitutive of the contemporary feminist movements. They question the romanticized vision of a previously autonomous feminism, outside the state and bring in the politics of location (Hodzic, 2014) and intersectionality to question the idea of “a pure, one-dimensional feminism” (Grewal in Roy, 2017). They also show that while NGOs are integral part of the feminist movement

today with specific tools of influence such as lobby and advocacy, they also use contention even though they do not always mobilize constituencies to large scale. Accounting for these critical assessments of what NGO-ization is, it becomes important to examine the sometimes privilege of being autonomous from the state, to question the idea of pure autonomy by critically assessing cooperation with the state, participation, collaboration or alignment with other social movements beyond the diagnosis of contamination and co-optation.

I use the concept of NGO-ization to examine what happens when certain forms of feminism become: a) institutionalized – cooperating with governmental bodies, including women’s policy agencies; b) professionalized – with salaried staff that most of the time are experts, gender experts; and c) bureaucratized – managed according to a set of norms, rules and procedures, sometimes in accordance with donors’ demands of accountability. While sometimes NGO-ization, institutionalization, professionalization and also bureaucratization, especially in its sense of formalization, are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature or they are not distinguished clearly as they are polysemic concepts, in what follows I aim to shed light on and disentangle these processes. I argue that institutionalization, professionalization and, bureaucratization are the three dimensions of the process of NGO-ization which will be discussed below.

A. Institutionalization

Institutionalization of movements can appear in three related contexts (Lang, 2013, 73). First it can appear from a desire to stabilize when there is a need to build durable institutions. Secondly, it can arise in the context of political opportunities to participate in institutional settings in the context of shifts from government to governance. Lastly, institutionalization can manifest when movement actors enter career paths within political institutions (Lang, 2013, 73). Through continuity and propinquity with political actors and arenas, institutionalization can foster the achievement of movement goals and the prospect of policy success.

Scholars identified three components of social movements’ institutionalization: routinization of collective action, inclusion and marginalization, and cooptation (Meyer and Tarrow 1998, 21). *Routinization* of collective action refers to a common script to which both challengers and authorities conform, recognizing accepted patterns but also risky deviations. *Inclusion*

and marginalization describe a “selection” of challengers between those who adhere to established routines and who consequently are granted access to politics in mainstream institutions and those who refuse and are excluded from decision-making in mainstream institutional settings through repression or neglect. *Cooptation* refers to the process through which challengers alter their claims and tactics in order to fit without disruption into the normal practice of politics. Other scholars identified cooptation as an effect or outcome of professionalization and bureaucratization (Smith, 2006).

Looking at the history of the feminist movement, while during the first and second waves, feminist activists were acting more as outsiders, forwarding their claims to the state without being part of it, after the 70s many militants have fought for equality from inside the state (Paternotte and Meier, 2017). As women’s policy agencies have been created within national state bureaucracies after the organization of the United Nations World Conferences on Women, state feminism developed, with a class of femocrats within, which sought to advance some of the goals of the feminist movement from within. Feminist movement activists who acted as outsiders, were skeptical of femocrats especially because many of them were not socialized and politicized with the feminist movement, being interested mainly in advancing their career. Nevertheless, the establishment of these gender equality governmental bodies opened a window of opportunity, as they often called for consultation or collaboration with movement activists and organizations that stayed outside the state, closer to civil society. The debate about cooperating and risking cooptation or staying autonomous and forwarding their agenda on their own, agitated feminist movement groups and organizations. Entering this discussion, some scholars suggested that the actual question is not how feminist activists and academics can avoid cooptation by powerful institutions but if they can afford not to engage with such institutions (True, 2003). In contemporaneity, part of the feminist movement actively collaborate with state institutions to advance feminist politics and the insistence of being autonomous from the state and the fears of cooptation have been thought as a privilege of a white feminist movement mainstreamed as universal. Feminists in the Global South and in the European semi-periphery argued that they cannot afford or do not desire this kind of autonomy.

From what has previously been an outsider, parts of the feminist movement today gained direct access to political power and allied with state institutions, especially with gender

equality governmental bodies, contributing in the elaboration and implementation of public policies.

Paternotte and Meier (2017) argued that this proximity to the state, on the one hand facilitates the transmission of the feminist movement goals and ideas to public authorities, but on the other hand it can hinder a more critical position towards governmental policies, placing them in an ambiguous position as it is the case with other movements trying to penetrate the state. State can institutionalize participation and some access to power in an informal manner as well. For example, in Poland, public authorities allowed animal rights movement to engage in animal rescue and intervention without formally delegating the task or contracting NGOs. Rather than cooptation, Jacobson describe this process as enrollment of the civil society actors in the policy work, describing it as the “indirect privatization of the responsibility for public policy implementation through which it is the civil society that ends up bearing the costs” (2013, 37). To sum up, institutionalization designates the relationship between state institutions and parts of a social movement, in which the public authorities allow activists and organizations to participate in a formal or informal manner in the decision-making, policy-making and/or implementation processes in their area of interest.

B. Professionalization

Similar to the context of emergence of the process of NGO-ization, Richard Wittorski (2014, 14) frame as well the development of professionalization – a concept established by the functionalist American sociology, and the modern figure of the professional, within the expansion of new forms of social governance that promote an autonomous individual, master of his own life, immediately efficient in his social, professional and private life actions, thus a self-sufficient autonomous subject able to manage his own life and to accept to pass on responsibilities to organizations. Aiming to transform the social concept of professionalization, into a scientific concept, Wittorski (2014) identifies three significations of the polysemic professionalization. The first one is that of professionalization as the buildup of a profession, the transformation of an activity in a *liberal profession*, driven by the idea of a service, emerged in the context of a free market where individuals needed to develop a discourse about their contribution in order to gain a place within the market (Wittorski, 2014, 16-18). The second signification is that of professionalization as the *flexibilization of work* by organizations, in the sense not of establishing professions in a social

space but in the sense of professionalization of employees, their constant formation and modification of their skills related to the evolution of the labor situations, an organizational intention to accompany work flexibility. The last meaning is professionalization as the production or buildup of a profession through training and the search of a greater legitimacy and effectiveness of the *training practices*.

These aspects are captured in different ways by the literature that informs about the professionalization of social movements. Resource mobilization theorists argued that transformations in funding patterns contributed to the rise of professional social movements that in turn affected the career patterns of movement leaders (McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 20). Some scholars see professionalization as concomitant with institutionalization showing how the organizational transformation of feminist movement in NGOs or study centers was accompanied by their professional specialization (Jenson, Marques-Pereira and Nagels, 2017; Alvarez 2009). Having professional experts makes NGOs gain public and institutional recognition and allow them participate at negotiations and decision-making. Professionalization is associated with policy success and there is evidence that when it lacks, policy influence of NGOs is low (Lang, 2013, 72). Professionalization also means a need to increase resources through fundraising to expand salaried workforce and adjustment to institutional norms and structures and policy field's language. Turbo-professionalization is used to describe income growth, increased management and expansion of salaried staff within NGOs (ibidem, p. 78).

At the same time professionals employed in NGOs are not always or do not see themselves necessarily as activists. A profane/expert and militant/professional divisions have been settled (Herman, 2013). As increased professionalization includes an emphasis on paid rather than voluntary work disagreements between paid workers and activists might appear. In the processes of professionalization, NGOs draw different women into political participation and entail relationships among feminist activists where inequalities and power relations between elite and subaltern women may be reproduced but also challenged, drawing attention on the fact that women are not a unitary interest group (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, pp. 307-308). Professionalization also might entail the rule of institutionalized expertise over other demands.

Herman (2013, 65) finds that the feminist ideology brings its specificity related to the kind of professionalization taking place and considers that in the French case of activism by working against violence, it is the insertion in the social work rather than professional specialization that takes place and this is linked to the actual subversion of the cleavages expert/profane, activist/professional. By contrast, in Romania, some feminist organizations successfully pressured for the establishment of the profession of gender expert and gender technician. What professional and militants working in a feminist NGO have in general in common is their claim of feminist affiliation. Previously, very few professional positions were allowed to live from and for the feminist cause. Professionalization allows to reconcile work with activism, represents a reward for the substantial commitment of activists (Lang, 2013) and gives engaged women a certain financial autonomy while reconfiguring certain tasks (Hermann, 2013).

For Herman (2013, 69), professionalization is based on a separation between emotions and work, a break with the idea of sorority, gaining professional distance through training, respecting the hierarchy and adopting a method. These changes might entail tensions within a feminist movement organization, especially in relation to the ideals of sorority, equality, free and safe spaces as cornerstones of feminism. Professionalization is thus about this incessant reconfiguring as the positions on chess table that try to reconcile competencies and training skills, experience and knowledge resulting sometimes in more militant arrangements and other times in the codification of relatively professional norms, nevertheless leaving room for manoeuvre.

C. Bureaucratization

Neo-liberal bureaucratization refers to the dissemination of bureaucratic practices from the market and enterprise to the society and can be defined as a set of norms, rules, procedures and formalities that encompass the whole society, not just state administration as often assumed, or in short is a synonym of “governance” in neoliberal argot (Hibou, 2012, 28). Even coming from different intellectual traditions, scholars have long-time argued that we are in a process of inescapable universal bureaucratization (Weber, 1994) or in a bureaucratic society (Castoriadis, 1988). Answering to demands of predictability and calculability, modern bureaucracy characterizes not just the state administration, but economic life, parties, churches, local communities, banks, cartels, cooperatives, factories or lobbies and its main

traits are division of labour, rational, technical specialization and training, evaluation through impartial procedures (Weber, 1994). Weber (1994) considered bureaucracy as inescapable, but thought that it increases efficiency, being a way in which to transform a social action into an action organized rationally. On the contrary, Robert Michels (1962) saw bureaucracy as potentially ending up in an oligarchic system, expressed through his iron law of oligarchy - "Who says organization, says oligarchy". By studying primarily, the German Social Democratic Party, radical in its aims at the time, Michels (1962) shows how the original political programme with its afferent goals was downgraded in favor of organizational expansion and bureaucracy. In a quest to preserve their own positions, elites become more concerned with organizational survival rather than following their initial goals, becoming alienated from the majority. Michels concludes that there is an incompatibility between democracy and large-scale organizations, arguing that mass organizations tend to become oligarchical, ruled by a small minority, displacing the radical initial aims of the organization (ibidem).

Michels (1962) 'iron law of oligarchy' penetrated the debates about the effects of bureaucracy and the centralization of power, among social movement scholars. In the sociology of social movements, bureaucratization refers to the formalization of social movement organizations in relation to decision-making processes, division of labour and archival record keeping (Staggenborg, 2013). While some scholars argue that there are advantages to bureaucratic organizations in terms of success and organizational survival, even though they are more likely to be co-opted by elites (Gamson, 1990), others show that movements of people who are poor can only succeed through mass insurgency with disruptive tactics and wasting time to build an organization is counter-productive and risks co-optation by elites (Piven and Cloward, 1977). Nevertheless, other scholars support Gamson's (1990) argument of organizational maintenance, as Suzanne Staggenborg (1988) who shows that the pro-choice movement in the United States formalized after the legalization of abortion, with professionalized staff maintained the movement alive in a period in which the battle for the abortion rights was apparently won, and supported afterwards when anti-choice Reagan came to power, the pro-choice grassroots mobilization through its formalized structures.

A bureaucratic social movement group is thought to possess a written document describing the purposes of the organization and rules for operations, a list of members to distinguish

between members and sympathizers, and three or more levels or internal divisions such as officers or executive committees or chapter heads and rank-and-file members (Gamson, 1990, 91). The bureaucratization of social movements appears in relation to a shift in functions historically served by social movement base that are taken over by paid staff, by the “bureaucratization of social discontent”, by mass campaigns financed by private foundations or the state (McCarthy and Zald, 1987, p. 340). Bureaucratization pressure increases more with sponsors that expect formal accountability chains, detailed reports on financial activities and internal monitoring. The pressure to deliver cost-effective results to grants and donations increase the need for further professionalization and bureaucratization.

For the feminist movement, bureaucratization was also related first, to the state’s embrace of women’s policy concerns that was regarded both as an important achievement, since it provided greater access to decision-making process and as a cause of concern because it was thought that bureaucratization potentially entails co-optation and depoliticization (Squires, 2012). Second, bureaucratization was also related to the shrinking of the welfare states and the externalization of substantial services to outside providers – with social movement organizations being the firsts to receive those contracts (Lang, 2013, 74). However, this concern related to seeing bureaucratization as a surrender to reformist politics holds for Western democracies; in the Global South and the European semi-periphery, securing the demands of the feminist movement through gender equality governmental bodies or women’s policy agencies have been seen as facilitating the achievement of movement goals (Alvarez, 1999).

But does bureaucratization entail more conservative goals and co-optation? Suzanne Staggenborg (1988) shows how the pro-choice movement in the United States, after formalization used more institutionalized tactics such as institutionalized advocacy or lobbying. However, she argues that institutionalized tactics do not necessarily involve conservative goals and while formalized organizations engage in institutionalized tactics, informal groups use direct action tactics that might be supported sometimes by formalized organizations as it was the case with the civil rights movement and with the pro-choice movement, both comprising multiple structures and organizations and different tactics (Staggenborg, 2013).

III. The role of funds and financial dependency in the process of NGO-ization

Feminists' concerns with the movement's autonomy from the state are thought to have commodified resistance and increased dependency on private market or international donors. Scholars have argued that dependency on foreign donors for funds has the effect of co-opting NGOs agendas (O'Reilly, 2014), contributing to depoliticization and demobilization of the movement, concerning the issues they struggle against, by adopting a softer approach, framed in terms of technical knowledge that complies with donor's demands. However, the relationship between social movement organizations and donors, and NGOs capacity to negotiate with funding bodies the frames and strategies of action should be analysed and understood through the lenses of North-South and East-West divisions and in the context of geopolitical transformations that engaged states during the last decades.

The neoliberal governance and the growing influence of NPM interested in outputs – meaning visible and quantifiable results of projects, transformed the terms under which funds are made available and the issues and strategies to be adopted by NGOs, away from consciousness-raising or community building (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 393). In the same time, the growth of transnational corporations and the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and humanitarian aid structures shaped the context in which the tension between resisting institutionalization and enabling grassroots feminist activism or collaborating with state bureaucracies and businesses while professionalizing, has been developing (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, p. 6).

If neoliberalism is conceptualized as the relationship between government and knowledge that articulates governing activities as non-political and non-ideological problems that need technical solutions (Ong, 2006, p.3), then the risks of reducing feminist interventions to short-term technical ones is factual. In this sense, neoliberalism became the condition of the possibility of the majority of NGOs' work (Grewal, 2005). One example of having feminist interventions reduced to technical ones is that of gender mainstreaming which – some scholars argue, in the context of reduced funding and political commitment, became subject to professional and specialized interventions rather than participatory ones (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 394; Outshoorn and Kantola, 2007: 278). At the supranational level of EU, gender mainstreaming is incorporated within the dominant neoliberal frame, under the logic of productive potential and human resources subdued to the marketized economic goals (True, 2009, p. 125). In the context of prioritizing efficiency and productivity, employment

and development, equal opportunities between women and men becomes a neoliberal good⁸. Since the EU represents the largest donor agency in Europe granting, among others, outreach funds to promote gender equality, raise awareness and improve analysis and evaluation, the neoliberal framing of gender equality through productivity and efficiency imposes itself as a meta-narrative both at the level of EU's strategies and policies and at the level of tendering for service providing or advocacy work of different NGOs. However, I should clarify that the vast majority of these funds are not granted to women NGOs or Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) who rank fifth after member states, local and regional authorities, other institutionalized bodies for gender equality and social partners, like businesses and large welfare associations (Lang, 2013, pp. 184-185; see also Lang, 2014 and Helms, 2014, p. 42). If NGOs want to participate in projects initiated by these larger actors they do so within the conditions set by institutions, meaning that institutional funding establishes the agenda and the frames that women NGOs need to work within (Lang, 2014, p. 275). Moreover, EU funds favour large, professional women NGOs over small groups lacking cash flow or grant-writing experience (Lang, 2014; Roth, 2007).

In the context of new forms of governance, the conditions under which funds are allocated to NGOs have been altered, as argued above. Different type of access to resources and funds affect the aims, strategies and tactics employed by activist groups and NGOs. NGOs might access domestic or international funds, from governmental bodies or from private businesses. Some organizations and groups can be autonomous in terms of resources, others totally dependent on state or private foundations or even hybrid in the sense of combining their autonomous resources with funds coming from governmental bodies or private businesses in order to meet their ends. The observed trends that characterize the relationship between social movement organizations and donors are first of all a pressure for professionalization, that would offer the legitimacy needed to gain funding, second of all, a pressure to contracting out gender expertise because the vast majority of donors do not propose long-term structural funding and ultimately elite patronage through funding requirements.

⁸ Giovanna Martelli, Gender Equality Adviser to the Prime Minister of Italy at the "Forum on the Future of Gender Equality in the European Union" organized by the European Commission between 20 and 21 April 2015 in Brussels, closed the session with a speech that articulated gender equality as a driving force for economic and market growth in the process of re-thinking the welfare state (REPORT, European Commission □ DG Justice and Consumers, Unit D.2 (Gender Equality) 1049 Brussels, Belgium, 10 June 2015; http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/future-of-gender-equality-2015/files/report_forum_gender_equality_en.pdf).

Within the process of NGO-ization, securing legitimacy in the eyes of donors means that NGOs start privileging expert communication and donor-speak language within professional organizations, over a public contestation language. There is an increased pressure to professionalize in order to acquire legitimacy for funders, that sometimes are decision-makers. Keck and Sikkink (1998) talk about “information politics” to describe this “politically usable” information produced by NGOs serving as alternative source of information by states or international institutions. This creates an inaccessible aloof framing of the political and social issues at the basis of NGOs actions privileging technical answers that require specialized “know-how”. Information politics, although being used to foster policy change, also means deciding what is technical and what is local knowledge and what are the experiences that count as significant (Guenther, 2009, p. 90).

Professionalization offered NGOs the legitimacy needed in order to gain funding. However, acquiring legitimacy also meant limiting the range of activities and strategies of NGOs, that become circumscribed by a donor decided mandate, generally more sympathetic towards the build-up of a professional entrepreneurial elite rather than mobilizing public constituencies. NGOs lack of engagement with publics is co-produced by donors’ philosophy, cushioned by the NGO-ization process (Lang, 2013, 86). Sponsors establish management-oriented performance criteria and choose to award grants and financial benefits to professional advocacy NGOs, with paid experts, that participate little or not at all in actions of public contention, such as disruptive protests and mobilizations. External funding is also thought to have accelerated the NGO-ization process, with feminist organizations and groups adopting more and more formal structures, employing professional experts, adopting pragmatic strategies and increasing specialization regarding the feminist issues they engage with (Lang, 1997).

Regarding the relationship between civil society and donors, in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), scholars emphasized that formalized and bureaucratized cadre-staff organizations learned to comply with the accountability requirements of foreign donors – writing applications, managing grants, focusing more on organizational matters rather than mobilizing constituencies (Jacobson and Saxonberg, 2013, 6). Reliance on foreign donors can also pressure NGOs to account more for the funder’s point of view rather than advancing their own agenda (Sloat, 2005). By contrast, international donor support is thought to have helped organizational capacity building and professionalization of civil society groups. In a context in which social movement organizations were unable to mobilize people in the

participatory form, they were successful in transactional activism⁹ that involved strategic networking and cooperative problem solving with public authorities and policy-makers (Jacobson, 2013; Cisar 2010, Petrova and Tarrow 2007). Looking at the environmental movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Fagan and Sircar (2013) show that membership fees and private donations comprise a negligible part of the funding for environmental organizations and if donors would withdraw entirely, most of the larger and more prominent organizations would disappear.

Another trend that portrays the relationship between social movement organizations and donors, supported by the NPM philosophy, is contracting out expertise. In the case of the feminist movement, the risk is that by contracting out gender expertise, the volatility of bureaucratic structures increases and makes it difficult to sustain long-term projects (Sawer, 2007, 27). There is a move from financing NGO structures themselves to funding individual projects. In Australia, whereas operational funding was previously made available to make the voices of those less privileged heard (such as the poor, Aboriginal, women), now it has been replaced by project-funding, related to competitive tendering for service provision, excluding completely representational or advocacy work (Sawer, 2007, 24-25). Some NGOs and movements managed to counter the risk of short-term logic imposed by project funding and contracting. For example, the coalition of feminists working to build-up the Women's Manifesto for Ghana initially refused funding in order to avoid short-term project logic and later were capable to negotiate the conditions of funding and accountability in their own terms. Nevertheless, in Ghana the lack of transparent distribution of funds contributed to rivalry among NGOs and undermined collaborations (Hodzic, 2014, pp. 234-235)¹⁰. The short-term logic derives, on the one hand, from contracting out gender expertise to gender mainstream projects related to other issues than women or gender, and on the other hand, from funding bodies who support NGOs through projects lasting from few months to two-three years.

This logic of funding through project-grants impedes politicizing local concerns that are considered at the basis of success of global women's movements (Hemment, 2014). For example, in Russia, the fight against violence against women became central for women

⁹ Petrova and Tarrow (2007, 79) define transactional activism as “the ties – enduring and temporary – among organized nonstate actors and between them and political parties, power holders and other institutions”

¹⁰ The coalition-building effort for “The Women's Manifesto for Ghana” was affected by existing inequalities and by donor-recipient relations (Hodzic, 2014, p. 237).

NGO's because international donors considered it part of a global project and concern, deflecting attention from class issues, material, financial forces that oppress women or other social justice problems (Hemment, 2014). While studying two models of "anti-crisis centre" - one for unemployed women and another for battered women, Julie Hemment concludes that the last one, by accepting the framing of violence against women backed by transnational campaigns, succeeded because it had a broad legitimacy among constituencies – Western donors and local administrations, and it was organizationally viable, both characteristics being the consequence of international donors' involvement and transnational feminist campaigns (2014, p. 132). She argues that the ideological consequence of the framing used in international campaigns is to hide that violence against women is a structural characteristic of liberal democratic capitalist regimes (Hemment, 2014, p. pp. 138-139). The Western support for democratization and the prominence of certain issues such as violence against women is contained within the discursive privatization of social restructuring and displacement during transition, depoliticizing the economic (ibidem, p. 138). With an increased drive to professionalize and a generalized scarcity of resources for civil society actors, there are still some NGOs that opposed resistance to institutionalization pressures and established their own financial and resource infrastructures connecting local resources, setting their particular agenda, close to grassroots, local goals (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, p. 5). For these NGOs, to keep an organizational material autonomy was very important.

Analysing the impact of project funding, scholars argued that contemporary funding practices involve new forms of control (Kantola and Squires 2012, p. 392), since NGOs receive not only funds from donors and other powerful institutions, but also agendas that shape strategies, practices and discourses, diminishing the voices of feminist activists (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, p. 5; see also Aksartova 2009). In CEE, besides accepting foreign grants, NGOs also accept to take on the responsibilities of the retreating welfare state. With the influx of financial resources through project grants, the organizational structure of NGOs becomes altered, contributing to the creation of new hierarchies and a flourishing of former elites, concluding that ultimately NGO-ization lead to the demobilization of social movements (Hemment, 2014, p. 124).

In CEE, while EU membership created new opportunities for women NGOs in terms of access to supranational institutions and EU funds, it also ensued the loss of financial support from previous donors as they assumed that these funds would not be necessary anymore

(Roth, 2007, 473). During the first decade of post-socialism sponsors were considered flexible, more sympathetic to local conditions, less rigid in bureaucratic terms and rather unconditional (Haskova, 2005). Some even argue that international funds contributed to the rebirth of civil society in post-socialist countries (Sloat, 2005), while others articulate their constraining effects in terms of driving NGOs towards professionalization, regulating their agenda and ruling out the non-fitting ones (Haskovà 2005). After adhesion, EU funds were made available that nevertheless penalized small NGOs that most of the times could not fulfil the requirements of EU donors, lacking resources¹¹ and know-how about the bureaucracy of structural funds¹², including grant writing. In CEE, Roth (2007, p. 473) shows that 90 percent of small women NGOs did not have access to EU funds¹³.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU as major donor and policy-maker redirected funds for projects from women NGOs who founded the first shelters for battered women towards the state considering that now it is state responsibility (Helms, 2014, p. 44-45). There is a shift, during the last years, in the EU subsidy policies and practices, from funding NGOs to subsidizing state agencies and governmental bodies. Civil society organizations are subsequently contracted by public institutions to play the role of a civil society expert with no decision-making power. Limited resources and EU funding might thus contribute to encourage institutional advocacy and preserving a good relationship between gender experts and EU institutions or national agencies. Engaging larger publics is discouraged because it might produce mission and strategy drift that would in turn threaten the relationship between gender experts and EU institutions (Lang, 2013, pp. 201).

NGO-ization is induced to a certain extent by elite patronage through funding requirements. One of the first incentives of social movements to NGO-ize is to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of donors (Lang, 2013, p. 75). The participation in institutional politics gave feminist NGOs legitimacy, recognition and knowledge about accessing grants, that subsequently

¹¹ The majority of EU Funds are complementary and not awarded retroactively, thus NGOs need to have “cash-flow” if they want to apply to these funds. See also Roth (2007).

¹² The five Structural Funds (European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), Cohesion Fund (CS), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)) are funds that work together to support economic, social and territorial cohesion and deliver the objectives of the EU's Europe 2020 strategy to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/structural_cohesion_fund.html).

¹³ EQUAL is funded through the European Social Fund and aims to develop strategies to fight against all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labor market (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal_consolidated).

contributed to policy success (Lang, 2014, p. 282). It is expected that an increase in funding produce durable engagement with professionalization, institutionalization and bureaucratization.

To summarize, within the social movements literature, NGOs' relationship with funds is mostly analysed in terms of the dichotomy autonomy/dependency. Social movement organizations' or NGOs dependency on funds and donors contribute to a change in their organizational structure, towards professionalization and bureaucratization and an alteration in strategies, tactics and practices. These transformations include a shift from public campaigns and mass mobilization to institutional advocacy, a technical framing of problems to be solved in the terms set by the donors rather than the local understanding of the issues at stake, a deepening of the gap between experts and other organizational elites and political constituencies. There are often discrepancies between the programmes and objectives of the projects implemented by NGOs and the reality of constituents on the ground (Lang, 2013, 221). There are mismatches between the initial intentions of NGOs when writing a project and the possibilities of implementation, given the existing resources. In this sense, the logic of grants amplifies the possibilities of **goal** displacement. To answer or to counter these effects Sabine Lang (2013, p. 220) suggests that it is governments and businesses who act as funders that could encourage NGOs to become more engaged with constituents by loosening conditions that restrict political participation and strategies of action, meaning to let NGOs talk politics. Letting NGOs talk failure might also support and encourage further commitment within communities and with larger constituencies.

Nevertheless, the risk of neoliberal co-optation remains and refers to NGOs being embedded in "transnational circuits of neoliberal power", caught within financial relations with donors, governments and neoliberal dynamics that situate them between powerful dominating actors or forces and the marginalized and vulnerable people they want to engage with and deliver for (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, p. 4). Co-optation will be examined in the next section as an outcome of the NGO-ization process together with demobilization and depoliticization.

IV. The risks entailed by the NGO-ization process and its impact on contemporary women's movements

The defining characteristics of NGO-ization are increased professionalization resulting in paid experts and femocrats, institutionalization with a focus on institutional public advocacy and bureaucratization with hierarchization and dependence on external funding, privileging a donor driven agenda rather than a local one (See Lang, 2013; Costa, 2014). Evidence-based policy-making creates the need for expert knowledge and research that can be provided in conditions of great organizational stability and expanded funding driving women's organizations towards professionalization (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 387). The growth in consultancy services with professional gender experts¹⁴ fits the new management style of neoliberal governance praising economic technical rather than political frames. These dimensions and dynamics characterizing the NGO-ization process are thought to entail various outcomes. While the literature on NGO-ization, on the institutionalization and professionalization of social movements almost always mentions the effects of co-optation, demobilization and depoliticization occasioned by these processes, scholars however do not always seem to agree if there is a causal relation or a co-occurrence one and what kind of causal relation between these processes if there is one. In what follows, I will examine mainly the processes of depoliticization, demobilization and co-optation and their analysis within the literature.

One of the outcomes of the NGO-ization process is thought to be the *depoliticization* of social movements. Depoliticization is the action of causing a previously or potential political activity or event to become apolitical, to be removed from political influence by managing it through technical and objective social scientific knowledge. It appears in the context of an increase in importance of evidence-based policy-making, creating the need for expert knowledge and research that can be provided in conditions of great organizational stability and expanded funding, driving women's organizations towards professionalization (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 387). In evidence-based policy-making the role of external actors – such as women's movement organizations and women's policy agencies – is to supply policy-relevant technical knowledge rather than to envision political alternatives or new

¹⁴ Feminist NGOs advocated for the introduction of the profession of expert in equality of chances within the Classification of Professions in Romania (COR). Their advocacy was successful and the profession was introduced through Order no. 1419/328/2014 of the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, regarding the amendment and supplementation of the Classification of Occupations in Romania - level of occupation (six characters) that was published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 631 of August 28, 2014

www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Munca/DO-legislatie/MOf_631_Ordin_INS_COR_august_2014.pdf
accessed July 14, 2019

agendas. The result is a growth in consultancy services with professional gender experts¹⁵ that fits the new management style of neoliberal governance favouring economic and technical rather than political frames, with depoliticizing effects on feminist activists and women's agencies.

While the turn to professional expertise provides new opportunities for making new claims, it encapsulates demands within the case of objective scientific knowledge (Kantola and Squires, 2012, p. 388) and it constrains the options of feminist organizations by closing off political spaces that may be considered too politicized or unconventional (Laforest and Orsini, 2005, 483–484), losing the political side of demands framing. In this view, the contractual relationship between women's NGOs, states and sometimes market actors might adjust and accommodate feminists' critiques, contain and reframe the more radical messages. Thus, it strengthens a donor-oriented articulation of political problems in an issue-specific and expert culture and language. This trend is specific of the managerial dynamics of neoliberal governance, with a focus on consultancy services that can entail very depoliticizing effects on activists or women's agencies (Kantola and Squires, 2012, 395).

The global articulation between NGO-ization and depoliticization can be understood through the loss of the political side of framing through a focus on technical, objective expertise in gender, development or LGBTQIA (Jaoul, 2017, 3). Julien Salingue (2015) shows in the case of Palestine how professionalization entailed the depoliticization of the activist leaders and a marginalization of militants with some of them becoming professionals in NGOs focusing on development and giving up the national liberation struggle.

Moreover, depoliticization is amplified by the fact that the professional experts employed in NGOs do not necessarily think of themselves as activists but rather through the lenses of their profession and occupational status (Helms E., 2014). While feminist commitment and militancy was an important driver for the development of gender equality policies and a source of legitimacy for the feminist struggle and actors, now it loses value in professional terms for more legal and technical expertise or managerial skills (Paternotte and Meier,

¹⁵ Feminist NGOs advocated for the introduction of the profession of expert in equality of chances within the Classification of Professions in Romania (COR). Their advocacy was successful and the profession was introduced through Order no. 1419/328/2014 of the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, regarding the amendment and supplementation of the Classification of Occupations in Romania - level of occupation (six characters) that was published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 631 of August 28, 2014 (www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Munca/DOlegislatie/MOf_631_Ordin_INS_COR_august_2014.pdf).

2017).

Other scholars criticize the use of the master narrative of neoliberalism as depoliticization that ignores the complex history of women's movements that were not all uniformly progressive and radical and emphasize the different trajectories that states have and the diverse local teleologies and temporalities within which neoliberal global capitalist politics became immersed, with different consequences for the feminist movements and activism (Hodžić, 2014; Bernal and Grewal, 2014).

A second outcome of NGO-ization is considered to be the *demobilization* of social movements. Demobilization represents the process through which a social movement industry, organization, campaign or individuals engaged within collapse, break or withdraw their commitment to a specific social and political cause. The political context, the success and failure of a movement or campaign, the general decline in a cause and the professionalization of a movement are factors that affect demobilization. Focusing on processes leading to withdrawal, scholars identified three factors: exhaustion of the rewards of involvement, the loss of ideological meaning and the transformation of relations of sociability (Fillieule, 2016). Besides the political climate, the erosion of ideological beliefs is thought to be related to the success rather than the decline of a movement, especially through the achievement of some demands and the institutionalization of some movements¹⁶, included in the decision-making process within the state or to a rupture of consensus causing factions and splinter groups leading to demobilization (ibidem).

The growth in importance of evidence-based policy-making leads NGOs to focus on knowledge production, furthering what are considered as legitimate claims, framed in terms of professional expertise to policy-makers while giving up contentious modes of advocacy (Laforest and Orsini, 2005). Thus, the price of professionalization is that it often entails a loss of militant interest and activist engagement of some actors within the gender equality struggle that equals demobilization (Jacquot, 2017; Lafon, 2017; Celis and Opello, 2017).

While professional expertise increases policy influence, its growing importance among feminist activists contributed in turn to a diminished involvement with constituencies, popular women, and larger public, leading to demobilization (Lang, 2013, p. 86). In short,

¹⁶ The institutionalization of the gay movement at the end of the 1970s and the emergence of state feminism are such examples. Institutionalization can contribute both to demobilization and goal displacement.

public policy expertise and PR gained over public engagement and mobilization amplified by the fact that NGO-ization discourages the build-up of relations with constituencies beyond donations. This causes an increase in strategic dimensions over substantive dimensions that characterize the relationship between organizations and their public (Lang 2013, p. 87). NGOs sometimes strategically manage constituencies instead of building up publics and together a channel to make people's voices heard.

Examining the civil rights movement, Jenkins and Eckert (1986) confirm the demobilization effect of professionalization and elite funding on social movements. The prevalent demobilization is supported by limited public discussion and lack of alternative repertoires fostered by an institutional environment channelling political action¹⁷. NGO-ization contributes to a change in tactical repertoire from activism to advocacy, mainly institutional advocacy, being another indicator of the shift in the relationship with NGOs' constituency from engaging with to speaking for, rather than a political strategy of transformation (Lang, 2013, p. 91). The explanation is the lack of incentives to engage in public advocacy except signing a petition or email political representatives (Lang, 2013, p. 206). The consequence is that public advocacy remains in the hands of a few well-funded large actors and their interests that might undermine the actual base of civil society (Lang, 2013, p. 209).

By acquiring high institutional legitimacy, NGO-ization might increase policy success with the sacrifice of public advocacy and constituencies' participation, leading toward inward orientation and an "organization-first" approach and ultimately threatens the build-up and maintenance of democratic publics (Lang, 2013; see also Hodzic, 2014). Since NGOs act as proxies for publics without necessarily strengthening their public engagement capacity, scholars examined the conditions and configurations that enable NGOs to develop stronger public accountability (Lang, 2013, pp. 203-205). Enhancing and restoring public accountability is fundamental to give NGOs the possibility to both engage with the critiques of NGO-ization and to safeguard their goals and actions through searching for normative public legitimation (Lang, 2013, p. 205). Critical junctures and enabling governance might incentivize NGOs to become more committed to their constituency and to have a stronger voice (*ibidem*, p. 211).

Nevertheless, as the above studies show, social movement scholars tended to have an

¹⁷ Lang (2009) identifies a relevant instance in the demobilization around poverty issues in the United States, challenged lately by the Occupy Movement.

“either/or” approach to militant organizations (Jacobson and Saxonberg, 2013), meaning either they engage in contentious actions and mobilize large publics or they are professional activists or experts in NGOs providing services, engaging with institutional advocacy, disconnecting from their constituency. In the edited volume by Jacobson and Saxonberg (2013) scholars show that social movement organizations in CEE often combine contention and occasional mass mobilization with service provision and institutional advocacy.

Another outcome of NGO-ization is *co-optation*. The co-optation of social movements is thought to be entailed by challengers’ interaction with dominant institutions, state or vested interests, that is very much encouraged by the process of NGO-ization. Co-optation was addressed by the sociology of organizations and social movements literature but also in feminist studies.

One of the first to address co-optation was Philip Selznick (1949, 13) in a study on Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) where he defines co-optation as the process of absorbing new elements into the structure of a hegemonic organization in order to avoid threats to its existence and stability. Initially, cooptation was associated with state institutions and the political system, since the state was the main target of social movements, but today the concept extends to private actors. Thus, co-optation can appear in relation to both public and private authorities, the state and the market. According to William Gamson (1968), cooptation emerges when: (1) moderate challengers gain access to the public policy process without producing policy changes (this might abate radical challengers and messages); (2) targets, antagonists, sponsors appropriate and redefine the discourses of the challengers; (3) by financial donors (public or private actors) who channel, transform and reorient the mandate of the social movement; (4) through the adoption of empty-forms-without-substance. In a later study, Gamson (2006) refers to co-optation as one possible outcome of social movements out of four. The two clusters of the outcome measures are “acceptance”, that is concerned with the fate of a challenging group as an organization and “new advantages” that refers to the distribution of new benefits to the movement’s beneficiaries (Gamson, 2006, pp. 113-114). Co-optation appears when there is an acceptance of the movement without new advantages.

Co-optation as a process was conceptualized by Coy and Hedeem in 2005, using the case of US community mediation movement and its co-optation by the state legal system. They have

identified four stages of the process. First, the inception stage captures the movement formation, their demands for change, the potential establishment of alternative institutions and the perception of the need to reform by dominant institutions (Coy and Hedeem, 2005, 410-412). The second stage is appropriation, first by language and technique and then via inclusion and participation (*ibidem*, 413-415). Appropriation by language and techniques includes the adoption of the language and methods of the movement and their employment and redefinition against the initial purposes. Appropriation via inclusion and participation has three steps. The first one is channelling which refers to the efforts of hegemonic groups to undermine the movement and reorient it away from their substantive goals towards the acceptance of moderate reforms. The second step is inclusion and participation of movement actors within policy-making committees, agencies and other governmental bodies and includes restricted participation to decision-making and power sharing. The third step is salience/control and it refers to the pacification of movement concerns over critical issues under the impression that those concerns are adequately dealt with and there is no more of a necessity for them to put pressure. The third stage of co-optation is assimilation of movement people and their goals through employment within dominant structures, through state certified training programmes, guidelines and policies (*ibidem*. 420-424). The carrot-and-stick mousetrap of funding is thought to pressure organizations to pursue specific goals. The last stage is regulation/response. Here, the state and other dominant institutions routinize, standardize, legislate practices and regulate qualifications of providers putting pressure to professionalize certain social services and endorsing dependence upon experts. Social movements might develop reactive strategies and measures to protect their alternative institutions, practices and cultures.

Within the feminist and post-colonial studies, scholars have also contributed to the debates on co-optation. Analysing the US feminist movement, Ferree and Hess (2000, 141) identify as dangers of co-optation when being absorbed within policy structures against which the movement has been fighting or when feminist movement and leaders are used to promote the goals of other groups and leaders than theirs. Studying the EU gender policies, Maria Stratigaki (2004) shows how the process of co-optation took place in the case of reconciliation between work and family life that shifted meaning from an understanding with feminist potential in the sense of encouraging sharing family responsibilities, to a market-oriented goals understanding that encourages flexible forms of employment. The original meaning of the concept of reconciliation between work and family life, introduced by

feminists and inspired by a feminist philosophy has been transformed and lost its potential for transforming gender relations (Stratigaki, 2004, 32). In the co-optation process, a concept is not rejected but its meaning transformed and used for a different purpose in policy discourse (ibidem, 36). Co-optation undermines gender equality, first through the fact that shifting the meanings of a concept that allows for a gradual and unnoticed deterioration of policy impact on gender equality and second through undermining mobilization and pressure around an issue, because the claim appeals to be dealt with, although it is no longer used in the original sense (Stratigaki, 2004, 36). This equals with the third stage of co-optation – salience/control, in Coy and Hedeem (2005) model that refers to the pacification of concerns that seem to be approached adequately by state and vested interests.

The neoliberal co-optation of feminism is addressed by Nancy Fraser in a polemical article from 2013 published in 'The Guardian' – *How feminism became capitalism's handmaiden ó and how to reclaim it* and also in her 2013 book "Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to the Neoliberal Crisis". Fraser (2013; see also Fraser and Honneth 2003) claims that there was a shift from redistribution to recognition claims within the feminist movement, that downplayed the critique of political economy in a moment in which it was much needed, specifically when neoliberal capitalism was at its rise. She argues that feminist critiques of economism, androcentrism, étatism and Westphalianism were resignified in the context of rising neoliberalism with attacks from free-marketers of the welfare and developmental states. First, the shift from redistribution to recognition decoupled feminism from a critique of capitalism previously embraced. Second, feminist critique of androcentrism and the family wage characteristic of state-organized capitalism was resignified by neoliberalism and it serves today to intensify the valorisation of waged labour by capitalism. Third, feminist critique of bureaucratic paternalism that originally aimed to transform state power into a channel for social justice is now recuperated by neoliberalism and used to legitimate marketization and welfare state retrenchment (Fraser, 2013, 222). In postcolonies, the critique of state androcentrism favoured a move towards NGOs that emerged to fill in the space emptied by state shrinking, having the effect of depoliticizing the grassroots and distorting the agenda of local groups in the direction of Western donors (ibidem, 221). Lastly, feminist critique of Westphalianism, proved ambivalent in the era of neoliberalism. Thus, what began as an attempt to build up a transnational social justice movement, beyond the nation state, through the organization of UN women conferences and

engagement with EU apparatus, spotting local abuses and shaming states, transformed into a gap between professionals and grassroots through intensified “NGO-ification” (ibidem, 223).

Angela McRobbie (2009) also argues that feminism has been instrumentalized. She shows how feminist elements such as “empowerment” and “choice”, have been incorporated into the political and institutional life and converted into a greatly individualistic discourse claimed by Western governments to define freedom for the rest of the world (McRobbie, 2009, 1). The discourse on women’s empowerment in the post-financial crisis context marks the rise of a political-economic project termed by Adrienne Roberts (2015) as “transnational business feminism” referring to the joint efforts of liberal feminists together with states, funding institutions, NGOs and multinational corporations to construct women as brand-new resources capable of providing high returns in Western investment. This perspective resonates with Kantola and Squires (2012) idea of a shift from state feminism to market feminism today.

In 2017, the “International Feminist Journal of Politics” published a thematic section within its second issue, on the “The co-optation of feminisms: a research agenda”¹⁸. Anna C. Korteweg contributed with a paper to the special section, aiming to re-think the notion of co-optation by proposing a framework that distinguishes between the “who” and the “what” of co-optation and illustrating it by drawing from research on Sharia-based arbitration debate that took place in Ontario between 2003 and 2006. Co-optation, as a form of erasure, occurs as attempts to advance liberation further instead of illiberal practices (Korteweg, 2017, 2). In the Sharia-based arbitration debate “gender equality” becomes the “what” and “immigrant women” the “who” of co-optation. Starting from the definition proposed by Stratigaki (2004) in which co-optation refers to the transformation of the initial meaning of a concept and its use in the policy discourse for a different goal than the original one, Korteweg (2017, 4) identifies the co-optation of gender equality, originally understood as a liberal project that becomes a neoliberal one which grants some access to power and resources to certain categories of women and certain categories of men. “Gender equality” functions thus as an empty signifier that becomes eloquent in relation to liberal concepts such as progress and might not even be about gender in its own but it might be a value of elites that helps preserve social hierarchies, including those related to post-colonial settler nation-states (Korteweg,

¹⁸ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14616742.2016.1191286> accessed July 14, 2019

2017, 4). This is the “what” of the co-optation, a political process that diminishes the liberatory potential ingrained in our notions of freedom as practice (ibidem, 3).

The “who” of co-optation starts with the radical idea that there is no a priori liberated subject and actors are embedded in social structures that contribute to the production of both discourse and practice, where freedom as practice make some freer to act than others (Korteweg, 2017, 3). Here, co-optation results from the power differentials between political actors, whose agency is embedded and shaped by – though not determined – structural contexts and conditions, where those who are less free to imagine or enact their liberation have their ideas and discursive practices mimicked by the more powerful actors (ibidem). The “who” of co-optation “reflects political actors whose subjectivity becomes defined (by self or others) in ways that support illiberal ends.” (ibidem).

What does this conceptualization of co-optation brings new is shifting the puzzle from how to avoid co-optation, or pollution through political engagement with hegemonic institutions and structures, in the light of “this” pure a priori form of participation, to how to understand when engagement produces liberation versus when does it contributes towards growing inequality and exploitation (Korteweg, 2017). The proposed solution when identifying co-optation is not to stop political engagement, nor to see co-optation as the end of agency, but to critically examine what is going on in the field of politics, to see the “who” and the “what” produced in politics through an understanding of subjectivity produced through the dynamic interaction of political engagement (Korteweg, 2017, 7). The empirical evidence produced by Korteweg (2017) shows that the interaction between the “what” and the “who” of co-optation produced universalizing practices questioned by the postcolonial theories. By separating the “what” and the “who” of co-optation, Korteweg (2017, 13) shows how second wave feminist claims contributed to the racialization of immigrant communities without revealing also how those involved in defining women’s equality have lost agency. The open question is whether co-optation represents the contemporary hegemonic mode of political engagement (ibidem, 14).

In the same thematic section on the co-optation of feminisms, Srila Roy interviews Inderpal Grewal (2017) about co-optation and intersectionality. Both authors brought important contributions to feminist movement theory, and lately about the NGO-ization paradigm. Inderpal Grewal (in Roy 2017) makes an important contribution to the debates about co-optation challenging the ideas of purity and autonomy of a movement. In “Transnational America”, Grewal (2005) argues that if co-optation is a loss of feminism to other movements

and institutions in terms of subject or strategies, we should also acknowledge that feminism was never about gender alone and that theories of post-colonialism and intersectionality revealed this fact and showed how a gendered subject is co-constructed with other social movements and institutions. She maintains that the idea of an autonomous feminism is untenable because it suggests a need for a pure subject of feminism that dismisses some kinds of feminist activism such as the intersectional feminist activism or the young feminism, and also because there was no moment in which feminism was not attached to an institution, be it the empire, the state or the market (Roy, 2017, 1).

Intersectionality offers the grounds to capture the complex history of the feminist movement and of identity and a way out of a narrative of co-optation that assumes a coherent and one-dimensional feminist movement in its language and tactics with a pure identity produced through white privilege and imperial subject (Grewal in Roy, 2017, 6). Inderpal Grewal (Roy, 2017, 7) reveals thus the normative formulations in concepts such as co-optation and NGOs as neoliberal imperial evil based on this romantic vision of an “autonomous” feminism outside the state, showing that NGOs are integral part of feminist politics today, making women recognizable as a specific version of women that becomes naturalized and universalized. She proposes to think about NGO women as a new professional class taking into account class and globalization to reveal what kind of subjects and feminisms are being produced and what is possible to do within NGOs for imperial and anti-imperial feminisms (Grewal in Roy, 2017, 7-8). Finally, Grewal (2017) proposes to address co-optation by looking how institutions, states, corporations, NGOs, the EU and communities take up feminist ideas and use them, but beyond this viewpoint of a pure autonomous movement. She proposes to search for ways on how to address neoliberalism as a problem without producing this prior pure autonomous subject.

In general, studies tend to show that co-optation softens radical demands when moderate challengers join the official authority structures or choose to cooperate with them. For the feminist movement, institutionalization and the focus on influencing the public policy process is thought to have tempered the demands of more radical challengers and while moderate activists gain visibility and influence through the development of state feminism and inclusion in women’s agencies, or more recently corporate influence through neoliberal and market feminism. More radical feminist challengers and their claims become invisible. Co-optation in this sense is thought to support demobilization and depoliticization. But

besides moderation in strategies that implies a move away from transgressive politics and tactical repertoires towards de-escalation or freezing of social movements, co-optation can also result in goal displacement. Goal displacement can refer to means/ends inversion; goals conflict; goals substitution; abstract goals. Nevertheless, Jenkins (1998) considers that the thesis of co-optation overstates the importance of dependence on sponsors and he proposes the term “channelling” to describe the impact of funding bodies on social movements. In this sense, Jacobson (2013, 35) found that donors channelling movements through professionalization have contributed to the development of their organizational capacity. Contrasting the thesis of co-optation through donor dependency, Cisar (2010) showed that in some cases sponsors can contribute to the radicalization of movements, as it was the case with the environmental movement in Czech Republic where conservative constituencies were not that open.

V. Critiques of NGO-ization and discussion

Scholars have shown that the NGO-ization paradigm that currently coordinates feminist knowledge about NGOs, both obscures and reveals power relations within feminist organizing (Hodzik, 2014, p. 222). NGO-ization is more than a descriptive category but an evaluative one that understands this phenomenon as detrimental to feminism. Within the debate about the NGO-ization of feminist movement different areas of critique and debate have crystalized around women NGOs as promoters of neoliberalism, around the autonomy of the feminist movement, dependence on donors and co-optation of their agenda and around professionalization and an expert-driven activist politics.

More than a proliferation of professional organizations, NGO-ization is described as actively promoting neoliberalism at national and global level, as officially endorsing particular organizational forms and strategies among feminist groups and other sectors of civil society (Alvarez, 2014, p. 287). New women subjects, created by NGOs, are either the victims, beneficiaries of projects or those with the potential capabilities of becoming agents or professional gender experts (Alvarez, 2014, p. 306). Nevertheless, feminist NGOs benefit certain types of women, while representing and constructing new categories of women, being both a neoliberal form and a site of struggle for feminist movement activism (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, p. 15). While NGOs might reproduce existing gender, class, racial, social divisions, that are endorsed by the transnational neoliberal context of the NGO form or by the

logic and agenda of donors, NGOs might also contribute to politicizing new struggles related to social, political and economic cleavages that marginalize some women while benefitting others – an aspect that would also demystify women as a homogenous category¹⁹.

Looking at the rapport between women's movement and the state, scholars have asked what kind of subjects are being produced through this relationship: active political subjects or/and regulated, subordinated and disciplined ones (Brown, 1995, 173). Following Chatterjee (2004) who considers that governmental programmes go beyond bureaucratized and submissive subjects, Sharma (2014, p. 110) argues that in postcolonial context governmental programmes might generate dissidence, capacity for contentious political mobilization and openings for subaltern political struggles showing an interplay between depoliticization and repoliticization under neoliberalism. In the same line, looking at NGO girls in Kolkata, India, and the femininities enabled by these NGOs under the tropes of economic independence and women empowerment, supported by the global development agendas, liberalization and the NGO-ization of the feminist movement, Romani (2015) argues that while some women are successful in using NGO femininities to their benefit, not all women are able to access NGO gender narratives to their advantage. She argues that while for some women NGO femininities might serve as a means to subvert class and gender hierarchies, for those women at the intersection of multiple marginalities, of class, sexuality, (dis)ability, caste, as well as other social relations, and personal experiences, NGO femininities can obstruct their effort to improve their everyday life.

Besides enhancing neoliberal modes of governance, another anxiety of feminist scholars is that NGO-ization by endorsing professionalization substantially transforms the feminist movement by bringing to the forefront a professional middle-class elite of women, deepening the gap between these NGO gender experts and the grassroots activists and communities of rural and refugee women for example (Jad, 2010, 345). Feminists also fear that through professionalization, the new young generation of activists meet feminist politics through paid employment in NGOs (Roy, 2015, 98). The pressure to professionalize is amplified by the requirements and conditions to access and gain funds, as donors consider legitimate the specialized, policy-relevant expert knowledge produced within professional bureaucracies

¹⁹ Even if women are not a homogenous category, difference does challenge and make more difficult solidarity building. Costa (2014, 187) shows that in Thailand class, education level and geographic location structure the relationship between women located differently.

(Alvarez, 1998). With formalized structures and managerial, hierarchical modes of functioning, activists and scholars worry that feminist NGOs begin to resemble corporations and fear a “9 to 5isation of women’s movement” and the development of a “career feminism” (Roy, 2015, 107). Chakravarty describes ‘career feminists’ as activists who are specialized in one issue of intervention such as sexual harassment, reproductive rights, sexuality, micro-credit and other areas and who do not have an extensive comprehension of the interrelatedness of these issues and complexity of patriarchal practices (Chakravarty n.d., cited in Roy, 2015, 107). Thus, feminists’ concerns related to the professionalization of the women’s movement through NGO-ization is that activists practice feminism as a profession, with no political commitment.

Critical accounts of NGO-ization emphasize relevant questions about the possible success of feminist NGOs considering their dependence on institutions and donors. Sabine Lang (1997, 113) interrogates about how feminist NGOs could engage successfully in more structural transformation of the political agendas and not do just “social repair work”, considering that they are dependent on those structures that they want to change. NGOs’ dependence on funding bodies and compliance with their requirements raises responsibility questions whether they are accountable to the constituency they claim to serve or to the donors on whom they rely for financial survival (Roy, 2015, 105). In Palestine, Jad (2010, 369) argues that the NGO-ization process enhanced by foreign, especially Western funding contributed to the fragmentation and demobilization of all social movements and in particular of the national secular women’s movement. Henderson (2002) also shows how in Russia grants support the fragmentation of civil society incentivizing smaller organizations rather than bigger ones in the competition for resources. Related to demobilization, Jacobson (2013) shows how in Poland, the animal rights movement gave up mobilizing new members and avoided disruptive tactics considered illegitimate by the larger public but also because they would impact on their resource mobilization opportunities.

Dependence on external institutions and donors is considered to increase the gap of accountability between local constituencies and funders, producing a kind of de-coupling of movement organizations from the public. But with the increase in professionalization there is also a de-coupling that is being produced between professional activists and rank-and-file activists. Social movement organizations are thought to become co-opted, in the sense of being encouraged to follow the principles and agendas of donors, rather than their goals or

values of their constituencies. Another effect of donors' dependency driven by the NGO-ization process is demobilization, in terms of engaging in non-disruptive tactics and moderation in strategies and ideological stances (Jacobson and Saxonberg, 2013, 6). These interlinks between SMOs or NGOs and funding bodies is thought to contribute to de-radicalization in terms of claims and framing and a loss of the critical perspective.

The much-valued autonomy of the feminist movement was thought to be able to solve these criticisms related to NGOs relationship with state institutions and funding bodies. Sacrificing the political autonomy of a movement organization to external donors, be them governments, private bodies, international organizations seemed to be wrong in the sense of deterring social movements and NGOs from their goals. Nevertheless, critical accounts of NGO-ization emphasized that the concept of autonomy and agency related to external actors is much of a normative prospect (Roy, 2015) that was build up from a romanticized vision of past women's movements from the second wave, thought to be autonomous and radical, leaving no room for co-optation or negotiation of their goals. But scholars argue that there was no moment in which the feminist movement was unattached in a way or another to state institutions or other movements and actors. And this kind of nostalgic vision of a past pure feminist movement left outside the contributions of many feminisms – intersectional, postcolonial, queer that are not articulated exclusively around gender but in which the gendered subject is co-constructed with other social movements and institutions (Grewal, 2005). Moreover, Grewal (Grewal in Roy, 2017, 7) argues that the state cannot be left out, giving the example of black feminists in the US who work with the state to reduce mandatory sentencing or Dalit feminists who agree with reservation policies that give jobs and educational preferences to their communities that have been denied to them for centuries.

Accounts that bluntly associate feminist activism or other social movements in which NGOs play a major role, with the pursuit of a neoliberal agenda might misunderstand the local realities and struggles, especially of those most marginalized. Trying to provide a more nuanced vision of the NGO-ization theory, many scholars have showed both some of the positive aspects of NGO-ization process and the internal contradictions and complexities of social movements such as lack of autonomy, donor dependency, co-optation and professionalization with paid activists. For example, Jaoul argues that NGO-ization is an effort to support full-time activism and the pursue of radical agendas without being repressed. He argues that in the case of the Dalit movement, NGO-ization, far from leading to

depoliticization, is more of a political opportunity to further “a history of proletarian upsurge within the Dalit movement” (2017, 14), and to advance subaltern claims and a radical intersectional agenda that takes into account caste, class and gender (ibidem). In CEE, scholars challenged the donor dependency thesis and the related depoliticization showing how in some cases international funding supported the pursue of radical claims and issues that previously were taboo. They also show that while some NGOs learned to play the funding game, others refused to do so (Henderson 2002, 156) and that some social movement organizations developed productive relationships with local policy-makers, instead of international donors (Hryciuk and Korolczuk, 2013).

To conclude, there is a need to move beyond figures of purity and contamination associated with the NGO-ization paradigm and attached to contemporary women’s movement, to historicize and contextualize the work of NGOs, as Hodzick suggests (2014) to account for the politics of location, through rich ethnographic accounts that might provide a key to addressing neoliberalism without producing a pure prior feminist subject and to understanding the NGO-ization of social movements through intersectional accounts that reveal the complexity of both identity and social structures beyond the narratives of co-optation that produce a pure, one-dimensional movement (Grewal in Roy 2017). In contrast, a contextualized and intersectional perspective would allow to reveal the contradictions, inequalities and struggles inherent to many social movements including the feminist one and to show how NGOs are part of the feminist movement today, what kind of subjects are being produced and to demarcate the processes related to NGO-ization without falling into normative and romanticized visions of feminism.

Chapter II. Feminist research for sciences from below

A central set of concerns with the objectivity and value-freedom of research today is about the fairness and responsibilities of researchers and their philosophies of research. Is a particular piece of research, or a favoured way of doing research, maximally fair and responsible to the data and to the severest criticism it does and could receive? Have the fears, desires, and interests of the most economically and politically vulnerable groups been considered? How will the lives of people in those groups be affected by a particular piece of

research, should it come to direct policy—and do those people have a say in whether and how the research will be done? (Harding, 2015, x)

I. A brief overview of the social and political conditions for scientific research and its philosophy

As important as the question of who participates in scientific research decision-making processes is the query of whose agendas are being pursued in terms of whose concepts, hypothesis, research designs and understandings about nature and social relations are supported in multicultural democracies (Harding, 2015, xi). Feminist research on epistemology and methodologies has its origins in the understandings and struggles of women largely excluded from the production of knowledge, and it is based on the acknowledgement of the importance of women's lived experiences that reveals the subjugated knowledge, linking at the same time feminism and activism, academy and women's daily life, eliminating the boundaries that privilege dominant forms of knowledge building, thus marking who can be a knower and what can be known (Hesse-Biber S. N., 2007, 3).

Feminist social scientists started from questioning the positivist ideals and assumptions about the possibility of a completely detached and value free researcher and advanced different principles of investigation and analysis that are coherent with the feminist aims of making visible women's experiences and denounce gender inequality (Taylor, 1998). Although considerable academic attention has been given to the study of the feminist movement or of women's movement, social movement scholars have showed little concern with the epistemological and methodological questions examined by a growing body of literature that endorse feminist research or standpoint approaches, although these epistemologies and methodologies from below emerged precisely in the context of social justice movements during the late 60s. The end of Western colonialism, the fall of the Soviet Union, the outset of globalization and information age and the rise of social justice movements emphasize the necessity of rethinking the "logic of scientific discovery" (Popper 1959) whose effects often work against progressive social movements stirrings (Harding, 2015, 4).

Positivism as a dominant research paradigm is based on the "scientific method" of inquiry grounded on logic and empiricism. Positivism starts from a particular epistemology of knowing holding that the truth is standing out in the social reality and the researcher can

discover and unveil it with the condition of being “objective” and “value-free” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, 8). Positivism establishes causal relationships between variables that are tested through hypothesis a priori formulated by deducing them from theories. The purpose is to be able to generalize the findings and establish causal laws that predict human behaviour. For, positivists there “is only *one* logic of science, to which any intellectual activity aspiring to the title of ‘science’ must conform” (Keat and Urry, 1975, 19).

Feminist scholars and philosophers of science criticized positivism on multiple grounds. First, the concept of scientific objectivity and the value-free and universal research that reside on the researchers’ detachment of her own values and attitudes in the research process have been questioned, considering that one cannot detach from the subjective reasoning and experience as a researcher. Adding to this, Alison Jaggar (1997) argued that emotions and values are critical aspects of the research process which shall be recognized as such and validated. Moreover, historian Joan Scott (1991) questions the positivist assumption of a direct relationship between experience that gives access to the social reality because, she argues, it is impossible to place ourselves outside the language (or discourses) and the history that construct the nature of experience and affect how subjects are constituted. Sandra Harding, American feminist philosopher, argued that the subjective reasoning and experience of the researcher is present in every step of the research process and this can be countered by practicing epistemological reflexivity from the hypothesis build-up, to the research design, the collection and interpretation of data and the reporting of the research results.

One should first ask in which context the type of regulatory ideals of scientific research ingrained in positivism such as objectivity, rationality and uniquely good method have developed. Questioning these standards, Harding (2015) shows how sciences and social context shape each other, advocating for the mutual support between objectivity and certain kinds of diversity. Harding (2015) maintains that sciences and their philosophies have never been value-free, but profoundly integrated with their specific social and historical contexts and explores the relevance of different social and historical events to the philosophies of science. She shows how the current agendas of Modern Western sciences and technologies and their Enlightenment diagnoses of how to advance social progress are at stake at events such as the protest of Brazilian citizens regarding the increase of bus fares, the popular protests Taksim and Gezi in Turkey, the Arab Spring in 2011 or the Occupy Wall Street (Idem, 3).

Two eras of great institutional change are crucial for the analysis the social conditions for scientific research and its philosophy, namely the post-war era of the 40s and 50s and afterwards the failure of development agenda, the rise of anti-authoritarian social movements and the onset of globalization during the 60s and the 70s (Harding, 2015, 5). Emphasizing the social and political conditions of the post-World War II context, Harding (2015) shows how the “autonomy of science” arguments were advanced in order to protect the scientific institutions from political interference. Corporations developing weapons for use by US military in Vietnam such as napalm that promised a better living though the advancements in chemistry or agricultural corporations that promised the end of hunger through patented seeds and toxic pesticides are examples used by Harding to show the interlink between science and society, the impossibility of “pure science”, autonomous and value-free, and its benefits while distributing the costs to institutions and people who are outside the research (Idem, 9-10). She shows how the logical empiricist philosophy of science aligned itself with the political projects of its era (Idem, 10). Social justice movements argued that there must have been something wrong with the best scientific methodology since it did not have the resources to obstruct discriminatory values and interests from shaping the very best research (Idem, xii).

The 1970s represent the second era important for understanding today’s philosophy of science, especially three phenomena that occurred during this period: the failure of development policies; the emergence of anti-authoritarian social movements; and the onset of globalization and its consequences for scientific research (Harding, 2015).

The failure of development policies who promised large-scale prosperity for everyone including disenfranchised groups, making war and revolt less appealing invites to question the image of development as progress when the gap between the rich and the poor highly increased during development implementation and post-implementation era (Idem, 12). Important for the discussion here is to interrogate about the consequences of this failure for what have been considered the engine of development and about the assumption that scientific rationality and technical expertise understood in Western terms when transferred to nonindustrialized countries would contribute to the general social progress (Ibidem).

During the 1970s anti-authoritarian social movements appeared that criticized among others First World scientific and technologic research. The civil rights movement asked to end discrimination based on race that was supported by scientific research on racial differences

and used by governments, corporations and communities (Harding, 2015, 12). Additionally, protests against the Vietnam War challenged the importance of scientific and technological research funded through federal military projects. Women's movements used lawsuits against workplace discrimination, demanded access to birth control and abortion and challenged the appropriation of the peasants and women labour and land rights for the profit of corporations (Ibidem). Lesbian, gay and queer movements, disability movement posed similar inquiries about scientific research.

Globalization, described as the capitalist economic restructuring on a global scale, is the third significant phenomenon that occurred during the 70s with effects on the institutional structures of scientific research. For scientific research, globalization involved more control of the research process and outcomes by state and corporations, diminished state funding for higher education and increased funding from corporations and increased bureaucratic accountability especially in terms of productivity of teaching and publishing (Hess, 2007). Nevertheless, globalization also opened some opportunities in terms of scientific research called "epistemic modernization" that resulted from different institutional changes. First, science is not produced only by Western elites and previously excluded groups participate and do science. Second, community-oriented research projects appeared and they involve laypeople in the defining the hypothesis, designing the research and implementing the project. Third, the growth of interaction with civil society and social movement organizations challenged the idea of epistemic authority and one-way transmission of knowledge, promoting more interactive models. Finally, a fourth type of epistemic modernization is related to dissident scientist who break with consensus opinion over agenda issues that formed coalitions with NGOs or social movement organizations providing them with counter-expertise (Hess, 2007, 48). Thus, while globalization has contributed to the massive increase of social inequality it also allowed for the opening up of new scientific and technical research agendas from below.

Critical examination of scientific institutions, their philosophies and practices have developed after the 70s both "from above" and "from below". Those from below were interested in how to link scientific research to democratic political agendas. Postcolonial and feminist science and technology studies are two examples of research fields from below that treat science as a social institution no less affected by the economic, political, social and cultural processes that produced them than for example products of legal or economic institutions (Harding, 2015,

18). They showed how sciences and societies co-produce and co-constitute each other (Ibidem). For example, feminist science studies brought a “gender lens” to their inquiries about the practices of sciences, considering gender, not only as a property of the persons “studied” or another category for “women” as attempts to mainstream gender often assume, but a social relation, a property of symbolic and structural relations (Harding, 2015, pp. 19-20). These transformations from below showed how sciences and their philosophies are “value-rich” and provide instruments for rethinking scientific research to democratic social goals.

After providing a brief overview of the social and political conditions for scientific research and its philosophy, analysed by Sandra Harding, I continue this chapter with a discussion about the development of feminist epistemologies and methodologies, that I draw upon in this research together with some common features that feminist scholars emphasized as being at the core of a distinctive feminist research. The necessity of continuously reflecting on gender and gender asymmetry as a fundamental feature of social life, including research, the centrality of consciousness-raising, the challenge of the objectivity norm that separates subject and object of research, the concerns for ethical consequences of research and exploitation of women as objects of knowledge and the prominence given to women’s empowerment and transformation of patriarchal institutions through social research are principles that guide a feminist research and some social movement scholars (Cook and Fonow, 1986; Cancian, 1992; Reinharz 1992; Taylor 1998). I explain how I engaged with different feminist epistemologies and methodologies, what have I reformulated and which choices I have made in the context of my own empirical investigations about the NGOization of the feminist movement in Romania and Belgium. I conclude by discussing how a feminist methodology in social movements research can bridge between researchers and activists’ efforts of knowledge production for social change.

II. Feminist epistemologies and methodologies

Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science examines the theory of knowledge from a feminist angle. Elisabeth S. Anderson (1995), American philosopher, describes the feminist epistemology as analysing the manners in which gender affects our notions and ideas about knowledge, the knowing subject, and research practices of investigating and explaining. Feminist epistemology asks questions about and identify the mechanisms at the basis of dominant approaches of knowledge production that systematically disadvantage women and

other disadvantage groups (Anderson, 1995). Feminist epistemology works towards reforming the dominant conceptions and practices about knowledge in a way that would make justice to those who are excluded, marginalized, mis- and (un)represented by the prevailing research.

In epistemology, philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge and political theory, “standpoint theories” appeared from new women’s movement research. Feminist approaches to science research emerged during the late 60s in the context of social justice movements (Naples, 2003). Women’s movement challenged the objectivity of dominant public policies that were discriminatory against women in various fields such as law, education, labor, politics or household. This feminist work was one of the many research projects of anti-authoritarian social movements that showed how the scientific norm of objectivity and the social norm of diversity are mutually supportive as Harding explains (2015, 52). Inspired by the Marxian “standpoint of proletariat”, these theories argued that in societies structured by inequality the predominant knowledge and philosophies tend to represent the perspective of dominant groups, composed almost entirely of men (Harding 2015, 29). Thus, the dominant conceptual frameworks were by no means value free but instead responded to the interest of this dominant group and the research results produced within such frameworks was translated into actual policies that mirrored men’s points of view (Ibidem). In an article published in 1983 – “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence”, Catherine MacKinnon shows how the state represent the dominant point of view by analysing the legislation and jurisprudence on rape, showing how “objectivity” in the legal system meant men’s point of view, imposed as a definition upon women’s experiences and that can be measured by the distance between most of the sexual violations of women and the legally rape measures (MacKinnon, 1983, 651).

Feminist researchers, philosophers of science, sociologists, political scientists argued for an approach to knowledge production that includes the perspectives of feminist and postcolonial theoretical and political concerns. This was the result of the work of feminists of colour and postcolonial feminists that emphasized the intersection between various forms of domination and oppression and who challenged the invisibility of race, class, and other axes of domination in previous feminist work (Anzaldúa 1987; Crenshaw 1993; Collins 2000). These authors questioned whether (white) feminists deeply involved in Western academia could see the issues women face in radical different locations where gender is only one of the social

factors constituting an axis of domination among others (Mohanty 1988; Collins 2000;) or gender can be understood differently as social relation.

Naples (2003) argued that one solution to these power differentials also between feminist researchers is to ground one's research in a materialist feminist perspective informed by postmodern and postcolonial analysis of power, knowledge and language that speaks of the empirical world of the research. Naples (2003) calls her perspective a materialist feminist multidimensional approach to standpoint epistemology that allowed her to build a class-conscious and anti-racist methodological approach by grounding her research on the everyday life and governing practices of poor women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds in both the rural and urban United States.

In general, feminist research is engaged with challenging the basic structures of oppression and its critiques regarding traditional positivist methods stems exactly from asking questions informed by exclusion of women and other marginalized groups, from the standpoint of those who were not sufficiently important to be considered in existing research practices. The aim is, as Verta Taylor puts it, "to expand science and culture to create knowledge that makes a difference in the world" (1998, 359). There are various feminist epistemologies and methodologies and not a single universal one, since they are targeting different systems of oppression as patriarchy, racism, homophobia and heteronormativity, as well as colonialism, formulating various perspectives on engaging with the legitimization of "subjugated knowledge", to use Hesse-Biber formula. Feminist research practice is diverse as are the commitments related to the questions that feminists inquire about and the fields in which they work.

Nevertheless, by challenging the androcentric bias in positivist science, various strands of feminist approaches to epistemology and theory developed. Feminist empiricism, standpoint theory and feminist postmodernism and poststructuralism are the main perspectives. Feminist empiricism resides on both feminism and empiricism. It is based on the underpinnings of the philosophy of empiricism supporting the idea that the social and natural world is accessible and understandable and an objective and truthful knowledge about it can be obtained (Leckenby in Hesse-Biber and Leavy eds. 2007). In the same time, it questions the

androcentric bias in sciences²⁰ in order to reflect the diverse interests and realities of both men and women (Millman and Kanter, 1975). For feminist empiricists, the social and political context of the research puzzle is measurable and observable and should be central for research (Leckenby in Hesse-Biber and Levy eds. 2007, 34).

Feminist standpoint bridges between activism and theory, between knowledge and practice. Feminist standpoint scholars search to understand the world through the eyes of those who are oppressed and marginalized, such as women and seeks to apply the knowledge of those marginalized for social activism to forward social change. Feminist standpoint places women and those oppressed at the centre of the research process and advances women's concrete experiences as the starting point to build up knowledge. Feminist standpoint scholars developed the concept of "strong objectivity" (Harding 1987) in response to the objectivity principle forwarded in positivism. In this sense, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argued that when making claims about women one should bear in mind that is their concrete experience that is the greatest criterion of credibility for these knowledge claims.

Postmodernist and poststructuralist epistemologies and methodologies question and resist to dichotomous thinking and invite to re-examine implicit assumptions about the nature of the subject, the knower and knowledge. They question the subject-centered epistemology of modernism based on binary categorizations such as mind/body, male/female, subject/object that have long oppressed women and other marginalized groups. They analyse the social constructions of reality and how they might serve particular interests, construction such as gender or gender differences. They examine how subjects are constituted through discursive practices and rethought "experience" as a category of knowledge building. Scholars in this school of thought criticized standpoint feminist theorists for returning to essentialist claims in the way they use "women" as an identity category and also feminist empiricist for forwarding a perspective "add women and stir into preexisting models" (Leavy, 2006, 84 in Leavy and Hesse-Biber). Joan Scott (1992, 25-26) argues that through starting to build knowledge from

²⁰ Denise Leckenby (2007, 30) describes the androcentric bias by inviting scholars to imagine that in the literature on violence and sexuality you cannot find a discussion about the daily experience of a particular women with their male supervisor who makes her proposals for having sex. The women cannot find a name for what she is experiencing, nor she can find support in legal texts. Moreover, the human resource department of her working place does not have any specific policy and standards that would allow to address the problem. Also, her experience is not studied by the sociology of workplace. Lekenby (2007, 30) uses this example to describe how androcentric bias can look like and to emphasize that androcentric science begin and end with men's experiences that in this case held the non-objective assessment that sexual harassment at workplace is not an issue.

women's experiences, feminists rendered invisible the historical and discursive processes that are at the basis of that experience, "it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience", explaining that experience is not the authoritative evidence per se that founds what is known but rather that what we want to explain, about which knowledge is produced.

Nevertheless, scholars do not maintain a different "female way of knowing" (Harding, 1987; Longino, 1987) but ask and inquire about what does it mean to "do science as a feminist" and how to do it (Longino 1987, 53).

Engaging in feminist research means to confront the knowledge that excludes (Hesse-Biber and Griffin, 2015, 73), to ask questions and inquire about those who are marginalized, including women, to listen to their – "the other/s" experiences as legitimate forms of knowledge (Trinh Minh-Ha, 1991), but also to question and analyse how categories such as gender have been historically and discursively constructed. Feminist research questions and criticizes the androcentric bias in science, while it advocates for the inclusion of gender as a category of analysis by traditional researchers (Hesse-Biber, 2012, 5). While during the 1970s and 1980s, feminist researchers focused on the deconstruction of traditional knowledge frameworks that were taken for granted, during the decades of 1980s and 1990s they concentrated on challenges regarding knowledge building, starting with the foundational inquiry about the nature of social reality, questioning positivism as conventional research paradigm and its assumptions. Feminist methodology is "the approach to research that has been developed in response to concerns by feminist scholars about the limits of traditional methodology to capture the experiences of women and others who have been marginalized in academic research" (Naples, 2016, 1) and it includes various methods, approaches and research strategies.

In this research I draw on different feminist epistemologies and methodologies that I reformulate, but especially on standpoint feminist. I also pay attention to the materialist feminist multidimensional approach to standpoint epistemology proposed by Nancy Naples to respond to earlier critiques of standpoint approaches. I follow distinction between epistemology, referred to as the study of how one comes to know, methodology, defined as theorizing about research practices and their implications for people and communities and methods as specific tools and practices used in the research process (Harding, 1987; Della Porta 2014, 9; see also Della Porta and Keating 2008). Feminist standpoint epistemology

draws on Hegelian and Marxist traditions based on the philosophy of individuals' daily, material experiences and activities as structuring their understanding of the social world, and thus proposing women's lived experiences of subordination and oppression as a starting research point for building knowledge (Hesse-Biber, 2007, 10). Moreover, feminist standpoint theory criticizes the positivist paradigm that assumes a value-neutral and objective researcher and research methods that conduce to obtaining generalized and universal results or truths, as well as the androcentric bias in research science.

Sandra Harding, one of the main theoreticians of standpoint theory introduces the concept of "strong objectivity" as a way to practice "feminist objectivity". As she emphasizes, standpoint epistemology introduced resources that lacked in the traditional epistemologies to envisioning various central themes that provide an idea of such resources (Harding, 2007, 50). In this respect, one subject matter concerns the fact that how societies are structured has epistemological consequences and that knowledge and power are intertwined, creating, reproducing and preserving reciprocally (Ibidem). Moreover, since the material life is organized hierarchically and structured across gender, race, ethnicity, class and other social oppressing positions, the understandings available to those in the dominant positions tend to support and reinforce the legitimacy of their own position, while those that are dominated to delegitimize it (Harding, 1987) In addition, Harding emphasizes that those who are dominated are obliged to live in social structures and institutions designed to serve the dominants, reinforcing their own power as natural (Ibidem). Therefore, it "takes both science and politics to see the world "behind," "beneath," or "from the outside" the oppressor's institutionalized vision" (Harding, 2007, 51). Finally, standpoint theory brings the possibility of liberation for the oppressed groups that must understand the imperative of engaging in social and political projects to build knowledge and understandings of the world from the perspectives of their own lives (Ibidem).

Standpoint methodology and its "strong objectivity" became some of the most widely used approaches for research in such social movements. Feminist research collectives challenged the dominant disciplinary assumptions within logical positivism and searched to answer questions that have been overlooked and to which women wanted answers. A different standard for maximizing objectivity in science research came from the feminist movement debates during the 70s and 80s that criticized the sexist and androcentric biases that shaped every stage of the research process from what counts as an important technical or scientific

question, what concepts and hypothesis, what counted as relevant evidence, the choices of results dissemination or the fact that women were not recognized as legitimate partners in the research process (Harding, 2015, 26; 1998; 1987; Smith, 1987). In the same manner anti-racist, anticlass, postcolonial or other liberatory social movements produced similar criticisms. More than a mere disciplinary added value, standpoint feminist theories argued that this kind of diversity in social values and interests would increase the actual reliability of research results (Harding, 2015, 29).

Thus, objectivity, one of the central principles of positivism was transformed in feminist objectivity, as “strong objectivity” or “situated knowledge”. Donna Haraway (1988, 583) argues that:

“only partial perspective promises objective vision. All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call, mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see”.

Standpoint theory thus argue to start research from outside the dominant frameworks, from the daily lives of oppressed groups, such as women, in order to have more objective accounts of nature and social relations and proposed the concept of “strong objectivity” as more adept to achieve the goals of fairness in research than the conventional objectivity understood as free-value research (Harding, 2015, 33).

There are several advantages for the use of strong objectivity in science research. First, strong objectivity implies an actual recognition about the way science is practiced today and not an imposed abstract ideal about how science should be practiced. It identifies the problems related to the goal of achieving value-free research, namely the homogeneity of research communities. It aims to answer questions about the conditions of subjects’ lives and the social relations that structure those conditions. Moreover, it identifies advances in women’s movement research and is grounded in existing best practices rather than abstract ideals imposed from outside. Finally, its assumptions and practices align with research in science and technology (Idem, 30-31).

The idea that particular kinds of societies are co-produced with particular kinds of knowledge, both enabling and limiting each other emerged from the anti-authoritarian movements of the 1960s and the newly decolonized states. The logic of inquiry of standpoint approaches recognizes thus the entanglement between social and natural sciences on the one hand and the social and political practices of the state for example. The strong objectivity advanced by standpoint approaches argues that starting research from outside dominant conceptual frameworks – those which primarily serve the values and interests of the most powerful groups, enables the detection of such dominant values and allows bringing novel insights from the perspectives of those economically politically and socially oppressed groups (Harding, 2015). Starting research outside the discipline means enabling the location and use of a critical distance to maximize the objectivity of research while acknowledging that no one can completely get outside one's socialization in a discipline to produce knowledge from no particular location as conventional philosophies of sciences assumed, because no one can obtain “a view from nowhere”²¹ as Donna Haraway (1988) puts it. Research from below can allow identifying aspects and characteristics about the dominant economic, political and social institutions that dominant groups cannot or refuse to recognize (Collins, 1991). Thus, starting off research from questions that arise in the lives of those excluded in the build-up of our political and social institutions enables to identify new questions and procedures to answer issues at stake for marginalized groups, ignored by dominant research.

Standpoint theory is an organic epistemology and methodology. Standpoint methodology is antidisciplinary, deeply disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary (Harding, 2015, 39). The organic quality explains the independent emergence of standpoint approaches in various social justice movements during the last decades, such as the civil rights movement in the US, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the LGBTQIA movements, the poor people's movement, Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring in which groups organized to produce answers to questions about social relations that are important for them (Ibidem). Sandra Harding (Ibidem) argues that this diversity in terms of knowledge production extends comprehensiveness and reliability of everybody's knowledge and that standpoint research methodology contributed to the build-up of important resources for progressive and groups.

²¹ The God trick

Some insights and strategies of the standpoint methodology and its strong objectivity align with those of the social studies of science and technology research field (SSST). First, objectivity is dynamic and the standards to achieve it change in function of shifts in scientific research methods and goals as well as societal pressures (Harding, 2015, 46)²². Second, sciences and societies co-constitute and co-produce each other²³. Third, multiple scientific and technical expertise goes beyond the narrow circle of official scientists that hold the monopoly until recently, and many forms of “civic science”²⁴ or “citizens science” have emerged. Lastly, standpoint theories and recent philosophers of science challenge the overvalue of theoretical scientific achievements over practical ones, and thus of scientific over technological innovation (Idem, 50). These alignments between central themes in the field of science and technology studies and standpoint theories draw attention about the silence in the science studies’ accounts about the relevance of the feminist and post-colonial work to science studies projects (Ibidem).

III. Self-position as a researcher and within the research

One of the central principles of feminist research, stemming from critical accounts to positivist objectivity, is the recognition that the social position of the researcher undoubtedly shapes the research process, the design, encounters, observations and interpretations (see also Taylor, 1998). The alternatives in feminist epistemology and methodologies are reflexivity and strong objectivity. Reflexivity means recognizing that the subjective experience resulting from researcher’s own social position influences the production and interpretation of the research (Taylor, 1998). Feminist scholars emphasize that “if researchers fail to explore how their personal, professional, and structural positions frame social scientific investigations, researchers inevitably reproduce dominant gender, race, and class biases” (Naples, 2016, 2). Practicing strong objectivity implies recognizing the way science is practiced today and not an abstract ideal about how science should be practiced, using advances in women’s movement research and grounding in existing best practices rather than abstract principles imposed from outside. Strong objectivity also involves identifying and challenging existing

²² see Daston and Galison 2007; Jasanoff 2004, 2005; Novick 1988; Porter 1995; Proctor 1991.

To show how objectivity is dynamic and with a history, Harding (2015, 46) gives the example of historians Daston and Galison who demonstrate the shifts in standards of objectivity due to the introduction of new technologies of observation in the production of scientific atlases in the last centuries.

²³ Harding (2015, 48) gives the example of the research conducted by Sheila Jasanoff (2004, 2005) in which she demonstrated how different national anxieties and political cultures required different strategies to secure the objectivity of biotechnology decisions in Germany, England, and the United States.

²⁴ See David Hess (2007); Karin Backstrand (2003)

problems related to the aim of a value free-research, specifically the homogeneity of research communities. It also aims to inquire about the conditions of subjects' lives and the social relations that structure those conditions and to provide answers.

I thus clarify about my positioning. As a feminist I was ambivalent about discourses surrounding the contemporary feminist movement, those coming from inside the movement such as the way the feminist movement became capitalism's handmaiden by Nancy Fraser or how the NGOization of politics "threatens to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job"²⁵ and especially I was sceptical of dichotomies surrounding debates about contemporary feminist movement such as autonomy/co-optation, politicization/depoliticization, insider/outsider, grassroots/institutionalized. I discovered that even if there is a proliferation of feminist NGOs, the feminist movement community is embodied in a variety of locations, structures and practices from a feminist reading circle, to a slutwalk protest, a take back the night march, a family planning, a feminist library²⁶, a shelter, a cooperative, an NGO or others, some more contentious and radical, others more incremental and moderate or both disruptive and gradual depending on the time or the issue at stake. As a Romanian, living abroad for studies and research for the last 6 years, in France, Belgium and Italy I met diverse feminist places and spaces and while I perceived the importance of local anchorage of feminist initiatives, I also acknowledged the international dimension of feminist struggles, groups and organizations being connected with alike collectives in different countries, sometimes involved in transnational projects. As a political scientist and sociologist, I was skeptical that social justice can be achieved without an intersectional and multilevel change. Although I based my research on theories from sociology, political sciences and gender studies interrelated with the subfield of social movements in order to understand the NGOization of the feminist movement, my personal social location surely reflected in the research. In these context, Ulrika Dahl's question (2011) – how can one study something to which also claim political and sexual belonging, becomes relevant in revealing the ongoing anxieties around issues of objectivity, despite decades long epistemological and methodological discussions that have been previously discussed.

²⁵ The NGO-ization of resistance (Arundhati Roy, August 16, 2004)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rgYaZAUzWuY> accessed July 11, 2019

²⁶ Tilitu in Brussels; Hecate in Bucharest.

My interest in feminist research derives from a proximity and overlap between social movements and the academic hermitage that implies exchange and co-production of knowledge. Positivist models of inquiry forward a hierarchical dichotomy between the researcher and the researched, thought as subject and object, and supports a perspective in which the researcher observes, discovers, reveals and interprets the object of research. The researcher is entitled to receive from the researched. It is mostly a one-way relationship embedded with power. Feminist research conventions oppose this perspective and search to dissolve the false hierarchical dichotomy between the researcher and the researched. Fieldwork is one crucial locus in which feminists have tried to curtail and abolish power differences between the researcher and the researched. Following feminist epistemology and methodology guidelines, in this study I accorded a feminist research approach with a comparative perspective. While a participatory approach to research, already used by social movement scholars (Melucci, 1995) as well as by feminist scientists on social movements (Taylor, 1998; Taylor and Rupp 2005) has been my initial choice in this research design, the time limitations and the number of actors involved in the research did not allow me to engage in more sustained back-and-forth exchange process of knowledge co-production that would have also allowed to account for the actions that transform the theory. While explaining the feminist epistemological and methodological perspectives on which I base this research and also their development in relation to positivist or neo-positivist research approaches I wanted to analyse and reflect about the context, the factors and the need for such approaches to emerge. I do not intend to maintain a “methodological war” as Donatella Della Porta (2014) explained it in the light the debates emerging in the research science between quantitative and qualitative, positivist and interpretivist approaches but to be informed by the methodological approaches in the social movement studies based on a pluralist attitude, cross-fertilization and triangulation that would better help to answer my research question. Methodological pluralism has been developed as a response to these divides in social sciences and a useful approach in social sciences that acknowledges the porous boundaries between approaches (Della Porta and Keating, 2008).

In this research, I have combined feminist ethnography through participant observation, political activism and collaboration with in-depth interviews and document analysis. Feminist ethnography concentrates on the lives, activities, and experiences of those who are oppressed, marginalized and also excluded from traditional research and its methods such as participant observation or the writing style are informed by feminist theories and ethics. Interpretation

and analysis uses a feminist perspective by paying attention to the intersectional interplay between gender and other forms of power and systems of oppression. Through feminist ethnography I aimed to provide an intimate picture about the contemporary feminist movement communities focusing on the way NGOization unfolds and how it affects the lives of different feminist groups and their practices in Romania and Belgium by participating and sometimes contributing at the daily activities such as workshops, round-tables, campaigns, reading-groups, informal gatherings, sit-ins and mobilizations.

IV. Methodologies and methods

In the context of contemporary transformations of the feminist movement from what have been considered classical social movement organizations (SMOs) to specialized feminist and women NGOs, the present research aims to explain and analyse the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement, informed by feminist epistemologies and methodologies, drawing particularly on standpoint feminism. The research aims to provide an answer to the question of what is NGO-ization and to trace the development of the NGO-ization process. Drawing both on social movements and NGO-ization literature, by analysing the NGO-ization process, I aim to disentangle the links between institutionalization, professionalization, bureaucratization and financial dependence in neoliberal context. While the literature on NGO-ization or the literature on the institutionalization and professionalization of social movements almost always mention the effects of co-optation, demobilization and depoliticization occasioned by these processes, scholars however do not always seem to agree if there is a causal relation or a co-occurrence one and what kind of causal relation between these processes if there is one. Bureaucratization and financial dependence seem to be entangled with neoliberal governance processes and techniques. Trying to answer what is NGO-ization and to trace its development, I look at current changes within the structure and configuration of the feminist movement in Romania and Belgium, by distinguishing loosely between NGO-ized and Street feminism. In exploring the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement, I will pay particular attention to organizational forms, tactics and frames of the feminist movements, but also on the activist engagement and militant trajectories.

The research focuses on feminist organizations after the 90s, more specifically those active after the 2000s. In Romania, after the fall of the state-socialist regime in 1989 first feminist organizations started to emerge. In Belgium, the 1990s marked the beginning of a new

'wave'/period, the third one (after the 1st wave at the end of XIX beginning of XX century and the second during the second half of the 60s and beginning of the 70s) – this third period is one of institutionalization of main feminist claims (Dental, 2004, 64) and development of the feminist movement towards professionalization expertise. I focused on the meso-level, specifically on the feminist movement community embodied in different locations, spaces and organizational structures out of each I loosely distinguish between street feminism, more informal groups and collectives and NGO-ized feminism, more formal and institutionally tied, nevertheless understood as imbricated in a spatial and locative web.

A. A comparison of different cases: the feminist movements in Romania and in the French-speaking Belgium

A cross-national comparative research strategy involving two different cases seemed the most appropriate to me answer the question of what is NGO-ization and to trace this process. The NGO-ization of the feminist movement seemed to occur and have been studied in various countries around the world, from Africa, Latin America and Europe. Belgium and Romania are maximally different cases, in terms of the political architecture, the political opportunity structure and also regarding the historical development of their respective feminist movements. In these two contrasting cases, the NGO-ization of the feminist movement is the common process or dependent variable. My aim was to explore why do movements in two very different countries experiences a similar process and transformation. NGO-ization was associated with demobilization and depoliticization favoured by financial dependence on donors, mostly international. This was thought to contribute to movements' professionalization and to devoting a considerable amount of time to a constant search for funds, to ensure organizational subsistence since funds are generally short-term, and to respond to increased bureaucratic demands from donors. Belgium is an interesting case from this point of view because of the availability of governmental funds to support SMOs and NGOs activities and that are granted for longer periods of time. Moreover, the development and institutionalization of such funding mechanisms as for example popular education is deeply rooted in the growth of strong trade union and workers' movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a whole network of associations has developed, involving many different groups in the society, including women, who started working in the field of emancipation. During the 1970s, the idea of financing these associations in a structural way,

emerged and popular education was institutionalized by the adoption of the decree of 8 April 1976. Thus, it is a process that historically comes from below and not a strategy of powerful state actors or international donors to co-opt social movements. This specificity of structurally financing movement organizations, including women and feminist movement organizations is rather unique in the world and particularly relevant for the process of NGO-ization in relation to the issue of financial dependence on donors.

By contrast, in Romania as in many countries in Eastern Europe, after the fall of the state socialist regime, the development of civil society organizations was seen more as a vertical process, fostered by the establishment of different programs by international organizations such as Women in Development Program by United Nations for Development Program (UNDP) and the availability of international funds to help developing civil society organizations. This led to subsequent diagnosis of a feminist movement dependent on donors, following an agenda imported from the West, aspects that will nevertheless be challenged and nuanced during the researched, especially by looking from a comparative perspective at formal feminist organizations and informal street feminist groups.

Another aspect, relevant for the case selection in order to explain the process of NGO-ization is related to the political opportunity structure and to the historical legacies of the feminist movement that contributed to its institutionalization. These will be analysed in detail in the following chapters. Sabine Lang (2013) argued that the institutionalization of social movements can appear from a desire to stabilize when there is a need to build durable institutions, in the context of political opportunities to participate in institutional settings or when movement actors enter career paths within political institutions. To consolidate their participation in official politics, organizations specialize and build-up expertise that would allow them gain public and institutional recognition and give them legitimacy to participate at negotiations and decision making (Jenson, Marques-Pereira and Nagels, 2017; Alvarez 2009). This translated into professionalization that involves also an increase in resources through fundraising to expand salaried workforce and adjustment to institutional norms and structures and policy field's language (Lang, 2013). The historical development of the process of institutionalization in Belgium and in Romania and that seem to be related to the subsequent or concomitant professionalization are different. While in Belgium feminists' participation in institutional politics developed after the seventies and was fostered by the creation of gender equality agencies fostered by governments' engagements during the

organization of United Nations World Conferences on Women, in Romania the creation of gender equality bodies was related to the accession to the European Union (EU) that subsequently occasioned the inclusion and marginalization of some of the feminist activists. Moreover, the institutionalization of gender studies at the university through the creation of master programs in the field and thought to support professionalization by delivering experts to feminist organizations and women's agencies took a different path. In Belgium the feminist knowledge production is rooted in the feminist movement. From the seventies on feminist groups and organizations such as Grief or Université des Femmes contributed to research in feminist and gender studies. Slowly research centers developed also in universities, mostly without financing. With sustained efforts of NGOs, activists and researchers the master in gender studies in the French speaking Belgium was created in 2017. In Romania, the institutionalization of gender studies at the University started in the second half of the nineties and subsequently, NGOs such as Filia was created to support the newly created master from the National School of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA).

Moreover, in Belgium, the institutionalization of participation of grassroots popular movements including the feminist one through mechanisms such as popular education consolidated through a bottom-up approach in relation with state institutions that was not considered to be co-opted or instrumentalized as it was based on collective processes of popular emancipation. In Romania the obligation, during the state socialist regime, of public participation in various groups and committees all related to the communist party was linked to increased scepticism regarding participation in civil society organizations or in the public life, after the regime change. The fact that *Consiliul Național al Femeilor* (CNF) (The National Council of Women) transformed itself into a form of control for women population in Romania compared to mass women organizations in communist countries that came with solutions to support a real family planning (Jinga, 2015) was also related to scepticism regarding engagement with women association after the fall of the regime. Jinga (2015, 160) argues that C.N.F. was one of the “faithful soldiers” of the Ceausescu's policies that resulted in more than 10000 women victims among those obliged to resort to illegal abortion. The historical chapters explain more in detail these evolutions.

The structure of Belgian women's movements is influenced to a great extent by two key characteristics of the society, namely, the pillarization – separation across philosophical and

ideological lines and the federalization of the Belgian state (Celis and Meier 2005, 10). The movement is fragmented, comprised of different organizations and groups, situated in Wallonia or Flanders (some groups at national level), with different aims and strategies, various sizes, aligned to the three major political families²⁷ or autonomous feminist groups. Women's organizations in Belgium are supported and represent an important partner for women's policy agencies that have multiplied during the last decades, as a result of the federalization process, opening windows of opportunity for promoting a feminist agenda (ibidem). The institutionalization of the women's movement concerns only a segment of the women's movement and many smaller groups with no official structure and financing have not been subject to the same evolution (Celis and Meier 2005, 15).

The structure of the Romanian feminist movement was shaped by the anti-communist backlash. Different from Belgium where the feminist movement remained faithful to the different pillars, in Romania, after the 90s the feminist organizations and the feminist academic figures that were most visible were those who embraces a liberal form of feminism that became mainstream (Moloea, 2015). The feminist movement after the 90s was considered to have re-emerged as an intellectualist-elitist endeavor (ibidem). While Roma feminist groups or figures or feminist autonomous collectives existed, there was not much bridge-building and they remained mostly in the underground or certainly not that visible due to the anti-left backlash, threats from the extreme-right and police repression²⁸ and racism. Despite differences in participation in institutional politics and the availability funding, a similar process of NGO-ization, including professionalization can be witnessed.

B. The selection of the units of analysis

To define the field boundaries in Belgium and Romania I combined a nominalist approach prior to starting the fieldwork in which I identified feminist organizations and groups according to some criteria a priori defined in the research design, with a realist approach in which I relied on the on feminist activists' perceptions of who is part of the field, of the feminist movement community. The purpose of establishing some a priori criteria for selecting the organizations and groups was twofold: one the one hand I wanted to find

²⁷ Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals

²⁸ C.L. – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa June 2015

<https://activewatch.ro/ro/freeex/reactie-rapida/6-ani-de-la-summit-ul-nato-la-bucuresti-jandarmeria-gasita-vinovata-pentru-abuzuri-asupra-cetatenilor-dar-lasata-nepedepsita>

accessed July 14, 2019

organizations and groups more or less comparable in the two countries and on the other hand and most important to go beyond the obvious and accessible organizations and groups. Related to this second point, I would like to emphasize that many studies on the feminist movement have the tendency to concentrate on the more formal organizations, that are also more easily identifiable as they are more visible in the public space, unless the studies concentrate on underground and anarchist environments. Thus, the purpose of this research was to bring together these different organizations and groups that inhabit the space of the feminist movement community and that also intersect, through their activists and members' multiple membership, with other social justice movements such as the LGBTQIA movement, the right to housing movement or undocumented and migrant movements among others.

I have identified feminist organizations and groups specifically defined by themselves and others as feminists. A challenge during the fieldwork in Belgium was related to the pillarization in which there were three main historical movement organizations: Conseil des femmes francophones de Belgique (CFFB), Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) and Vie féminine. While the three of them were recognized as important organizations historically within the feminist movement community, Vie féminine seemed to stand out more as a more active and stable partner within the feminist movement and with a greater recognition from the other organizations. At encounters, meetings and collaborative projects during the fieldwork, the organization seemed to be more embedded within the feminist movement, collaborating closely with other feminist organizations. While I have chosen to focus just on Vie féminine as one of the main organizations from the fieldwork in Belgium, I have also tried to analyse the role of the other two organizations within the feminist movement community and conducted some interviews and did participatory observation during events at which these organizations were present.

A challenge encountered during fieldwork related to establishing boundaries and the choice of organizations and groups was related to their availability to participate in the research, especially to participate in interviews. Some organizations felt instrumentalized in previous research studies and were sceptical to answer or participate in new research. Others lacked resources and availability. Others wanted to keep complete anonymity. For example, one undocumented women's collective in Belgium already felt instrumentalized within previous research studies or by institutional actors and were more sceptical to discuss with researchers. While I did some participant observation during events at which the collective of

undocumented women participated, I did not want to put additional pressure also considering the very difficult political and social position in which they were and the fact that I did not have much support that I could offer them in the short period of the fieldwork. Time resources also proved to be distributed unevenly. At the moment when I conducted the fieldwork in Romania, a new Roma feminist association, E-Romnja, stable partner in major feminist coalitions and initiatives was completely squeezed out of time, having at that specific moment only two persons that were supporting the organization. In these cases, from a feminist approach to methodology, I had to set limits regarding insistence and getting the fieldwork done. As I could not chose them as main organizations in this research, I have nevertheless tried to complement my understanding of the feminist community environment that I thought necessary and helpful for understanding the process of NGO-ization through participant observation and documentation, especially using online resources.

After mapping the feminist community in Belgium, I chose to focus on the following organizations and groups: Vie feminine, Université des femmes, Garance, Cercle féministe de l'ULB, Isala, Le monde selon les femmes and two networks "Abortion Rights" and "Le Réseau pour l'Élimination des violences entre partenaires" (REV). While focusing on these organizations as units of analysis, in order to enhance my understanding regarding the feminist movement community and the various processes associated with NGO-ization I have also been in contact with other organizations and groups, through participant observation or interviews where I thought necessary, as some activists seemed key informants with important roles in bridge-building: Femmes et santé, Sophia, Fat Positivity, Le monde selon les femmes, CEFA, European Women's Lobby (EWL), the group around Reclaim the night march, Le collectif des femmes sans papiers. Apart from the interviewees availability, I tried to cover through interviews persons in leading positions within the organizations or group, hired feminist professionals or feminist activists in more informal groups, but also volunteers or interns. All the organizations are based in Brussels, apart from CEFA.

In Romania, after mapping the field I chose to focus on the following formal organizations and informal groups in Bucharest, Cluj and Sibiu ("Asociatia FRONT" – Front Association, "Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate, CPE" – Center Partnership for Equality, "Centrul de Dezvoltare Curriculara si Studii de Gen Filia" – Center For Curricular Development and Gender Studies FILIA, "Asociatia pentru Egalitate si Libertate de Gen, ALEG" – The Association for Liberty and Gender Equality, ALEG, "Dysnomia" – feminist reading group,

the feminist group within A- CASA (anti-authoritarian Collective) and from two networks: “Rupem tacerea despre violenta sexuala” – Break the Silence about Sexual Violence Network and “Reteaua pentru prevenirea si combaterea violentei impotriva femeilor, VIF” – The Network for the prevention and combating violence against women” that assemble NGOs from Bucharest, Timisoara, Cluj, Sibiu, Brasov, Iasi, Targu-Mures. Although started by feminist NGOs, both coalitions included during expansion other support organizations not necessarily defined as feminist. Just one of the coalitions comprises an informal group. I have also conducted four interviews with the president and officers from the National Agency for the Equality of Chances between Men and Women and with the president of the National Council for Combating Discrimination. I have also conducted interviews with four MEPs involved in legislative initiatives related to women’s rights and gender equality.

Compared to Belgium, in Romania, while the organizations outside the capital believed that the national/local divide and the factual distance make it more difficult to meet more regularly, it seemed nevertheless that the organizations and groups in Sibiu and Cluj were more closely connected to those in Bucharest than for example the organizations in Liège and those in Brussels. In Romania, while I chose to focus on these specific organizations I have also been in contact through participant observation and coalitions’ meetings with other organizations such as: E-Romnja, CMSC or theatre group Giuvlipen on the more autonomous queer and Roma feminist scene.

The fieldwork was a constant process of drawing and re-drawing boundaries. During fieldwork, I have tried not to let the necessity of collecting data to conflict with activists’ availability of participating in the research, but nevertheless to try to compensate for the missing data in other ways. As the current research combines different methods such as interviewing, participant observation, ethnography and document analysis, in those few cases in which scheduling official interviews did not happen, I complemented with informal discussions at the end of conferences, debates, during long train journeys in Romania for example to participate in coalition meetings or through the analysis of available documents. However, most of the organizations and activists approached responded to the call of participating in the research.

I focused both on cross-national comparative strategies and cross-movement strategies by loosely distinguishing between the more formal professionalized organizations and the informal collectives.

C. Research methods: triangulation

In this research I have applied a mixed-method strategy, with a triangulation combining different methods, data sources and theories in order to overcome the potential limits and biases of each method (Della Porta, 2014; Ayoub, Wallace, Zepeda-Millán 2014). To answer my research question I have relied mainly on in-depth interviewing useful to understand the perceptions of the activists and professionals about their work in general and engagement either in feminist NGOs or more informal feminist groups or both and participant observation to observe some of the activities of the organizations, the interactions among feminist movement organizations within the field but also in relation to other institutions and actors such as governmental bodies or police. I have complemented this data with documents analysis, organizations reports, video and audio material and social media posts. In Romania I have conducted fieldwork between January and July 2016 when I did most of the interviews and participant observation. A year before I have spent other two weeks to map the terrain and to conduct some first interviews. In Belgium I have conducted fieldwork from October to March when I did most of the interviews and participant observation, although some of the interviews have been conducted also during the following months, due to interviewees availability. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using Nvivo. Documents and notes from participant observation were organized, coded and analysed manually.

The in-depth interviewing that I have chosen to conduct reflects also my engagement with feminism and feminist methodologies with the aim of more egalitarian relationship within the research process, with feminist activists being able to share and explain in terms suitable to them about the organizations they are part of and their experiences within the group or within the wider feminist community, creating a favourable space for interviewees to introduce new research questions based on their experience. In Romania, I have conducted and used 44 semi-structured interviews with feminist activists from the six feminist groups and NGOs selected in Bucharest, Cluj and Sibiu, from the two networks and key persons working at the National Agency for the Equality of Chances between Men and Women. In Romania I started the research first and I had the occasion to have a period of two weeks to map the terrain one year before doing the six months fieldwork in 2016. After discussions and feedback from different professors and scholars regarding my research project, I thought it would be useful for the analysis of the processes of institutionalization and professionalization to conduct some interviews also with politicians that were involved in various legislative projects and

public policies related to gender equality. I have conducted four such interviews with women politicians that sometimes were collaborating with key feminist activists, but the data gathered through these interviews did not seem useful to help me answer the question about the process of NGO-ization. Thus, I have chosen not to use them and I focused only on governmental actors working within gender equality bodies.

In Belgium, I have conducted 33 interviews with feminist activists in different feminist organizations: Vie feminine, Université des femmes, Garance, Cercle féministe de l'ULB, Isala, Le monde selon les femmes and two networks – “Abortion Rights” and “Le Réseau pour l'Élimination des violences entre partenaires” (REV) and two government officials from the Ministère de l'Enseignement de promotion sociale, de la Jeunesse, des Droits des Femmes et de l'Égalité des chances, Isabelle Simonis and from Ministère de la Culture et de l'Enfance, Alda Greoli from the government of the French Community.

The feminist interviewing that I assumed during this research rejects the pretended neutrality of social sciences that views women informants as objects of the researcher's gaze (de Vault M.L. & Gross G., 2007, 178), building the interviews as an encounter between feminist women, different in various aspects, but also with common curiosities, and that share knowledge together, maintaining a reflexive awareness and critical perspective. To facilitate mutual understanding and relation I was open to conduct the interviews at the moment and in a space that was convenient for interviewees. Some interviews were conducted at the siege of the feminist organizations interviewees were part of and some took the time to show me the space, others welcomed me at the organization's siege but for the those interviewees that preferred to go to a different place interviews took place in cafés, cooperatives or their house. I did not have any facilities to propose for childcare during the interviews, but I tried to be as flexible as possible about scheduling the appointment for interview.

The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and almost three hours, were tape recorded and then transcribed. A loose list of areas and pre-identified themes relevant to the question of NGOization of the feminist movement guided the interview. The aim was to contribute to build up a space for building knowledge, sharing a conversation and allowing for the emergence of possible new relevant issues. For example, one such issue that emerged when discussing the professionalization of the feminist movement was the question of burnout, about which I was aware and analysed it through the lenses of activists' general engagement in social movements, but did not related it specifically with the professionalization and

institutionalization of movements. Important information emerged also after turning off the recorder when sometimes we spent time discussing either on topics touched upon during the interview, either sharing impressions on different experiences and sometimes interviewees asked me questions about my positioning related to diverse questions of feminist scrutiny. One such question at the end of an interview was my position related to prostitution/sex-work debate, a moment in which I felt I owe an answer although my position related to the topic was not that clear cut.

Another challenge encountered while appointing interviews was related to the scepticism of interviewing multiple persons from the same organization or group, especially in the cases of smaller organizations. As I did not want to be intrusive or to pose challenges to the dynamic of functioning of organizations or groups I have explained the necessity related to the research design of this project that would allow to answer questions at the meso level about the NGO-ization process to interview different persons from the same organization or collective. For example, in one of the cases, when I asked the president of an organization to recommend me other members that I could contact, she proposed to tell other activists in her association about the research I am conducting in their next General Assembly, to give them my contact and if they would be available to participate, they would contact me. After a few months, many of them contacted me and we conducted the interview. It was important from a feminist perspective to be available in the field for a longer period of time and to negotiate with activists according to their possibilities, beyond the sole scope of getting the data no matter how.

Although the codes of ethics on qualitative research mostly refer to the protection of the identity of the interviewees by using pseudonyms and changing details, recent research provides provocative discussions regarding anonymity, that may seem as another way to render invisible the identities and histories of activists. Flexibility regarding confidentiality may be a successful solution. In this dissertation I provide unrelated acronyms of the feminist activists with whom I had conducted the interviews, but I nevertheless specify the organization or collective from which they are part of.

In addition to participant observation and interviews I have collected and analysed data, such as organizations' annual reports, their websites, coalition's petitions and open letters, videos, radio and TV interventions of feminist activists, part of the organizations and groups

participating in the research, blog posts, mailing lists and mail discussion groups and Facebook interventions.

During the fieldwork sometimes my personal life and the field overlapped or the boundaries between the two became blurred. I have occasionally established friendships with activists from the feminist movement community. For example, in Romania, during the fieldwork, between January and end of July 2016, I shared a flat with one activist from FRONT Association, a feminist organization part of the research and of which I am part, and with whom I became very close friend. During the evening, when I was back home from fieldwork and she came from work, we had long discussions about the feminist movement and activism, but also personal stories and histories related to our social location.

D. The shared dimension of knowledge production

To emphasize the shared dimension of knowledge production and of co-production of knowledge specific of feminist participatory methodologies, aiming to challenge the dichotomy between the researcher and those persons participating in the research I give two examples of moments in which I conducted participant observation: one of my participation at the Reclaim the Night March organized in Brussels in February 2017 and another of my participation in the study day “Professionalization! New challenges in times of crisis” organized on the 30th of November 2016, in Brussels. My fieldwork period in Belgium started in early September 2016 and my aim was to compare both more formal feminist NGOs that have also been more easily identifiable with more informal collectives without essentializing them but nevertheless having in mind the hypothesis informed by the recent literature that official NGOs function with more formal and hierarchical structures, pursue incremental change and organize less contentious actions while informal groups are more radical and disruptive both in content and actions and aim at an egalitarian way of organizing. Informal feminist collectives, such as the Reclaim the Night collective were more difficult to identify and get in touch with also because of privacy issues. For example, the “Reclaim the Night” collective have on their its blog as a slogan – “Anyone who claims to be one of us is not one of us. We are anonymous.” The “Reclaim the night” is “a feminist night march (non-mixed no cis men) to take back the streets at night against sexist violence”²⁹. The collective chose a torchlight procession which brings inclusive feminism, intersectionality, pro-choice

²⁹ <https://reclaimthenightbruxelles.wordpress.com/a-propos/>

(for abortion, free to wear hijab or not, sexual-liberty of sex-workers). Since I will analyse more in depth in the next chapters the Reclaim the night march, I would like here to outline those elements relevant for a feminist methodology namely challenging the hierarchical dichotomy between the researcher and the researched, the shared dimensions and the co-production of knowledge. The march started around 8:30 pm and the group of around 200 protesters, activists from Belgium but also from France who came specifically for the event marched towards the city centre singing songs and slogans against sexist violence. The protest was brutally repressed by the police and with the participation of undercover police officers, activists were beaten, encircled and threatened to be jailed unless they present their IDs to get out of the police cordon. The fact that undocumented women participated at the protests, made the choice of the activists to get out one by one presenting their documents not feasible. The proposal of living their fellow companions without papers being jailed by the police was not an option. Real time videos and posts on Facebook and Twitter alerted also other official feminist organization about the situation on the ground. The official media presented the event as a march that degenerated, with activists making graffiti and the police intervened to stop them. The feminist community was offended by this description of the events, though inaccurate and misleading. The next day, after the protest, alternative media and feminist blogs and websites of organizations started to publish pieces that condemned police brutality. The editor-in-chief of *Axelle*, a feminist magazine of *Vie féminine*, one of the movement organizations focused on in this research, started to gather accounts of the event from protesters in order to write an article that would make justice to the facts. I have been contacted and asked if I would like to make a testimony about the manifestation to be used in a press article and I have accepted. The edited piece was sent to those who recounted their experience to see if it corresponds, before it was published.

The study day “Professionalization! New challenges in times of crisis” was organized by Sophia, the Belgian network for gender studies and the Institute for equality between women and men. When I started my fieldwork in Belgium, I have contacted Sophia as I knew that previously Sophia had a young researchers group on feminist and gender studies issues who shared knowledge and experience from their fieldwork and I also knew that the organization was very anchored and knowledgeable about the feminist associative field in Belgium. After insightful exchanges with and contacts provided by the French coordinator of Sophia I was invited to participate at the study day and also to moderate a workshop, as she knew that the topic of the study day was related with my research topic, since NGO-ization comprises

professionalization as a dimension and financial dependency both as a component and as an effect. She proposed me to moderate a workshop during the study day as she thought I have knowledge about financial challenges for feminist organizations and I could share as well with participants, mostly activists within different feminist organizations in the francophone part in Belgium.

Through these two examples I wanted to emphasize not just the participatory dimension of my research but also how I aimed to challenge the hierarchical dichotomy between the researcher and the researched embedded with power relations. To completely eliminate power relations in the research process may be impossible if we account for Foucault's perspective of power as a multiplicity of relations of force immanent in the domain in which they are exercised:

“By power, it seems to me that we must first understand the multiplicity of the relations of force which are immanent in the domain in which they are exercised, and are constitutive of their organization; The game which, by means of constant struggles and confrontations, transforms, reinforces and inverts them; The supports which these relations of force find in each other, so as to form a chain or system, or, on the contrary, the shifts and contradictions which isolate them from one another; The strategies in which they take effect, and whose general design or institutional crystallization take shape in the "state apparatuses, in the formulation of the law, in social hegemonies.” (Foucault, 1976, 121-122)

The social and scientific research field is already a locus of entrenched power relations, but also of multiple resistances:

“These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, the center of all rebellions, the pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances: possible, necessary, improbable, spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, violent, irreconcilable, quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations.” (Idem, 126).

Feminist research distinguishes itself also through the component of social change as a goal, of action and many times feminist research begins from a commitment to social activism

(Naples 1998; Taylor 1998). The aim is to create knowledge for social change purposes. To this end feminist inquiries might have a policy component that can help reduce inequalities and gender inequality specifically (Taylor, 1998) or might help generate new strategies for coalition-building. The current study aims to shed light on the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement, on politicization, diversity and continuity in the political struggle in which the feminist movement is engaged.

What are the implications of applying a feminist methodology in the study of social movements? How was my understanding of social movements, of feminist movement and specifically of the NGO-ization transformed by using a feminist methodology? Studies on social movements tend sometimes to focus more on formal social movement organizations, excluding sometimes more fluid, informal, diverse, cultural forms of organization, focus more on cognitive factors rather than emotions in protests, emphasize institutional change strategies rather than identity politics in mainstream social movements, contributing to the exclusion of women's collective action (Taylor, 1998, 374). In this research, without essentializing, I compared more formal organizations involved in lobbying and advocacy, service providing but also more informal collectives, sometimes involved in broader cultural and political initiatives, but I also analysed how NGOized and street feminism overlap and divide and also how the feminist movement community intersects with other social justice movements. Feminist methodology was developed in the context of struggles for social justice that problematized hegemonic modes of knowledge production that contribute to render invisible women and other marginal groups' experiences. My research on the NGOization of the feminist movement, a comparative endeavour, based on feminist epistemologies and methodologies allowed for contributing to knowledge that is situated and located in a specific time and space (Haraway, 1988) but which also opens possibilities for more general theoretical approaches.

Chapter III. An historical account of the feminist movement in Belgium

I. 1830-1892

In 1831, Belgium acquired a liberal Constitution that granted great modern liberties with nonetheless a system based on selective suffrage, exclusively male, that excluded women, working class, foreigners. The Belgian Civil Code inspired by the Napoleon Code from 1804, strengthened the exclusion of women from the public sphere, depriving them from juridical capacity, with a statute similar of minors (Jacques, 2009, 6). Not only did the Napoleon Code enshrine the legal inferiority of women in relation to their husbands and their political absence, but faced with the societal changes brought about by the industrial revolution, women see this inequality further accentuated by a lower remuneration of female workers and by a penalizing division of roles in the household (Estene, 2007, 21-22).

In this context, between 1830 and 1840, a small group of women from the progressive bourgeoisie, convinced that laws are not enough to change women's condition, being necessary to act on all mentalities, concentrate their efforts on education, laying the foundations for a pedagogical profeminism (Jacques, 2009, 6). Zoé de Gamond becomes in 1847 the first inspector of nursery, primary and normal schools for girls. The feminist participation during the revolutionary wave of 1848 was quickly repressed with the return to bourgeois order and traditional values, leaving the possibility only for educational actions (Jacques, 2009, 6-7; Gubin et al. 1997; Piette, 1999). Isabelle Gatti – the daughter of Zoé de Gamond opens in Brussels, in 1864, the first medium-sized girls' school and in 1891, the upper secondary cycle. The first generations of girls educated and trained in Isabelle Gatti's schools will engage as women activists in the first feminist associations at the end of the XIXth century (Jacques, 2009, 7). Thus, the struggle for women's education will pave the way for feminism in Belgium and mobilize the first major actresses of the movement (Estene, 2007, 21-22).

While the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) opened to women in 1880, followed by the

University of Liège in 1881 and that of Ghent in 1882, the Van Diest³⁰ and Popelin³¹ cases showed how difficult it was to practice practically a profession in relation to their studies. In 1889, Marie Popelin, the first Belgian woman to have completed law studies, student of Isabelle Gatti de Gamond, is effectively excluded from the Bar following the consecutive decisions of the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation, invoking clearly a sexual motivation (Estenne, 2007, 22).

II. 1892-1914

In 1892, the first feminist association in Belgium - la *Ligue belge du droit des femmes* (the 'Belgian League for Women's Rights') is created, triggered by the mobilization related to Popelin Affair, around the refusal to register with the Bar of Marie Popelin. Together with her lawyer – Louis Frank and the help of Henri Lafontaine and her sister Léonie, Isala Van Diest – first female doctor in Belgium, Hector Denis and his wife Joséphine, Marie Popelin founded the *Ligue belge du droit des femmes*, on the model of *Ligue française des droits des femmes* ('French League of Women's Rights') and with the support of baptismal funds (Jacques, 2009, 8). The *Ligue* publishes a quarterly magazine with the same name which appeared regularly until the WWI, to inform about the progress of feminism in Belgium and abroad, about legal issues and achievements of women in different fields (Ibidem). In 1895, a permanent secretariat and feminist library opened (Ibidem). In 1909, *within Institut international de bibliographie* (the International Institute of Bibliography), a central office of documentation for women's issues is founded (Ibidem).

The *Ligue* cultivated contacts with international feminists, occasioned by May Wright Sewall's visit in Europe in 1888 to promote the International Council of Women (ICW).

³⁰ Isala Van Diest (1842-1916) is the first female doctor in Belgium. In the 1870s, Belgian universities did not accept any girls in their courses. Isala thus carried out her studies abroad and finally obtained the authorization, by royal decree, to practice medicine in Belgium on the 24 of November, 1884. She then opened her cabinet in Brussels and worked in a shelter for prostitutes. Isala Van Diest, along with Marie Popelin, is one of the founders of *Ligue belge du Droit des Femmes* (the Belgian League of Women's Rights) in 1892. Valérie Piette, "Isala Van Diest", in Eliane Gubin et AL., *Dictionnaire des femmes belges*, Bruxelles, Racine, 2006, p. 556-557

³¹ Marie Popelin (1846-1913) was a former teacher at Isabelle Gatti's school. She worked for several years as a teacher until the ULB opened its courses for women. She enrolled at the Faculty of Law and graduated with distinction. When she later joins the Bar to practice as a lawyer, the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation refuse her demand. Although there is no rule against women's access to the legal profession, the courts disapproved it.

de Bueger-Van Lierde, F. (1972). A l'origine du mouvement féministe en Belgique.«L'Affaire Popelin». *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 50(4), 1128-1137.

It was just in 1922, almost ten years after the death of Marie Popelin that women gained access to the Bar.

While the Ligue had strong ties with the ICW, it was not officially a member because it did not meet the criteria of being an association that federates other feminist groups, until the 1899 ICW Congress, when Marie Popelin assumed to set up a *Conseil national des femmes belges* (CNFB) (National Council of Belgian Women (CNFB) (Jacques, 2009, 8).

During the last decade of the XIXth century, other women associations were created, such as *Société belge pour l'amélioration du sort de la femme* (ASF) ('Belgian Society for the Improvement of the Status of Women') in 1897, *Union des femmes belges contre l'alcoolisme* ('Union of Belgian women against alcoholism') and *Union des femmes belges pour la paix* ('Belgian Women's Union for Peace') in 1899, *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* (Christian Feminism of Belgium) and *Union féministe belge* (Belgian feminist union) in 1902. The coagulation of all these organizations in a federative association was a difficult process, due to divergent views around traditional political cleavages. While, the Ligue proposed a neutral option for the federation, other groups claimed both feminism and a political party, such as *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* allied with the Parti catholique ('Catholic Party') or the national federation of socialist women organized within Parti Ouvrier Belge (POB) (Jacques, 2009, 9). Isabelle Gatti left the Ligue, joined the POB and founded her own review – *Cahiers féministes* in 1896 (Ibidem). Marie Popelin, finally founded the CNFB on the 30th of January 1905, with only three associations; other 12 organizations will join until the beginning of the WWI. *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* did not join, and neither the socialist women who refused to collaborate with a bourgeois feminism (Ibidem). Although, portraying itself as apolitical and neutral, the CNFB reveals itself as secular and liberal (Ibidem).

While in Europe, the right to vote was a central claim for feminist groups, in Belgium, the Ligue focused on civil and economic equality considering that women cannot be full independent citizens if they remained submissive to the husband and the boss (Idem., 10). This aspect was obvious for example in the first international feminist congress in Brussels, from 4 to 7 August 1897, to celebrate its fifth anniversary (Ibidem). The economic and civil reform program of the League aimed at the suppression of all the measures that maintain the incapacity of the married woman and, eventually, the abolition of the marital authority (Jacques, 2009, 11). In March 1901, The League together with *Société pour l'amélioration de la condition de la femme* (SAF) mobilized against article 340 of the Civil Code which forbade any search for paternity that after long and sustained efforts led to the law of March

31, 1908 that allowed, the search for paternity, under certain conditions, maintaining the prohibition of research in the case of married men (Ibidem).

Another successful campaign concerned the representation of women in industrial tribunals (Conseils de prud'hommes)³² which mobilized several feminist associations among which SAF that took the initiative of petitioning in 1906, supported by *Ligue du droit des femmes* (Women's Rights League), *l'Union féministe* (the Feminist Union), *la Ligue des femmes socialistes de Gand* (the League of Socialist Women of Ghent) (Jacques, 2009, 12). Despite strong resistance in the Senate, the law finally was promulgated on May 15, 1910. Nevertheless, other campaigns did not succeed, such as the one to obtain the equal treatment of teachers, despite a petition of almost 6,000 signatures (Ibidem).

The Ligue did not concentrate its efforts on claims about suffrage rights that were at the heart of political struggles in Belgium since the advent of POB in 1885 (Jacques, 2009, 12). The pressure of international feminism and the contacts of Belgian organizations with the IC W and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance helped Belgian feminists discover other strategies and the importance of the right to vote for the success of other claims (Jacques, 2009, 13). Moreover, the national context of instrumentalization of women's suffrage by political parties – POB mobilizes only for the benefit of male suffrage while the Catholics influenced by *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique*, integrate the vote of women to their strategy to oppose the rise of socialism, determined Belgian feminists to decide on their strategies and actions (Ibidem). While the whole feminist movement adopts a cautious and reformist attitude expressed during the 2nd International Feminist Congress organized by the League in Brussels at the end of April 1912, the *Union féministe* created in 1902 and renamed seven years later as *Union pour le suffrage des femmes* proposes violent actions, similar to English suffragettes (Ibidem). *The Ligue catholique pour le suffrage* (the 'Catholic League for Suffrage'), a branch of *Féminisme chrétien*, created in 1912 by Louise Van den Plas, initiated and submitted a petition to the Chamber of Deputies on the 15th of January 1913, for women's suffrage, supported by the *Ligue du droit des femmes*, *Société pour l'amélioration de la condition de la femme* (the 'Society for the Improvement of the Status of Women') and *Union belge des femmes gantoises* (the 'Belgian Ghent Women's Union') (Jacques, 2009, 13). On the 10th of February 1913, all the feminist efforts around the right to vote coagulate

³² Strong debates took place since the law of July 31st, 1889 established industrial tribunals to settle disagreements between employers and workers of both sexes but did not allow women to be represented (Jacques, 2009, 11-12)

into a common front -*Fédération belge pour le suffrage des femmes* (the ‘Belgian Federation for the suffrage of women’). Nevertheless, as the IWW starts, feminist efforts are converted into patriotic actions within a common front founded on the 8th of August 1914 - *Union patriotique des femmes* (the ‘Patriotic Union of Women’), rapidly integrated within *Comité national de secours et d’alimentation* (the ‘National Relief and Food Committee’) (Idem, 14).

Jacques (2009, 14) argues that before the WWI the Belgian feminist movement adapted its demands to the ideas of the social milieu from which it emerged, namely the French “urban, progressive and enlightened bourgeoisie” (with few exceptions in Ghent and Antwerp), with its center in Brussels, favoring thus education as a privileged way to achieve emancipation (Ibidem.). Considering that women’s oppression could transcend political and ideological divisions, the Belgian feminist movement attempted to position above party struggles and to attract all women under a common front (Ibidem). Nevertheless, it eschewed in its efforts and divided according to the traditional parties into a secular and liberal feminism associated with the *Ligue du droit des femmes* and the *Conseil national* and other associations around them, a Catholic feminism represented by the *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* and a socialist feminism within POB (Ibidem). The liberal and secular feminism was considered universalist and egalitarian and had a reformist program and claimed the alignment of the condition of women with that of men. The Christian feminism focused on gender differentialism and complementarity, insisting that only women are capable of defending women's rights. Finally, the socialist feminism subordinated the feminist struggle to the class struggle, postulating that the end of the capitalist regime will bring an end to all forms of discrimination. Thus, besides being divided into different groups, the Belgian feminism presents irreducible conceptions of women’s emancipation (Jacques, 2009, 14). Networking within the international feminist movement, Belgian feminism reinforced its credibility nationally and structures its work and rededications within feminist associations (Ibidem).

III. 1918-1939

The interwar years represent a period of transformations and readjustments for the feminist movement in Belgium, both at the national level in relation with other political movements and at the level of its international involvement (Jacques, 2009, 16). The universal suffrage from the age of 21 for men shook the previous political stability and parties adapted to a new experience of coalition governments and compromises between parties since none of them

gained a sufficient majority to govern alone (Ibidem). The economic difficulties favoured the rise of authoritarian tides (Ibidem). The question of reconstruction and suffrage and the economic crisis were the two structuring issues of the political life during interwar and of the feminist movement.

The feminist movement presented a united front around the common demand of the female suffrage in the immediate post-war period. Nevertheless, the fight for political rights did not bear fruit and only a few categories of women – widows of war, mothers of soldiers dead for the fatherland if they are widows, heroines and prisoners of war, obtain legislative suffrage (Jacques, 2009, 30).

After the WWI, the reorganization and reconstruction of the feminist movement in Belgium is realized around different associations. CNFB, *Fédération des femmes pour le suffrage*, *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique*, *Ligue belge du droit des femmes*, *Société belge pour l'amélioration du sort de la femme* (ASF), *Union des femmes de Wallonie* managed more or less successful restructuring after the war. Among them, the CNFB imposed itself as the essential meeting place for Belgian feminism.

Other associations, less reformist, with more radical claims appear. One of them is *La Fédération belge des femmes universitaires* (FBFU) (The Belgian Federation of University Women) created in 1921 on the model of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) funded in England in 1919 (Jacques, 2009, 19). The organization includes university graduates or women with equivalent degrees and defends the education of girls, women's access to all professions and the defence of the right to work for women, responding to the new interwar reality of an increase in the number of young girls that pursue higher education (Idem, 20). The organization will mobilize against the unfavourable measures taken against women's work during the 1930s economic crisis, to reduce male unemployment (Idem, 21).

Among the more radical organizations, the *Groupement belge pour l'affranchissement de la femme* (GBAF) is created by Louise De Craene-Van Duuren in 1928. The aim was to obtain the complete political and legal capacity of women and to liberate women from all the restrictions and obstacles in the economic, social and intellectual spheres (Idem, 21). Louise De Craene-Van Duuren was one of the four feminists, together with Marcelle Renson, Georgette Ciselet and Élise Soyer to have participated at the congress of Open Door Council

(ODC), acting in relation to the protection of women's work and reacting to the policies undertaken by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The economic crisis of the 1930s encourages the organizers to divide GBAF in two organizations with separate objectives, namely the *Groupement belge de la Porte ouverte (GBPO)* (the 'Belgian Open Door Group') devoted to the defense of economic rights and the *Groupement belge pour l'affranchissement de la femme (GBAF)* (the 'Belgian Group for Women's Empowerment') devoted to the defense of civil and political rights (Ibidem). The GBPO is presided by Louise De Craene-Van Duuren and affiliated at Open Door International (ODI). The GBAF is presided by the lawyer and militant Georgette Ciselet and changes its name in *Egalité* (Equality) in 1931. Both organizations advocated a radical feminism and their claims were only partially supported by more moderate associations such as the CNFB and completely rejected by organizations created before 1914 such as *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* or *Fédération belge pour le suffrage des femmes* (Jacques, 2009, 22). But the most fervent criticism towards these radical organizations came from the *Femmes socialistes* and the feminine branches of the *Ligues ouvrières chrétiennes* (the Christian Workers Leagues) with their leader Maria Baers denouncing them as bourgeois, disconnected from the reality of the women's workers and with no legitimacy to speak on their behalf (Ibidem). Thus, these new Belgian feminist associations grouped under the umbrella of the "feminist egalitarian movement" and connected with the evolution of the international feminist movement, receive partial support from more moderate associations around CNFB and are confronted with fierce opposition from mass women's organizations linked to political parties (Jacques, 2009, 24).

During the interwar period women branches within political parties play an important role in the mobilization of women. Within POB three entities are created in relation to women's issues. First, as early as 1920, the *Comité national d'action féminine (CNAF)* (the National Committee for Women's Action) is in charge of the political actions of socialist women, securing the votes of women voters, earning their loyalty through the services that POB offer to families, especially the mutuality (Jacques, 2009, 25). Second, in 1922 a women's section within *Union nationale des fédérations des mutualités socialistes (UNFMS)* ('National Union of Socialist Mutual Federations') under the name of *Femmes prévoyantes socialistes (FPS)* ('Women's Socialist Foresight') that rapidly attracts thousands of member, ousting CNAF (Ibidem). Lastly, in 1923, the *Ligue nationale des coopératrices belges qui encadre les ménagères* (the National League of Belgian Cooperators for the supervision of housewives) was created (Ibidem). Tensions arise between the three-headed feminine organization

regarding different conceptions of the emancipation of women, in relation to POB's vision promoting the withdrawal of women from the labour market associated to a victory over the capitalist system and worker's exploitation – all these constraining a new generation of socialist women who find themselves wavering between their feminist convictions and the priority that the party gives to the class struggle (Idem, 26).

The restructuring of the Catholic Party after the WWI into interest groups (*standen*) entailed the creation of a women association within each stand: *Boerinnenbonden*, *Union des femmes des classes moyennes*, *Fédération des femmes catholiques (bourgeoises)* (the Federation of Catholic Women (middle-class) et *Ligues ouvrières féminines chrétiennes* (LOFC) (Leagues for Christian Women Workers), promoting an essentialist vision of feminism starting from the perspective that each social class has special interests to defend and that only this social category is apt to do so, the reasoning also applies to women (Idem, 26). Moreover, each women organization is headed by a chaplain and subordinated to the male power (Ibidem). Catholic youths are also organized in a separate structure – JOC, which comprises a women section – JOFC that serves as a recruitment base for (LOCF). Out of these organizations, the *Boerinnenbonden* and the LOFC become mass organizations with thousands of members (Ibidem). Between LOFC and FPS there is a harsh competition (Ibidem). The only political feminist association - *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* (1902) remains outside the reorganization of the party (Ibidem).

Within the Liberal Party, which is not a mass party, women branches were created, much narrower compared to their socialist and Catholic counterparts. One women organization for political action, *Fédération nationale des femmes libérales* (National Federation of Liberal Women) was created in 1921 and another one for social actions - *Secrétariat des œuvres sociales libérales* (Secretariat of liberal social works) will become independent in 1937 under the name *Solidarité. Groupement social féminin libéral* (Solidarity. Liberal Women's Social Group) (Idem, 27). Tensions were resented as well at the level of the Liberal Party that has always been hostile to women's suffrage, but open to the civil and economic emancipation of women (Idem, 27).

The Communist Party has a women's section since its creation in 1921, but without autonomy and which is subordinated to the party's vision that there is no women's issue, but social issue that will be solved with the disappearance of the class struggle (Idem, 27).

In addition to the two clear axes of feminist associations and women's mass organizations related to political parties, the landscape is further complicated by alliances between feminists and certain women's groups such as social and philanthropic associations³³, pacifist associations and professional organizations³⁴ (Jacques, 2009, 28). Since the Catholics organized around issues of protecting women's work, radical feminists largely mobilized Masonic lodges and free-thinking societies (Idem, 35).

During the interwar period the feminist struggled around suffrage, the civil and juridical equality, economic equality and opposed to various attacks against women's work. Since the Speech from the Throne of November 22, 1918 mentioned only male suffrage, feminist organizations mobilized at the call of the *Fédération belge pour le suffrage des femmes* and sent letters and petitions to politicians, organized events and conferences all over the country to claim women's suffrage (Jacques, 2009, 30). The CNFB and the Federation try to lobby by gathering more than 200,000 signatures on a petition supporting the Catholic proposal for universal suffrage without distinction of sex but the first elections of the post-war period were nevertheless held by universal male suffrage (Ibidem). After extensive negotiations between political parties hostile to women's suffrage³⁵, a compromise arises concretized through the law of April 15, 1920, where Catholics accept universal male suffrage at age 21, but in exchange, they get women to vote in local elections (Ibidem). The *Union patriotique des femmes* organizes a campaign to raise women's awareness of political issues and political organization and together with the *Ligue belge du droit des femmes* and CNFB created a general party of Belgian women on January 25, 1921 (Jacques, 2009, 30). The poor success achieved, despite the mobilization of feminist associations contributed to the decrease of the movement around suffrage in the late 1920s, regaining momentum at the beginning of the 1930s with the creation of GBAF, that became afterwards *Egalité* (Idem, 31). The "egalitarian feminists" around GBAF mobilize as well during the 1930s for the civil and juridical equality and claim the civil and legal capacity of the married woman, claim the suppression of the notion of marital authority of the Civil Code, the reform of matrimonial regimes and the access of women to all professions (Jacques, 2009, 33).

³³ Anti-alcoholism associations, associations for the protection of youth such as Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

³⁴ *Fédération nationale des infirmières belges* (1922) ('National Federation of Belgian Nurses'), *Association centrale des auxiliaires sociaux de Belgique* ('Central Association of Social Auxiliaries of Belgium').

³⁵ Catholics are in favor of women's suffrage because they see it as a way of curbing the rise of the Socialists; liberals and socialists are hostile because they are convinced that women are mostly under the clergy.

The mobilization of feminists around economic equality was tenuous. Most of the moderate feminists support the ideal of women as housewives and even when they agree with the idea of women working outside the house they support professions considered consistent with women's feminine 'qualities'³⁶ (Jacques, 2009, 33). The ideal of women as housewives is also supported by the Catholic movements and their women organizations, which mobilize for measures to limit the work of married women (Ibidem). The deepening of the crisis and the rise of male unemployment favored the adoption of a series of decree-laws between 1933 and 1935³⁷, to reduce male unemployment to the detriment of the female workers but also of migrant workers (Ibidem, 33-34).

Concerned about these measures, women's organizations linked to the Liberal and Socialist Party and women's professional organizations mobilized to protest at a meeting in the hall of the Great Harmony in Brussels, December 21, 1934 with 2,000 people present. In extension, a vigilance committee, composed of neutral and socialist feminist associations, was founded and organized a protest meeting against the prohibition of spousal overlapping in the public service (Idem, 36). The vigilance committee also obtains the creation of a Women's Labor Commission, with only advisory power, to discuss issues relating to women's work (Ibidem). At the end of the crisis these measures are eventually repealed (Ibidem).

At the international level, during the interwar period, feminists mobilized to lobby the newly created League of Nations, employing a double strategy –at the national level they pressured their government to designate among their delegates personalities favorable to the feminist views and at the international level they put pressure on the international organizations via their accredited international representation (Idem, 37). With this strategy, they obtained progress in different areas such as the issue of the nationality of the married woman where Belgian feminists play a significant role (Idem, 38). The feminist engagement within the international peace movements was low during the 1920s and regained momentum during the 1930s to oppose the rise of Nazism and Fascism (Idem, 39). The FBFU and the GBPO

³⁶ New professions open for women such as nurse, with the legal diploma being recognized in 1921, social assistants with schools created in 1920, physiotherapists with schools created in 1926, secretaries with a secretariat school opening in 1924 (Jacques, 2009, 33).

Moreover, some of the traditional male professions also open for women who become eligible for commercial courts, they obtain the right to exercise as lawyers in 1922, to become stockbrokers in 1925 or ushers in 1931 (Ibidem).

³⁷ See the laws: May 31, 1933, April 12, 1934, December 8, 1934, January 23, 1935, January 28, 1935 and February 5, 1935 in the chronology.

inform about the situation in Germany, Italy and Spain and FBFU also mobilizes to support Spanish university women (Idem, 40). In 1934, a Belgian section of the World Committee of Women against War and Fascism was created in which FBFU is active. Other Belgian feminist organizations, even if they do not adhere to the Committee, maintain links through personal memberships (Ibidem). The *Union des femmes coloniales* (UFC) (The Union of Colonial Women) was created officially in 1924 to supervise and advise European women accompanying their husbands in the Belgian Congo, being a group at the service of the Belgian colonial enterprise, gravitating around CNFB (Idem, 41).

IV. After the World War II

During the WWII, the activities of CNFB and FBFU were pursued clandestinely and at the end of the war the feminist ranks were fragile – out those who were deported, some died in detention and others returned weak (Idem, 42). After the war, CNFB and FBFU mobilize, while the GBPO struggles to resist after the death of Louise De Craene-Van Duuren in 1938, while *Equality*, led by Georgette Ciselet, disappears despite some attempts to maintain it (Idem, 43). Jacques (2009, 43) argues that what marked the most the feminist movement after 1945 was the great expansion of feminist organizations and the Cold War.

First of all, women mass organizations related to political parties strengthened so much that feminist success was evaluated in terms of how they manage to get their demands adopted by these great associations, especially the Catholics (for the most part, the LOCF / *Kristelijke arbeidersvrouwen* - KAV) and the socialists (FPS-SVV) that compete among each other as liberal women fail to impose themselves (Idem, 44).

In 1943, women Christian organizations set up the *Conseil général des femmes catholiques* (General Council of Catholic Women) with a French-speaking and a Dutch-speaking branch, composed of LOCF/KAV that are dominating numerically, the Boerinnenbonden, the *Fédération des femmes catholiques* and the *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* (Ibidem). The LOCF / KAV redefine their positions on feminist claims and accept that women should enjoy equal rights to men in civil and political terms becoming the promoters of reforms that support this claim (Ibidem). A break-up took place at the end of the 60s with KAV remaining related to *Christelijke Volkspartij* (Christian Social Party) (CVP) while LOCF, renamed *Vie Feminine*, distanced themselves from the Catholic Church (Idem, 44-45).

In the socialist field, out of the three women organizations, just *Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes* (FPS) and *Ligue des coopératrices* survived, with FPS gaining momentum when the law of September 28, 1944, which introduces the system of generalized and compulsory social security, passed (Idem, 45). From 1947 to 1949, the number of persons affiliated to FPS increases by 60%, passing from 150 000 to 240 000 affiliates because all the women belonging to socialist mutual societies become automatically members of the FPS (Ibidem). Thus, after the WWII there was a great development of popular education movements through LOFC that later became *Vie feminine* and the FPS (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 17).

After the communists established in the aftermath of the WWII a Women's International - Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), Belgium left resistance movements created *Union des femmes pour la défense de la famille* (Women's Union for the Defense of the Family) that adhered to the WIDF (Idem, 45). The Union changes its name into *Rassemblement des femmes pour la paix et le bien-être* (RFP) ('Women's Rally for Peace and Wellbeing'). Feminist associations were skeptical towards RFP because of its relation to the Communist Party, but the links have been nevertheless maintained through overlapping membership of militants active within RFP but also GBPO and CNFB (Idem, 45).

Second, the feminist association reconstruct themselves immediately after 1945, with CNFB resuming its official activities under the leadership of Marthe Boël after liberation, FBFU and the GBPO they all reaffirm their claims for the support of economic, civil and political equality between men and women throughout the 1950s (Idem, 46). Under the presidency of Lily Wigny – wife of the minister Pierre Wigny, the CNFB opens to Catholic circles (Ibidem). But most important, during this period, is the progressive rallying of women's mass associations to the demands of the CNFB, with the guilds of socialist cooperatives becoming affiliated with the CNFB in 1952, and the LOFC in 1967, only the FPS remaining outside the CNFB (Idem, 47). Moreover CNFB, FBFU and GBPO benefit as well from the support of three women MPs – Georgette Ciselet, Jeanne Vandervelde and Pierre Vermeylen (Ibidem).

Other women associations are created in relation to the new needs of women who are more and more present on the labour market and reclaim access to culture and information (Ibidem). Thus, in 1956 Lily Wigny, president of CNFB founded *Centre féminin d'éducation*

permanente ('Women's center for popular education') organizing conferences, training for women in various fields, hosting a library and discussion tables and organizing investment clubs to advise women in the management of their wealth (Ibidem). In line with the opening of liberal and commercial professions to women, other organizations were created, such as *Association belge des femmes-chefs d'entreprises* ('Belgian Association of Women-Entrepreneurs') and *Association belge des femmes juristes* (ABFJ) ('Belgian Association of Women Lawyers').

Lastly, after 1944 CNFB resumed the struggle for women's suffrage with all the feminist and women associations progressively concentrating their efforts on this claim (Ibidem, 48). It is in 1948 that the combat is won, although feminist militants continue to criticize the opportunism of political parties related to women's suffrage (Idem, 49). CNFB and GBPO organize campaigns to inform women about their rights and duties (Ibidem). In this period, CNFB tries to organize as a place of encounter between men and women politicians, favourable to feminist ideas and women and feminist associations (Idem, 49). In 1968, CNFB together with other feminist associations organized Estates General of Women at the *Palais des congrès* in Brussels to celebrate the 20th anniversary of women's suffrage but also to evaluate the advancements of feminism (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 16). For example, despite the fact that equal pay was guaranteed by many international texts, in practice discriminations persisted (Jacques, 2009, 49). In this context, the GBPO, true to its original positions remains at the forefront of the social and economic combat, out loud with the slogan "Equal work, equal pay" (Idem, 50). Albeit being a small association, the GBPO exerts influence also due to its relation with international organizations, such as the Open Door International that lobby the International Labour Office and the ILO (Ibidem).

Since 1958, different associations gather at Centre féminin, in Brussels – 16, Toison d'Or Avenue at the initiative of Lily Wigny that changed address in 1978 to 1A, place Quetelet, 1030 (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 17).

The success of the feminist movement after the WWII was also due to the support of MPs Georgette Ciselet and Jeanne-Émile Vandervel who fully used their parliamentary initiatives to enact laws in favour of women (Jacques, 2009, 50). Women obtain access to different professions such as diplomatic career in 1945, judiciary in 1948 and notariat in 1950. The 1958 law that is the work of Georgette Ciselet, theoretically puts an end to the legal

incapacity of married women by abolishing marital power but nevertheless the effective equality between the spouses will be brought by the reform of the matrimonial regimes - law of July 14, 1976 - obtained thanks to the works of the feminist and feminine associations (Idem, 50). The law of August 21, 1948 officially abolishes the regulation of prostitution following years of lobbying of the feminist and abolitionist movement (Ibidem). These new advances in terms of civil, political and economic equality and the increased presence of women on the labor market gives rise to new demands, debates and reflections, such as on women's "double workday" (Ibidem).

V. 1970-1990

In the context of increased participation of women in the labour market and the debates around the regulation of their work, the *Fédération générale du travail de Belgique* (FGTB) creates a Women's Labor Committee first in Liège in 1963 and then in the whole country in 1965 which drafted a final report on the situation of women workers on the occasion of their congress in 1965 (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 19). In 1967, the FGTB proclaims *La Charte des droits de la femme au travail* ('The Charter of Women's Rights at Work') and the Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens (CSC) ('The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions') adopts in 1968 *Le statut de la travailleuse* ('The Statute of the Women's Worker') (Idem., 20). The 16th of February 1966, more than 3,000 women workers from the *Fabrique Nationale d'armes de guerre* (FN) ('National Factory of Weapons of War') in Herstal go on strike and claim the application of the article 119 from the Treaty of Rome – "equal pay, for equal work" (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 21; Coenen 2016, 1). The strike lasts for twelve weeks and sparks the solidarity of trade unions (Ibidem). Women gain some increase in salary but they have to wait the next strike in 1974 in order for them to obtain worthy improvements related to the conditions of their work and their salaries (Ibidem). A committee *A travail égal, salaire égal* ('Equal pay, for equal work') was created at the initiative of *Union de la gauche socialiste* (UGS)³⁸ (The Union of the socialist left) to support the strike by organizing a march in solidarity (Idem., 22). Initiated to back the strike, the committee settles permanently with reunions organized in the beginning at *Centre féminin* and then from 1974 on at *Maison des femmes* (Idem., 23). This committee is thought to embody the transition from a feminism à l'ancienne to the new feminism of the 70s (Idem., 22). From

³⁸ Small leftist party created in Brussels at the beginning of the 1965 (Denis and Van Rokegem, 1992, 22)

1971 on the links between the committee and the new feminist groups will be created and nourished (Idem., 24).

Created in 1964, the radio show Magazine F devoted to women, will include the first debates on the 1966 FN women's strike or about abortion, in 1971 (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 29).

In December 1962, the first francophone family planning center in Belgium opens, in Saint-Josse in Brussels, under the name *La famille heureuse*. The center is created as a result of reflections brought during a workshop organized by the masonic lodge – *Droit humain* (human right) - the only mixed lodge in Belgium at the time (Denis and Van Rokeghem, 1992, 31). The creation of family planning centres and the diffusion of contraceptives was considered as one of the great feminist achievements after the WWII (Idem., 37).

The new Belgian feminist movement or neo-feminist was born at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, characterized by a multitude of different small groups, scattered initiatives without a clearly established strategy.

The first groups appeared in Flanders, inspired by the Dolle Mina in the Netherlands active since 1969 (Denis and Van Rokegem, 1992, 42). Thus, a similar Dolle Mina group was created in Flanders. The group was named after a woman worker from the XIXth century – Wilhelmina Drukker who was part of the socialist movement, interested about the equality between men and women and who created “the movement of the free women” (Ibidem). Regarding its tactics, Dolle Mina played the spectacular and unconventional card, distinguished through their humour in the happenings and manifestations that they organized, ingraining bits of feminism, pretty much everywhere they could (Idem., 43). From 1973 on, they publish a periodical named *De grote kuis* (“The great cleaning”) (Idem., 44). In Wallonia, inspired by Dolle Mina, a similar group is created under the name of *Marie Mineur*. The group was also named after a women worker in a mine, who fought for the reduction of the working time and the abolition of the child work in mines (Idem., 45). The group holds a specific place within the new Belgian feminism through the social position of their activists – all coming from popular environments in direct connection with worker's life and through the geographical implantation in an industrial area around Charleroi and the central region (Idem., 45). They insist on the necessity of the solidarity between men and women workers (Idem., 47).

During the 1970s, at ULB – still under the spirit of May 68 – women students started to hold, once a week, at the university restaurant, a stand with the latest publications on what starts to be called ‘women’s liberation’ (Denis and Van Rokegem, 1992, 48). They got in contact with the GBPO animated by Adèle Hawel and formed the group *Front de liberation des femmes* (FLF) (‘Women’s Liberation Front’), to distinguish from *Movement de Liberation des Femmes* (MLF) (‘Women’s Liberation Movement’) in France. It became known, outside the university through a concerted action organized with Dolle Mina, that consisted in the disruption of the final of Miss Belgium in Antwerp (Idem., 48-49). In September 1971, they publish the first number of the newspaper *Et ta soeur?* (‘And your sister?’) together with the movement’s manifesto (Idem., 51). FLF gathered twice a month involving around forty participants. All women were welcome and there was no formal adhesion (Ibidem).

Other groups were created during the 1970s around Belgium. The *Pluralistische aktie groep voor gelijke rechten voor man en vrouw* (PAG) (‘The pluralist action group for the equality between men and women’) was created in Bruges at the beginning of the 1970s (Idem., 54). In Leuven, the *Groupe d’action pour la liberation des femmes* (GALF) (‘Groupe of action for women’s liberation’) was born under the influence of the progressive student’s movement – *le Mubef* (Mouvement Unifié Belge des Étudiants Francophones), and comprised women students, researchers, teaching assistants and wives of researchers (Idem., 54). Other groups were created in Liège, in Brussels involved in different actions and projects, from the creation of savage kindergarten to the preparation of what will become ‘Le petit livre rouge des femmes’ (‘The small red book of women’) (Idem., pp. 54-55). The specificity of these new emerging feminist groups was that they were informal and spontaneous, with no established functions or hierarchy – even if some activists became more visible during the gatherings (Idem., 55). The structure of *Association sans but lucratif* (ASBL, similar to an NGO) was not foreseen by the law at the time.

Reconciliation and rapprochement between old and new feminist groups takes place as well during the 1970s. To this end, GBPO organized a reunion where all the new groups presented their thesis (Idem., 62). Contacts are also established with the committee *A travail egal, salaire egal* and CNFB which initially seemed unseated with respect to the informal and provocative character of the new groups (Idem., 63). *Vie féminine* and FPS were more

reticent in the beginning regarding the new groups and the organization of the first Women's Day on the 11th of November 1972 (Ibidem). Women's trade unions were positive in general in what concerns new feminist groups, using them to put pressure on men's trade union to listen to their claims (Idem., 64). Some women from traditional trade unions (CSC and FGTB) participated in the first Women's Day mobilization (Ibidem).

Since 1970s, Françoise Collin and Marie Denis write a chronicle – Femmes ('Women') in the weekly magazine *La Relève* ('The Changing') where they present subversive books, make critical reflections about women's magazines, talk about clandestine abortion (Idem., 71). Under the initiative of Marie Denis who contacts Jeanne Vercheval, founder of Marie Mineur and the journalist Suzanne Van Rokeghem, a project aimed to address directly women in their most concrete aspects of their lives is born (Ibidem). Other feminists join the project of the above mentioned book called *Le petit livre rouge des femmes* for all the women of all ages, comprising economic analyses and daily life experiences, denouncing the fake sexual liberation, the prohibition of abortion and the silence on contraceptive methods, women's representation in the mass media, or the contempt regarding single mothers (Idem., 76). The book was out in October 1972 and it was a real success among women, being distributed and out of stock for the first Women's Day selling 15,000 copies in a few months.

The idea of a first Women's Day in Brussels emerged in Paris during the days for the denunciation of crimes against women, organized between 13 and 14th of May, 1972 in which Belgian feminists such as the journalist and co-founder of Vrouwen Overleg Komitee (VOK) Lily Boeykens, Nina Ariel from *Parti féministe unifié* (PFU) (United Feminist Party), activists from FLF and Marie Mineur or coordinators of the Little Red book of women participated (Idem., 81). The day after the encounter in Paris, Lily Boeykens, Nina Ariel and other feminists from Belgium thought that time has come to organize in Belgium a day of encounter for women and proposed to Simone de Beauvoir who was also present at the gatherings in Paris to participate at the Women's Day in Brussels which they thought to organize and she accepted (Idem., 82). Flemish and French groups or national groups addressing both communities participated in the organization, such as VOK, GBPO and *A travail égal, salaire égal*, but participation was on individual basis in the sense that no group claimed to be the organizers of the event (Ibidem). Between the French and the Flemish activists, there were differences regarding political perspectives, strategies and issues. Nevertheless, both French and Flemish activists agreed not to receive any private commercial

funding (Idem, 83). The place chosen for the gathering was the Auditorium of Passage 44 obtained from *Crédit Communal*. This choice caused arduous discussions because activists did not want to organize their gathering in an ultra-bourgeois place – a commercial gallery and to be indebted to a bank (even if a national one), but they did not find an alternative.

They agreed on a common declaration that ‘the aim of feminism is the establishment of a truly humane society for the fulfilment of all’ (Idem., 88). The programme comprising their claims was – with some modifications, that of *Le petit livre rouge des femmes*, published in both languages and distributed as a leaflet at the press conference that launched the book in October 1972 (Ibidem). Saturday, on the 11th of November 1972 at 10.00 o’clock in the morning, women started gathering at Passage 44. 8,000 women came and many of them take the floor at the gathering. There was a nursery organized in a nearby school by Dolle Mina where men take care of children. Men among which the State Minister Pierre Vermeyleen or the university professor Peter Piot, declare their support to the cause of women (Idem., 96). Simone de Beauvoir took the floor in the afternoon and among other feminist figures of the time Germaine Greer and Françoise d’Eaubonne were present, marking the international Occidental character of the movement (Idem., 97-99).

Hundreds of contacts are being collected and exchanged among participants. Many of them joined the united feminist party PFU, founded the same year. Many others join different reflection groups under the name *Groupes des femmes du 11 novembre* (GF11N) (Women groups of the 11th November) (Idem., 99-101). These were raising awareness groups, groups of analyses of sexual discrimination in education, media, women's journals, groups of analyses on health problems, adult communities, body expression, comics and photo novels (Idem., 101). Some of the analyses and research will be included in the *Cahiers du Griff* after 1973, while others will constitute the basis for the formation of action groups within the movement (Ibidem).

Around different initiatives and struggles a new movement consolidates. Abortion fight was a cornerstone of the neo-feminism, from the 1970s until the 1990s. In Belgium, abortion was forbidden by the Penal Code of 1867. Switzerland, England and especially the Netherlands as countries that allowed abortion became the last resort for sufficiently enough privileged Belgian women. The first debates around abortion emerged in Belgium during the 1970s. Dolle Mina mobilized under the slogan ‘baas in eigen buik’ (‘my body is mine’) (Idem.,

114). CNFB organized the first debate on abortion on the 26th of November 1970. In March 1971, ULB organizes a colloquium on abortion with the participation of various associations related to the abortion struggle (Idem., 114-115). In April, the manifesto of 343 was published in the French *Nouvel Observateur* signed by women celebrities that confessed that they had an abortion, exposing themselves to prosecution and imprisonment, because abortion was illegal³⁹. A few months later the Bobigny Trial took place in France generating a grand echo⁴⁰.

In Belgium, in May 1971, socialist senator Willy Callewaert proposed a law decriminalizing abortion which was never discussed (Idem., 115). In November 1971, feminist mobilizations around the country took place, on the occasion of an international day for the freedom of abortion (Idem., 116). FLF organized a demonstration-performance in Brussels and Marie Mineur also went in the street to protest. Police repression is high and many protesters are being arrested (Ibidem). Initiatives, manifestations, debates and colloquiums multiply, reaching climax when doctor Willy Peers was arrested and protests took place and petitions circulated for 35 days – the duration of his imprisonment (Idem., 117). A bridge building between the feminist, laic and progressive organizations took place to fight against the criminalization of abortion (Ibidem). Under the pressure of feminist movements a network has been created to allow to abort in good conditions, despite the legal prohibition (Idem., 119). At La Louviere it was Marie Mineur who dealt with this, in Brussels was *groupe A* (group A) that collaborated with a medical home, in Liege the group *femmes* ('women') provided useful addresses (Ibidem). The family planning center at ULB organized in March 1975 the first abortion in a non-hospital setting (Idem., 122). Other non-hospital centers for abortion are created among which the collective 'contraception' in 1976, financed by Dutch centers that were facing a high number of Belgian women coming to abort in the Netherlands (Ibidem).

³⁹ The text of the manifesto was edited by Simone de Beauvoir was supported by the *Movement de Liberation des Femmes* (MLF) and it contributed together with the Bobigny Trial and the constituted movement for the freedom of abortion and contraception at the adoption of the Veil law in December 1975-January 1976, depenalising abortion in France. The text of the manifesto was republished by *Nouvel Obs* in 2007 and can be found at:

<https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20071127.OBS7018/le-manifeste-des-343-salopes-paru-dans-le-nouvel-obs-en-1971.html> accessed May 12, 2019

⁴⁰ Five women were put on trial: a young minor who had an abortion after being raped, and four women of age, including the mother of the young girl judged for complicity or practice of abortion. This trial, which was defended by the lawyer and feminist Gisèle Halimi, had an enormous impact and contributed to the evolution towards the decriminalization of abortion in France.

The judiciary pretend to ignore the generalization of these actions and initiatives that were illegal waiting for a change in the law (Idem., 122-123). Despite the fact that the majority of population agrees with decriminalizing abortion and that many law proposals are being forwarded, nothing changes (Idem., 123). In 1978 the lawsuits against those practicing abortion start with 30 processes taking place, most of the accused being condemned but acquitted on appeal (Idem., 122). In 1978, the *Groupe d'action des centres extra-hospitaliers pratiquant des avortements* (GACEHPA) (Action group of extra-hospital centres performing abortions) is created, addresses are well known and many women have access to safe abortion. Nevertheless, many protests, manifestations and trials took place until the law of 1990, decriminalizing abortion (Idem., 123).

The PFU was created on the 19th March 1972 by four women Nina Ariel from Parti de la liberté et du progress (PLP)⁴¹, Claire Bihin from Parti social-chrétien (PSC)⁴², Adèle Hawel from GBPO and Renée Wary-Fosseprez from Front démocratique des francophones (FDF)⁴³. The programme of the party is similar to the claims made by FLF or within the Le Petit Livre Rouge des Femmes describing itself as a party that chose legal fight within the existing structures in order to change them radically (Idem., 126). A scission is being produced between the feminist movement whose main characteristic at the time was to criticize the political system and the PFU which chose to interweave precisely with those structures (Idem., 127). However, the party was not very successful at elections.

In 1973, on the 11th of November, when the second Women's Day was organized in Belgium, appeared the 1st number of *Cahiers du Griff* (*Groupe de recherché et d'information féministe*) (Feminist Research and Information Group) and its 1,500 copies are exhausted the same day (Idem., 133). Griff will mark the neo-feminism of the period, but will also have extensions within the feminist movement after the 1990s. Concerned about political and ideological

⁴¹ The PLP, in dutch Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (PVV), is a former Belgian unitary political party. Called Parti libéral since its founding in 1846, it changed its name in 1961, following the Congolese crisis. It split in 1972 into a French-speaking wing (PLP) and a Flemish wing, the Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (PVV).

⁴² The PSC, in Flemish Christelijke Volkspartij (CVP), is a Belgian Christian Democratic unitary party, which existed from 1945 to 1968.

⁴³ Front démocratique des francophones / Fédéralistes démocrates francophones / Démocrate fédéraliste indépendant (1964-2015); founded in 1964 by French-speaking Brussels-based politicians and activists from the three traditional pillars of the Belgian political field, the FDF is a party defending the linguistic rights of French-speaking people in Brussels and the Brussels periphery. In 2010, officially breaking with its de facto anti-federal line the FDF renamed itself Fédéralistes démocrates francophones. In November 2015, the FDF changed its name and acronym: DéFI Démocrate fédéraliste indépendant (Independent Federalist Democrat).

cleavages, Françoise Collin – who initiated the project – gathers in a board feminists from the old and the new wave, journalists, writers or women with different political engagements (Idem., 135). Together with Françoise Collin, the editing committee included Eliane Bouquoy (member of the committee *La Revue Nouvelle*), Marie Thérèse Cuvelliez (lawyer and member of the group ‘A travail égal, salaire égal’), Hedwige Peemans-Pouillet (historian) and Jacqueline Aubenas (editor at *Bruxelles-Jeunes*) (Idem., 135-136). There were also around twenty regular collaborators among which an Italian, an English and many French women intellectuals such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cisoux, Françoise d’Eaubonne, Odette Thibaut (Idem., 138). The *Cahiers du Grif* cease to appear in 1978 and Françoise Collin testifies about it saying that ‘it was a miscalculation to destroy an international tool like that, but our conception of desire was outside the institutional: when we do not want to do anything, we stop it’⁴⁴. Afterwards, the team of *Grif* concentrates on research under the name of *Université des Femmes* (Women’s University) and then splits in two groups – one around Françoise Collin that starts editing again the journal *Cahiers du Grif* from 1982 and another around Hedwige Peemans-Pouillet that continues the work at *Université des Femmes* and starts its own publication from 1981 entitled *Chroniques féministes* (Feminist Chronicles) (Denis and Van Rokegem, 1992, 139).

In 1972, as described by Denis and Van Rokegem (1992, 153) ‘the women’s movement was composed of islands born in the wave of subversive ideas and is homeless’, gathering in different cafés, abandoned factories or theatres. After the Women’s Day in 1973, an informal group called ‘Maison des femmes et Interféministe’ was created with headquarters and a basic service two days a week for women seeking abortion (Ibidem). Debates took place about the creation of a *Maison des femmes* as an important political project that would allow having a place to exchange, gather and prepare common actions but feminists who were interested in this initiative were also concerned to leave the streets and to become a substitute for state services or to be dependent on a municipality or a mayor in terms of location (Idem., 154-155). The idea was to create an organization that is non-hierarchical, open to all women, where all women can comfortably speak, to have a day care centre, a restaurant, occasional but also regular meetings and all sorts of workshops (Idem., 155). The *Maison des femmes* opened at 79, Rue de Meridien, in a disused postal building, made freely available by the Saint-Josse Municipality and had the first gathering among participant groups the 4th June

⁴⁴ Interview with Françoise Collin, February 1992 cited in Denis and Van Rokegem, 1992, 139.

1974 (Idem., 155-156). An ASBL (non-profit organization) is created in the place where the Maison des femmes is hosted, in order for it to be able to receive subsidies for five years and where six women are co-responsible (Idem., 156). Nevertheless, the ASBL does not have a president, a treasurer, or any kind of delegation (Ibidem). Permanent volunteers and some activists more or less remunerated shared tasks and responsibilities concerning the management of the house (Idem., 160). Different groups were having weekly reunions and activities at Maison des femmes, such as Groupe A and then 'médecine-femmes' working on abortion, Le Groupe d'Action Crèches (GAC) that initiated a day-care for one year, the group 'A travail égal, salaire égal', preparatory meetings for the Cahiers du Griff and many other groups. Various workshops were regularly organized on plumbing, electricity, car repair, carpentry, corporal expression for a feminist theatre, self-defence, reading workshops and others (Idem., 170-171). Spontaneous actions were also organized related to various political events, such as a help-group for women prisoners in Chile or support for the actions organized by women flight attendants (Idem., 178).

A group of lesbian feminists was also created during the same period. The group was first called 'Biches sauvages' and then 'Lesbiennes radicalles'. As *Lesbiennes radicales*, they participated in the famous Women's Day, baptised Journée 'F' and they organized their reunions every Monday at *Maison des Femmes* (Idem., 181). At Maison des Femmes, they also create the group *Homo-L*.

Other groups and initiatives are active within the *Maison des Femmes* such as Women Overseas for Equality, founded by the American Lydia Horton in 1971, popularizing the method of self-help, a group of juridical information that used a pragmatic, collective and critical approach of juridical problems and women were sharing information, a group of reflection and action concerning rape, another group concerning beaten women and another one on sexism in education (Denis and Van Rokegem , 1992, 180-190).

In 1972, at the General Assembly of the United Nations, it was decided that 1975 will be International Women's Year. In each country, women organize to prepare for the International Women's Year. In Belgium, Emilienne Brunfaut is the president of the Francophone Committee, while Lucienne Herman-Michielsen presides the Flemish Committee (Idem., 194). On the francophone side, the committee gathers 92 women and family associations that organize various activities on different aspects regarding the

condition of women, throughout Belgium (Ibidem.). But the thunderous event was the First World Conference on Women in Mexico between 19th of June and 2nd of July 1975 that brought together 133 governments, UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations and agencies. A ten years Action Plan is adopted by all delegations and two other world conferences on women are organized – one in Copenhagen in 1980 and one in Nairobi in 1985.

Under the pressure of the International Women's Year in 1975, in Belgium, two advisory commissions were created, in order to revise and improve the legislation and policies regarding women. They could be considered as the precursors of the Belgian women's policy agencies. First, in 1974 a Committee on Women's Employment within the Ministry of Labour and Employment was founded. The Committee had limited powers, its mandate consisting in informing the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the National Labour Council (Celis and Meier, 2007, 3). Second, in 1975 a Consultative Committee for the Status of Women within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was created. It had as mandate "to prepare the International Women Conferences, to assist the Minister of Foreign Affairs in determining the Belgian attitude towards problems with the status of women, and to ensure that international guidelines would be applied in Belgium" (Ibidem). The Committee comprised members of various social, political and women's organizations and it also had the right to advise the Minister regarding women's issues on the international agenda but this never happened⁴⁵ (Ibidem). Despite these institutional changes, feminist activists consider that 1975 is not women's year but the year of unemployment, since the economic crisis started and women were the first to lose their jobs (Denis and Van Rokegem, 1992, 197). Dolle Mina requested 'not one year, but a real life' (Ibidem.).

In 1976, between the 4th and the 8th of March, an International Tribunal on Crimes against Women took place in Brussels, at *Palais du Congrès*. The idea crystallized during a feminist summer camp organized in Femö, Copenhagen in 1974, by a Danish group – Redstockings, and that gathered activists from all over Europe. The idea was to be a source of information subsequently transformed into a pressure and lobby instrument (Idem., 200). National

⁴⁵ At the UN Copenhagen World Conference on Women in 1980, member states were encouraged to ban illegal abortions. The Belgian internal legal agenda did not mention this issue, even though the first chairs of the Consultative Commission for the Status of Women – Mieke Coene, Marijke Van Hemeldonck, Emilienne Brunfaut and from September 1981 onwards Françoise Lavry –were feminists (Celis and Meier, 2007, 3).

committees were organized to prepare the Tribunal and each country was invited to present two crimes and to find women who will testify regarding the subject (Idem., 200-201). The responsible for the Belgian committee were Lily Boeykens and Lydia Horton, the founder of Women's Organization for Equality (WOE). While the Tribunal denounced crimes that women undergo throughout the world and created a spirit of global solidarity through talks and testimonies, a critique was brought that among participant countries – 29 in total – there were mainly rich countries, with some exceptions such as women's participation from Puerto Rico, Mexico, India and Egypt (Idem., 201).

In terms of mobilization, the 11th of November when the Women's Day – Journée 'F' – was first organized in 1972 continued to be a day for actions and protests for at least the next twenty years (Idem., 142-152). Nevertheless, at the end of the 1970s, the 8th of March resumes its place as the first mobilization of women, created in 1910 at the initiative of Clara Zetkin to commemorate the strike of 30,000 textile women workers in 1857 in Philadelphia (Idem., 150). The day is adopted by the UN in 1977 as the official International Women's Day. From the 1970 until the 1980s many strikes and processes concerning labor disputes and discrimination of women burst in Belgium and were supported by feminist activists (Idem., 205). Strikes of young women workers in textile industry, strikes for the equal pay supported by Marie Mineur, new strike at FN in Herstal in 1974, the occupation of the Salik factory, self-management experiences at Balai Libéré⁴⁶ or Daphica in Ere, strike of women workers at Hertz and many others took place (Idem., 207).

VI. After the 1990s

A. The development of an institutional architecture: women's policy agencies in Belgium

In 1985, the government created a State Secretary of Environment and of Social Emancipation with Miet Smet as State Secretary who also negotiated an Equal Opportunities portfolio and in 1986 an Emancipation Council (Celis and Meier, 2007, 65). The State Secretary covered everything related to social emancipation but throughout Smet's mandates a focus had been given to violence against women, women's economic position and women's participation in political decision-making. The Emancipation Council functioned as an

⁴⁶ <https://autogestion.asso.fr/experiences-autogestionnaires-en-belgique-22>
accessed July 14, 2019

advisory entity for the State Secretary who was subordinated to the Minister of Public Health and Environment and from 1989 on, to the Minister of Labour and Employment. In 1991, when Miet Smet becomes Minister of Labour and Employment she retained the Equal Opportunities portfolio that attained the level of a Minister which involved the creation of a Unit of Equal Opportunities within the Ministry of Labour and Employment in 1992 (Ibidem). The Emancipation Council and the former Committee on Women's Employment fused into the Council of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

Miet Smet was a former president of the Flemish Christian Democrats' political women's organisation - Vrouw en Maatschappij and when the Flemish Christian-Democrats lost elections in 1999, the new government coalition did not initially include a Minister of Equal Opportunities. This was rectified after protests by the women's movement (Idem., 65-66). After the 2003 elections, Equal Opportunities were again overlooked and then considered after protests by the women's movement (Idem., 66). When Laurette Onkelinx was Minister of Equal Opportunities she restructured the federal women's policy agency (Ibidem) and she pushed for the creation of the *Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes* (Institute for Equality of Women and Men) that was finalized in 2002. The *Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes* is a federal government institution, whose mission is to ensure and promote the equality of women and men and to combat all forms of gender-based discrimination or inequality, through appropriate legal framework, structures, strategies, instruments and actions⁴⁷. The Institute is autonomous to a certain extent as it falls under the authority of the Minister of Equal Opportunities for whom the Institute prepare and execute decisions, following up European and international policy measures regarding gender equality, but can initiate actions, including legal actions (Idem., 67). Celis and Meir (Ibidem) argue that even though the Belgian women's policy agency grow in autonomy and scope in terms of resources of personnel and budget it was marginal compared to other Ministers and State Secretaries.

The oldest women's policy agencies are those created at the federal level. With the federalization process that led to the creation of regions – Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels Capital City and of communities – Flemish, Francophone and German speaking, which have their own parliaments and governments since the mid 1990s. This brought about the creation

⁴⁷ <http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/institut> accessed July 14, 2019

of women's policy agencies for the regions and communities (Celis and Meir, 2007, 67). Thus, in Flanders, since the 1995 elections, there is a Minister in charge of Equal Opportunities and a women's policy agency part of the Cross-Sectional Department of Coordination (Celis and Meir, 2007, 67-68). The Wallon government since the 2004 election also has a Minister of Equal Opportunities but no women's policy agencies (Idem., 69). There is also a Walloon Council for Equality between Women and Men that advises regional authorities and promotes gender equality (EP, 2014, 8). At the level of Brussels-Capital Region there is an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Cell and an Advisory Council for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (Ibidem).

At the level of Parliaments, most of them have an advisory committee on gender equality. The House of Representatives has *Commission Emancipation Sociale* ('the Advisory Committee for Social Emancipation')⁴⁸ and the Senate of the federal Belgian parliament has *Comité d'Avis pour l'égalité des chances entre les femmes* ('Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men')⁴⁹. The Flemish Parliament has a standing committee that includes equal opportunities – Committee for Housing Policy, Poverty Policy and Equal Opportunities⁵⁰. The Parliament of the Francophone Community has a *Commission de l'Enseignement de promotion sociale, de la Jeunesse, des Droits des femmes et de l'Égalité des chances* ('Committee on Education for Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities')⁵¹.

B. The road towards feminist studies

The development and deepening of the feminist intellectual production in Belgium started during the 1970s by feminist groups such as Grif and then *Université des Femmes* and through the creation of various oasis of feminist research in universities, most often without financing. Thus, in 1987 the first center on women's studies – *Centrum voor Vrouwenstudies* at the University of Antwerp, initiated by professor Mieke Van Haegendoren – was created.

⁴⁸ <https://www.lachambre.be/kvcr/showpage.cfm?section=/comm&language=fr&cfm=/site/wwwcfm/comm/com.cfm?com=9331> accessed July 14, 2019

⁴⁹ RÈGLEMENT DU SÉNAT DE BELGIQUE 2016, p. 50
https://www.senate.be/doc/Reglement_2016_F.pdf accessed July 14, 2019

⁵⁰ http://www.calrenet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2015_Vlaams_Parlement_Informative_Sheet.pdf accessed July 14, 2019

⁵¹ <http://www.pfwb.be/le-travail-du-parlement/commissions/commissions-permanentes/ens-prom> accessed July 14, 2019

In 1988, a *Centrum voor Vrouwenstudies* (centre for women's studies) was created at Vrije Universiteit van Brussels by Lydia de Pauw-de Veen. On the French side, in 1989, Eliane Gubin created the *Groupe Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes sur les Femmes/GIEF* ('Interdisciplinary group on women's studies') at ULB, that publishes the journal *Sextant*, the first university journal devoted to women studies in Belgium (Puissant, 2002).

In 1990, the Secretariat for Science Policy funded, as part of the social sciences research program, the *Point d'appui Women's studies (1990-94)* (Support Point Women's studies (1990-94)) entrusted to two researchers – Eliane Vogel-Polsky and Mieke Van Haegendoren (Stoffel, 2004). They will subsequently obtain a new funding for a *Steunpunt Women's Studies* attached to the Sociaal Economisch Instituut / SEIN, University Center of Limburg. In July 1990, the *Centrum voor Genderstudies* is created at Ghent University. In January 1996, the *Groupe Interfacultaire Etudes-Femmes/GRIEF* is set up at *Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve* and in 1999 the *Centrum Gelijke-Kansenbeleid* is established at *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (KUL). In 2001, *Femmes Enseignement Recherche/FER* ('Women, teaching, research') was created at *Université libre de Liège*. In 2004, a study and research group *Genre et Migration* was set up at ULB (Ibidem).

Feminist and women's studies progressively entered university but in a scattered and precarious manner. During this period, Grif constituted a gathering place among feminist activists, researchers and professors and decided to organize in 1989 at ULB a European colloquium entitled *Concept et réalité des études féministes* ('Concept and reality of feminist studies'). Out of this colloquium the idea of creating a coordinating network of feminist studies of the two linguistic Belgian communities was born. Consequently, a group of feminist activists and researchers gathered together and created Sophia, a coordinating network of women's studies in March 1990, as a not-for profit association (Stoffel, 2004). At the request of Joëlle Milquet, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities, the Institute for Equality between Women and Men commissioned Sophia to carry out a study of feasibility for the creation of an inter-university master's degree in gender studies in Belgium, that took place between 2009 and 2010 (Sophia, 2011, 13). Activists, NGOs and researchers appeal to the political world to support the project of the creation of master degree in gender studies on the French side. After sustained efforts, the

Master interuniversitaire en Etudes de Genre ('Inter-University Master in Gender Studies') of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is born in 2017⁵².

C. The feminist movement after the 1990s

Celis and Meier (2007, 75) argue that the Belgian women's movements are affected by two central characteristics of the Belgian society, namely pillarization, meaning compartmentalisation along ideological and philosophical lines and the progressive federalisation of the Belgian state, even though these cleavages are less salient during the last decades. Women's movement appears thus as diverse and fragmented. Women's movements in Belgium active at the national level are rare with some exceptions such as *Sophia* or *Amazone*. *Amazone* was created in 1995 with the aim of fostering the conditions for effective and efficient functioning of the organizations and groups of women, creating of a gathering centre that enhances the feminist movement and organizing actions and events that support popular education promoting equality between women and men⁵³. *Amazone* aims to promote cooperation and contact between Francophone and Flemish women organisations. The catalogue of *Amazone's* Documentation Center on Gender Policy currently includes 645 organisations for gender equality. Celis and Meier (2007, 10) talk about women's movements, at plural, to denote the multiplicity of organizations, the fragmentation and the diversity characterizing the movement(s).

Celis and Meier (2007, 10) claim that the composition and structure of the Belgian women's movements during the 1990s is the outcome of processes started earlier and to capture its main features during this period, they distinguish between integrated and autonomous women's movement. The integrated women's movement is represented by the women's sections within political parties that are used as an instrument to achieve feminist goals and lobby within the party. There is the Christian-Democratic women's movement, the Socialist women's movement and the Liberal women's movement. The autonomous women's movement goes beyond the traditional cleavages and include, according to Celis and Meir (2007, 76), the *Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad* and *Conseil de Femmes Francophones de Belgique* – the Dutch and the French-speaking Councils of Women regrouping smaller organizations and *Vrouwen Overleg Komitee* ('Women's Reflection Group') and *Comité de*

⁵² <https://www.mastergenre.be/presentation> accessed July 14, 2019

⁵³ <http://www.amazone.be/spip.php?article5098&lang=fr> accessed July 14, 2019

Liaison de Femmes ('Women's Coordinating Group'). Formal women organizations are largely funded by the state – structurally for major organizations, sometimes through popular education and, for some others through specific projects. Many other feminist informal groups developed as well with no official structure and no state financing (Celis and Meier, 2007, 78).

Table 1: Chronology of contentious events and the buildup of institutional and societal infrastructures

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- 1847 - Zoë Gatti de Gamond becomes the first inspector of nursery, primary and normal schools for girls.
 - 1864 – Isabelle Gatti de Gamond opens in Brussels the first medium-sized girls' school. The upper secondary cycle will be opened in 1891.
 - 1880 – The ULB is the first Belgian university to open its doors to girls, while there is not yet a complete secondary education available to them. Liège will follow in 1881, Ghent in 1882 and Leuven in 1920.
 - 1884 - Isala Van Diest opens a medical office. To enable women to work as a doctor, a royal decree had to be drafted specially. Van Diest had been refused in 1873 at the Faculty of Medicine of Louvain, but had graduated in 1877 in Bern.
 - 1885 - Creation of the *Ligue des femmes socialistes gantoises* League of Socialist Women of Ghent ("Vrouwen Vereniging"). It organizes many activities, and sets up the first specifically female solidarity fund, intervening in case of childbirth.
 - 1888 - Marie Popelin is excluded from the Bar by the Court of Cassation.
 - 1889 – The woman giving birth is entitled to four weeks of unpaid leave
 - 1890 – The law of April 10 gives the explicit right to women to access all university degrees, as well as that of doctor and pharmacist.
 - 1892, November 27th *La ligue belge du droit des femmes* (the Belgian League of Women's Rights) by Marie Popelin, Isala Van Diest and Louis Frank – first women association in Belgium
 - 1893 - The first appointment of a woman in the public service: Alice Bron becomes a member of the public welfare center of Monceau-sur-Sambre.
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- 1894 - charte de Quaregnon (The "Charter of Quaregnon"), the founding text of *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (POB) (the Belgian Workers Party), calls for equal rights for women and men, including the right to vote.
 - 1896 – Cahiers féministes ('Feminist notebooks'), Isabelle Gatti
 - 1897 – creation of *La Société belge pour l'Amélioration du Sort de la Femme* (the Belgian Society for the Improvement of the Fate of Women)ⁱ Elise (Lily) Beeckman-Pousset
 - 1899 – creation of *La Société belge pour l'Amélioration du Sort de la Femme* Joséphine Keelhof and *L'Union des femmes belges pour la paix* Léonie La Fontaineⁱⁱ
 - 1900 - The law of 10 February 1900 recognizes the married woman's right to savings and the law of 10 March 1900 the right to obtain a work contract and to cash her own salary (with a maximum of 3,000 francs a year). All restrictions on disposing of one's own professional income will be lifted in 1922, and the right to receive one's own pension introduced in 1928. Today, women's access to a similar income from work or pension to men is still far from being acquired.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - 1902 - creation of *l'Union féministe belge* Julie Gilain and *Féminisme chrétien de Belgique* (Louise van den Plas)^{iv}
 - 1905: creation of *Conseil national des femmes belges* (the National Council of Women of Belgium) Marie Popelin and *Alliance des femmes contre les abus de l'alcool* (Women's Alliance against Alcohol Abuse), Marie Parent^v
 - 1908 – law of January the 7th, 1908: allows women to be witnesses in civil status records;
 - 1908 - law of March 31, 1908: allows, under certain conditions, the search for paternity;
 - 1912 - law of May 15, 1912: allows women to be voters and eligible for industrial tribunals (conseils de prud'hommes);
 - 1912 – April 28-30 1912, Brussels the 2nd International Feminist Congress organized by the League, to celebrate its twenty years of existence.
 - 1912 – October 12th, 1912, the creation of *Union des femmes de Wallonie* (the 'Union of Walloon Women')
 - 1912 - Christian Women's Professional Unions and General Secretariat of Christian Women's Social Work (replaced by the *Ligues ouvrières féminines chrétiennes*)
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(LOFC) (Christian Women's Labor Leagues) and Kristelijke arbeidersvrouwen (KAV)

- 1913 – February, 19th – the creation of *Fédération belge pour le suffrage des femmes* (the ‘Belgian Federation for the suffrage of women’), at the initiative of Jane Brigode, secretary of the Belgian League of Women's Rights with the aim of coordinating all feminist efforts for the right to vote.^{vi}
 - 1914 – law of May 1914 - represses any incitement to debauchery and prostitution of minors and non-consenting adult women.^{vii}
 - 1914 – August 8th, the creation of *Union patriotique des femmes* (the ‘Patriotic Union of Women’), rapidly integrated within *Comité national de secours et d'alimentation* (the ‘National Relief and Food Committee’)^{viii}
 - 1914 - *Fédération des femmes catholiques* (Federation of Catholic Women)
 - 1919 – A limited number of women get the right to vote: mothers and widows of soldiers and civilians killed by the enemy as well as women imprisoned or sentenced by the occupier.
 - 1920 - *Comité national d'action féminine du POB* (CNAF) (POB National Women's Action Committee)
 - 1920 - the law of April 15, 1920, grants women the right to vote in communal elections (with the exception of prostitutes and adulterous women). Women also have the right to be elected to the House and Senate even if they do not have the right to vote in parliamentary elections. ("Universal" right of Suffrage granted to men)
 - 1920 - The law allows actions in search of paternity, which had been prohibited by the Civil Code. Children born out of wedlock were previously the sole responsibility of the woman.
 - 1921 – the creation of *Fédération belge des femmes universitaires* (FBFU) (‘Belgian Federation of Women Academics’) by Marie Derscheid who presided it until 1932
 - 1921 - January 25th *Parti général des femmes belges* (the General Party of Belgian Women) was created at the initiative of *Ligue belge du droit des femmes*, *Union patriotique des femmes* and CNFB.
 - 1921 - The salaries of the teachers are aligned with those of the teachers. This is the first time in Belgium that the remuneration is officially detached from the reference
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to the sex of the worker.

- 1921 - Marie Spaak-Janson (POB) becomes the first Belgian senator, through co-optation.
 - 1921: 181 women communal councilors are elected during the communal elections.
 - 1921: Women get the right to exercise the functions of mayor, alderman, of communal secretary or recipient. Married women, however, must always have the agreement of their husband to take office.
 - 1922 - Creation of *Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes* (FPS) within Socialist Mutualities. It is a solidarity fund, but also the beginning of a women's political movement which, as such, carries specific demands.
 - 1922 – Law 22 April 1922 Women get the right to practice law.
 - 1923 - Ligue (Gilde) nationale des coopératrices belges (National Guild League of Belgian Cooperators)
 - 1923 - The Penal Code prohibits all information and publicity about contraceptives (but not their sale).
 - 1923 – Belgian branch of Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) (1923 in Brussels and 1927 in Liège)
 - 1923 - Union des femmes coloniales belges (UFC) (Union of Belgian Colonial Women)
 - 1920 – 1923 - *Fédération nationale des femmes liberals* (National Federation of Liberal Women)
 - 1928: creation of *Groupement belge pour l'affranchissement de la femme* (GBAF) (the Belgian group for women's emancipation) presided by Louise De Crane –Van Duuren (which will be split and the following year is created *Groupement belge de la porte ouverte* ('the open door') and *Égalité* (Equality) in 1931).
 - 1929 - *Groupement belge de la porte ouverte* ('the open door') presided by Louise De Craene-Van Duuren
 - 1929 - Lucie Dejardin (POB) is the first MP.
 - 1931 - *Égalité* (Equality) ex. GBAF was created, presided by Georgette Ciselet
 - 1933 - law of 31st of May 1933, the salary of married women civil servants is reduced by 25%
 - 1933 – law 31st of May 1933, excluding married women from the right to
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unemployment benefits, even when they are the head of the household

- 1934 - Belgian section of the World Committee of Women against War and Fascism
- 1934 - The law introduces quotas of married women in different branches of the economy. As for the public service, it is entirely reserved for men, except for a few specific jobs such as ... the cleaning of offices.
- 1934 – 12th of April 1934, Ministerial circular forbidding the recruitment of any female agent in the civil service, except explicitly for the cleaning service
- 1934 – 8th December 1934, law authorizing the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare to limit the number of married and unmarried women in each branch of industry with a view to the possible replacement of surpluses by involuntary unemployed persons
- 1934 – December 21st Brussels, reunion of more than 2000 persons, bringing together many associations fighting against government measures limiting women's professional work
- 1935 – Royal Decree of 23rd of January 1935 decreasing the basic salary of teachers
- 1935 – Royal Decree of 28th of January 1935 decreasing the basic salary of female state employees
- 1935 – Royal Decree of 5th of February 1935 prohibiting cumulation in the public service, including between spouses
- 1937 - *Solidarité. Groupement féminin social liberal* (Solidarity. Liberal social feminine group)
- 1944 - Establishment of the Social Security of salaried workers. There are many differences in treatment between men and women: the amount of benefits, the conditions for granting them ... Among them, the limitation of the amount of unemployment benefits for women.
- 1945 – creation of Union des femmes de Belgique (UFB) (Women's Union of Belgium) led by Andrée Thonnart
- 1947/49: Rassemblement des femmes pour la paix (ex-UFB) (the Gathering of Women for Peace)
- 1948 - Abolition of all restrictions on women's right to vote. The right of women to vote in parliamentary elections and in provincial elections is recognized by law.
- 1949: *Association belge des femmes chefs d'entreprises* (Belgian Association of

Women Entrepreneurs)

- 1949: *Section belge de la Ligue abolitionniste belge* (Belgian section of the Belgian abolitionist League)
 - 1949 - first participation of women in parliamentary elections
 - 1951 - *Association belge des femmes juristes* (Belgian Association of Women Lawyers)
 - 1952 - Belgium signs the International Labor Office's Convention 100 on Equal Pay.
 - 1957 - Signing of the Treaty of Rome and its ratification by Belgium, which provides for equal pay between men and women art. 119
 - 1958 - Law of April 30th, 1958, Suppression of the notion of marital power. The married woman, however, remains assimilated to a "minor" in the terms of law.
 - 1962- The tax system of "spousal cumulation" is introduced, which has the effect of discouraging women's paid work by severely penalizing two-earner couples.
 - 1962 - creation of the first family planning center in the French-speaking region, *La famille heureuse* (The happy family), whose goal is to fight against illegal abortions
 - 1965 - For the first time, a woman, Marguerite de Riemaecker-Ligot (PSC) is appointed Minister (Housing and Family).
 - 1965: birth of the committee for equal work, equal pay - *À Travail égal, salaire égal*
 - 1966 - about three thousand workers at the Fabrique Nationale factory in Herstal go on strike to obtain equal pay. The strike lasts 11 weeks. All the Belgian and European women's organizations, and, after a while, some trade union bodies, stand in solidarity with this almost three-month-long event, which will be a milestone and will end with a victory.
 - 1968 - Stewardess Gabrielle Defrenne starts a lawsuit against the airline Sabena for sex discrimination. Sabena forces women to retire at age 40, while their male colleagues have the right to continue working until the legal retirement age.
 - 1968 - Estates General of Women at the Palais des congrès in Brussels
 - 1969 - The law prohibits employers from dismissing a woman because of marriage or pregnancy.
 - 1970 - The law establishes parental equality by removing the notion of "paternal power".
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- 1970 - The first action *Votez femme a Bruge* (Vote for a woman in Bruges), organized for the communal elections, is a success: the number of women elected increases from two to seven.
 - 1970 – Creation of Dolle Mina in Flanders and Marie Mineur in Wallonia^{ix}
 - 1971 - the principle of equality between women and men is applied to unemployment benefits. However, the "head of household" category receives increased allowances.
 - 1971, March – Creation of *Front de liberation des femmes* (FLF) ('Women's Liberation Front') by women students at ULB^x
 - 1971, Mai – the Miss Belgium competition is disrupted by FLF
 - 1971, October – appears the FLF journal – *Et ta soeur?* ('And your sister?')
 - 1971, November – Creation of Women Overseas for Equality (WOE) and of Galf in Louvain^{xi}
 - 1972 - Marriage no longer modifies the civil capacity of the woman.
 - 1972, Mars – Creation of *Parti féministe unifié* (PFU) ('Unified Feminist Party')
 - 1972 - For the first time, Belgian feminists organized their "Women's National Day" on 11 November at Passage 44, with the participation of Simone de Beauvoir among other feminist figures of the time. This event is a huge success. The *Petit livre rouge des femmes* is out and distributed during the manifestation.
 - 1972 - creation of VOK in Flanders, coordinating committee of women: pluralistic, including women from various ideological backgrounds
 - 1973 - arrest of Dr. Peers (who practiced abortions): extensive demonstrations and radicalization of groups. This is the beginning of long struggles and attempts to decriminalize abortion.
 - 1973: creation of 11th of November Women's Groups^{xii}
 - 1973: creation of the GRIF (feminist research and information group) and first publication of *Cahiers du Grif* ('the Grif notebooks') – a feminist journal, on 11th of November during the second Women's Day organized at the cultural centre Jacques Franck (1500 women participated)^{xiii}
 - 1973 - Following a strong mobilization of women's movements and the secular world in support of Dr. Peers, imprisoned for practicing abortions, the ban on information and advertising for contraception is lifted. Access to the contraceptive pill is spreading widely.
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- 1974: the commission for the employment of women is created as part of the preparation of the International Women's Year in 1975. It is an advisory body within the Ministry of Labor and Employment, proposing measures related to women's work. This commission runs until 1985.
 - 1974: PFU runs for legislative elections but gets no seat.
 - 1974: Creation of *groupe A* in March and the debut of consultations in June at *Maison des Femmes*
 - 1974: creation of *Maison des Femmes* ('Women's House') at Rue Meridien, Saint-Josse (Brussels)^{xiv}
 - 1975 - Collective Work Agreement on Equal Pay, applicable to all employers.
 - 1975: International Women's Year (70 Belgian organizations participate) and 1st World Conference on Women in Mexico City: Decreed the Decade of Women (76-85)
 - 1976: November 11, For Women's Day the theme is: Abortion, women decide. Creation of committees for the decriminalization of abortion to centralize the actions of regional groups and to develop other groups of pressure
 - 1976: *Le Tribunal International des Crimes contre les femmes* ('The International Tribunal for Crimes against Women') - 4, 5, 6, 7 et 8 mars 1976 at Palais des Congrès - Brussels^{xv}
 - 1976 – opening of women houses in La louvière, Arlon, Gand, Liège^{xvi}
 - 1976 - The law proclaims the total equality of the spouses; the woman no longer obeys her husband; they agree by mutual agreement the conjugal residence (legally, it was previously the husband who decided alone, the woman being obliged to follow him). The married woman can open a bank account without the permission of her husband.
 - 1976 - The Court of Justice of the European Communities condemns the Belgian State for its discriminatory treatment of air hostesses of Sabena (Defrenne arret; the lawsuit of Gabrielle Defrenne, stewardess, against the airline Sabena started in 1968). The contract of employment of these workers provided for their dismissal without compensation as soon as they reached the age of 40. In addition, Sabena did not contribute for them to the "Pension Fund" as much as it did for male workers.
 - 1976 – Protests organized by Marie Mineur against the exclusion of unemployed
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women and the publication of *Livre blanc de chômeuses* ('The White book of unemployed women')^{xvii}

- 1977: creation of the collective *femmes battues* ('beaten women') and SOS Viol^{xviii}
 - 1977: 11th of November, the organization of Women's Day at Liège, rue Jonfosse under the theme of women's work^{xix}
 - 1978 - The law imposes full equality of treatment between men and women in the context of employment and economic relations in general. A new law will confirm these principles in 1999.
 - 1978: creation of the first documentation center RoSa (Dutch-speaking)
 - 1978: creation of women's café 'Lilith'^{xx}
 - 1978 -1982: publication of the feminist journal *Voyelles*^{xxi}
 - 1979: creation of *Université des femmes* (the University of Women (Francophone))
 - 1980 - Establishment of three statuses in unemployment. The lowest paid status is "cohabiting". At that time, it comprises 90% of women.
 - 1980: protest of women at Palais d'Egmont against the discrimination of unemployed cohabitants^{xxii}
 - 1981 – The publication *Chronique Féministe* for the first time (related to *Université des Femmes*)
 - 1981: The organization of the 10th Women's Day on 11th of November in Charleroi under the theme of the right to economic independence and the right to unemployment benefits at the initiative of the women commissions from trade unions^{xxiii}
 - 1982 - An agreement between the management and the Bekaert-Cockerill unions provides the passage to part-time work for women workers who are not head of household, in order to avoid male workers to be dismissed. After the failure of their strike (which results in 13 dismissals, all female), women begin legal actions through which they will obtain compensation, but not their reinstatement in the company. This affair led to a strong mobilization of women's movements.
 - 1984 - Marriage no longer has an immediate consequence on the nationality of the spouses; the acquisition of Belgian nationality will be facilitated to those who marry a Belgian. Previously, the wife automatically acquired the nationality of her husband through marriage, but not vice versa.
 - 1984 - The law protects the inheritance rights of the surviving spouse
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(overwhelmingly women) and in particular her right to remain in the marital home.

- 1985: 3rd United Nations World Conference on Women (Nairobi)
- 1985: A State Secretariat for Social Emancipation is created at the federal level. Equality of opportunity makes its official entry into politics.
- 1986: A new commission for women's work is created within *Secrétariat d'État à l'Émancipation sociale* ('State Secretariat for Social Emancipation').
- 1986: first academic center for women's studies at VUB (officially recognized as a research center in 1998)
- 1988 - Suppression of "spousal cumulation" and introduction of the "marital quotient".
- 1989 - The law punishes rape between spouses. Previously, a woman's sexual relationship with her husband was "conjugal duty".
- 1989: the policy of equal opportunities is entrusted to the Minister of Employment and Labor.
- 1989 January – Eliane Gubin creates *Groupe Interdisciplinaire d'Études sur les Femmes/ GIEF* (Interdisciplinary Group on Women Studies) at l'ULB, that publishes the review *Sextant*, an interdisciplinary women studies review
- 1989 February – International Colloquium organized by GRIF at ULB about “concepts and realities in feminist studies”
- 1990 - the abortion is partially decriminalized (article 350 of the penal code, modified by the law of April 3rd, 1990.)
- 1993: A Council for Equal Opportunities is created at the federal level, continuing the work of the *Commission pour l'emploi des femmes* (Commission for the Employment of Women), created in 1986.
- 1994 - The Smet-Tobback law requires parties to entrust at least a third of the places on their lists to women, at all electoral levels, from the municipality to Europe. The law will be adopted on May 24, 1994 and published in the *Moniteur Belge* on July 1, 1994. It provides that "on a list, the number of candidates of the same sex cannot exceed a quota of two thirds of the total constituted by the sum of seats to be filled for the election and the maximum number of substitute candidates¹³". This applies equally to men and women, this provision applies to the House of Representatives, the Senate, Regional, Community, Provincial and Communal Council and the European Parliament elections

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- 1995: the first woman Minister of Equal Opportunities is appointed to the Flemish Government.
 - 1995: 4th United Nations World Conference in Beijing. In parallel, there is the NGO Forum on Women in Hairou (near Beijing): 30,000 participants.
 - 1995: federal creation of Amazone, a women's centre, hosting feminist associations and Sophia, Coordinating Network of Feminist Studies.
 - 2000: World march of women against poverty and violence against women: protests in many countries, millions of petitions filed at the UN.
 - 2001 - The first National Action Plan on Violence Against Women is in place; it aims to develop and coordinate policies.
 - 2002 - The law imposes parity on the electoral lists; at least one candidate of each sex must be in the first three places.
 - 2002 - Establishment (at the federal level) of *l'Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes* (the Institute for Equality of Women and Men), responsible to guarantee and promote the equality of women and men, combat all forms of discrimination and gender inequality, more specifically to evaluate policies in terms of equality, make recommendations to the public authorities, support associations working for equality, to support anyone who is a victim of gender discrimination, including in justice if necessary.
 - 2002 - Establishment of a paternity leave of 10 working days.
 - 2002- Article 10 of the Constitution, affirming the equality of all Belgians before the law, is completed as follows: "the equality of women and men is guaranteed". An article 11bis is introduced, entrusting the legislator with the task of guaranteeing women and men equal exercise of their rights and freedom
 - 2003 – The law allows same-sex marriage.
 - 2004 - Signature by the three Belgian unions (FGTB, CSC and CGSLB) of the "Charter on the Equality of Women and Men", by which the trade unions undertake to integrate the gender dimension in their practices and in their negotiations with employers.
 - 2005: World Women's Meeting for Beijing + 10 Evaluation
 - 2006 - The law allows joint adoption by two persons of the same sex.
 - 2006 - Regulation of 20 December 2006 establishing the European Institute for Equality between Men and Women.
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- 2007 - The "anti-discrimination" laws specify the concrete implementation that one is entitled to expect from the principle of equality, and facilitates the obtaining of compensation in case of discriminatory treatment (at work, in housing, services ...)
 - 2007 - The law requires all political and administrative actors (federal level) to take into account the gender dimension in each of their policies "in order to avoid or correct any inequalities between men and women".
 - 2008 - The Collective Agreement on Equal Pay for Men and Women (CCT 25ter) is made mandatory and applicable to all professional sectors.
 - 2009 - In regional elections, the law now requires the presence of one representative of each sex in the first two places of each list. The Walloon Parliament went from 18.7% (2004 elections) to 34.7% women. Following the 2014 elections, this number is currently 45%.
 - 2011 - when a child is born, the co-mother (spouse or cohabitant of the mother) is entitled to the same parental leave as fathers.
 - 2012 - all schools in the Wallonia / Brussels Federation are in principle required to organize within them the education for relational, emotional and sexual life (EVRAS)
 - a very right wing government is taking shape and announcing measures that affect many social rights. These measures affect women more violently (unemployment, pensions, labor law, etc.). The length of stay in hospital supported by the INAMI following a childbirth is cut.
 - 2015 - the co-mother of a child becomes a mother without any formality if she is married to the biological mother. Out of wedlock, she can recognize the child on the same terms as men.
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Chapter IV. An historical account of the Romanian feminist movement

I. 1815-1929

The history of the Romanian feminist movement is related to the rise of ideas about women emancipation during the first decades of the XIXth century, to the emergence of first women organizations and the rise of bourgeois revolution in Europe. Women's participation in the historical and political events that fostered the creation of modern Romania – 1848 Revolution, the Union of Romanian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, the Romanian Independence War⁵⁴, the First World War and the constitution of Romanian unitary state in 1918 – contributed to the growth and maturation of a movement for the emancipation of women in the context of democratization efforts and independence. During this period women's status was one of submission. The 1817 Callimachi's Law and the 1818 Caragea's Law codified the subordinate status of married women, with few exceptions

⁵⁴ The Romanian War of Independence is the name used in Romanian historiography to refer to the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78), following which Romania, fighting on the Russian side, gained independence from the Ottoman Empire

(Mihailescu, 2002, 18). The Civil Code of the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, inspired by the Napoleon's Code, came into force on December 1st, 1865 and worsened women's status by acting the legal incapacity of married women in its art.197-208 that were abrogated by the Law 96 on April 14th, 1932.

The first organization of Romanian women is *Societatea Femeilor Române din Buda* ('The Society of Romanian Women of Buda'), founded in 1815, with the aim of supporting the "Greek-Oriental Romanian schools in the capital of the Hungarian country" (Mureșianu, 1926, 23). The program adopted by the revolutionary movement of Wallachia – *Proclamatia de la Islaz* (The Islaz proclamation) provided at point 16 equal education for Romanian men and women and many women organizations, besides charity work, were also involved in educational programmes. The oldest women organization in Transylvania, founded in 1850 - *Reuniunea femeilor romane pentru ajutorul cresterii fetitelor orfane cele mai sarace* ('The Reunion of Romanian women to help raise the poorest orphan girls') initially focused on providing education for orphan girls and later extended its goals in the service of national interest (Mihailescu, 2002, 23). The organization received funds from the Orthodox and Greco-Catholic Churches, Romanian banks and business men that allowed the creation of college schools and boarding schools for girls in different cities, as well as a library (ibidem). Following the model of the "Reunion", similar organizations were created in other cities of Transylvania such as Sibiu, Blaj, Hunedoara, Deva, Fagaras, but also in Bucovina, in Cernauti where *Societatea doamnelor romane din Bucovina* (The Society of Romanian Ladies in Bucovina) was established in 1891 and Moldova where *Reuniunea Femeilor Romane de la Iasi* ('The Reunion of the Romanian Women from Iasi') was founded in 1867 with the aim of creating the first vocational school for the poor but also talented girls (Mihailescu, 2002, 23-25). In Transylvania and Bucovina, the activity of the Reunions was related to the national liberation movements and their fight for women's emancipation was articulated with the fight for national liberation (ibidem, 23-24).

The foundation of different journals and the contributions of feminists and other visible political figures that supported women emancipation in these publications, contributed greatly to the growth of women organizations and of the movement. Between 1863 and 1865, in Bucharest appears the magazine *Amicul familiei* (The Family Friend), led by the feminist Constanta Dunca-Schiau. Between 1878 and 1881 appeared the newspaper *Femeia Romana* ("Romanian Women") under the direction of Maria Flechtenmacher, with important

contributions from feminists such as Sofia Nădejde⁵⁵ and Adela Xenopol or other political and cultural figures such as C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Paul Scortanu (Mihailescu, 2002, 25).

Another element that contributed to the fruition of women organizations was the relationship with and support of the socialist movement, whose leaders supported the importance of the women's vote for the success of the aims of the feminist movement (Mihailescu, 2002, 27). The *Partidul Social-Democrat al Muncitorilor din România* (P.S.D.M.R) (the Socialist Democratic Workers Party of Romania) founded in 1893, included in its programme fundamental claims for women such as absolute equality between men and women in juridical terms or in exercising political and civil rights or access to all professions, to equal work, to equal pay or laws protecting the work in plants and factories (ibidem).

In the context of support and influence both from the socialist movement and the international women's movement for universal suffrage, feminist organizations and journals in Romania, started to frame their claims in terms of juridical, political and economic rights (Mihailescu, 2002, 28). Other organizations and journals were created to take action and continue the fight for women's emancipation. In 1894, *Liga Femeilor Române de la Iași* (The Romanian Women's League from Iasi) was created with the aim to achieve legal rights for women, economic independence, to be educated and to have access to culture.⁵⁶ In 1911, the association *Emanciparea Femeii* ("The emancipation of the woman") was created and presided by Eugenia de Reuss-Ianculescu – a fervent supporter for the economic and political rights of women (Mihailescu, 2002, 29). In 1913, the association changed its name in *Drepturile Femeilor* ("The rights of women") with the aim to achieve political, civil and legal equality between women and men, equal pay, economic independence, parental search, women's access to liberal professions and so on (ibidem., 30).

⁵⁵ In March, 25th 1879, Sofia Nădejde publishes "Chestiunea femeilor" in *Femeia Romana*, arguing, in a very documented manner, against an article from the same year from *La Liberté* reproduced in *Le Nord* entitled "Women's brain" that claimed that women are incapable of development and intelligence. Sofia Nădejde, *Femeia Romana*, Anul II, nr. 111, March 25th 1879, text reproduced integrally in Mihailescu (2002, 82-87).

⁵⁶ The statute of the *Liga Femeilor din Romania* (The Romanian Women's League) was voted within the General Assembly from October 30th, 1894. The integral text of the statute can be found in Mihailescu (2002, 96-103).

The leaders of *Drepturile femeilor* wrote a political declaration and proposed to *Cercul Feminin Socialist* (“Women Socialist Circle”, founded in 1912) to submit a memorandum together to the legislative bodies to claim again the participation of women, if not at parliamentary elections, at least at the communal elections, proposal rejected by *Cercul Feminin Socialist* on the grounds that *Drepturile femeilor* limited the claim for the right to vote to literate women, excluding women working in factories and peasant women (ibidem).

Feminist magazines and newspapers were founded to support the fight for the legal, economic and political emancipation of women. In May 1896 in Iasi, the first edition of *Dochia* magazine was published under the direction of feminist Adela Xenopol that continued to be published until 1898. *Romanca* (“The Romanian Women”) was published between 1905 and 1906 in Iasi and *Viitorul Romancelor* (“The Future of Romanian Women”) was published between 1912 and 1914 in Bucharest, both of them supporting women’s emancipation (Mihailescu, 2002, 28).

Although organised in Reunions, the actions and initiatives of Romanian women in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were rather isolated and lacked coordination until the First World War, when Maria Baiulescu – president of *Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Braşov pentru ajutorul creşterii fetelor orfane* (“The Romanian Women’s Reunion in Brasov to help raising orphan girls”), in an attempt to organize together all the efforts of women associations in Transylvania, convened a congress of unification of all Romanian women reunions in Austro-Hungary that resulted in *Uniunea Femeilor Romane din Austro-Ungaria*⁵⁷ (the Union of Romanian Women from Hungary) (Mihailescu, 2002, 31).

While during the First World War, there were feminist associations that condemned the despotic powers and supported peace through democratic regimes with civil liberties for all irrespective of sex, there were also feminist figures among which Adela Xenopol, Eugenia de Reuss-Ianculescu, Eleonora Stratilescu, that supported Romania’s participation in the war for reunification (ibidem., 33). In march 1917, in Bucharest, women organized a massive manifestation to protest against the cessation of aid for the families of those mobilized in war,

⁵⁷ Adunatia Femeilor Romane din Brasov care pasira la infiintarea Reuniunii si la adoptarea statutelor sale, integral text in Mihailescu, 2002, pp. 60-64.

against the lack of food and school supplies (ibidem., 34). In June 1917, Romanian feminists advanced a petition to the Senate, claiming political and civil rights for women.⁵⁸

The defeat of Central powers in 1918, created the conditions for the political unification of the Romanian people and women associations chose their delegates for the Great National Assembly on the 1st December 1918, to vote the unification with Romania and the future democratic reforms including the right to vote for men and women . Despite the decisions taken by the Great National Assembly of Romanians from Transilvania, Bucovina and Bessarabia, the political and civil rights of women were contested by the legislative bodies of the Greater Romania (ibidem., 36).

In July 1918, a new association was created – *Asociatia pentru Emanciparea Civila si Politica a Femeilor din Romania* (The Association for the Political and Civil Emancipation of Women from Romania) with the aim of obtaining the right to vote for women, both in legislative and municipal bodies (ibidem, 37). In this context, arduous debates about women’s participation in politics and the autonomy of feminist associations towards political parties took place. *Cercul de studii feminine de la Iasi* (“The women’s studies circle from Iasi”) decided to maintain autonomy from political parties until they gain the right to vote and afterward to support those parties who included in their programmes partially or totally the claims of feminist movement (Idem. 37-38).

After the unification, the project of a new constitution was under debate. Article 6 was regulating the statute of women saying that special laws voted by a two-thirds majority will determine the conditions under which women could exercise their political rights (ibidem, 40). In this context, on July, 4th 1921 a federation comprising all feminist and women associations in Greater Romania was constituted, under the name of *Consiliul National al Femeilor Romane* (C.N.F.R.) (The National Council of Romanian Women) (Statutul Consiliului National al Femeilor Romane, Cap. I, art. 1). While C.N.F.R. coordinated feminist efforts, all member organizations kept their autonomy (Statutul Consiliului National al Femeilor Romane, Cap. I, art. 3)⁵⁹. C.N.F.R. was affiliated to the International Council of Women (ibidem, art. 5) with more than 40 millions members in more than 40 countries

⁵⁸ *Petitia femeilor romane din 16 iunie 1917 catre Senatul Romaniei*, integral text of the Petition in Mihailescu, 2002, pp. 186-188.

⁵⁹ *Statutul Consiliului National al Femeilor Romane*, integral text in Mihailescu, pp. 240-244.

around the world, after the end of WWI (Mihailescu, 2002, 40-41). On the 4th of march 1923, a few days before the submission of the Constitution project to the Parliament, in Bucharest took place one of the greatest protest of women to question the fact that their claims are disregarded, at the end of which activists adopted a protest motion sent to the Constituent Assembly, that was nevertheless dismissed (ibidem, 41-42).

After article 6 was voted with no modification, women associations protested and the C.N.F.R. decided to create a special legal commission to formulate concrete ways of acquiring equal rights for women (Idem. 42-43). The parliamentary commissions considered to a very small extent the demands forwarded by the legal commission of the Council. Between 1924-1926, also other women organizations affiliated to the National Council claimed the political rights for women. The political pressure of feminist associations on state bodies paid off when the law for administrative organizing was enacted on the 3rd of august 1929 that provided for the first time in Romania the women's right to vote and be elected in municipal and county councils.⁶⁰ This law was considered as the reward for decades' efforts of the feminist movement in Romania (Mihailescu, 2006, 24). Nevertheless, the electoral law from 1929 imposed discriminatory conditions and restrictions that were not imposed to men, such as having at least middle-school education, to work as state or local official and other. The vast majority of men having the right to vote did not comply with these conditions (Ibidem).

Obtaining the right to vote and to be eligible for local elections triggered debates and exchanges among women organizations regarding the most suitable strategy to follow (Mihailescu, 2006, 25). In 1929, *Gruparea Nationala a Femeilor Romane* (G.N.F.R.) (The National Group of Romanian Women) was created and presided by Alexandrina Cantacuzino, with the aim to politically prepare Romanian women to run the country. G.N.F.R. and its president supported the idea of creating an independent women's political party in order to ensure a real freedom of action and gather together all capacities and efforts to develop efficient actions that would advance the goals of the feminist movement (Mihailescu, 2002, 45-46; Mihailescu 2006, 25).

⁶⁰ Rapport du Conseil National des Femmes Roumaines sur l'activité de 5 dernières années, 1925-1930, Bulletin du Conseil National des Femmes Roumaines, 1921-1938, Rédaction "Casa Femeii", Bucarest, 1940, pp. 1-3 in Mihailescu, 2002, pp. 305-311.

Other important feminist figures such as Ella Negruzzi, Margareta Paximade-Ghelmegeanu, Calypso C. Botez, Elena Meissner, Maria Baiulescu, Ortansa Satmary, contested this initiative and formulated a different argumentation advanced by *Uniunea Femeilor Romane* (Union of Romanian Women) and *Asociatia pentru Emancipare Civila si Politica a Femeilor Romane* (A.E.C.P.F.R.) (The Association for the Political and Civil Emancipation of Women from Romania) created in 1918 (Mihaiescu, 2002, 46; Mihailescu, 2006, 26). They considered that organizing a women's party was not a good solution and during the 9th Congress of *Uniunea Femeilor Romane* (Union of Romanian Women) in January 1930 condemned the creation of G.N.F.R and urged the 100 affiliated organizations to participate at municipal and county elections on the lists of those parties who supported to grant women full rights (Mihailescu, 2002, 46).

A third position, contesting both the previous two, was advanced by the *Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare* (UFM) (The Union of Women Workers) founded in the 1930s through the fusion of women socialist circles which disapproved the official enrolment of women in the bourgeois party although they supported women's participation in political life (Mihailescu, 2006, 28).⁶¹ *Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare* considered feminism as a movement of capitalist women, of the exploiting capitalist class that could not represent the interests of women's workers and encourage their members to support the programme of *Partidul Social-Democrat din Romania* (P.S.D.R.) (Romanian Social Democrat Party) to put the basis of a democratic movement. The result was that the Union of Women Workers isolated itself from other feminist organizations and its influence was more modest (Ibidem).

During the 1920s, women activists were also present within P.C.d.R., the Romanian Communist Party. Elena Filipovici,⁶² Ana Pauker⁶³ and Ecaterina Arbore⁶⁴ were important

⁶¹ "Femeia muncitoare ai alegerile", în *Femeia muncitoare*, nr. 2, din 1932

⁶² Elena Filipovici, born in 1903 was involved with the youth socialist group in the factory where she worked and prepared the general workers strike when she was not yet even fifteen (Jinga, 2015, 29). Her activity made her a target of *Siguranta* since 1920 and in 1921 she was arrested and amnestied with other communist delegates (Jinga, 2015, 30). In 1927, she left Romania to follow the courses of the Leninist School in Moscow. In 1931 she was condemned to forced labour and contumacy (Ibidem).

⁶³ Ana Pauker imposed as an important figure as well when during the second Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (PCdR) she presented a report about women's revolutionary movement and was elected member of the General Committee. In 1924 she was again sentenced and accused the party of passivity and her career was shadowed until 1928 when with the support of Clara Zetkin she enrolled at the Leninist School in Moscow. In 1936 she was arrested again and had a very mediatized process with 24 defence lawyers, 7 of them coming from abroad. She passed through different prisons – Dumbraveni, Ramnicu Sarat si Caransebes where she formed a large group of more than 100 detainees and taught them Marxist-Leninist theory and

women figures within P.C.d.R who played a crucial role until the debut of WWII. During the 1921 Party Congress delegates voted to transform the Socialist Party in the Romanian Communist Party and one day after this decision, the delegates were arrested, accused of plot against state order (Jinga, 2015, 27). Later on, they were partially amnestied by King Ferdinand and the communist movement was granted the right to a legal existence (Jinga, 2015, 27-28). Since there was a permanent harassment from the part of Romanian political authorities, many leaders of the PCdR choose exile and in 1927 created a Political Office for activists from abroad. A conflict took place and P.C.d.R. and its dummy groups were dismantled with the direct intervention of *Comintern* during 1930 (Idem, 29).

The feminist movement in Romania collaborated with international women organizations, working together to obtain full civil and political rights for women, but also to achieve and build-up peace. The newspaper *Femeia Romana* (“The Romanian Woman”) informed regularly about the feminist movements in other countries, as for example the debates and resolutions of the International Congress for the rights of women held in Paris in 1897 (Idem. 47). *Liga Femeilor Romane de la Iasi* (“The Romanian Women’s League from Iasi”), after being founded in 1894 joined the International Union of Women from London (Ibidem). Women’s organizations also participated in the Socialist International Congresses in Stuttgart (1907), Copenhagen (1910) and Basel (1912) and replied to their call to stand up against arming and the outburst of military conflicts (Idem., 48). They also participated at Inter-Balkan conferences and meetings against the outbreak of the conflagration in the area (Ibidem.). Romanian feminists participated and expressed solidarity with great international demonstrations for granting universal suffrage for both men and women. The organization *Drepturile femeilor* (“The rights of women”) and later on *Asociatia pentru Emanciparea Civila si Politica a Femeilor din Romania* (A.E.C.P.F.R.) (“The Association for the Political and Civil Emancipation of Women from Romania”) adhered to the International Alliance for Women’s Suffrage (Ibidem).

political economy and met for the first-time Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej (Jinga, 2015, 28). In 1941 she went back to Moscow in a prisoners exchange between Romania and the Soviet Union.

⁶⁴ Ecaterina Arbore was another important women figure within the PCdR, she was member of the Communist Party Delegation at the 6th Conference of the Communist Balkan Federation in September 1923 but also a member of the fifth Congress of *Comintern* (Jinga, 2015, 28).

At the preparatory Congress for the creation of the League of Nations, Romanian feminists proposed the establishment of a women's section of the League of Nations, proposal accepted at the beginning of the 1920s. At the 9th Congress of the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage in Rome 1923, the women's delegation from Romania proposed the creation of the Little Entente of Women as an umbrella organization for women from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Poland and Romania to work on changing their legal, socio-economic and political status. At the first meeting of the Little Entente of Women held in Bucharest 1923, Alexandrina Cantacuzino was elected president of the newly created body. Two years later, she was also elected vice-president of the International Council of Women during the Council's Congress in Washington. She put efforts in creating the House of Women in Bucharest (founded on the model of the House of Women in Belgrade) that became an important centre for social solidarity, providing a library, medical and juridical assistance, canteen offering free meals for the poor, shelter for battered women and so on.

II. 1929-1948

After obtaining the right to vote and to be eligible for local elections, the public arguments concerning the most suitable strategy to follow, fragmented the women's movement in a moment in which Romanian women were about to vote for the first time (Mihailescu, 2006, 28). Thus, in December 1929, G.N.F.R. who supported the idea of autonomy of the feminist movement and the creation of a women's independent political party, decided to run for the communal elections of the 1930 summer on their individual list (Mihailescu, 2006, 29-30). Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Ecaterina Cerkez, Alexandrina Floru, Ana Fillitti, Elena Stângaciu were among those who ran for elections on individual lists (Idem., 30). On the contrary, in January 1930, those women organizations who disagreed with the creation of a women's party voted an act specifying the full freedom to vote individually any party with the condition of maintaining full autonomy of women's organizations.⁶⁵ Some of these activists – Ella Negruzzi, Calypso Botez, Margareta Paximade-Ghelmegeanu, Ortansa Satmary, ran as candidates on the list of P.N.T. at the communal and county elections, considering the party to be favourable to granting women's rights (Mihailescu, 2006, 30-31). 100 women were

⁶⁵Fulmen, „Marea întrunire feministă de la Fundația Carol I. Asis- tența oi discursurile”, în Dimineața din 8 ianuarie 1930.

elected and the quasi-exclusive area of expertise that was assigned to them was social assistance/social care which they revolutionized (Idem. 31).

Scoala Superioara de Asistenta Sociala (“The National School of Social Assistance”) and *Biroul de corespondenta pentru munca femeii* (“Correspondence Office for Women's Work”) coordinated by Calypso Botez organized social surveys about the work and life conditions of women’s workers, their professional skills, the consequences of their professional engagement on the private life, prostitution, the delinquency of minors etc.⁶⁶ (Idem. 33). Ortansa Satmary organized for the first time an employment centre for jobless persons (Mihailescu, 2006, 34). Alexandrina Cantacuzino’s efforts fostered the build-up of a nursing school in 1930s, with courses held by university professors at *Casa Femeii* (“Woman’s House”) in Bucharest (Mihailescu, 2006, 34). During the same period, *Casa Femeii* became an important and strong social assistance centre for poor women, especially workers that could benefit from free medicines and free medical care for an annual minimum subscription, but also for single mothers and homeless women who were hosted (Mihailescu, 2006, 35). Juridical assistance was offered (Ibidem).

Despite their efforts, proven skills and efficiency women candidates for the next elections were either disregarded or put at the bottom of the lists (Idem., 36). Women organizations protested and claimed justice in Court asking for the administrative law to be accurately applied (Ibidem). After a long battle, women were re-included on the electoral lists and continued to be active during the following years in local councils, despite all the obstacles they faced (Idem., 37).

During the rule of P.N.T., between 1928 and 1933, the preparatory works for the unification of the Civil Code were sized as a window of opportunity for women organizations to reclaim the elimination of the civil incapacity of married women which they succeeded and the new ways to proceed for the enlargement of women’s rights (Mihailescu, 2006, pp. 38-41). In the same time, activist women elected in 1930, fought for the elimination of those paragraphs of the Civil Code that were harmful for women’s rights, especially those concerning the share of assets within a marriage and those concerning abortion – claim that minimally succeeded in

⁶⁶ Calypso Botez, Réponse au questionnaire du B.I.T. sur les conditions du travail des femmes en Roumanie; La réponse de M^{me} Thibert, în Arhiva pentru stiintă si reformă socială, anul XV, nr. 1-2, 1937, pp. 157-161.

that it was accepted only in those cases in which the mother's life was in danger or one of the parents was mentally ill (Mihailescu, 2006, 42-44).

An increased polarization of the political forces in Romania, followed the economic crisis between 1929-1933 with many dissident groups within P.N.T. and within *Partidul National Liberal* (P.N.L.) (National Liberal Party). The workers' movement became more and more fragmented under the pressure of the III Communist International, new parties appeared such as the National-Christian Party - chauvinist and with dictatorial tendencies and fascist groups such as *Garda de fier* ("The Iron Guard") legalized under the name of *Partidul ōTotul pentru taraö* ("All for Fatherland" Party) reinforced by the Nazi Germany. The confusion increased when Carol the 2nd was proclaimed King in 1930s and contributed to the erosion of the democratic regime by nourishing the disputes between the political parties with the aim of reinforcing its authority (Mihailescu, 2006, 47).

In 1933, *Comitetul National Antifascist* ("The National Anti-Fascist Committee") was created at the initiative of *Partidul Comunist din Romania* (P.C.d.R.) ("The Communist Party from Romania) and one year later appealed to women as allies, that organised in the feminine section of *Comitetul National Antifascist al Femeilor* ("The Women's National Anti-Fascist Committee") presided by Zoe Frunza (Jinga, 2015, 42). *Comitetul National Antifascist al Femeilor* made a general call to all women to protest for the release of the political detainees and for the participation at the World Congress of Women against War and Fascism in Paris in august 1934 initiated by the USSR and organized by the French communist activist women who proposed to gather together women rights activists and human rights activists from different countries that fight against fascism – the communist movement membership not being a condition (Ibidem). The participation of the Women Workers delegation from Romanian was hindered by authorities and the only Romanian presents were part of the Romanian migrants in Paris, students and activists within Comintern (Jinga, 2015, 43). After the Anti-Fascist Committee was declared illegal for communist activity in the same year (Jinga, 2015, 44), women's efforts to stand against fascism were continued within *Asociatia pentru protectia mamei si copilului* ("The Association for the protection of the mother and the child") founded by P.C.d.R. in January 1935 and dissolved the same year under the excuse of using leftist slogans (Mihailescu, 2006, 48).

In the same time, *Garda de fier* (“The Iron Guard”) that was many times dissolved continued its activities through *Partidul ȃTotul pentru taraö* (“All for Fatherland” Party) (Idem. 49). The fascists’ activities culminated at the Congress of *Uniunea Studentilor Crestini Romani* (“The Union of Christian-Romanian Students) in Tg. Mures in 1935 where those who were present manifested their disapproval against the pro-Occidental orientation of the country and created the *Echipele mortii* (“death teams”) to remove their political challengers (Ibidem).

In this context, the necessity of consolidating the anti-fascist front became imperative and *Frontul Plugarilor* (“Plower’s Front”), *Partidul Socialist* (“the Socialist Party”) and *Blocul pentru apararea libertatilor democratice* (“The Bloc for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms “) created a common front against the extreme right at the 1936 parliamentary elections (Idem. Pp. 49-50). Also in February 1936 *Frontul Feminin* (“The Front of Women”) was initiated by Lucia Sturdza Bulandra, Claudia Millian, Alice Gabrielescu, Vanda Mihail, Zoe Bugnariu, Milița Pătrașcu etc., with Sofia Nadejde as honorific president (Căncea, 1976, 116 cited in Vacarescu, 2014, 97), with branches in different cities, to stand against fascism. In the context of the World Congress for Peace in Brussels 1936, the Front of Women launched a call for peace encouraging women to stand together with other democratic forces against the outburst of a new world war (Mihalescu, 2006, 52-53).

Mia Jinga argues that the effort of coagulating a common Front was difficult as groups and associations close to Alexandrina Cantacuzino chose to act alone for obtaining political and civil rights (2015, 47). Moreover, women branches of political parties were sceptical of any collaboration with an organization that has anything to do with communism and in the end the only associations that joined the Front were those leftist in orientation or charities (Ibidem). Jinga also maintained that among women and feminist organizations there was high competition for resources and attracting supporters which contributed to the fact that the call of the Front was not that successful (2015, 47). During the Front meetings of 1937, women were advised at the next elections to vote with the party that supports their agenda, hence P.N.T. *Frontul Feminin* failed to obtain the authorization to function and thus gradually its activities were pursued within PNT and circumscribed to the interests of PNT (National Peasants Party) (Jinga, 2015, 48). In 1938, *Frontul Feminin* loses its statute as a legal organization (Ibidem).

Given the political crisis, feminist and women organizations reaffirmed the urgency of granting women integral political rights, at various national women meetings organized in 1937 in Bucharest and in Cluj (Mihailescu, 2006, 57-58). At the parliamentary elections that took place the 20th of December 1937, the legionary movement acquired 15,8% of votes through *Totul pentru Tara* Party (“All for Fatherland” Party) that acted as a front for *Garda de Fier* (Iron Guard) which was banned to participate in elections. A short government followed between 28th December 1937 and 10th February 1938 that prepared the way for the *coup d'état* of Carol II and the establishment of the martial law on the 19th of February 1938 that suspended all civil liberties (Haynes, 2007). This action was justified as a way to counter the actions of the Legionary movement and this can explain the support of some anti-fascist personalities as well as women associations (Mihailescu, 2006, 59-60). Moreover, Mihailescu claims, that the confidence of some women associations in the new regime was due to the inclusion of the right to vote for women in the Constitution of Carol II, which happened through a decree for electoral reform from the 9th of May 1939 (2006, 60).

Patronage committees (“Ella Negruzzi⁶⁷ Committees”) were created by Ella Negruzzi that fought for the political and civil rights of women as the initiator and president of *Asociatia pentru emanciparea civila si politica a femeilor romane* (“The association for the civil and political emancipation of Romanian women”) and afterwards as a member of PNT. It is not very clear how the proximity with the PCdR happened but in 1936 Ella Negruzzi became one of the seven lawyers defending Ana Pauker⁶⁸ (Jinga, 2015, 50). A few activists from *Frontul Feminin* continued their activity within *Apararea Patriotica* (The Patriotic Defense) that replaced *Ajutorul Rosu* (Red Aid⁶⁹) led by Ana Toma (Marioara) until 1943 and then by Victoria Sarbu (Idem., 51).

Many women from Romania fighting fascism from abroad joined the French Resistance.⁷⁰ Among these women fighting in the underground very little was known to the wider public, a more renowned figure was that of Olga Bancic who joined the communist youth when she was fifteen, she travelled clandestinely to USSR, joined the PCdR in 1932, being arrested in 1935 and condemned at two years prison (Jinga, 2015, 55). After being released, she

⁶⁷ Ella Negruzzi was the first women lawyer in Romania.

⁶⁸ Ella Negruzzi states in interviews that she defended Ana Pauker not as a communist, but as an antifascist and mother of three children (Jinga, 2015, 50).

⁶⁹ International Red Aid.

⁷⁰ Sanda Sauvard, Charlotte Gruia (Sari), Cristina Boico (Jinga, 2015, 55-57).

travelled illegally to France where she joined the International Brigades, the Jewish section of *Main d'œuvre Immigrée* (MOI) and the resistance group *Franc-tireurs et partisans ó main d'œuvre immigrée* (FTP-MOI) (Ibidem). Part of the Manouchian group and the only woman she was arrested in 1943 and executed together with her comrades in the affair known as *L'Affiche Rouge*. The movies "L'Affiche Rouge" (1976), *L'armée du crime* (2009) and Louis Aragon Poem "Strophes pour se souvenir" sang by Léo Ferré as "L'Affiche Rouge" made the Manouchian Group and Olga Bancic as the only woman representing a symbol of foreigners engaged in the French resistance.

The new Constitution was thought to crown the last decades' efforts of feminists. *Frontul Renasterii Sociale* ("The National Renaissance Front") was established at the end of 1938 to replace political parties and invited women that were active within organizations to join the Front against the fascist threats (Mihailescu, 2006, 62). But *Frontul Renasterii Sociale* never became a viable political entity to resist fascism, lowered the resistance capacity of democratic institutions and women associations that joined the Front lost their organizational structures (Idem., pp. 63-64). The new government established in February 1939 showed that the real power was Carol II's and his camarilla and the women's right to vote has proven to be purely formal (Idem. 64). The dictatorial fascist regime of Ion Antonescu followed, after his nomination as prime-minister with absolute powers on the 14th of September 1940, suspending the Constitution and dissolving the Parliament. Carol was forced to abdicate by passing the throne to his son Mihai I. Women organizations such as *Societatea Ortodoxa a Femeilor Romane* (The Orthodox Society of Romanian Women) re-elected Alexandrina Cantacuzino as president and together with *Consiliul National al Femeilor Romane C.N.F.R.* (The National Council of Romanian Women) whose president was again Alexandrina Cantacuzino and other women organizations they helped war victims (Mihailescu, 2006, 66-67).

In June 1944, one of the largest political coalitions in Romanian history was established – *Blocul National Democratic* (National Democratic Bloc) between P.N.L., P.N.T., *Partidul Social Democrat* (P.S.D.) (Social Democrat Party) and P.C.R. to turn against Germany and re-establish a parliamentary democracy. Following the coup d'état of August 23, 1944, the 1923 Constitution-based regime was re-established by a royal decree and guaranteed the rights and liberties of citizens and allowed the activity of political parties and professional organizations (Mihailescu, 2006, 70). In September 1944, *Frontul National Democratic*

(National Democratic Front) was created, at the initiative of P.C.R who proposed to political parties, professional associations, women and youth organizations and trade unions to unite in a common effort (Mihailescu, 2006, 71). Women's sections of P.N.L. and P.N.T. did not adhere to the Front, but *Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare din Romania* (U.F.M.R.) as a branch of P.S.D.R. did so (Idem, 72). If during the interwar period, U.F.M.R. was not so visible, after the end of WWII it became a powerful association with 4000 members only in Bucharest, in 1944 (Ibidem.).

On the 31st of January 1945, in Bucharest took place *Marea conferinta a femeilor muncii* ("The Great Conference of Working Women") and its result was the decision to form women commissions within trade union committees in companies and institutions (Mihailescu, 2006, 73). The conference participants aimed at ending exploitation and misery and delineated themselves in their discourses from feminist bourgeois associations who tackled women's issues without considering the social problems (Idem., 73-74).

On the 15 of April 1945 *Uniunea Femeilor Anti-fasciste din Romania* (UFAR) (The Union of Anti-fascist Romanian Women) was created, as a unique mass-organization that would gather all organized and non-organized women around P.C.R. programme (Mihailescu, 2006, 74) with the aim of building solidarity with all women regardless of class, religion, nationality, improving the political and cultural situation of women, their healthcare, children's protection but also networking with other antifascist women organizations in democratic countries (Jinga, 2015, 66-67). The UFAR had a pyramidal structure with branches at regional, county and local levels and it was presided by Ana Pauker (Idem., 68). At a P.C.R. meeting with mass-organizations, in July 1945, U.F.A.R.'s activity was heavily criticized by communist leaders as being too bourgeois and not connecting with the mass of women's workers (Jinga, 2015, 69; Mihailescu, 2006, 75). U.F.A.R. had an important role in the upcoming parliamentary elections in 1946, to remove competition from other women organizations.

Federatia Democrata a Femeilor din Romania (F.D.F.R) ("The Democrat Federation of Women in Romania") was created as a consequence of the International Congress of Women that took place in Paris, between 4-8 of March 1946 and was part of Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) (Jinga, 2015, 75-76; Mihailescu, 2006, 77). F.D.F.R. comprised among its founding organizations: *Femeile Ortodoxe* (Orthodox Women), *Uniunea*

Femeilor Antifasciste din Romania (U.F.A.R.) (“The Union of Antifascist Women in Romania”), Trade Unions, *Apararea Patriotica* (“Patriotic Defence”), P.N.T. (National Peasants Party), *Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare* (U.F.M.) (The Union of Women Workers) (Jinga, 2015, 75-76; Mihailescu, 2006, 77). Organised as a federation, each organization kept its specificity and independence, at least in appearance, favouring the advancement towards the communist desideratum of creating a unique women organization (Jinga, 2015, 77; Mihailescu, 2006, 77). Nevertheless, lacking financing, the Federation did not have any activity and did not contribute to increase the influence of PCR within member organizations (Jinga, 2015, 78).

Thus, acknowledging the failure of the Federation, Communist Party leaders took the measure of organizing women branches within the Party that could interfere within the Federation through its members from the women branches, representing another step towards the creation of a unique women organization (Idem., 79-80). The unification process of women organizations between 1945-1948 was reinforced by tough policies against feminist associations that contributed to the disappearance of *Casa femeii* (Women’s House) in Bucharest, afterwards of *Consiliul National al Femeilor din Romania* (National Council of Women in Romania) together with the archives of women associations in its custody (Jinga, 2015, 80).

At the beginning of 1948, *Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din Romania*, (UFDR) (The Union of Romanian-Democrat Women) was created and presided by Ana Pauker⁷¹. Its objectives did not differ very much compared to FDFR or women branches within the Romanian Communist Party, just adding training and specialization courses (Jinga, 2015, 82). Those organizations that did not join UFDR were dissolved during 1947-1948: *Asociatia Crestina a Femeilor Române* (“The Christian Women's Association”), *Federatia Femeilor Universitare*, (“The Federation of Women in Academia”), the social assistance associations, etc. (Mihailescu, 2006, 80). Mihailescu considers that through the establishment of the unique organization UFDR, the women’s movement in Romania was disorganized, having the same

⁷¹ While Mihailescu (2006, 80) argues that *Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din Romania*, (UFDR) (The Union of Romanian-Democrat Women) was created at the National Women Conference organized by PCR (Romanian Communist Party) in Bucharest in February 1948, Jinga (2015, 82) maintains that U.F.D.R. was created on January 3rd 1948 and was a direct consequence of the directives established at World Congress of Women in Stockholm in 1945.

fate as other liberal and socialist movements that could not be expressed and manifested for more than four decades as the communist regime lasted (2006, 81).

III. 1948-1989

As the UFDR has achieved the established aspirations of the PCR such as winning the elections and obliterating other women and feminist organizations close to historical political parties, the new challenge established for the Union, at the meeting of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the PCR February 2nd 1949 was to support the process of collectivization of Romanian villages and the payment of allowances to the State (Jinga, 2015, 82). Nevertheless, at the level of communist leadership it was not clear what role the UFDR should play among other organizations coordinated by the Romanian Communist Party and decided in 1950 to subordinate the Union to the Section of the Leading Bodies of the Party, trade unions and youth having as a consequence the loss of autonomy of the UFDR with a high degree of control by the Party (Jinga, 2015, 86-87). In 1953, the UFDR was dissolved.

The next step was the creation of Women Sections and Women Commissions alongside Party Committees (Idem., 88). One of the organizing direction was *Adunarea Delegationelor* (“The Assembly of Delegate Women”) for which every group of 10 women was supposed to elect one delegate with a one year mandate, validated by the General Assembly of Women from a specific larger street, neighbourhood or village (Idem., 90). One important activity of the Women Commissions, apart from coordinating women activities according to the activity plan, was the propaganda for the creation of collective households (Jinga, 2015, 91). After finalizing the elections for *Adunarea Delegationelor*, those elected were invited on May 30, 1953 in Bucharest to elect their representatives for the central body of Women Commissions – *Comitetul Femeilor Democratice* (CFD) (“The Committee of Democrat Women”) (Idem., 93).

After three years, the CFD was disbanded as the main form of leadership of women organization and replaced by *Consiliul National al Femeilor* (C.N.F.) (The National Council of Women), the official invoked reason being the poor results of CFD and the necessity of simplifying the bureaucratic process (Jinga, 2015, 96-97). Thus, C.N.F. was created through the decision of the Political Office of the Romanian Communist Party from October 10th,

1957 as the main leadership body of the women's movement in Romania, composed of all delegates elected at regional level, every four years (Jinga, 2015, 99). After the list of delegates was created, there was a call for a National Congress of CNF where the Executive Committee of the National Council of Women was elected comprising a president, 6 vice-presidents, 6 secretaries and a 10 members censors' board (Ibidem.).

The first elections for the new women's committees at regional, district and municipal level and those for the National Council of Women took place between November 12 and December 10, 1957 (Idem., 102). 115 members were elected in the C.N.F, among which women workers represented 35%, peasants 35%, intellectuals 23%, civil servants 3%, housewives 7% (Idem., 104). An important change in the CNF took place in 1963 when its president Maria Rosetti died and a new president – Suzana Gadea, was elected (Ibidem).

The structure of the CNF did not resemble other women organizations in communist states, but had its correspondence in the Union des Femmes Françaises (UFF) – women's organization of the French Communist Party (Jinga, 2015, 105). Nevertheless, while in UFF women were trained and encouraged to take initiative from the local level, the initiative coming from the people towards the political representatives being militant in its nature, in Romania the UFDR and then the CNF were not interested in the priorities of local women, but focused to convince people for the benefits of the measures taken by the communist state for women (Ibidem.). Moreover, while UFF had a certain autonomy from the French Communist Party, within UFAR and then FDFR there was only a simulated autonomy that disappeared completely once the movement was unified in 1948 (Ibidem.).

Between 1945 and 1989 U.F.A.R., U.F.D.R. and afterwards C.N.F. as women organizations of the P.C.R., Romanian Communist Party were affiliated to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and followed the resolutions and action plans of the international organization whose main aim was to obtain peace in the world (Idem., 109).

After the General Secretary of P.C.R., Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, died in 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu came to power. The C.N.F. enters a new phase with the call for a new National Conference of Women between 23-25 July 1966 with the participation of 3000 women (Jinga, 2015, 110). Ceausescu's discourse almost identical with the one of his predecessor called for women's participation in all areas of activity, replaced some state positions with

the participation of women as for example women's commissions in factories were responsible to watch over the application of legislation devoted to women (Jinga, 2015, p. 113). Ceausescu also called for diminishing the time for domestic work so that women could participate more in paid work and the political activities of C.N.F. (Ibidem.). Nevertheless, the discourse about active participation of women in labour did not exclude a discourse about the role of women as mothers transposed in the forced demographic growth policy through the 770 decree from 1966 that forbade abortion and through measures that discourage divorce (Jinga, 2015, 113-114). It was established that the National Conferences of Women to be organized every 5 years and the Executive Committee was replaced with a Secretariat after the model of the party (Idem, 115).

The territorial reform in 1968 that established 41 counties led to new elections within C.N.F. in 1969 (Jinga, 2015, 115). 506 women were elected for the county offices – 21% workers, 6% working in cooperatives, 60% intellectuals, 13% domestic workers and other categories (Ibidem). Moreover 91% of the elected women were party members, explained through an increase of the number of women party members between 1953 and 1969 (Idem., 116-117).

At the beginning of the 70s, *Comitetul Central* (“the Central Committee”) took important measures such as the decision from 18-19 July 1973 to increase the role of women in the economic, political and social life of the country without consulting the C.N.F., while assigning it with the responsibility of implementation (Idem., 117-118). Also, some of the members of the C.N.F. were supposed to represent other mass organizations such as Trade Unions, *Uniunea Tineretului Communist* (U.T.C.) (The Union of the Communist Youth), *Uniunea Nationala a Cooperativelor Agricole de Productie* (U.N.C.A.P.) (The National Union of Agricultural Production Cooperatives), Television (Idem., 119). The party leadership also changed the composition of the Executive Committee of C.N.F. (Idem., 120). Jinga argues that the way the party leadership thought the implementation of equality measures had a superficial impact and did not undermine the patriarchal tradition (Idem., 122).

In January 1968, *Frontul Unitatii Sociale* (F.U.S.) (Social Unity Front) was created to bring together all mass organizations with the aim of coordinating the economic programmes, to exceed the plan, to increase productivity and reduce losses (Idem. 123). In 1974, at the first Congress of F.U.S., Ceausescu was elected as its president by unanimity (Idem., 124).

For the first time since 1966, a new National Conference of Women was organized in 1978 with election for all the bodies of the women's organization. Elena Ceausescu proposed the modification of the organizational form from the Office with 15 members to a larger body finally composed of 31 members: 1 president, 6 vice-presidents, 3 secretaries and 21 members (Idem., 125). Another measure taken during the Conference was the increase of the number of workers within the leadership of women's organization in order to increase party control (Jinga, 2015, 125). The new statute and way of functioning of the C.N.F. was approved by the P.C.R. Secretariat on the 10th of April 1978 and Elena Ceausescu was elected honorific president and Ana Muresan the president of the C.N.F. (Idem., 126-131). After the Conference in 1978 the leadership of the C.N.F. organized its plenaries every year in January, but the organization was not anymore of great interest for the party (Idem., 133). Their magazine, *Femeia* ("The women") published the discourse of the president of the women organization for the 8th of March (Idem., pp. 133-134).

During the 80s, there was a great emphasis on the demographic policy that was translated in hardening the provisions of the 770 decree by increasing the minimum age to be able to make a request for abortion at 45 years old and/or having given birth and nurtured 5 children (Jinga, 2015, 135).

A new National Conference of Women was organized in 1989 and the previous year took place the elections for the delegates' assemblies as stated by the modifications took in 1978 (Idem., 137-138). Jinga argues that there was a complete party indifference towards these elections as there was no stake anymore (Idem., 138.). The C.N.F. was restructured, reorganized, politicized and its relationship with the Romanian Communist Party shows how the immersion of the politics within the functioning of the mass organization killed the internal autonomy and also how social control mechanisms were established during this period (Ibidem).

During Ceausescu, there was an increase of the number of illegal abortions and as a result during the second half of the 70s and the 80s the control of women was strengthened with the help of the medical personnel, militia, prosecutors and C.N.F. (Jinga, 2015, 139). Medical controls were happening regularly and doctors had to depict possible pregnancies and to follow the pregnancy of the women in order to avoid illegal abortion. Most of the

gynaecological controls took place in big enterprises. For those enterprises that were having more than 2500 women workers it was compulsory to have a gynaecologist; for the other enterprises, a gynaecologist came regularly (Jinga, 2015, 140). Besides controls at the work place, great campaigns to discourage abortion were organized using propaganda movies, brochures, flyers, press articles to draw attention about the negative medical and juridical consequences of illegal abortion (Idem., 141). C.N.F. used also artistic movies with famous actors for their propaganda to discourage abortion and such an example is the 1975 movie, *Illustrate cu flori de camp* by Andrei Blaier (Ibidem.). Despite the restrictive measures taken by the regime to control abortions, the demographic index in Romania continually dropped until December 1989, with the exception of a demographic increase at the end of the 60s (Idem., 142).

One other aim of the communist officials' policies was to diminish the index of infant mortality and to this end introduced compulsory home visits in those families with children younger than one year, undertaken by medical personnel together with women committees and women commissions of C.N.F. (Idem., 143). As a result of demographic policies, child abandonment heavily increased and since social assistance was underfinanced and lacked enough personnel, the state appealed to C.N.F. to fill in the gaps and deficiencies of the system (Idem., 144.). Life conditions in orphanages deteriorated constantly until the fall of the regime (Idem., 145)

Beginning with the second half of the 80s the soft autonomy of C.N.F. vanishes when the organization becomes politicized through the insertion of new members without experience within the movement, marking the moment when issues related to the equality between women and men were not a priority anymore, CNF following strictly the tasks outlined by the party leadership (Jinga, 2015, 149-150).

According to the 1974 action plan, the number of women within certain branches of industry was supposed to be increased. These priority branches were: chemical industry, the industry of glass, porcelain and tile, thermic and electric energy industry, polygraphic industry, textile industry and state agriculture (Idem., 150). In this context, C.N.F. was supposed to ensure the compliance with production quotas established in the 5 year plans related to industry and agriculture (Ibidem.). C.N.F. and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry together with the *Uniunea Nationala a cooperativelor agricole de productie* (U.N.C.A.P) ("National Union

of Agricultural Production Cooperatives”) organized control actions within the country to mobilize women in agricultural campaigns, to use virgin lands and courtyards to grow fruits and vegetables and households for livestock (Idem. 151). Compared to the increase in production in industry, the increase in agriculture benefited not only the state. Cocoon silk industry, winter preserves, or fruits and vegetables were paid activities and some of the money went to C.N.F. that was auto-financing this way. 40% of this sum went to a deposit to the National Bank of the Socialist Republic of Romania and the rest went into the account of C.N.F. and used for different actions with priority on buying furniture, appliances, linen and clothes for orphanages, nurseries and kindergartens (Idem., 153).

After adopting the 1948 Constitution, the equality of rights between men and women became a constitutional principle. Nevertheless, the character of the celebration of the 8 of March initially as the international women’s day transformed to just women’s day and lastly to Mother’s Day after the debut of Ceausescu’s demographic policies (Idem., 156). The role of women as mothers was emphasized through celebrations organized by women committees and commissions together with the *Organizatia Pionierilor* (Pioneer Organization) and *Soimii Patriei* (The Fatherland Falcons) in all the institutions of the educational system and also at parents workplaces (Jinga, 2015, 159). Collaborating with *Uniunea Tineretului Comunist* (UTC) (The Union of the Communist Youth) the “young women’s week” was organized in order to prepare young women for family life through always the same courses about the importance of children in family life, practical cooking lessons, sewing lessons (Ibidem.).

Mass media was contributing as well to all this manifestations through the magazine *Femeia* (“The Woman”) that devoted its writings in March to the international fight for the equality between men and women, publishing articles as well about the capitalist states in which women are touched by unemployment, unequal salaries and lack of facilities for child rearing compared to the communist Romania where equality legislation played its role to cease inequalities (Idem., 159-160).

Jinga (2015) argues that over the time C.N.F transformed itself into a form of control for women population compared to mass women organizations in communist countries that came with solutions to support a real family planning. She considers that C.N.F. was one of the “faithful soldiers” of the Ceausescu’s policies that resulted in more than 10000 women

victims among those obliged to resort to illegal abortion (Jinga, 2015, 160). Moreover, equality policies were not considered anymore during the years and solely P.C.R. was in charge with the increase in the number of women within leadership positions (Jinga, 2015, 160).

IV. The feminist movement after 1989

After the fall of the communist regime, the creation of the first women and feminist organizations happened in a context of unabated development of civil society organizations under the auspices of the reconstruction of a democratic citizen's participation sphere (Grunberg, 2000). During the 1990s, in Romania around 400 NGOs were created monthly, exceeding 12,000 organizations in 1996 (Balogh cited in Molocea, 2015, 23). Molocea (2013, 172) argues that the rapid increase in the number of NGOs showed on the one hand, a lack of knowledge about what civil society or democratic institutions are and on the other hand, opportunism since many people created organizations believing that they will have some financial advantages.

The first feminist associations and newspapers were initiated by educated women from an urban milieu, including Roma women activists. Scholars distinguish between Phoenix organizations⁷² (newly created organizations which nevertheless are ingrained in the old communist system) and new organizations that focus on emancipation and democracy (Molocea, 2015). Among the Phoenix organizations, *Asociatia Femeilor din Romania* (A.F.R.) (The Women's Association in Romania), is by far the most popular one, being created in 1989, on the basis of the old *Consiliul National al Femeilor* (C.N.F.) (The National Council of Women) and still active today. According to their official statement, A.F.R. has more than 9,550 members and beneficiaries of its projects, in Bucharest and in its 20 branches in the country. The funds of the Association come from donations, voluntary contributions and projects. A.F.R. is self-declaring as the initiator of the women's national movement in Romania, becoming "a powerful bridge between organizations, committees, associations that work for the benefit of women in Romania".⁷³ Nevertheless, A.F.R. was not part of any coalition or network, initiated after 1989, to combat gender discrimination or

⁷² Fábíán, K. (2004). Bridges across the Public-Private Divide: The Welfare-Rated Activism of Hungarian Women after 1989. *L'Homme*, 15(1), pp. 47-62. Retrieved 7 Feb. 2018.

⁷³ <http://www.afr.ro> accessed July 14, 2019

violence against women and did not collaborate with other feminist organizations. A.F.R. says to be part of *Coalitia pentru Sanatatea Reproductivei in Romania* (Coalition for Reproductive Health in Romania) from 1998 and the initiator of *Coalitia pentru Cultura Pacii si Non-violentei in Romania* (Coalition for Peace Culture and Non-Violence in Romania) in 1999. However, neither the members nor the activities of these coalitions can be traced down.

Among the new organizations, not rooted in the old system, *Societatea de Analize Feministe: AnA* (Society for Feminist Analyses) created in 1993 is one of the most active feminist organizations at the time. Compared to Phoenix organizations that had a national infrastructure, with a large mass of adherents in different counties in Romania, these new associations built up from scratch lacked infrastructure – equipment, technology and human resources and many times they did not even have an office (Moloea, 2015). A tension was resented among the two kinds of organizations around various issues, and one of them was precisely this difference in access to material resources. A second cause of the tense relationship was the suspicion around the Phoenix organizations as being deep-rooted in the old communist system that made new feminist organizations avoid them (Moloea, 2015, 25). This aspect should be understood in the context of a strong anti-communism present in the public sphere after the fall of the regime (Ban, 2015). The last source of constriction was ideological in nature. Phoenix organizations, while stating that they “no longer accept the idea of a communist woman, with her head bent and a party activist”, they detach themselves from the feminist movement, historically from the suffragettes.⁷⁴ By contrast, new organizations such as AnA, openly assumed a feminist identity and practice, modelled and inspired by feminist and gender studies theories and feminist movements in Western democracies.

Despite these tensions, Phoenix organisations and new feminist associations, build-up mostly as NGOs worked together unevenly in various circumstances, during the 90s, holding workshops and seminars on civic education, women’s rights and discrimination (Moloea, 2015, 26). One of these first collaborations was occasioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that initiated the project Women in Development (WiD) in Romania, organized in partnership with the Labor Ministry, and that aimed to increase

⁷⁴ Interview with L.P. from A.F.R. in Moloea (2015, 26).

women's participation in society and within the democratization process (Idem., 28). The expected tangible outcomes of the project were the creation of a state department for gender equality that did not happen, and the creation of a catalogue of women's organizations in Romania that was implemented – AnA being the only feminist organization identified (Ibidem). This initiative aimed to structure the existing women organizations but also to fuel the creation of an agenda of women's issues and problems that has not been realized. The difficulties encountered were first to establish a group cohesion among the representatives of various organizations (Moloea, 2015, 29). Disagreements regarding the vision and approaches towards women's issues hindered precisely group cohesion. There were on the one hand organisations of Christian women or women organizations from political parties that were focused on charity actions, and on the other hand, organizations that focused more on identifying and eliminating the causes of the problems that women were facing (Ibidem). A disagreement between aid and emancipation as philosophies at the basis of their collaboration was in place.

The creation of women organizations within political parties was met with reluctance, at the beginning of the first decade of post-socialism. The first women organization of a political party after 1989 was that of *Frontul Salvării Naționale* (FSN) (The National Salvation Front). The political parties that were more open to the foundation of women's sections were those from the left – FSN and then *Partidul Democratice Sociale din România* (P.D.S.R.) (“Party of Social Democracy in Romania”)⁷⁵ and a nationalist one *Partidul România Mare* (P.R.M.) (“The Greater Romania Party”) (Moloea, 2013, 150). *Partidul Național Țărănesc* (P.N.Ț.) (“The National Peasants' Party”) and *Partidul Național Liberal* (P.N.L.) (“The National Liberal Party”) were opposed to it, finding it worthless (Ibidem).

Women's political representation became an issue in the years before elections (1995-1996). *Programul 222* (The 222 Programme) organized by WiD, UNDP, between 1996 and 1996 pursued the election of at least 222 women in the Romanian Parliament (about half of the members of Parliament) (Moloea, 2015, 50). To realize this goal, *Grupul 222* (“The 222 Group”) was formed. It was an informal group made up of people interested in a fair representation of women and men in the Romanian Parliament, with no particular political

⁷⁵ P.S.D.R. emerged from the scission between FSN and a group of politicians that left FSN close to the then President Ion Iliescu and formed *Frontul Democrat al Salvării Naționale*, FDSM (The Democratic National Salvation Front) and then PSDR.

colour, its members belonging to various democratic or independent political parties (Molocea, 2013, 151). The specific goals of the programme were the identification of women capable of running for the next legislative elections, to support women who want to run, to lobby political parties to include women candidates on the electoral lists not at the end of the lists, to organize a campaign to support the election of women candidates in Parliament (Molocea, 2013, 152). One of the problems identified with this project was the lack of takeover by public authorities and also by political parties, especially considering that among its participants were many women members of political parties. This adds to the reticence of some parties to support the creation of women's branches within their organizations. *Programul 222*, was also a life-changing experience for some women, as it was the case of Dina Loghin who, during her participation at the activities of project, decided to create *Fundatia Sanse Egale pentru Femei* (SEF) (The Foundation Equal Chances for Women) in Iasi, in 1996.

During the 90s, a grassroots feminist movement was thought to be missing (Molocea, 2013, 170). First of all, this was due to the lack of studies concerning the realities of women in Romania (Molocea, 2013, 171). Second, it was also due to people's lack of trust in organizations, related to communist period when every citizen was supposed to be part of an organization, with the state being able to monitor any behaviour away from party politics (Idem. 172). Furthermore, the impressive number of NGOs created after 1989 showed opportunism as many people created NGOs believing to have some financial benefit or as fake organizations to cover commercial activities, contributing to increased scepticism towards the activities of these organizations (Ibidem). Lastly, the fact that the majority of feminists during the 90s were academics, such as Mihaela Miroiu, Laura Grunberg, Eniko Vincze, Daniela Roventa Frumusani, Adriana Baban and others, limited the kind of actions in which they were engaged initially to the particularities of the academic sphere. Nevertheless, during the next decades some of them in grassroots activism such as Eniko Vincze who was very actively involved in the housing movement, anti-racism and for social justice, became important public figures of the movement.

At the end of the 90s, gender studies/feminist studies have become institutionalized. The first programme created as a state subsidized programme in Bucharest in 1998 was an MA in Gender Studies at *Scoala Nationala de Studii Politice si Administrative* (SNSPA)

(The National School of Political Science and Public Administration).⁷⁶ This happened after some previous years of diffused courses of feminist philosophy, sociology of gender and other academic activities around AnA that did research, published the first books in the field and the feminist studies journal *AnAlize* (Miroiu, 2010, 158). *AnAlize* appeared few times a year until 2004 when it stopped its activity due to the lack of funding. In 2013 *AnAlize, Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies* reopened and its activities and publications are carried on still today.⁷⁷ The power position of Mihaela Miroiu as the head of the Department of Political Science made it easier to convince the Senate of SNSPA to accept a ‘strange exoticism’ (Ibidem.). In 2000, an MA programme of gender studies – *Gen, diferente si inegalitati* (“Gender, differences and inequalities”) was created at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, under the leading figure of anthropologist Eniko Vincze. However, at the end of 2000s, the master was dismantled by the university Rector, Andrei Marga. In 2004, in Timisoara a third MA in gender studies was created, coordinated by Reghina Dascal. This MA programme was also dismantled after three years of functioning. Some of the reasons invoked were the low level of requests from students for this specialization (Vlad, 2013, 35).

In an effort to support the development and continuance of gender studies in conditions of lack of funding for innovation and research in higher education and the concentration of resources in the NGO sector, Mihaela Miroiu and Otilia Dragomir established in 2000 *Centrul de Dezvoltare Curriculara si Studii de Gen, FILIA* (‘Center for Curricular Development and Gender Studies, Filia’), an NGO affiliated with SNSPA with the aim of attracting research funds for the support of the newly established gender studies MA (Vlad, 2013, 36). They managed to access on hundred thousand dollars financing from the World Bank to be used in the development of the Gender Studies MA, the creation of a gender studies library and to support research and publications (Ibidem.). To secure institutional support for the newly created MAs, in Cluj in 2000, Eniko Vincze *founded Grupul Interdisciplinar pentru Studii de Gen* (‘The Interdisciplinary Group for Gender Studies’)⁷⁸ (Vincze in Baluta and Cirstocea 2003, 214) and in Timisoara in 2001 the *Centrul Interdisciplinar de Studii de Gen* (‘Interdisciplinary Center for Gender Studies’) was created.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ <http://www.politice.ro/ro/mpgm> accessed July 9, 2019

⁷⁷ <http://www.analize-journal.ro>, accessed on February 8th, 2018.

⁷⁸ http://www.nec.ro/data/pdfs/publications/relink/directii-si-teme-de-cercetare/ENIKO_MAGYARI-VINCZE.pdf accessed July 14, 2019

⁷⁹ <https://genderstudies.uvt.ro> accessed July 14, 2019

Filia slowly became for students an entry point for activism as they were volunteering there and some of them doing their practical internships required during the MA. The organization grew in terms of public visibility as a feminist organization and slowly changed its profile, after 2010, besides research, started to incorporate more and more advocacy work and activism.

The beginning of 2000s meant also the beginning of grassroots feminist activism symbolized by the organization of the first feminist protest after the fall of the communist regime, in April 2000, against domestic violence, in response to an article published in *Playboy* ó the Romanian edition, entitled ‘How to Beat Your Wife Without Leaving Marks’.⁸⁰ The concerned article described in detail: ‘how to grab the hair of "a piece of wife", how to apply the kitchen cooker "slowly on the wife’s livers", suggestions are provided on the necessary utensils to be used (police truncheon, rolling pin, transmission belt from the washing machine) and tips for "beginners" ("you must hit her heavily as you do not know when you will have the chance to do so again", if the girl escapes, you need to apply "a small beating supplement at the end, for habit", "the beating should not take longer than 10-15 minutes ") ... This "practical course" with eloquent illustrations/ photos cannot have any purpose other than "marital harmony"’(Misleanu, 2000, 12).

The protest took place on the 24th of April 2000 at 17.00, in front of the Senate building and was organized by Liliana Popescu, director of Civic Education Project, Romania and Dina Loghin from SEF, in Iasi (Misleanu, 2000, 14; Molocea, 2013, 181). Most of those who participated came from the academic area, professors and students at the gender studies MA in Bucharest (Misleanu, 2000, 14; Molocea, 2013, 181), but also Sheila Rosapepe the wife of the back then American ambassador, the well-appreciated actress Maia Morgenstern or the musician A.G. Weinberg joined the protest (Molocea, 2013, 181). Also due to the presence of international figures and cultural personalities in Romania, the protest was well covered both by the international and national press. The publication of the article that triggered the protest happened in the context in which there was no law regulating and sanctioning domestic violence. One of the aims of the protest was also to pressure authorities to speed up the

⁸⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/24/business/media-romanian-playboy-article-draws-protests.html>
accessed July 14, 2019

adoption of the draft law on domestic violence and some offenses related to sexual violence, which was supposed to amend the Criminal Code and was finally voted in the fall / winter of 2000 (Popescu, 2004, 252). The April 2000 mobilization was part of a chain of actions that followed which ultimately led to the adoption of a law – 217/2003 on domestic violence.

Along with the institutionalization of gender studies and the organization of the first feminist protest after 1989, the years 2000s also meant the development of a political infrastructure to ensure the respect of gender equality and non-discrimination. Gender equality was not a priority for transition governments, especially during the 90s, unless related to European Union accession (Massino and Popa, 2015, 171), more significantly during the pre-accession period that started in 2000 and expressed through legislative and public policies endeavors to comply with the *acquis communautaire*. Thus, in this context gender equality and non-discrimination laws were adopted and public entities were established such as *Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării* (CNCD) ('The National Council for Combating Discrimination') created in 2001, *Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați* (ANES) ('The National Agency for Equality between Women and Men') (2004), *Agenția Națională pentru Protecția Familiei* (ANPF) ('The National Agency for the Protection of the Family') founded in 2003, with power in the area of domestic violence, and Equal Opportunities Commissions in the Parliament, one in the Senate founded in 2003 and one in the Chamber of Deputies created in 2004. Labeled 'room service' feminism, specifically to emphasize the external influence, transfer and import character of norms, discourses, policies and legislation, Miroiu (2004), who coined this term, considered this process to be one surface since the Romanian society did not have the foundation for this. More than this, revealing is also the fact that the concerned civil society organizations could not and did not participate in the process of creation of these gender equality and non-discrimination bodies. Civil society was not consulted, being a classic case of a top-down process. Afterwards, the lack of enforcement and the deficiencies in implementation of gender equality legislation a gap has been created and widened between the existing legislative framework and its implementation through programs and policies. This 'compliance gap' is due to corruption and lack of will from the part of the political elites (Massino and Popa, 2015, pp. 171-172).

Feminist and women NGOs changed and extended their tactical repertoire after 2000 and these transformations are strongly related to the national context and to the relationship that

NGOs had with authorities adapting their tactics to cooperation or confrontation contextually (Vlad, 2015). They sometimes combined service providing, advocacy, protests and cultural activities. Among the organizations that coupled service providing with advocacy is the *Institutul Est-European pentru Sanatatea Reproductivei* (The East European Institute for Reproductive Health) founded in 1996 in Targu-Mures. The Institute established in 2005 a shelter for victims of domestic violence and one for aggressors and implemented a comprehensive system of support and accompaniment involving public institutions (Vlad, 2013, 61). It is the only private shelter entirely funded by the state (Idem., 62). In 1998, *Artemis* was founded in Cluj, opening also a shelter for victims of domestic violence, but they were less successful in their collaboration with local institutions that refused year after year to give them a building for the shelter. Being dependent on foreign funds, such as PHARE and embassies to sustain their service, they had to close the shelter after financing stopped (Vlad, 2013, 63).

Another organization that provides services for violence victims is *Centrul pentru Mediere si Securitate Comunitara* (CMSC) ('Centre for Mediation and Community Safety') that was founded in 2000, member of Soros Open Network in Romania. CMSC mixes service providing with advocacy in the area of violence, trainings for state institutions staff, such as police officers. Although they integrate domestic violence as one of their main areas of focus and interventions, CMSC proposes and develops community security models, multi-institutional collaboration systems and protocols and services to help 'protect victims of *all types of abuse and vulnerable people* by integrating, multidisciplinary approach and respecting each individual'.⁸¹ Conversely, *Asociatia pentru Libertate si Egalitate de Gen*, A.L.E.G. ('The Association for Freedom and Gender Equality'), specifically address patriarchy through education and provide services in all the areas of violence against women, including sexual violence, circumscribed by their general mission to 'promote gender equality and fight against gender based discrimination and gender based violence affecting women and girls disproportionately'.⁸²

Roma women activists started to organize as well since the beginning of the 1990s, especially related to racist violence, hate speech and discrimination against Roma in employment, education, health care, administration and other public services. In the 1996 report of the

⁸¹ <https://www.cmhc.ro/>, accessed February 8th, 2018.

⁸² <http://aleg-romania.eu/>, accessed February 8th, 2018.

European Roma Rights Center – “Sudden Rage at Dawn. Violence against Roma in Romania”, abuses, official violence and the use of excessive force by law enforcement officials are well documented. Police raids were often conducted in Romani communities and the report identifies three types of raids: raids without justification, raids for “illegal domicile” and raids to “fight crime”.⁸³ The work by Roma women activists, within Roma communities in the context of institutionalized violence but also interethnic conflicts, occasioned a process of reflection regarding the difficulties and oppression that Roma women faced inside and outside their communities (Vlad, 2013, 98). Vlad (2013, 99-104) identifies three types of tensions faced by Roma women activists. The first one is between them and the Roma rights movement, between Roma and non-Roma women activists and between two generations of Roma women activists. Accordingly, when Roma women activists were uncovering the injustices and oppression that they were facing within their own communities such as early marriages and trafficking, activists from the Roma movement were discontented. In the same time, Roma women activists felt that their issues were also rejected from the agenda of the feminist movement (Vlad, 2013, 100). Nevertheless, overlapping membership and collaboration between the Roma movement, the feminist movement, Roma women activists is becoming more and more common. Nicoleta Bitu, president of the Democratic Federation of Roma from Romania (a federation of the most active Romani organization in Romania) and the co-chair of the newly established European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) is also a member of the feminist association, FRONT, founded in 2011. Andreea Braga, now president of feminist NGO Filia and Carmen Gheorghe, now president of E-Romnja– Roma feminist organization founded in 2012, met while they were both working at *Fundatia Agentia de Dezvoltare Comunitara ș Impreunaö* (‘The Foundation Agency for Community Development “Together”’), an organization focusing on the development of Roma communities in the context of civil, social, political and economic rights.⁸⁴ After they left *Impreuna*, they continued a close collaboration and joint programmes with Roma women communities, especially in Valea Seaca, Bacau, but also in other communities in different counties in Romania.

After 1989, women activists and feminists did not organize just around formal NGOs, but also within the alternative cultural scene of the left, together with anarchists, communists, in an anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist, and anti-capitalist struggle. They organized feminist

⁸³ <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/00/18/m00000018.pdf> , accessed February 8th, 2018.

⁸⁴ <http://agentiaimpreuna.ro/?cat=10> accessed July 14, 2019

reading groups, created zines, involved in DIY activities, organized festivals and political art projects. During the second half of the 90s in Timisoara, Iasi, Craiova, Cluj and Bucharest, various autonomous collectives have been created. One of them is Spatiul DIY Craiova, an informal and independent group, not related to political parties, non-hierarchical and financially independent that created a space as an alternative to the commercial society, encouraging people to create instead of consuming, joining together in political, social and cultural activities, in an open space, based on cooperation not competition, respect and non-discrimination on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion.⁸⁵ Another group is Lovekills, an anarchist-feminist zine by women in the anarchist-punk scene in Craiova who felt discriminated within the movement and wanted to revolt against this fact (Vlad, 2013, 110). Then, the Ladyfest DiY feminist festivals with art, music, workshops, film was organized in 2005 Ladyfest Timisoara, in 2006 Ladyact Bucharest and in 2007 Ladyfest Bucharest producing spaces for women to get to know each other and to discuss politically relevant topics for them around patriarchal, capitalist, racist oppression, to reflect about resistance strategies and ways of being and working together. Ladyfest Timisoara describes itself as a “positive outlet for our anger in response to cowardly and insidious sexism that exists in our everyday life”, non-profit, advocating feminism, embracing diversity, anti-corporate and anti-exploitation, not competitive, patriarchal, misogynist, hierarchical and non-discriminatory based on gender and sexual identity.⁸⁶ In 2006, at Ladyact, among others, Crina Morteau, Roma feminist activist held a workshop “All together for interculturality” and Florentina Ionescu psychologist and LGBTQIA activist held a workshop entitled “The right to be different”.⁸⁷ At Ladyfest Bucharest workshops were organized around anti-racist strategies, self-defence, women and science/technology, vegan baking, queer identities versus heteronormativity, maternity and its social and political implications and the organization of the Take Back the Night Rally during the festival.⁸⁸

Out of the collective Ladyfest-ro, the F.I.A. group (*fete/femei/feminism in actiune/activism*, ‘girls/women/feminism in action/activism’) was created in 2008 with the aim of fostering collaboration and working with other groups and individuals, and supporting other initiatives on social justice, including gender issues.⁸⁹ Their main projects are a "mobile" library of

⁸⁵ <https://diycraiova.noblogs.org> accessed February 8th, 2018.

⁸⁶ <https://fia.pimienta.org/05/index-en.php> accessed February 8th, 2018.

⁸⁷ <http://ladyact2006.blogspot.fr/> accessed February 8th, 2018.

⁸⁸ https://fia.pimienta.org/weblog/uploads/2007/10/afis_if_net.jpg accessed July 14, 2019

⁸⁹ https://fia.pimienta.org/weblog/?page_id=34 accessed July 14, 2019

zines, books and other feminist materials, and the website and blog f.i.a.. Some members of F.I.A. got actively involved in *Biblioteca Alternativa* (BA) ('Alternative Library') created in 2010 and organized a feminist reading group that coagulated in a collective. After BA dismantled, two other groups emerged – *Claca* and *Centrul feminist Sofia Nadejde* (CFSN) (Feminist Center Sofia Nadejde). *Claca*⁹⁰ is an independent center for community activities, political organization, debate, critical education in Bucharest with a politics based on queer-feminism, anti-capitalism and anti-racism, respectful towards the environment and animals.⁹¹ CFSN is organized as an explicitly antisexist, antiracist, antihomophobic, antitransphobic, antiableist, anticapitalist and antispeciesist autonomous space,⁹² hosting the women- and trans- only Feminist Reading Circle,⁹³ F.I.A.'s mobile library,⁹⁴ the library of *Societatea Vegetarienilor din Romania* (SVR) (The Society of Vegetarians in Romania), a Vegan Café and a rape crisis project. More recently MACAZ⁹⁵ – a bar theatre cooperative was created in Bucharest comprising some of the ex-members of BA and *Claca* and *A-casa* collective in Cluj.⁹⁶

In terms of contentious actions, after the 2000 protest, women in autonomous collectives organized and participated together with their comrades in protests, for example, for the International Day Against Fascism and Racism in 2002 in Timisoara and anti-NATO summit protests in Bucharest in 2008 that occasioned confrontation between anarchist and the Romanian state.⁹⁷ In 2007, Ladyfest Bucharest organized the Take back the night march. In 2010, a protest against the announced reduction of parental leave allowance was organized by miresici.ro and desprecopii.com with the support of feminist NGO Filia and other organizations. On the 8th of March 2011, Filia organized a campaign for the International Women's Day. On the 6th of October 2011, the Slutwalk protest was organized against street harassment, sexual assaults, victim blaming, by Front Association, together with the feminist

⁹⁰ *Clacă* - Collective voluntary work organized by villagers to help each other, sometimes followed by a small party. Voluntary work, which is usually between neighbours, spontaneous and free, based on reciprocity. It is generally done for fieldwork, for construction, and among women, for housework, and usually ends with a party, with drinks and social games. Today: mutual aid between peasants to harvest, to defoliate beans etc. when they gather in the house of the one who needs help who give in exchange food and drinks, and so it is synonymous with *șezătoare* (this is the definition provided on Claca's collective website).

⁹¹ <https://centrulclaca.wordpress.com/cine-suntem/> accessed February 8th, 2018.

⁹² <https://centrufeminist.wordpress.com/about-cfsn/> accessed July 14, 2019

⁹³ <https://cerculdelecturifeministe.noblogs.org> accessed July 14, 2019

⁹⁴ <https://centrufeminist.wordpress.com/mobilobiblioteca-f-i-a/> accessed July 14, 2019

⁹⁵ <http://macazcoop.ro> accessed July 14, 2019

⁹⁶ <https://acasa.blackblogs.org> accessed July 14, 2019

⁹⁷ <https://centruldecultura.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/buruieni-3-final.pdf> accessed July 14, 2019

reading group from BA and F.I.A. Vlad (2013, 49) argues that by bringing in feminist NGOs and feminist autonomous collectives, the 2011 Slutwalk demonstration “helped bridge previously parallel actions and also contributed to a subsequent ideological and tactical contamination”. After 2011, yearly protests and demonstrations were organized on the 8th of March for the International Women’s Day and on the 25th of November for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. There was a strong feminist participation at the anti-austerity protests in the winter of 2012 in Bucharest, where both feminists in autonomous collectives and NGOs resisted against patriarchal way of organizing and extreme’s right discourses packed with sexism, homophobia and racism (Ana, 2017).

Coalition work and networking was a strong element of cooperation between NGOs working on violence against women, against discrimination, for gender equality, with sometimes overlapping membership. On February 1st, 2003 *Coalitia Nationala a ONG-urilor Implicate in Programe privind Violenta asupra Femeilor* (VIF) (‘National Coalition of NGOs Involved in Programs on Violence against Women’) was created with the aim of preventing and combating violence against women in Romania, in the spirit of respect for women's rights as human rights.⁹⁸ The coalition involved different organizations – feminist, human rights, advocacy and service providing associations in the area of domestic violence. VIF elaborated and advocated for the revision of the domestic violence law from 2003 that would monitor its implementation that took place 9 years afterwards through the adoption of the Law no. 25 of 9 March 2012 on amending and completing the Law no. 217/2003 on the prevention and fight against domestic violence.⁹⁹

Coalitia Anti-Discriminare (‘The Anti-Discrimination Coalition’) was created in 2000, when NGOs fighting against discrimination, jointly supported the adoption of Law no. 48/2002 for approval of the emergency ordinance no. 137/2000 regarding the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, which transposed the anti-discrimination standards valid at the level of the European Union.¹⁰⁰ So far, the Coalition has carried out numerous lobby and advocacy actions that contributed to improving the anti-discrimination legislative framework in Romania. Another coalition, *Coalitia pentru Egalitatea de Gen* (‘The Coalition for Gender

⁹⁸ http://apfr.ro/inactiv/images/RAPOARTE_SERVICII/Rapoarte_proiecte/raport_coalitia_vif_2004.pdf accessed July 14, 2019

⁹⁹ <http://www.mmuncii.ro/pub/imagemanager/images/file/Legislatie/LEGI/L%2025-2012.pdf> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.antidiscriminare.ro> accessed July 14, 2019

Equality') was created with the support of EEA and Norway Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 with the aim of institutional building, in the sense of creating favourable conditions for developing and strengthening the capacity of NGOs that are active in the field of gender equality to promote and integrate the principle of equal opportunities between women and men in all areas of public and private life. In 2014, with the support of the same financial mechanism, the network *Rupem tacerea despre violenta sexuala* (Break the silence against Sexual Violence) was created to provide a structured framework for collaboration between organizations that promote gender equality and act to prevent and combat violence against women, so that sexual violence does not remain a taboo topic in the public space and that victims of sexual violence are ensured access to services.

The fall of the communist regimes, the European Union accession along with the shift in social movement theory during the 1990s towards cultural approaches, exposed scholars to different understandings of the dynamics of contestation, mobilization and social activism. Most of the literature on Central and East European feminism after the fall of the communist regimes has been described as being transactional, dependent on foreign funds, professionalized and lacking potential for broad political mobilization (Petrova, Tarrow, 2007; Cisar and Vráblíková, 2013), using conventional tactics of influence, being NGOized (Grunberg, 2000). The gap between the regular depictions of East European movements as being NGO-ized and the kind of disruptive forms some of them have adopted are not yet explored. The Romanian feminist movement politicized gender interests and gender issues through a variety of tactics in different organizational settings from more institutionalized NGOs to more autonomous collectives.

The history of the Romanian feminist movement showed us that feminists in different waves organized around formal associations from the XIXth century and questions of autonomy regarding political parties or donors have been addressed in the past. More informal forms of organization happened around the communist movement both at national and international level. How the meaning of the feminist organizational forms has changed in the contemporary context have to be explored in relation to also macro-structural transformations.

Table 2: Chronology of contentious events and the buildup of institutional and societal infrastructure

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- 1815, Buda – *Societatea Femeilor Române din Buda* (‘The Society of Romanian Women of Buda’) to support the “Greek-Oriental Romanian schools in the capital of the Hungarian country”^{xxiv}
 - 1850, Brasov – *Reuniunea femeilor romane pentru ajutorul cresterii fetitelor orfane cele mai sarace* (‘The Reunion of Romanian women to help raise the poorest orphan girls’)
 - 1863-1865 – *Amicul Familiei* (‘The Family Friend’) Magazine appears in Bucharest, led by feminist Constanta Dunca-Schiau
 - 1867, Iasi – *Reuniunea Femeilor Romane de la Iasi* (The Reunion of the Romanian Women from Iasi) creating the first vocational school for the poor but also talented girls^{xxv}
 - 1878-1881 - *Femeia Romana* (‘Romanian Women’) newspaper led by Maria Flechtenmacher, with important contributions from feminists such as Sofia Nadejde¹⁰¹ and Adela Xenopol or other political and cultural figures such as C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Paul Scortanu^{xxvi}
 - 1891, Cernauti – *Societatea doamnelor romane din Bucovina* (‘The Society of Romanian Ladies in Bucovina’)^{xxvii}
 - 1893 - *Partidul Social-Democrat al Muncitorilor din România* (P.S.D.M.R) (‘the Socialist Democratic Workers Party of Romania’) included in its programme fundamental claims for women^{xxviii}
 - 1894 *Liga Femeilor Române de la Ia i* (The Romanian Women’s League from Iasi) with the aim to achieve legal rights for women, economic independence, to be educated and to have access to culture^{xxix}
 - 1896-1898, Iasi – *Dochia* feminist magazine was published under the direction of feminist Adela Xenopol
 - 1905-1906, Iasi – *Romanca* (‘The Romanian Woman’) magazine was published under the direction of feminist Adela Xenopol
 - 1907, Stuttgart - Socialist International Congresses, Romanian women organizations participated

¹⁰¹ In March, 25th 1879, Sofia Nădejde publishes “Chestiunea femeilor” in *Femeia Romana*, arguing, in a very documented manner, against an article from the same year from *La Liberté* reproduced in *Le Nord* entitled “Women’s brain” that claimed that women are incapable of development and intelligence. Sofia Nădejde, *Femeia Romana*, Anul II, nr. 111, March 25th 1879, text reproduced integrally in Mihailescu (2002, 82-87)

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- 1908, Iasi – *Uniunea Educatoarelor Romane* (“The Union of Kindergarten Teachers”)
 - 1909-1916, Iasi – *Unirea Femeilor Romane* ‘The Union of Romanian Women’) was the magazine of the organization *Uniunea Educatoarelor Romane*. The magazine published studies of feminist sociology^{xxx}
 - 1910, Copenhagen - Socialist International Congresses, Romanian women organizations participated
 - 1911, Bucharest - *Emanciparea Femeii* (“The emancipation of the woman”) presided by Eugenia de Reuss-Ianculescu. In 1913, the association changed its name in *Drepturile Femeilor* (“The rights of women”) with the aim to achieve political, civil and legal equality between women and men, equal pay, economic independence, parental search, women’s access to liberal professions etc.^{xxxi}
 - 1912, August 15th, *Cercul Feminin Socialist* (“Women Socialist Circle”)
 - 1912, November 24-25, Extraordinary Congress of the Second (Socialist) International, Romanian women organizations participated
 - 1912-1914, Iasi – *Viitorul Romancelor* (‘The Future of Romanian Women’) was published under the direction of feminist Adela Xenopol
 - 1917, March Bucharest – women organized a massive manifestation to protest against the cessation of aid for the families of those mobilized in war, against the lack of food and school supplies^{xxxii}
 - 1917, June - Romanian feminists advanced a petition to the Senate, claiming political and civil rights for women
 - 1918, July - *Asociatia pentru Emanciparea Civila si Politica a Femeilor din Romania* (A.E.C.P.F.R.) (The Association for the Political and Civil Emancipation of Women from Romania) with the aim of obtaining the right to vote for women, both in legislative and municipal bodies^{xxxiii}
 - 1921, May 8-12, - The General Congress of the Socialist Party of Romania (Congress I of the PCC), which votes for its transformation into the Communist Party of Romania (originally called the Socialist-Communist Party). All those who voted were arrested among which Elena Filipovici, important communist women figure^{xxxiv}
 - 1921, July, 4th - *Consiliul National al Femeilor Romane* (C.N.F.R.) (The National Council of Romanian Women) a federation comprising all feminist and women

associations in Greater Romania was constituted^{xxxv}

- 1923, May, Rome - 9th Congress of the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage, women's delegation from Romania proposed the creation of the Little Entente of Women
- 1927 – *Biroul Politic* ('Political Bureau') of the *Partidul Comunist din Romania* (P.C.R.) ('The Romanian Communist Party') was established abroad, while the practical activity in the country was provided by an office with operational work and the secretariat of the PCR^{xxxvi}
- 1929, *Gruparea Nationala a Femeilor Romane* (G.N.F.R.) (The National Group of Romanian Women) was created, presided by Alexandrina Cantacuzino, with the aim to politically prepare Romanian women to run the country^{xxxvii}
- 1929, November 1st, Bucharest - *Scoala Superioara de Asistenta Sociala oPrincipesa Ileanaö*, Calypso Botez organized social surveys about the work and life conditions of women's workers, their professional skills, the consequences of their professional engagement on the private life, prostitution, the delinquency of minors etc.^{xxxviii}
- 1930 – *Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare* (UFM) (The Union of Women Workers) founded through the fusion of women socialist circles^{xxxix}
- 1933 - *Comitetul National Antifascist* ("The National Anti-Fascist Committee") was created at the initiative of Partidul Comunist din Romania (P.C.d.R.) ("The Communist Party from Romania")^{xl}
- 1934 - *Comitetul National Antifascist al Femeilor* ("The Women's National Anti-Fascist Committee") presided by Zoe Frunza
- 1935 January – *Asociatia pentru protectia mamei si copilului* ("The Association for the protection of the mother and the child") founded by P.C.d.R. and dissolved the same year under the excuse of using leftist slogans^{xli}
- 1935, Tg. Mures - Congress of *Uniunea Studentilor Crestini Romani* ("The Union of Christian-Romanian Students) fascists manifested their disapproval against the pro-Occidental orientation of the country and created the *Echipele mortii* ("death teams") to remove their political challengers^{xlii}
- 1936 February – *Frontul Feminin* ("The Front of Women") was initiated by Lucia Sturdza Bulandra, Claudia Millian, Alice Gabrielescu, Vanda Mihail, Zoe Bugnariu, Milița Pătrașcu etc., with Sofia Nadejde as honorific president to stand

against fascism^{xliii}

- 1936, February and June, Bucharest and Craiova – The Process of Ana Pauker, communist leader; at the process Ella Negruzzi becomes one of the seven lawyers that defends Ana Pauker; she was condemned for 10 years prison^{xliiv}
- 1936 September, 3-6, Brussels - First World Peace Congress, , the Front of Women launched a call for peace^{xlv}
- 1938, February 10 - proclaimed martial law and suspended all civil liberties^{xlvi}
- 1938 - *Frontul Feminin* loses its statute as a legal organization^{xlvii}
- 1939, May 9 - The Electoral Law of 9 May 1939 was voted, which "provided that only Romanian citizens, both men and women, who were at least 30 years of age, were entitled to vote, who were educated and practiced one of the expressly prescribed activities of the law"^{xlviii}
- 1940 – Olga Bancic leaves Romania after various arrests for communist activity and joins the International Brigades, the Jewish section of *Main d'œuvre Immigrée* (MOI) and the resistance group *Franc-tireurs et partisans ó main d'œuvre immigrée* (FTP-MOI) (Ibidem). Part of the Manouchian group and the only woman she was arrested in 1943 and executed together with her comrades in the affair know as *L'Affiche Rouge*.^{xlix}
- 1944 June - *Blocul National Democratic* (National Democratic Bloc), a large political coalition in Romanian between P.N.L, P.N.T., *Partidul Social Democrat* (P.S.D.) (Social Democrat Party) and P.C.R. to turn against Germany and re-establish a parliamentary democracy
- 1944, August 23 - coup d'état, the 1923 Constitution-based regime was re-established by a royal decree and guaranteed the rights and liberties of citizens and allowed the activity of political parties and professional organizations
- 1944, September - *Frontul National Democratic* (National Democratic Front) was created, at the initiative of P.C.R who proposed to political parties, professional associations, women and youth organizations and trade unions to unite in a common effort^l
- 1945, January 31st, Bucharest - took place *Marea conferinta a femeilor muncii* ("The Great Conference of Working Women") and its result was the decision to form women commissions within trade union committees in companies and institutions^{li}

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- 1945, April 15 - *Uniunea Femeilor Anti-fasciste din Romania* (UFAR) (The Union of Anti-fascist Romanian Women) was created, as a unique mass-organization that would gather all organized and non-organized women around P.C.R. programme^{lii}
 - 1946 – *Federatia Democrata a Femeilor din Romania* (F.D.F.R) (“The Democrat Federation of Women in Romania”) was created as a consequence of the International Congress of Women that took place in Paris, between 4-8 of March 1946 and was part of Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)
 - 1946 November 19 - *Blocul National Democratic* (National Democratic Bloc) won the elections
 - 1948 - *Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din Romania*, (UFDR) (The Union of Romanian-Democrat Women) was created and presided by Ana Pauker; social, educational and cultural projects; selecting cadres; propaganda in favour of cooperativization
 - 1947-1948 - Those organizations that did not join UFDR were dissolved: *Asociatia Crestina a Femeilor Române* (“The Christian Women's Association”), *Federatia Femeilor Universitare*, (“The Federation of Women in Academia”)^{liii}
 - 1947 December 30th – Republica Populara Romana proclaimed after the abdication of the King Mihai the 1st
 - 1953 – UFDR was dissolved
 - 1957 October 10th – return to women mass organization; *Consiliul National al Femeilor* (C.N.F.) (The National Council of Women) was created as the main leadership body of the women’s movement in Romania, composed of all delegates elected at regional level, every four years; until 1989 part of Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)^{liv}
 - 1966 July 23-25 - National Conference of Women with the participation of 3000 women^{lv}
 - 1966 – 770/1966 decree that forbade abortion. Subsequently the N° of illegal abortions increased and during the second half of the 70s and the 80s the control of women was strengthened with the help of the medical personnel, militia, prosecutors and C.N.F.^{lvi}
 - 1968 January - *Frontul Unitatii Sociale* (F.U.S.) (Social Unity Front) was created to bring together all mass organizations with the aim of coordinating the economic programmes^{lvii}

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- 1978 - National Conference of Women; Elena Ceausescu was elected honorific president and Ana Muresan the president of the C.N.F.^{lviii}
 - 1980s - hardening the provisions of the 770 decree by increasing the minimum age to be able to make a request for abortion at 45 years old and/or having given birth and nurtured 5 children^{lix}
 - 1989 - National Conference of Women
 - 1989 December – The Romanian Revolution started in Timisoara and spread all over the country; it culminated with the trial and execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu
 - 1989, Bucharest - *Asociatia Femeilor din Romania* (A.F.R.) (The Women's Association in Romania) created in 1989, on the basis of the old *Consiliul National al Femeilor* (C.N.F.) (The National Council of Women) and still active today
 - 1990, Bucharest - *Societatea de educatie contraceptiva si sexuala din romania* (SECS) ('The Contraceptive and Sexual Education Society in Romania)
 - 1990 – Women's Organization of *Partidul Social-Democrat Roman* (P.S.D.R) (The Romanian Social Democratic Party)
 - 1993, Bucharest – *Societatea de Analize Feministe Ana* (The Society of Feminist Analyses, AnA); promoting research on the situation and social position of women in Romania; introduction of feminist studies and women in universities; creating a library of feminist literature and gender studies
 - 1994 - *Grupul Român pentru Apărarea Drepturilor Omului* (GRADO) ('Romanian Group for the Human Rights Defence') To contribute to a criminal justice system in accordance with European standards, to promote education for human rights, democracy and citizenship, to contribute to the defense of the persons whose rights have been violated, to contribute to the development of civil society^{lx}
 - 1996 Tg. Mures – *Institutul Est-European Pentru Sănătatea Reproducerii* (Eastern European Institute For Reproductive Health); Service provision (Center for victims and Center for aggressors), advocacy, training
 - 1996 Iasi - *Fundatia Sanse Egale pentru Femei* (SEF) (The Foundation Equal Chances for Women) presided by Dina Loghin who founded the foundation after participating at the 222 programme of UNDP
 - 1997/1999, Timisoara - *Asociația pentru Promovarea femeii din România* (APFR) The Association for the Promotion of Women in Romania (In 1997, as a branch of

Icon Foundation and in 1999 established as an independent organization); Services providing (psychological and legal counselling) and advocacy

- 1998, Cluj – *Asocia ia Femeilor Impotriva Violen ei ó Artemis* (‘Association of Women Against Violence – Artemis’); specialized assistance to girls and women affected by abuse and violence^{lxi}
- 1998 Bucharest – first MA in Gender Studies at *Scoala Nationala de Studii Politice si Administrative* (SNSPA) (The National School of Political Science and Public Administration)
- 2000, Bucharest - *Centrul de Dezvoltare Curriculara si Studii de Gen, FILIA* (‘Center for Curricular Development and Gender Studies, Filia’) with the aim of attracting research funds for the support of the newly established gender studies MA
- 2000 Cluj - MA programme of gender studies – *Gen, diferente si inegalitati* (‘Gender, differences and inequalities’) was created at Babes-Bolyai University
- 2000 Timisoara – MA in gender studies at *Universitatea de Vest*, Timisoara (University of the West (UW))
- 2000 - *Centrul pentru Mediere i Securitate Comunitar* (CMSC) (‘Centre for Mediation and Community Safety’) member of Soros Open Network in Romania; service providing & advocacy in the area of violence, trainings for state institutions staff, such as police officers.
- 2000, April 24th - Protest against Playboy, in response to an article published in *Playboy ó* the Romanian edition, entitled ‘How to Beat Your Wife Without Leaving Marks’^{lxii}
- 2000 - *Coalitia Anti-Discriminare* (‘The Anti-Discrimination Coalition’)
- 2001 – *Asociatia Transcena* (‘Transcena Association’). The vision of their work is: Education instead of marginalization. “advocacy instead of delinquency. Theater instead of victimization. Monitoring instead of inactivity. Art is a part of solving complex social problems.”^{lxiii}
- 2001, Timisoara - *h.arta*, is a group of three women artists, Maria Crista, Anca Gyemant and Rodica Tache, “interested in topics ranging from knowledge production and (re)writing histories to gender issues in global capitalist times, all these in the context of working in various collaborations with persons and groups with different backgrounds.”^{lxiv}

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- 2002 – *Fundatia Sensiblu* ('The Sensiblu Foundation') is "A & D Pharma's social responsibility division and is a binder between the company, the community and the non-governmental environment. Since its inception, the Foundation has been involved in supporting the women and children, victims of domestic violence, through the CASA BLU Program"^{lxv}.
 - 2002, Bucharest – *Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate* (CPE) (Center Partnership for Equality) to promote equal opportunities for women and men in Romania^{lxvi}
 - 2003 – *Coalitia Nationala a ONG-urilor Implicate in Programe privind Violenta asupra Femeilor* (VIF) ('National Coalition of NGOs Involved in Programs on Violence against Women')
 - 2004, Sibiu - *Asociatia pentru Libertate si Egalitate de Gen, A.L.E.G.* ('The Association for Freedom and Gender Equality') focusing on sexual violence^{lxvii}
 - 2004, Timisoara – Ladyfest, DiY feminist festival with art, music, workshops, film
 - 2006, Bucharest – Ladyact
 - 2006, November 10th Bucharest – anti-discrimination protest organized for the International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism^{lxviii}
 - 2007, Bucharest – Ladyfest
 - 2007, June 9th Bucharest - Counterdemonstration at the "March of Normality" organized by extreme right groups against Gay Pride^{lxix}
 - 2007, October 12th – Take back the Night March by Ladyfest
 - 2007, November 10th - Protest against the ethnicization of criminality, against the amplification of the racist and xenophobic discourse of the Romanian authorities for the International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism^{lxx}
 - 2008 - F.I.A. group (*fete/femei/feminism in actiune/activism*, 'girls/women/feminism in action/activism') out of the collective Ladyfest-ro
 - 2008 April, 2-4 – Anti-NATO protests by antifascist collectives with Ladyfest și h.arta □ ActiveWatch and APADOR-CH
 - 2010, Bucharest – *Biblioteca Alternativa* (BA) (Alternative Library) – autonomous project – library; DIY activities
 - 2010, May Bucharest - Protest against the announced reduction in childcare allowance
 - 2011, Bucharest – *Asociatia FRONT* ('Front Association'); among others, created and managed the <https://www.feminism-romania.ro>

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- 2011 March 8th - International Women's Day Campaign - „Vrem reprezentare, nu doar flori și mărișoare” (“We want representation not just flowers and gifts”) by Filia Center
 - 2011 October 6th – Slutwalk Bucharest, Demonstration against street and sexual harassment and against blaming victims of violence by FRONT, F.I.A, BA’s feminist reading group
 - 2011 November 25th – Protest against domestic violence
 - 2012 January – March – University Square protests; feminist activists and organizations participated
 - 2012 March 8th, Bucharest – Protest “On 8th of March We Fight!”
 - 2012, July 26 Bucharest – *E-Romnja*, struggles to promote, promote and increase the involvement of Roma women in society and the community.
 - 2012, November 25th Bucharest - Protest “Violence is not entertainment”, protest against the mass-media’s tabloidization of violence against women.
 - 2013 February, Bucharest - Protests against rape inclusion in the announced mediation law^{lxxi}
 - 2013 February 21st - Protest against homophobia as a reaction to the attack of some nationalist lists on their participants in a film projection held at the Romanian Peasant Museum during the LGBT History Month.^{lxxii}
 - 2013, Bucharest – *Claca*, members from BA after scission; independent center for community activities, political organization, debate, critical education in Bucharest with a politics based on queer-feminism, anti-capitalism, queer feminist and anti-racist, respectful towards the environment and animals
 - 2013, Bucharest - *Centrul feminist Sofia Nadejde* (CFSN) (Feminist Center Sofia Nadejde), autonomous space¹⁰², hosting the women- and trans- only Feminist Reading Circle¹⁰³, F.I.A.’s mobile library¹⁰⁴, the library of *Societatea Vegetarienilor din Romania* (SVR) (The Society of Vegetarians in Romania), a Vegan Café and a rape crisis project
 - 2013 – *Gazeta de Arta Politica* (GAP) (Political Art Gazette)
 - 2014 - *Coalitia pentru Egalitatea de Gen* (‘The Coalition for Gender Equality’)
 - 2014 - the network *Rupem tacerea despre violenta sexuala* (Break the silence)

¹⁰² <https://centrufeminist.wordpress.com/about-cfsn/>

¹⁰³ <https://cerculdelecturifeministe.noblogs.org>

¹⁰⁴ <https://centrufeminist.wordpress.com/mobilobiblioteca-f-i-a/>

against Sexual Violence)

- 2016, Bucharest – MACAZ is a cooperative that functions as theatre-bar, on the principles of autonomy and horizontality. MACAZ is a place dedicated to strengthening and promoting active and LGBT scenes, autonomous initiatives and representing those who are not found elsewhere.

Chapter V. The Political Opportunity Structure (POS)

I. The Political Opportunity Structure Approach

The idea of structure of opportunities can be retraced to Lipsky (1970) who concluded that protest arises in the context of a vulnerable political system, due to different types of changes affecting it at a particular time. But the concept of political opportunity structure (POS) was first introduced by Eisinger (1973) who intended to explain variations in riots in American cities by looking at the degree of institutional openness. Kitschelt (1986), Tarrow (1983, 1994), della Porta and Rucht (1991), Kriesi et al. (1995), McAdam (1995) have contributed to the development of the concept, whose main critique was linked to the lack of a rigorous procedure of measuring the “*objective probability of goal attainment in case of political action*” (Opp, 2009:168).

One of the important debates raised within POS theories regards the difference between an objective definition of the opportunity structure, meaning the political environment variables that increase or reduce the probability of success chances of mobilized groups and the subjective one, referring at the perceptions of actors involved in protest regarding the success of their action, thus expectations of success or failure.

Within the objectivist tradition Kitschelt defined political opportunity structures as being composed of “*specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization, which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others*” (Kitschelt 1986: 58). In his conceptualization of political opportunity structure, Kitschelt further distinguishes between input and output processes affecting mobilization. Input processes refer to the “*curvilinear relationship*”

between the openness of a system and political actors mobilization, where open systems assimilate movements, closed one repress them, and moderately repressive ones allow for a broader mobilization and articulation of demands from the part of protesters (Kitschelt, 1986:62). Output processes refer the way policy cycles impact social movements in terms of the existence or lack of points of access and inclusion or exclusion with regards to policy making (Idem: 63).

Within the subjectivist paradigm, Tarrow (1994: 85) defines political opportunity structure as the “*consistent but not necessarily formal or permanent dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure*”. In contrast to the objective chances of success, their perception as so – expectations of success, becomes relevant in this second perspective. The argument is that an objective opportunity structure is a necessary condition for mobilization, but it is not sufficient unless it is visible and perceived as an opportunity in the view of potential contenders (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001: 43).

As Karl-Dieter Opp argues, a subjectivist perspective is preferable as it defines political opportunities as “changes of the political environment that change the expectations of success” (Opp, 2009: 171). In accounting for these observations, I use the framework proposed by Kriesi et al. (1995) where political opportunity structure comprises four major dimensions: (national)¹⁰⁵ cleavage structure, institutional structures, prevailing strategies, and alliance structures, that would picture the relationship between social movements and “conventional politics both in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arenas of a given country.” (Kriesi et al., 1995:xii).

First, Kriesi et al. (1995) argue that the political cleavage structure of a society determines to a certain degree the capacity for mobilization of social movements, by facilitating or constraining the space for action related to the articulation of “new” demands from the part of the challengers. Undoubtedly, in order to become politically significant, social cleavages needs to be politicized. As Mair (1997) has emphasized, parties’ resistance over time is linked to their capacity to adapt to structural and cultural transformations and in this context it becomes imperative to see how new issues can become attractive and occupy the political space dominated by the traditional conflict issues and afferent actors. Thus, in addressing the relationship between the traditional cleavages and the new ones addressed by social

¹⁰⁵ Within European Union, the center-periphery, translated at regional level, “value cleavage”.

movements, Kriesi et al. (1995: 5-6) propose to look at two dimensions: the degree of closure of the social relationship at the basis of the cleavage and its salience, meaning the extent to which it dominates the political arena.

Second, the formal institutional structure of the political system, a rather fixed and given element of POS, rooted in the political legacy of a specific political system, refers to the degree of access to the state and the last one's capacity to act. Five factors are considered to affect the formal institutional structure within the parliamentary, administrative and direct democracy arenas. The first two characterize all three levels. The first one assumes that a greater level of decentralization contributes to a wider degree of formal access and a reduced capacity of the state to act (Kriesi et al. 1995:28). The second points that a greater degree of separation of powers between and within a state's different arenas, the higher is the level of formal access and the more restricted is state's capacity to act (Ibidem). Additionally, the number of political parties is more close to the parliamentary arena. The authors distinguish between four types of coalitions: (a) single-party government, with a highly disciplined governing party, (b) single-party governments with heterogeneous undisciplined parties, (c) multiparty coalitions with undisciplined parties and, (d) multiparty coalitions with disciplined parties. The fourth factor affecting the formal institutional structure is to be found in the administrative arena, where the distinction weak/strong administration becomes necessary in order understand state's capacity to act as function of resources, internal organization or structural arrangements (Idem: 31). The last factor refers to the degree of institutionalization of direct-democratic procedures. Here, one should look at least at the presence and use of popular initiatives as well as referendums.

The third component of POS is represented by the informal procedures and prevailing strategies, meaning actually the way in which the formal institutional structure is applied. There are two main strategies. On one side, *exclusive strategies* are repressive, confrontational, polarizing and have been used mainly in southern Europe and, on the other side, *integrative strategies* are facilitative, cooperative and assimilative are thought to be found in small European states with an open economy (Kriesi et al.1995: 34-35).

The last and more volatile component of the POS is the alliance structure, determined by two elements: the configuration of power on the left and, the presence or absence of the left in the government. In order to analyze the relationship between the left and the articulation of new demands by social movements, Kriesi et al. (1995: 54) stress the necessity of distinguishing between the old and the new left, assuming that the legacy of informal strategies used to

respond to challengers has had a strong impact on the strategies and structuration of the old left. Here the difference between inclusive and exclusive regimes becomes relevant once again. While in inclusive regimes the strategy is based on negotiation and compromise, in exclusive regimes, exclusive strategies have contributed to a split between Communist and Socialist/Social-Democratic groups, further contributing to a radicalization of the labor movement that itself contributed to a reinforcement of exclusive strategies from the part of authorities (Ibidem). The resulting hypothesis is that a non-pacified old-left in exclusive regimes would limit the political space for action for movements articulating new demands that would only be supported by the first one in their own traditional terms.

The other side of the alliance structure refers to the support of the left to the new issues demanded by social movements. Depending on whether it participates in government and if so, on its position, Kriesi et al. (1995:59-60) argue that when the left is in power the need for mobilization for collective action decreases as there are anticipated successful reform chances in their favour and as well the mobilization of social movements is no longer supported by their fiercest supporter. In contrast, when the left is not in government the need for mobilization increases. Additionally, it should be added that a left in opposition is generally favourable for the mobilization of social movements. Lastly, but equally important is that further differentiation should be made between the kind of social movements that are favoured or not by the left. All elements of POS are related to each other and the alliance structure represents the more volatile dimension of POS, determined in part by the other more stable elements. The distinction between the stable and volatile components of POS, has been emphasized by different authors (della Porta and Rucht 1991; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Kriesi et al. 1995).

Kriesi et al. (1995) focused in their study on Western European democracies. When applied to Romania, as a post-communist country, the volatile component of POS plays differently. The relationship between the Old and New Left would be translated into an open cleavage about the regime divide that separates anti-communists and communist 'nostalgic' or winners versus losers, but also anti-communists and the new left emerging in post-communism, all this being mediated by an anti-communist backlash characterizing the public space and more generally the discursive opportunity structure. In what follows, I will briefly discuss some of the elements of the general POS in Belgium and Romania and then, I will analyse more in depth those elements of the POS relevant for the feminist movement, and particularly its institutionalization. This elements of POS and some new ones, such as the economic crisis

and austerity measures will be discussed across the chapters, in relation with the other elements of NGO-ization.

II. POS in Belgium and Romania

A. The cleavage structure

In Belgium, economic, religious and ethno-linguistic cleavages are cross-cutting and scholars argued that they neutralize each other (Deschower, 2013, 35). The pillarization of society has been based on economic and religious cleavages, with the ethno-linguistic cleavage cutting across both of them (Ibidem). The Catholic, Socialist and the smaller Liberal pillar are internally divided by at least one of the other cleavages (Ibidem). The old cleavages coincide partially with the ethno-linguistic divide (Deschower 2006). Old cleavages around class, religion and language still play a considerable role in Belgian politics, although this role is declining, opening the space for new issues such as the environmental one (de Moor, Marien, Hooghe 2017; Deschouwer 2009). The cleavage structure and pillarization structured the development of the feminist movement and its institutionalization. One of the oldest, most visible and enduring women's movement organizations are organized around pillars, namely *Vie feminine*, corresponding to the workers – catholic one, FPS corresponding to the socialist one and CFFB to the liberal one. When state institutions opened up to collaboration with civil society, inviting women's organizations to participate in negotiations and decision-making within official politics, the pillarization played a role in the choice of organizations.

In Romania, according to the data provided by Withefield and Rohrschneider (2009) that measures the salience of cleavages (or rather main political conflict issues) in different CEE countries, in 2003 and 2007, where 1 is maximum significance, and 5 is insignificant, the most important political conflict is represented by far by the welfare state, with similar scores registered between 2003 and 2007 (1.9 and 2.0 respectively) as shown by Table 3. Market versus State was the second most salient issue in 2003 but rapidly became a non-issue by 2007 (from 2.4 to 4.8). Democracy is a consistently medium-salient issue in Romania, both in 2003 and 2007. Communist legacy presented a very small salience in 2003, but became the second most salient conflict in 2007 (from 4.3 to 2.6) after the Welfare State in 2007. On the other hand, the least salient conflicts in Romanian party competition are social rights, religiosity, urban-rural and regionalism, with consistently insignificant or close to

insignificant scores registered both in 2003 and 2007.

However, more recent studies (Saarts, 2015), go beyond the classical Lipset-Rokkan theory of the cleavage formation in Western Europe based on two fundamental critical junctures, namely the nation building and industrialization, and argue that the cleavage formation in CEE could be mainly understood by the new challenges brought by transition in 1989 as a third revolution or critical juncture. According to Saarts, the cleavage configuration in Romania corresponds to “complex transition challenges – complex cleavage structure” with three major transition challenges, namely democratization expressed through the communist/anti-communist cleavage because of the survival of sustainable Communist-successors parties, marketization but with the nation-building challenge more crucial in the cleavage formation, producing pronounced ethnic cleavages (Saarts, 2015, 26). Some of the cleavages were merged cleavages (Ibidem). For the institutionalization of the feminist movement, the fourth critical juncture/revolution in Saarts’ model of cleavage formation (2015, 28) become relevant, namely EU integration vs national sovereignty and neoliberalism vs. state intervention, the last one discussed in relation to the anti-communist backlash.

The degree of volatility is an indicator for the closure and salience of traditional cleavages in a particular society. Table 1.0 and 1.1. provide some indicators about the electoral volatility in Romania and Belgium. The distinction between type A and type B of volatility becomes important, especially for social movements, since they have different causes and consequences. While replacement Volatility (Type A Volatility) refers to volatility caused by new party entry and old party exit and reflects the opening, the opportunity of new parties that politicize new issues to enter and participate in the official political arena, electoral volatility (Type B Volatility) refers to volatility caused by vote switching across existing parties and is less interesting in relation the social movements institutionalization or politicization of new issues by new political parties.

Table 3. Degree of volatility Belgium

Belgium ó Type A Volatility				
I Period	II Period	III Period	Mean	After crisis
(1946–1968)	(1969–1991)	(1992–2015)	(1946-2015)	(2010-2015)
0.87	0.73	1.08	0.88	0.93
Belgium ó Type B Volatility				
I Period	II	III Period	Mean	After crisis

	Period			
(1946–1968)	(1969–1991)	(1992–2015)	(1946-2015)	(2010-2015)
8.26	7.4	10.72	8.63	11.9

Source: (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017)

Table 4. Degree of volatility Romania

ROMANIA			
	Type A	Type B	Total
1996	3.85	10.55	14.4
2000	4.39	29.18	33.57
2004	0.36	13.54	13.90
2008	0.26	18.35	18.61
2012	8.14	13.22	21.35
2016	8.94	17.28	26.22

Source: (Collini 2018)

B. The formal institutional structure

Romania is a semi-presidential republic¹⁰⁶ with the executive power shared between the government and the President with a key role in government formation and with the legislative branch represented by the bicameral parliament, composed of the Chamber of Deputies (lower chamber) and the Senate (upper chamber). The two Houses share equal powers, insignificantly altered by the 2003 Constitutional reform, leading to categorize Romania's bicameralism as extremely symmetrical and highly congruent, with equal powers, similar mode and scheduling and elections, leading to a similar political composition. Some scholars (Apahideanu, 2014) argued that the current bicameral structure of the country fails because in terms of checks and balances, both Chambers are controlled by the governing majority, leading to an imbalanced Legislative and Executive power relationship. In what concerns the constitutional review, Romania had a weak-form of judicial review between 1991 and 2003 when two thirds of MPs could override a decision of the constitutional court (Gardbaum, 2015, 293-294). The backlash against the Constitutional Court can be emphasized through the 2010 and 2012 crises. In 2010, the Romanian Constitutional Court invalidated government's austerity programme, considering that pension cuts were

¹⁰⁶ Romania is considered to be a presidential system by Easter (1997) and Baylis (1997), a parliamentary system by Sartori (2002), a semi-presidential system by Elgie (1998, 2005) and a hybrid eclectic system by Preda and Soare (2012).

unconstitutional. In 2012, the Court was caught into a power struggle between the back then centre-right President Basescu and social democrat Prime Minister Ponta leading to an attempt to impeach the President, process filled with claimed death threats by the government against some of its judges and the government questioning court's independence (Gardbaum, 2015, 298-299). Despite the fact that the Romanian central bank seemed to have increased in its legal central bank independence during the last decade, with the longest serving governor of a central bank, it is exactly its longstanding governor and the evolution of the government debt together with open market operations that make some scholars (Doroftei and Paun, 2013, 11) question the *de facto* independence.

Belgium is a federal representative democratic constitutional monarchy, one of the “relatively pure cases of consensus democracy” (Lijphart, 2012, 7) with the executive power exercised by the government headed by the prime minister of Belgium and the federal legislative power both by the bicameral Parliament and the government. Belgium was a unitary centralized state for a long time, but engaged in a process of federalization and decentralization from the 1970s on, becoming a federal state in 1993, constructed around a two-layered system, comprising of three geographical regions – Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels Capital and three non-geographical cultural communities – the French and the Flemish and the smaller German communities (Lijphart 2012, 37–38). In order for bicameralism to be meaningful in its representation of minorities, the two houses should be elected on different basis and the upper house should have real power, ideally as much as the lower one (Lijphart, 2012, 38). Bicameralism was stronger in the prefederal Belgium than in the federal Belgium, when both chambers had almost equal powers but were nevertheless similar in composition as both proportionally constituted (Ibidem). In federal Belgium, the Senate represents particularly the two main cultural-linguistic groups and its power are reduced compared to the prefederal Senate, losing budgetary power for example, thus bicameralism being considered relatively weak (Ibidem). Belgium has a written constitution and amendments to it require the approval of two-thirds majorities in both houses of the legislature (Idem., 39). Belgium introduced judicial review first in 1984 through the Court of Arbitration whose powers expanded with the constitutional revision from 1988 and could be considered as a genuine constitutional court (Lijphart, 2012, 39-40). With respect to the central bank independence the National Bank of Belgium was long one of the weakest central banks, until its autonomy was reinforced at the beginning of the 1990s (Idem., 40).

Concerning the degree of separation of powers, Lijphart uses the cabinet duration as an indicator of the executive dominance within parliamentary systems. According to some scholars (Sartori 2002), Romania is more in line with a parliamentary system, thus cabinet duration can be a useful indicator. Table X and Y show the government duration in Romania and Belgium, indicating a weak executive dominance in both countries. Nevertheless, in Romania both chambers have very similar majorities and can easily dominate them if they have control over parliamentary groups and MPs, leading to an power imbalance between the executive and the legislative in favour of the first one (Apahideanu, 2014).

Table 5. Cabinets & cabinet duration ó Romania (1990-2017)

#	Date	Name	Election	Size	Parties	Duration (y)
1	20/05/1990	Roman	20/05/1990	±	FSN°	1.41
2	16/10/1991	Stolojan		+	FSN PNL MER PDAR none°	1.08
3	13/11/1992	Vacaroiu I	27/09/1992	-	FDSN none°	1.76
4	18/08/1994	Vacaroiu II		-	PDSR PUNR none	2.04
5	02/09/1996	Vacaroiu III		-	PDSR none°	0.27
6	11/12/1996	Ciorbea	03/11/1996	+	PNT-CD° PD PNL UDMR PSDR	1.34
7	15/04/1998	Vasile		+	PNT-CD° PD PNL UDMR PSDR	1.68
8	21/12/1999	Isarescu		+	PNT-CD PD PNL UDMR PSDR none°	1.00
9	20/12/2000	Nastase I	26/11/2000	-	PDSR° PSDR PUR	2.50
10	19/06/2003	Nastase II		-	PSD°	1.53
11	29/12/2004	Popescu-Tariceanu I	28/11/2004	-	PNL° PD UDMR PUR	1.94
12	07/12/2006	Popescu-Tariceanu II		-	PNL° PD UDMR	0.33
13	05/04/2007	Popescu-Tariceanu III		-	PNL° UDMR	1.72
14	22/12/2008	Boc I	30/11/2008	±	PD-L° PSD	1.00
15	23/12/2009	Boc II		-	PD-L° UDMR	0.40
16	19/05/2010	Boc III		-	PD-L° UDMR UNPR	1.73
17	09/02/2012	Ungureanu		-	PD-L° UDMR UNPR	0.24
18	07/05/2012	Ponta I		-	PSD° PNL PC	0.62
19	21/12/2012	Ponta II	09/12/2012	+	PSD° PNL PC	1.20
20	04/03/2014	Ponta III		-	PSD° UDMR PC UNPR	0.78
21	15/12/2014	Ponta IV		-	PSD° LRP PC UNPR	0.90
22	10/11/2015	Cioloș §		-	none°	1.15
23	04/01/2017	Grindeanu	11/12/2016	±	PSD° ALDE	0.48
24	29/06/2017	Tudose		±	PSD° ALDE	incumbent

Source: Parl.gov.org

Table 6. Cabinets & cabinet duration ó Belgium

Average cabinet duration 1981-2014 = **1.93 years**

#	Date	Name	Election	Size	Parties	Duration (y)
77	17/12/1981	Martens V	08/11/1981	±	CVP · PVV · PRL · PSC	3.95
78	28/11/1985	Martens VI	13/10/1985	±	CVP · PRL · PVV · PSC	1.90
79	21/10/1987	Martens VII ·		±	CVP · PRL · PVV · PSC	0.55
80	09/05/1988	Martens VIII	13/12/1987	+	CVP · PS · SP · PSC · VU	3.55
81	24/11/1991	Martens IX ·	24/11/1991	±	CVP · PS · SP · PSC	0.28
82	07/03/1992	Dehaene I		±	CVP · PS · SP · PSC	3.30
83	23/06/1995	Dehaene II	21/05/1995	±	CVP · PS · SP · PSC	4.05
84	12/07/1999	Verhofstadt I	13/06/1999	+	VLD · PS · PRL · SP · Ecolo · Agalev	4.00
85	12/07/2003	Verhofstadt II	18/05/2003	±	VLD · PS · MR · SPa+Spi	3.92
86	10/06/2007	Verhofstadt III ·	10/06/2007	-	MR · PS · O-VLD · SPa+Spi	0.53
87	21/12/2007	Verhofstadt IV ·		+	CD+NVA · MR · PS · O-VLD · CDH	0.25
88	20/03/2008	Leterme I		+	CD+NVA · MR · PS · O-VLD · CDH	0.78
89	30/12/2008	Rompuy		+	CD&V · MR · PS · O-VLD · CDH	0.90
90	25/11/2009	Leterme II		+	CD&V · MR · PS · O-VLD · CDH	0.55
91	13/06/2010	Leterme III ·	13/06/2010	-	PS · MR · CD&V · CDH	1.48
92	06/12/2011	Di Rupo		+	PS · CD&V · MR · SPa · O-VLD · CDH	2.47
93	25/05/2014	Di Rupo II ·	25/05/2014	+	PS · MR · CD&V · O-VLD · SPa · CDH	0.38
94	11/10/2014	Michel		±	N-VA · MR · CD&V · O-VLD	incumbent

Source: Parl.gov.org

Table 7. Cameral structure

	Symmetric (powers and legitimacy approximately equal)	Asymmetric (powers and/or legitimacy very unequal)
Incongruent (over-representation of minorities in the senate)	Strong bicameralism	Moderately strong bicameralism
Congruent (no over-representation of minorities in the senate)	Moderately strong bicameralism Belgium (to 1993) Romania	Weak bicameralism Belgium (since 1993)

(based on Lijphart, 2012)

Table 8: Constitutional court jurisdiction

Country	Individual complaint	Court referral	Legislative access	Other institutional actors	Local government
Romania	No	Yes (Supreme Court)	Yes (50 MPs)	Yes (President, Ombudsman, Political parties)	Yes

Belgium	Yes	Yes	Yes (2/3 MPs)	Yes (Fed. Gov.)	Yes
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Source: Benjamin Bricker 2016, 6

In what concerns the party system, Romania was a closed party system for many years as showed by the ratio of type A and type B in Table W, with more recent changes, showing an influx of new parties such as *Uniune Salvati Romania* (USR) (Union Save Romania) or *Partidul Alianta Liberalilor si Democratilor* (ALDE) (The Alliance between Liberals and Democrats Party) that was actually not a completely new party as it formed through the fusion of *Partidul Liberal Reformat* (PLR) (Liberal Reformist Party) and *Particul Conservator* (PC) (The Conservative Party). Belgium, until late 1960s was characterized by a three party system with two large parties, namely the Christian-Democrats and the Socialists and a medium size party – the Liberals. Additionally, two Green parties entered the scene, both on the French-speaking and Flemish-speaking sides in “one of the most fragmented party systems of any modern democracy” (Lijphart, 2012, 35). The effective number of political parties can provide an indicator about the parliamentary arena as it is considered a function of the national conflict structure and the type of electoral system (Kriesi et al. 1995, 29).

Table 9. Number of parties Belgium

Belgium				
Election date	Turnout	ENeP	ENpP	disp.
08/11/1981	94.5	9	7.60	4.1
13/10/1985	93.6	8.2	7	3.2
13/12/1987	93.4	8.1	7.1	3.2
24/11/1991	92.7	9.8	8.4	3.5
21/05/1995	91.1	9.5	8	3
13/06/1999	90.6	10.3	9.1	3
18/05/2003	91.6	8.9	7	5
10/06/2007	91.1	9	7.9	3.4
13/06/2010	89.2	10	8.4	3.8
25/05/2014	89.4	9.6	7.8	4.7

Source: ParlGov.org

Table 10. Number of parties Romania

Romania				
Election date	Turnout	ENeP	ENpP	disp.
20/05/1990	86.2	2.2	2.2	0.9
27/09/1992	76.3	7	5.8	6.2
03/11/1996	76	6.1	6.1	4.6
26/11/2000	65.3	5.2	3.5	8.6
28/11/2004	58.5	3.9	4.1	9.1
30/11/2008	39.2	3.9	3.7	3.2
09/12/2012	41.8	2.5	4.4	16.1
11/12/2016	39.5	3.8	3.5	2.4

Source: ParlGov.org

NB. ENeP effective n° parties participated in elections; ENpP effective n° of parties in parliament

The formal access depends also on the degree of institutionalization of direct-democratic procedures, with the procedure of mandatory or optional referendum providing challengers with additional opportunities to act (Kriesi et al. 1995:32). As the below table shows, both Romania and Belgium have provisions for referendums.

Table 11: Direct-democracy instruments

Country	National referendums	Date	Valid	Types of referendum	Turnout
Romania	Constitution	October 6-7, 2018	No	Citizen's Initiative	21,1%
	Referendum on impeaching President Traian Băsescu	July 29, 2012	Yes		46.24%
	Autonomy	February 1, 2008	Yes		-
	Referendum on the voting system, establishment of majority election	November 25, 2007	No	Governmental referendum	26,51
	Referendum on the dismissal of President Basescu	May, 19, 2007	No	Mandatory referendum	44,45
	Constitutional Amendment for EU Accession	October 18-19, 2003	Yes	Mandatory referendum	55,7%
	Constitution	December 8, 1991	Yes	Governmental referendum	67%

	Reduction of the army and of armaments expenditure of around 5%	November 23, 1986			
Belgium	The return of King Leopold III	March 12, 1950	Yes	Optional referendum	93%

Source: <https://www.idea.int>

C. Informal strategies ó repression

Linking the political opportunity structure influenced by the type of informal strategies, Kriesi et al. (1995:38) find that one factor affecting the costs of collective action is repression which lowers the potential for mobilization through its high cost. While official data regarding police repression in Romania and Belgium is unavailable, NGOs, the media and activists themselves offer a picture about the situation in the two countries. In Romania, the legacy of the secret services from the Communist regime is subject of debates, through techniques of monitoring and discouraging, infiltration and physical repression, especially in relation to anti-capitalist and anti-militarist protestors associated with the anarchist movement contribute to the demobilization of activists (Abaseaca, 2017, Vlad 2015). During the 2008 anti-Nato protests organized in Bucharest 46 local and foreign activists were arrested and detained for up to 24 hours, one day prior to the Nato summit, many of them who have been already visited or called by the local police or the Romanian secret services¹⁰⁷. This illustrates Della Porta and Reiter's (2006, 176) idea of the intensive use of information strategies to spot activists and dissuade them before the protest, in order for the police and gendarmes to avoid to intervene directly during protests. The repression of anti-Nato protesters in 2008 that led to the dismantling of some local networks created a discontinuity between the Global Justice Movement and the crisis mobilizations in Romania, Abaseaca argues (2017). During the 2012 anti-austerity protests in January, similar abuses have been signalled and documented by activists, NGOs such as Apador-CH - Asociația pentru Apărarea Drepturilor Omului în România – Comitetul Helsinki through a report published in March 2012¹⁰⁸ or Active

¹⁰⁷ http://gipfelsoli.org/Home/Bukarest_2008/4906.html accessed January 14, 2019
<https://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2008/04/02/18490151.php> accessed January 14, 2019

Interview C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.apador.org/raport-privind-cazurile-persoanelor-care-s-au-adresat-apador-ch-reclamand-abuzuri-ale-forelor-de-ordine-in-contextul-protestelor-de-strad-13-ianuarie-14-februarie-2012-3> accessed January 14, 2019

Watch¹⁰⁹ and the mass-media¹¹⁰. One of the feminist interviewees, active anarchist militant among others recalls about her experiences with the secret services and that of another friend of hers and protester during the 2012 mobilizations:

Well, they come ... *securisti* (secret information service). They came to us, they were asking us things, that's what is all about. In the University Square there was one thing at a point, it was like science-fiction at a time when people were stopped on the street knowing and checked by civilian policemen, people who were part of the organization group, men in general or just men. Or once they came to our house. It was very bizarre. I was with X and someone knocks at the door and X goes to see who is it, and he comes back for a minute and I ask who was it and he says the SRI (Romanian secret information service). What do you mean the SRI? Well, there was one man who asked me if I saw this man in the area, that he is a criminal and so on, saying he is the Roman Intelligence Service. I mean, it's kind of nobody, not even the local police does not knock at people's door in the neighbourhoods to ask if you've seen this guy ... I do not know... like in the wild west with the display of "Wanted" you know, no one even local police, you know the SRI in the Facebook and information age you know? Meaning satellite who are you? It was exactly in 2012 when it was with the University Square and it was clear like "Who are you, what are you doing" and so on which was embarrassing. For example, Y they searched for him in Curtea de Arges. They went to his mother's house to scare her, you know what your son does... In Curtea de Arges it was the local police. That's how they put fear in parents.¹¹¹

After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015 and the attacks in Brussels in March 2016, the Belgian society undergone a process of securitization through the deployment of gendarmes in the streets, part of a newly introduced "anti-terrorist plan" denounced by CNAPD, La ligue des droits de l'homme or Amnesty International that fear the risks involved by a treating an offense under emergency regime¹¹². According to the existing literature (Kriesi et al. 1995), one would have expected in Belgium as a consensual type of democracy, more inclusive strategies regarding civil society actors. Also, one would have expected that unitary democratic countries are more likely to repress, but research (Francisco, 2009) shows that federal systems have more repression. The available data on Belgium suggests that the level of repression is particularly high for a small country. Francisco (2009, 31) shows that while smaller countries tend to have the least repression, such as Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, and Portugal, Belgium has higher levels of repression, comparable to those of

¹⁰⁹ <https://activewatch.ro/ro/freeex/reactie-rapida/jurnalisti-agresati-in-timpul-protestelor-abuzuri-ale-jandarmeriei-impotriva-cetatenilor> accessed January 14, 2019

¹¹⁰ <https://jurnalul.antena3.ro/stiri/observator/proteste-violente-in-bucuresti-sute-de-jandarmi-au-intervenit-in-forta-sa-i-imprastie-pe-manifestanti-video-601447.html>

¹¹¹ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

¹¹² http://www.cnapd.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/kairos_special_hd.pdf accessed July 14, 2019

Greece that is above the European countries average. In Belgium, protest also increases with interaction with the police (Francisco, 2009, 17). More recent protest events show that the police does not hesitate to resort to arrests¹¹³ or to bring on trial those who are recording police interventions as for example during the celebration of the new occupying of La Voix des Sans-Papiers¹¹⁴. The *Observatoire des violences policières en Belgique* was created in 2013, at the initiative of the Ligue des Droits de l'homme with the aim of providing a space where victims can share their story, of linking the victims of illegitimate police violence and those who can help them and provide relevant information for them¹¹⁵. The initiative was implemented after an upsurge in the testimonies about police abuses and violence, some of them more mediatized than others and which made the object of public denouncements by the LDH such as the recurring violence regarding the deportation of foreigners, the brutality of the police during the Euromanifestation in Brussels in September 2010 and “the justice trial parody” of No Border activists which followed or the violence that fell on June 17, 2012 on a group of counter-demonstrators at the demonstration of the Popular Party joined by members of the far-right group Nation¹¹⁶. Overall, several human rights organizations such as LDH or Amnesty International¹¹⁷ denounce the increase in police violence and abuses and their arbitrariness.

D. Alliance structure

The last and more volatile component of the POS is the alliance structure, determined by two elements: the configuration of power on the left and, the presence or absence of the left in the government. Depending on whether it participates in government and if so, on its position, Kriesi et al. (1995:59-60) argue that when the left is in power the need for mobilization for collective action decreases as there are anticipated successful reform chances in their favour and as well the mobilization of social movements is no longer supported by their fiercest supporter. In contrast, when the left is not in government the need for mobilization increases. Additionally it should be added that a left in opposition is generally favourable for the mobilization of social movements. However, not all social movements are favoured by the

¹¹³ https://www.rtbef.be/info/societe/detail_la-police-interpelle-des-manifestants-anti-racisme-a-la-bourse?id=9258445 accessed July 14, 2019

¹¹⁴ <https://plus.lesoir.be/121498/article/2017-10-28/tu-veux-ma-photo> accessed July 14, 2019

¹¹⁵ <http://www.obspol.be/index.php> accessed July 14, 2019

¹¹⁶ <http://www.obspol.be/about.php> accessed July 14, 2019

¹¹⁷ https://www.amnistie.ca/sites/default/files/upload/documents/publications/air201617-french_2017-02-14_11-24-01.pdf accessed January 15, 2019

left. Arguably, the feminist movements should be favoured by a left in the government. The tables below show the presence or absence of the left in the government in Belgium and Romania, during the recent decades. In Romania, the left in opposition in 2012 coincided with the outburst of the anti-austerity protests. However, the following years, the presence of the left in government as a coalition leader accorded with some of the biggest protest movements after 1989, such as Rosia Montana protests, led to the demission of the government after the 2015 protests after the incident at *Colectiv*, or coincided again with the 2017-2018 anti-corruption protests.

Table 12. Left in government/opposition Romania

Period	Party	Orientation	Status	Full name
1992-1996	FDSN/PDSR	centre-left	in government (coalition leader)	Democratic National Salvation Front/Romanian Social Democratic Party (<i>Frontul Democrat al Salvării Nationale/Partidul Social Democrat Român</i>)
	PSDR	centre-left	opposition	Romanian Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat Român</i>)
	PSM	far-left	opposition	Socialist Party of Labour (<i>Partidul Socialist al Muncii</i>)
1996-2000	PSM	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)	Socialist Party of Labour (<i>Partidul Socialist al Muncii</i>)
	PSMR	far-left	Opposition (not in parliament)	Romanian Socialist Party of Workers (<i>Partidul Socialist Muncitoresc Român</i>)
	PSDR	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)	Romanian Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat Român</i>)
	PDSR	centre-left	opposition	Party of Social Democracy in Romania (<i>Partidul Democraticei Sociale în România</i>)
	PS	centre-left	Opposition (not in parliament)	Socialist Party (<i>Partidul Socialist</i>)
2000-2004	ApR	centre-left	Opposition (not in parliament)	Alliance for Romania (<i>Alianța pentru România</i>)
	PSD	centre-left	in government (coalition leader)	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat</i>)
2004-2008	PSD	centre-left	opposition	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat</i>)
2008-2012	PSD	centre-left	in government (2008-2009 jr. partner) opposition (2009-2012)	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat</i>)

2012-2016	PSD	centre-left	in government (2012-2015, <i>coalition leader</i>) opposition (2015- 2016)	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat</i>)
2016-	PSD	centre-left	in government (<i>coalition leader</i>)	Social Democratic Party (<i>Partidul Social Democrat</i>)

E. Source: ParlGov.org

Table 13. Left in government/opposition Belgium

Period	Party	% votes	Orientation	Status
1981-1985	PA-PTB	0,7	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	KPB -PCB	2,3	far-left	opposition
	RW	1,7	centre-left	opposition
	PS	12,7	centre-left	opposition
	SP	12,4	centre-left	opposition
1985-1987	KPB -PCB	1,2	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	13,8	centre-left	opposition
	SP	14,6	centre-left	opposition
1987-1991	KPB -PCB	0,8	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	15,7	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
	SP	14,9	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
1991-1995	PA-PTB	0,5	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	13,5	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
	SP	12,0	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
1995-1999	PA-PTB	0,6	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	11,9	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
	SP	12,6	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
1999-2003	PS	10,2	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
	SP	9,6	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
2003-2007	PS	13,0	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
	SPa+Spi	14,9	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
2007-2010	PA-PTB	0,8	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	10,9	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
	SPa+Spi	10,3	centre-left	opposition
2010-2014	PA-PTB	1,6	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	13,7	centre-left	in government (coal. leader)
	Spa	9,2	centre-left	in government (jr. partner)
2014 -	PA-PTB	1,6	far-left	opposition (not in parliament)
	PS	11,7	centre-left	opposition
	Spa	8,8	centre-left	opposition

Source: adapted from ParlGov.org

Table 14. Left-wing parties in Belgium

Left-wing parties in Belgium			
minor	RW	centre-left	Walloon Rally (Rassemblement Wallon)
	PA-PTB	far-left	Workers' Party of Belgium (Partij van de Arbeid – Parti du Travail de Belgique)
	KPB -PCB	far-left	Communist Party of Belgium (Kommunistische Partij – Parti Communiste)
main	PS	centre-left	Socialist Party [Francophone] (Parti Socialiste)
	SP	centre-left	Flemish Socialist Party (Socialistische Partij)
	SPa+Spi	centre-left	Socialist Party Different / Social Liberal Party (Socialistische Partij Anders / Sociaal-Liberale Partij) + Spirit
	Spa		Socialist Party Different / Social Liberal Party (Socialistische Partij Anders / Sociaal-Liberale Partij)

III. The role of the POS in the process of institutionalisation in Romania

The embedding of feminist norms and practices into organizations, social systems or society through the stabilization of some access points into enduring immutable institutions depends on the political and the discursive opportunity structure at a certain point.

In Romania, two elements of the political and discursive opportunity structure are relevant for the institutionalization of the feminist movement. The first one concerns the institutionalization of gender studies and the anti-communist backlash dimension of the discursive opportunity structure, after the fall of the state-socialist regime. In Bucharest, the gender studies MA at SNSPA, founded in 1998 and still functioning today, owes its existence, in considerable part, to its coordinator and leading feminist figure of Mihaela Miroiu. The gender studies MA founded in Cluj at Babes-Bolyai University in 2000, under the coordination of Eniko Vincze, was closed after a few years of functioning. While the first one adopted a liberal social stratification position and a liberal kind of feminism, the second integrated class and ethnicity, from an intersectional feminist perspective, under the influences of neo-Marxism. The liberal perspective associated with the SNSPA MA and Mihaela Miroiu, critical of the benefits of the welfare state for women in post-communist context, more favourable to liberal measures, matched the anti-communist backlash defining the context after the fall of the regime. However, one must keep in mind that the opposition towards gender studies and feminism was oriented towards all forms of feminism, with public intellectuals performing a ‘preventive anti-feminism’ in the public sphere, as Mihaela Miroiu (2009) calls it. Nevertheless, the implantation of a liberal form of feminism was

favoured by the existing opportunity structure, while an intersectional feminism was dismissed in a context of crystallization of an anti-poor, racist, anti-Roma public discourse. Thus, the political opportunity structure has a differential effect not just on different social movements, but also on different strands of the same movement, calling for more in-depth analysis of intra-movement dynamics. Even though critical towards the liberal kind of feminism promoted at SNSPA in Bucharest or Filia Center for a long time associated with this University, activists in Cluj insist on the benefits of the multiplicity of feminist groups in Bucharest that gives the power of numbers, more capacity to mobilize for reaction, to do media monitoring and actively participate in public debates, as it is the case of the platform feminism-Romania; such strength is considered to be lacking in Cluj, despite sustained efforts of local activists.¹¹⁸

The second element of the POS in Romania is EU accession. EU accession is relevant not only for the process of institutionalization that will be discussed here, but also for processes of professionalization, bureaucratization and precarization through financial dependence as part of the NGO-ization process that will be discussed in the following chapters. EU accession contributed to the development of the process of institutionalization, specifically to its dimension of inclusion through the creation of national agencies for gender equality and to its dimension of co-optation, inter-linked with financial dependence. First, EU accession, specifically the conditions and requirements that Romania had to comply to, contributed to a great extent to the establishment of the gender equality and non-discrimination bodies to improve legislation, advance policies and watch over their implementation,¹¹⁹ but it also contributed to defining its form and attributions to a certain amount. In 2001, *Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării* (CNCD) ('The National Council for Combating Discrimination') was created as an autonomous institution, under parliamentary control. In 2004, *Agencia Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați* (ANES) ('The National Agency for Equality between Women and Men') was built up as a governmental entity under the subordination of the Ministry of Labour. Equal Opportunities Commissions in the Parliament were founded – one in the Senate in 2003 and one in the Chamber of Deputies in 2004. The creation of gender equality bodies opened up the possibility of collaboration with feminist NGOs that could contribute and participate in policy-making in the area of gender equality, non-discrimination and violence against women. This led to the

¹¹⁸ R.C. – A-Casa, Cluj

¹¹⁹ M.C. – ANES, Bucharest, M.T. – ANES, Bucharest, I.C. – Filia, Bucharest

third development as the search for legitimacy to be recognized as official partners by the state further pushed feminist NGOs towards formalization and professionalization, supported by the availability of financial resources, from international and European donors. The creation of ANES and its subordination to the Ministry of Labour is related to the importance given by the EU to labour market reflected in its treaties, through Art. 157 TFEU that allows the EU to act in the wider area of equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation and Art. 153 TFEU that authorizes positive action to empower women and its directives on gender equality even if not exclusively focused on the labour market, giving it a great weight.¹²⁰ One of EU Parliament's and Council's latest proposals in this sense, known as 'women on boards' directive is concerned with improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures.¹²¹ Talking about emphasis placed on the labour market when considering gender equality by the EU and reflected on the National Agency, one of the ex-Secretaries of State at ANES mentions:

I do not think that, by chance, the equality of chances between women and men is focused on the labour market, the directives do not just cover the labour market, there is a reason for representation,

¹²⁰Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security;
Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding;
Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services;
Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006^[1] on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast);
Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave;
Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC;
Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA;
Directive 2011/99/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 establishing the European Protection Order;
Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/59/equality-between-men-and-women>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/HIS/?uri=celex:52012PC0614>

¹²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52012PC0614>

Interviewees working at ANES emphasized the interest given to the women on boards directive (AC ANES)

participation, eventually a woman to become economic independent must have a job or at least one income, whatever it is.¹²²

Even though previous to the EU accession, Romania resented the waves of Beijing¹²³ where it had sent a delegation and took the responsibility to create a gender equality body, this did not happen before. One interviewee recounts the process of creation of ANES through a twinning project between Romania and Spain:

Romania was in a context in 2005/2006, we were approaching a big year – 2007 when we were to become members of the EU and we had to meet some targets, as the European Union had told us (...)

And then this twinning project between Romania and Spain was needed. And it was the opportune time because we were joining the European Union and because the back-then European Directive demanded that there must be an equality body and a national mechanism in Romania to promote gender policies. And it was one of the last flags that we had to comply with to set up this mechanism.

But not just its creation was a requirement.

The institution was supposed to function with trained staff, so employees had to be trained, people with a gender consciousness, people who had to do gender mainstreaming were needed... And the strategy came as a government commitment, as proof of taking responsibility for this. And so was the context. That's how it was born. It is true that everyone who asks me and I agree with it that gender issues in Romania came from the EU, indeed, many things were done back-then imposed by the EU and they were made fast because the EU imposed us, but I do not see in it a bad thing.¹²⁴

Thus, gender equality became a priority for post-communist governments when related to EU accession and expressed through legislative and public policies endeavours to comply with the *acquis communautaire*, and this import process was labelled 'room service' feminism and was considered superficial since the Romanian society did not have the foundation for it (Miroiu, 2004).

Second, EU accession also implied the necessity to gender mainstream the projects implemented with EU funds. As many small NGOs did not have the organizational capacity nor the cash flow needed to develop independent projects, they often made partnerships with larger institutions. In relation to the institutionalization of gender studies, Filia Center, created with the initial aim to support the newly created gender studies MA and that further

¹²² M.C. – ANES, Bucharest

¹²³ M.C. – ANES, Bucharest

¹²⁴ M.C. – ANES, Bucharest

moved towards advocacy and activism developed many of its projects in partnership with SNSPA, a fact criticized by many feminist activists from inside Filia Center, but also from the outside as the organization was for a long-time one of the only reference points regarding feminism in Bucharest. One interviewee, former member and employee of Filia Center for a long period of time mentions that:

“After entering the EU, the majority of the activists I knew and the NGOs that seemed to me to do nice basically dissolved because ... I think the NGOs that were more active and more grassroots within the possible limits back-then were exactly those that were not attuned with the new exigencies and practically these mastodons appeared suddenly. We had an extraordinary advantage, namely that we had a partnership with the university. We were very close to the university much more than I liked to believe back-then and basically this project was applied for by the university. We wrote as well for the project application but became only partners and... I really did not find myself in what was actually in the project and what came out of it and I left.”¹²⁵

The volatility of various points of institutionalization in time, its partial and open-ended character as a process is supported for example by the fact that ANES was dismantled a few years later, after its creation or amongst other by the fact that slowly Filia Center loosened its relation with SNSPA, gaining more in autonomy and investing more in advocacy and activism.

IV. The role of the POS in the process of institutionalisation in Belgium

In Belgium, at least four dimensions of the political opportunity structure (POS) are relevant for the process of institutionalization of the feminist movement – three main and more stable dimensions and a more volatile one. Decentralization and federalization, on the one hand, and pillarization, on the other, are the first two stable dimensions of the POS, related to the formal institutional structure. The third one is an integrative, facilitative strategy through the institutionalization of popular education. The last and more volatile dimension is related to the establishment of a post-terrorist-attacks security context. The research also revealed that the anti-intellectualist tradition in Belgium was significant in relation to the institutionalization of the feminist movement.

¹²⁵ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

First, in relation to the federal structure, there are different points of access within state's institutional structure that the feminist movement might be able to enter. However, in the process of mounting movements' claims on the political agenda, access to one level of power and support at that level might not be the end of the process or necessarily conducive to a positive result for the movement. Slalom and shifts of the movement and its claims between communities, regions and the federal level are the common way of participation in the decision-making process, through official political channels. One of the interviewees, deputy chief of staff for the equality of chances and women's rights in Isabelle Simonis cabinet and also an ally and former activist in the LGBTQIA and feminist movement explained this process:

So the minister will bring these claims to other ministers, because according to the extremely complex logic of the institutional system, the minister has to carry the demands first in her government, here in the French Community, or then to carry the demands of women's organizations in other governments, asking the other ministers some sort of reaction. Are they going to put forward those claims or not, or are they going to bridge politically or not and why, when, and so on, asking each time on each item (...) As I said, the minister is going to bring the demands of the associations to the other levels of power.¹²⁶

However, ideological differences can constitute a significant obstacle when bringing claims at different levels of power, as for example the Simonis cabinet encountered more difficulties to mount claims at federal level than regional level.¹²⁷ Obviously, the different levels of power involve a division of work and competencies, that inform social movement actors about the level they need to access in order to advocate for their demands or to lobby. The research showed that when the federal government level is involved, SMOs tend to organize more in transversal coalitions that cross-cut the existing economic, linguistic and religious cleavages. Feminist organizations seem feel more inclined to organize in coalitions and networks that cross-cut the existing cleavages when they need to address issues at the federal level. In the case of Istanbul Convention as a Council of Europe Convention, each level of power must ratify the Convention, sign a decree of assent and the federal government ultimately must assemble all the regional decrees of assent and then enact it, which has been done. The Belgian report to the Istanbul Convention was coordinated by the Institute for the equality between men and women, thus at the federal level. Out of the networking among

¹²⁶ V.P. Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Brussels

¹²⁷ V.P. Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Brussels

feminist organization the *Plateforme féministe contre les violences faites aux femmes* (PFVFF) (“Feminist Platform to End Violence against Women”) that Garance co-founded in 2015 reunited both French and Flemish feminist organizations. In 2017, at the initiative of la *Voix des femmes* (“Women’s voice”), the platform decided to write an alternative report to the one of the Belgian government with respect to the application of the Istanbul Convention by public authorities.¹²⁸ In the same way, the platform abortion rights regroups both French and Flemish organizations that gathered together to fight for abortion rights and lobbied to bring about the depenalization of abortion in Belgium, a successful initiative since abortion was removed from the criminal law.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, this was a limited success since there was just a partial decriminalization of abortion and not a law legalizing abortion. To get the vote of the law, women and progressists had to give up many of their demands.¹³⁰ Feminist activists, academics and member of NGOs also organized¹³¹ as a reaction after the depenalization of abortion law passed by the Justice Commission from the House of Representatives to boycott and underline the fact the law would not change much since abortion was already tolerated as a practice and more substantial changes need to be made to put an end to the restrictions provided by the law, as for example the twelve week time limit to use the procedure or the compulsory reflection time limit. They have decided to write and sign a tribune in *Le Vif* on September 22, 2018 to boycott the instrumentalization of the decades fight for abortion rights and denounce the political marketing and the “feminist washing” from the part of the political elites and demand for substantial changes that would put an end to shackles and constraints on women’s reproductive rights and to warrant a real possibility to safely access abortion.¹³²

Second, pillarization (segmentation) structures as well the feminist movement and its institutionalization, by shaping the collaboration with state institutions and the possibilities of alliances. To recall, pillars in Belgium were built upon a mix of religious and economic cleavages cross-cut by linguistic and ethnic divides. The liberal, catholic and socialist pillar have their own institutions from political parties, to trade unions and political movements,

¹²⁸ Garance rapport 2017; participant observation at the platform’s meeting

¹²⁹ <http://www.brusselstimes.com/rss-feed/12591/abortion-removed-from-criminal-law-in-belgium>, accessed November 14, 2018

¹³⁰ <https://www.laicite.be/laction-laique/nos-engagements/avortement>, accessed November 14, 2018

¹³¹ A Facebook common group was created, which I also joined, to mobilize for reaction against the form in which the law de-criminalizing abortion was to be adopted and the decision take was to immediately sign a tribune in *LeVif*.

¹³² <https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/depenalisation-de-l-avortement-marre-d-etre-patientes-et-flouees/article-opinion-1008995.html>, accessed November 14, 2018

universities and women's organizations associated with the movements of each pillar. Even though scholars and activists consider that there is currently a process of de-pillarization in Belgium, they also consider that pillarization still structures the Belgian society.¹³³ One activist and employee of Vie feminine mentions with regard to pillarization:

In fact for all the associative in French-speaking Belgium, the pillars are super important historically. So symbolically there are people who studied at a secular university, and who go after to the Parti Socialiste or to Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) and socialist mutuality and there are other people who study at Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) and after they will go to Catholics. But it does not matter on the stakes. It's not so important, but it remains there – we are on one side or the other. But today *Vie féminine* is still part of the MOC (*Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien*) for subsistence, financial, reasons, because it gives the possibilities to have rooms, money and so it is still associated. But Vie féminine says they are independent of the political gamble, they do not depend on the political party, but on the other hand they are still part of the MOC (AE, Vie féminine).

Some argue that the pillarization of the Belgian society also affects the kind of strategies and ways of organization the different strands of the feminist movement proposes. For example, regarding care centres for children, the socialist would promote more collective child care systems, supporting nurseries and the equality between all children while Vie feminine developed a service of childcare at home based nursery system to give priority to each child, being paid, but in a family context.¹³⁴ Some feminists argue that both are necessary and women can choose. Nevertheless, some of them feel that this is related to the pillars, while others argue that it is not the pillars that distinguish between the different approaches but the values at the core of their organizations and movements.¹³⁵ In 2001, at one of its congresses, Vie feminine removed their Christian orientation from their statute and declared themselves a feminist organization, “but since its members are part of the Christian culture, this is resented”.¹³⁶ However, during the research, out of the three main organizations associated with the corresponding pillars, Vie feminine was time and again mentioned as a steady feminist partner for other associations, preferred by newer or smaller feminist organizations especially for their positions regarding ethnic and religious minorities, especially the foulard issue against the *positions laicardes*, secular positions of FPS.¹³⁷

¹³³ A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels; B.E. Université des femmes, Brussels

¹³⁴ A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels

¹³⁵ Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussels

¹³⁶ B.E. Université des femmes, Brussels

¹³⁷ I.S. – CFULB, Brussels

Pillarization affects institutionalization of the feminist movement also by structuring how the relationship with state institutions is being built-up and how it unfolds. An illustrative example is that of *Alter Égale*, a participatory assembly for women's rights created to respond to the demands of women's and feminist organizations in order to achieve real equality between men and women.¹³⁸ The Assembly was initiated by the Simonis cabinet from the Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles (FWB) as space for dialogue between grassroots organizations and politics and each year participants at the Assembly are invited to work on specific themes in three sub-commissions. Even if smaller or newer feminist associations participated in the sub-commissions and in the platform, the sub-commissions were co-piloted by the three big movement organizations – *Vie féminine*, FPS and CFFB.¹³⁹ The deputy chief of staff for the equality of chances in Simonis cabinet explains:

And so what we had done in AlterEgal, at the beginning of the legislature we identified fundamental rights that we proposed to women's organizations, that we gathered all in a plenary session, and every year we work on one of the pillars of fundamental rights to which women have different access than men. We work with the three large representative organizations - FPS, Vie féminine and CFFB on each theme. We are now on violence and therefore there are three subcommittees that will work: the Cabinet and Vie féminine, another the Cabinet and FPS and yet another commission the Cabinet and CFFB and the idea is for a year to have working meetings on the recommendations on the claims that we can do together.¹⁴⁰

When asked how did they make the choice of associations to co-pilot the different commission, the deputy chief of staff explains that there was not necessarily a process of selection, but that the choice was related to financial reasons and to representativity within the pillars. She mentions:

We did not really make a selection of associations. The only selection we made was for material reasons. It was the sub-commissions we only work effectively with the three big associations, that are umbrella associations. So they are also associations that have the most public funding but we have identified them because they finally represent a little bit the three pillars in Belgium and they gather within them a whole series of associations of diverse tendencies. It was indeed the only choice that we were able to operate for the sub-commissions. But for the plenaries it is entirely open and in general we have a hundred of the participants in the plenary.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ <http://www.alteregales.be> accessed November 14, 2018

¹³⁹ <http://www.alteregales.be/resultats/2017-2/#> accessed November 14, 2018

¹⁴⁰ V.P. Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Brussels

¹⁴¹ V.P. Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Brussels

Moreover, family planning centres in French speaking Belgium, historically linked to the feminist movement, are also organized around pillars. There are four federations: *Fédération des Centres de Planning et de Consultations* (FCPC) related to the Christian movement, *Fédération des Centres de Planning des FPS* (FPS-CPF) of *Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes* (FPS), *Fédération des Centres Pluralistes de Planning Familial* (FCPPF) with a pluralist orientation and *Fédération Laïque Centres de Planning Familial* (FLCPF) associated with the laic movement.¹⁴²

Pillarization also limits the functioning of the feminist movement and the possibilities of making alliances within the pillars.¹⁴³ However, emphasising too much the division of the society in pillars, obscures smaller or newer feminist associations and simultaneously the dynamic renewal of the feminist movement with various organizations, collectives and groups.

Third, popular education and its institutionalization is part of an integrative, facilitative strategy part of the political opportunity structure. Historically, in French-speaking Belgium, civil society movements were tremendously developed, with many citizen's initiatives and strong workers' and trade unions' movements, around which a whole network of associations developed that embodied and integrated all the people in the society – workers, children, youth, women and who engaged together in emancipation work.¹⁴⁴ It was also the case for the three big women's associations *Vie féminine*, FPS and CFFB. During the 1970s, the idea to structurally finance these associations emerged, and has materialized into 1973's decree on popular education. The institutionalization of popular education impacted women's movement organizations working on emancipation at the time but also set up the conditions and boundaries for the new women's and feminist organizations that came afterwards. This meant that they had to conform to a number of provisions to be recognized within popular education and be qualified to structural funding to do emancipation work with women.

Lastly, the more volatile dimension of POS, relevant for the institutionalization process, especially its dimensions of co-optation and movement's relationship with state institutions is

¹⁴² Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussels
<http://www.loveattitude.be/qui-sommes-nous> accessed November 15, 2018

¹⁴³ O.V. *Vie féminine*, Brussels

¹⁴⁴ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels

the establishment of a post-terrorist attacks security context. Feminist organizations were pressured to change their mode of working in order to be able to maintain the financing they were receiving from the state. This pressure was for women's organizations that were working only with women, to open up to gender mixity. Some of them tried to dodge and avoid the new requirements through various strategies, but that was only possible for smaller organizations and, however, it could not be a long-term viable strategy. The public discourses around security and terrorism also weaken and deteriorate the relationships and solidarity between women who started to appropriate prejudiced discourses and statements that were not theirs, as the president of one movement organization mentioned.¹⁴⁵ One interviewee explains about this situation:

I think that the security context in which we are now is a context of panic that makes politicians to lose it and suddenly – you've probably heard, almost everywhere now, there is a vision of diversity (...) So it becomes problematic because it is a vision that says that mixity is needed to ensure equality, and we know very well that mixity does not automatically guarantee equality. And on the other side there is a kind of intransigence on women's organizations. When we are a women's organization by nature we work with women. So with this ideology of panic they are dissuading women's organizations who already had difficulties to reach their aims. There are organizations of women, I heard in Brussels who were ready to change their (...) to be able to continue to obtain funding and it is not a long-term strategy if they aim to work with women.¹⁴⁶

However, the same dimension of POS might constitute a closure and negatively affect some movements and organizations, while constituting an opening for other organisations. The post-terrorist attacks security context that brought to the forefront the mixity/non-mixity debate, with the state institutions defending a vision of work based on mixity to support equality, affected those associations, financially dependent on state subsidies and who were working in gender non-mixity, pushing them to change their practice. On the other hand, it increased partnerships with state institutions, as well as demands of training and expertise from other associations. Such was the case of Garance that works on feminist self-defence and violence prevention that was in high demand by youth houses and supported by political authorities to work with youth, opening associated with the security political climate.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

¹⁴⁶ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

¹⁴⁷ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

The late institutionalization of gender studies in the French-speaking Belgium, in 2017, is attributed sometimes and amongst others to this anti-intellectualist tradition that served to delegitimize the establishment of gender and sexuality studies.¹⁴⁸

V. Inclusion and marginalization

Inclusion and marginalization concern this process of “selection” of activists, between those who adhere to the established routine and who consequently have access to the decision-making process through official channels, regarding policies within the framework of traditional institutions and those who refuse and are thus excluded from participation in official settings, through neglect or repression. Within the feminist movement, in Romania and Belgium, this process of inclusion and marginalization began, on the one side, with the creation of governmental institutions for gender equality or national agencies for the promotion of equality between women and men, and on the other side, with the establishment and development of gender studies at university.

A. The development of an institutional architecture: women’s policy agencies in Belgium

In 1985, the government created a State Secretary of Environment and of Social Emancipation with Miet Smet as State Secretary who also negotiated an Equal Opportunities portfolio and in 1986 an Emancipation Council (Celis and Meier, 2007, 65). The State Secretary covered everything related to social emancipation but throughout Smet’s mandates a focus had been given to violence against women, women’s economic position and women’s participation in political decision-making. The Emancipation Council functioned as an advisory entity for the State Secretary who was subordinated to the Minister of Public Health and Environment and from the 1989 on, to the Minister of Labour and Employment. In 1991, when Miet Smet becomes Minister of Labour and Employment she retained the Equal Opportunities portfolio that attained the level of a Minister which involved the creation of a Unit of Equal Opportunities Ministry of Labour and Employment, in 1992 (Ibidem). The Emancipation Council and the former Committee on Women’s Employment fused into the Council of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

¹⁴⁸ D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels

Miet Smet was a former president of the Flemish Christian Democrats' political women's organisation - *Vrouw en Maatschappij* and when the Flemish Christian-Democrats lost elections in 1999, the new government coalition did not initially include a Minister of Equal Opportunities. This was rectified after protests by the women's movement (Idem., 65-66). After the 2003 elections, Equal Opportunities were again overlooked and then considered after protests by the women's movement (Idem., 66). When Laurette Onkelinx was Minister of Equal Opportunities she restructured the federal women's policy agency (Ibidem) and she pushed for the creation of the *Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes* (Institute for Equality of Women and Men) that was finalized in 2002. The *Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes* is a federal government institution, whose mission is to ensure and promote the equality of women and men and to combat all forms of gender-based discrimination or inequality, through appropriate legal framework, structures, strategies, instruments and actions¹. The Institute is autonomous to a certain extent as it falls under the authority of the Minister of Equal Opportunities for whom the Institute prepare and execute decisions, follow up European and international policy measures regarding gender equality, but can initiate actions, including legal actions (Idem., 67). Celis and Meir (Ibidem) argue that even though the Belgian women's policy agency grow in autonomy and scope in terms of resources of personnel and budget it was marginal compared to other Ministers and State Secretaries.

The oldest women's policy agencies are those created at the federal level. With the federalization process that led at the creation of regions – Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels Capital City and of communities – Flemish, Francophone and German speaking, which have their own parliaments and governments since the min 1990s. This brought about the creation of women's policy agencies for the regions and communities (Celis and Meir, 2007, 67). At the level of parliaments, most of them have an advisory committee on gender equality.

B. The road towards feminist and gender studies in Belgium

The development and deepening of the feminist intellectual production in Belgium started during the 1970s by feminist groups such as Grief and then *Université des Femmes* and through the creation of various oasis of feminist research in universities, most often without financing. Thus, in 1987 was created the first centre on women's studies - *Centrum voor*

Vrouwenstudies at the University of Antwerp, initiated by professor Mieke Van Haegendoren. In 1988, a *Centrum voor Vrouwenstudies* (centre for women's studies) was created at Vrije Universiteit van Brussels by Lydia de Pauw-de Veen. On the French side, in 1989, Eliane Gubin created the *Groupe Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes sur les Femmes/GIEF* ('Interdisciplinary group on women's studies') at *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB), that publishes the journal *Sextant*, the first university journal devoted to women studies in Belgium (Puissant, 2002).

In 1990, the Secretariat for Science Policy funded, as part of the social sciences research program, the *Point d'appui Women's studies (1990-94)* (Support Point Women's studies (1990-94)) entrusted to two researchers - Eliane Vogel-Polsky and Mieke Van Haegendoren (Stoffel, 2004). They will subsequently obtain a new funding for a *Steunpunt Women's Studies* attached to the *Sociaal Economisch Instituut / SEIN*, University Centre of Limburg. In July 1990, the *Centrum voor Genderstudies* is created at Ghent University. In January 1996, the *Groupe Interfacultaire Etudes-Femmes/GRIEF* is set up at *Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve* and in 1999 the *Centrum Gelijke-Kansenbeleid* is established at *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (KUL). In 2001, *Femmes Enseignement Recherche/FER* ('Women, teaching, research') was created at *Université libre de Liège*. In 2004, a study and research group *Genre et Migration* was set up at ULB (Ibidem).

Feminist and women's studies progressively entered university, in a scattered and precarious manner. During this period, Grif constituted a gathering place among feminist activists, researchers and professors and decided to organize in 1989 at ULB a European colloquium entitled *Concept et réalité des études féministes* ('Concept and reality of feminist studies'). Out of this colloquium was born the idea of creating a coordinating network of feminist studies of the two linguistic communities, in Belgium. Consequently, a group of feminist activists and researchers gathered together and created Sophia, a coordinating network of women's studies in March 1990, as a not-for profit association (Stoffel, 2004). At the request of Joëlle Milquet, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities, the Institute for Equality between Women and Men commissioned Sophia to carry out a study of feasibility for the creation of an inter-university master's degree in gender studies in Belgium, that took place between 2009 and 2010 (Sophia, 2011, 13). Activists, NGOs and researchers appeal to the political world to support the project of the creation of master degree in gender studies on the French side. After sustained efforts, the *Master*

interuniversitaire en Etudes de Genre ('Inter-University Master in Gender Studies') of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is born in 2017¹.

In Romania, the process of institutionalization took place in reverse order - first the institutionalization of gender studies and then creation of a government infrastructure to advance gender equality policies.

C. The road towards feminist and gender studies in Romania

At the end of the 90s, gender studies/feminist studies have become institutionalized. The first programme created as a state subsidized programme in Bucharest in 1998 was an MA in Gender Studies at *Scoala Nationala de Studii Politice si Administrative* (SNSPA) (The National School of Political Science and Public Administration)¹⁴⁹. This happened after some previous years of diffused courses of feminist philosophy, sociology of gender and other academic activities around AnA that did research, published the first books in the field and the feminist studies journal *AnAlize* (Miroiu, 2010, 158). *AnAlize* appeared few times a year until 2004 when it stopped its activity due to the lack of funding. In 2013 *AnAlize*, *Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies* reopened and its activities and publications are carried on still today¹⁵⁰. The power position of Mihaela Miroiu as the head of the Department of Political Science made it easier to convince the Senate of SNSPA to accept a 'strange exoticism' (Ibidem.). In 2000, an MA programme of gender studies – *Gen, diferente si inegalitati* ("Gender, differences and inequalities") was created at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, under the leading figure of anthropologist Eniko Vincze. However, at the end of 2000s, the master was dismantled by the university Rector, Andrei Marga. In 2004, in Timisoara a third MA in gender studies was created, coordinated by Reghina Dascal. This MA programme was also dismantled after three years of functioning. Some of the reasons invoked were the low level of requests from students for this specialization (Vlad, 2013, 35).

In an effort to support the development and continuance of gender studies in conditions of lack of funding for innovation and research in higher education and the concentration of resources in the NGO sector, Mihaela Miroiu and Otilia Dragomir established in 2000 *Centrul de Dezvoltare Curriculara si Studii de Gen, FILIA* ('Centre for Curricular Development and Gender Studies, Filia'), an NGO affiliated with SNSPA with the aim of

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.feminism-romania.ro/legislatie-si-politici/programe-universitare> accessed January 15, 2019

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.analize-journal.ro>, accessed on February 8th, 2018

attracting research funds for the support of the newly established gender studies MA (Vlad, 2013, 36). They managed to access on hundred thousand dollars financing from the World Bank to use in the development of the Gender Studies MA, the creation of a gender studies library and to support research and publications (Ibidem.). To secure institutional support for the newly created MAs, in Cluj in 2000, Eniko Vincze *founded Grupul Interdisciplinar pentru Studii de Gen* ('The Interdisciplinary Group for Gender Studies')¹⁵¹ (Vincze in Baluta and Cirstocea 2003, 214) and in Timisoara in 2001 Centrul Interdisciplinar de Studii de Gen ('Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies') was created¹⁵².

Filia slowly became for students an entry point for activism as they were volunteering there and some of them doing their practical internships required during the MA. The organization grew in terms of public visibility as a feminist organization and slowly changed its profile, after 2010, besides research, started to incorporate more and more advocacy work and activism.

D. The development of an institutional architecture for gender equality and non-discrimination in Romania

Along with the institutionalization of gender studies and the organization of the first feminist protest after 1989, the years 2000s also meant the development of a political infrastructure to ensure the respect of gender equality and non-discrimination. Gender equality was not a priority for transition governments, especially during the 90s, unless related to European Union accession (Massino and Popa, 2015, 171), more significantly during the pre-accession period that started in 2000 and expressed through legislative and public policies endeavours to comply with the *acquis communautaire*. Thus, in this context gender equality and non-discrimination laws were adopted and public entities were created such as *Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării* (CNCD) ('The National Council for Combating Discrimination') created in 2001, *Agencia Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați* (ANES) ('The National Agency for Equality between Women and Men')(2004), *Agencia Națională pentru Protecția Familiei* (ANPF) ('The National Agency for the Protection of the Family') founded in 2003, with power in the area of domestic violence, and

¹⁵¹ http://www.nec.ro/data/pdfs/publications/relink/directii-si-teme-de-cercetare/ENIKO_MAGYARI-VINCZE.pdf accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁵² <https://genderstudies.uvt.ro> accessed July 14, 2019

Equal Opportunities Commissions in the Parliament, one in the Senate founded in 2003 and one in the Chamber of Deputies created in 2004. Labelled 'room service' feminism, specifically to emphasize the external influence, transfer and import character of norms, discourses, policies and legislation, Miroiu (2004), who coined this term, considered this process to be one surface since the Romanian society did not have the foundation for this. More than this, revealing is also the fact that the concerned civil society organizations could not and did not participate in the process of creation of these gender equality and non-discrimination bodies. Civil society was not consulted, being a classic case of a top-down process. Afterwards, the lack of enforcement and the deficiencies in implementation of gender equality legislation a gap has been created and widened between the existing legislative framework and its implementation through programs and policies. This 'compliance gap' is due to corruption and lack of will from the part of the political elites (Massino and Popa, 2015, pp. 171-172).

The process of inclusion, in Belgium as well as in Romania, has been done in two ways: on the one hand, through the incorporation of certain activists into the new institutional structures for gender equality, either within government agencies or in the academic *milieu* and on the other hand through the collaboration between these new entities for gender equality and the different feminist organizations. For example, in Belgium, feminist and/or LGBTQIA activists have moved from the movement to the state agencies for gender equality or popular education and from that position they act as bridgebuilders. At the same time, some gender studies scholars are members in these governmental agencies, contributing with their expertise to the production of policies. In Romania, most of the feminist activists and gender experts who were hired to work for the governmental agencies or parliamentary committees for gender equality, soon gave up their work within these entities. At times, former employees of the National Agency for Equality between Women and Men (ANES) have moved to the feminist movement, working in NGOs and again operating as bridgebuilders, intermediaries between state institutions and the feminist movement.

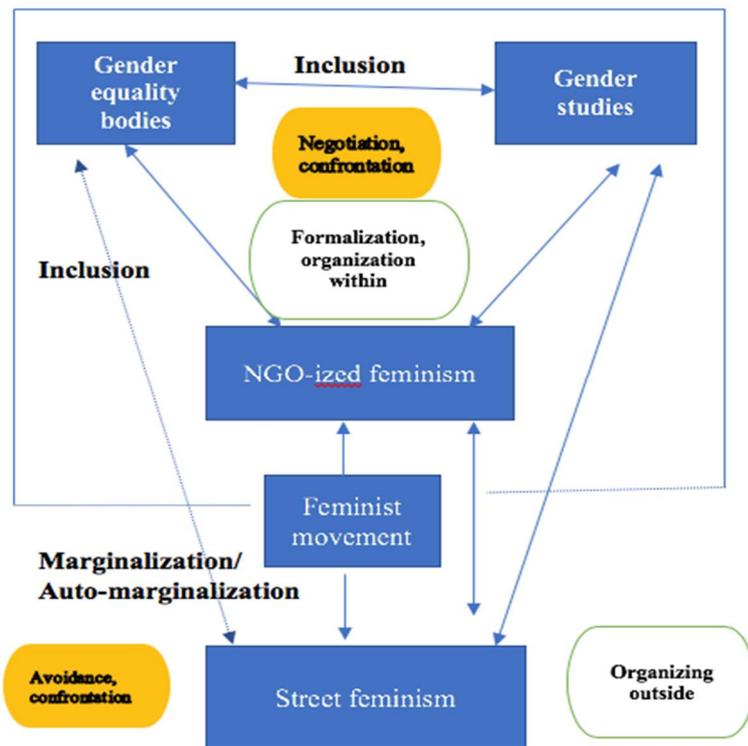
This process of inclusion and marginalization as defined by Tarrow and Meyer (1998), this 'selection' of activists between those who adhere to the collaboration with politicians and the ruling bodies, through official channels and those who refuse and are marginalized seems to imply just the unequal relationship of power between the state who is making the selection and the passive activists who are selected. This research shows that in the process of

institutionalization, this dimension of inclusion and marginalization implies on the one hand resistance and on the other, a quasi-permanent, very dynamic negotiation. By committing to collaborate with the state, feminist NGOs: are in a process of negotiation on the legislation, public policies and their implementation, compliance with international agreements; they criticize or react to policies that aim to restrain the rights of already marginalized and oppressed groups; but they are also at risk of co-optation. Moreover, this inclusion also implies a process of formalization, creation of structures - non-profit organizations, NGOs. These organizations accept the formula proposed by the state in order to be able to negotiate with the governmental bodies and participate in decision-making. The state allocates some space within the framework of civil society where these organizations can exist; it gives them financial incentives, but also legitimacy to formalize themselves. The state decides the framework within which these organizations can exist and participate. The ongoing negotiations takes place in relation to issues of content - legislation, public policy, or framing of some issues. But the NGOized branch of feminist movement sometimes comes out of this imposed framework by participating or organizing protest actions, when negotiations do not succeed through more formal means.

On the other hand, marginalization, which mainly concerns Street feminism, ie informal, self-managed groups, is also a self-marginalization. These groups want to organize, consciously, outside of a system that is considered oppressive - be it the state and its institutions or the market. Marginalization and / or self-marginalization occur on two sides: on the one hand in relation to the form of organization, rejecting the space allocated by the state in the form of NGOs, thus rejecting the formalization which obliges a hierarchical organizational structure with a president, and secondly with respect to the type of relationship with the State that is either avoidance or confrontation. One of the interviewees from the A-Casa collective said: “At first, we wanted to have this space where we can organize events to reach a larger group of people, to encourage critical and free discussions, outside the pressure of the market”¹⁵³.

Fig. 1. Inclusion and marginalization

¹⁵³ R.C. – A-Casa, Cluj



E. Conclusions

The institutionalization of the feminist movement is partial, open-ended and multiple-level process that involves the embedding of feminist norms and practices into organizations, social systems or society through the stabilization of some access points into enduring immutable institutions. This process involves both stabilization and dynamic adjustments of movements' values, norms and practices and depends on the political, including the discursive opportunity structure at a certain point. In Romania, the anti-communist backlash, as a dimension of the discursive opportunity structure affected the kind of feminism that gain pre-eminence after the fall of the state-socialist regime, consequently a liberal one. The EU accession sped up the process of creation of gender equality and non-discrimination bodies, in line with the international and European norms. This subsequently contributed to the process of inclusion and marginalization of feminist activists. In Belgium, decentralization and federalization affect the process through which the feminist movement is mounting its claims on the political agenda. Access to one level of power and support at that level might not be the end of the process. Movement's shifts and altering of claims according to the

different levels of power are the common way of participation in the decision-making process. The research showed that feminist organizations seem feel more inclined to organize in coalitions and networks that cross-cut the existing cleavages when they need to address issues at the federal level. Pillarization (even though scholars and activists consider that there is currently a process of de-pillarization) as another element of the POS in Belgium still affects the way institutionalization unfolds, by shaping the collaboration between state institutions and the feminist movement and the possibilities for alliances. For example, when governmental actors invite the feminist movement to collaborate they sometimes chose representatives from the three big movement organizations – *Vie feminine*, FPS and CFFB. The institutionalization of popular education in the 70s as an integrative, facilitative strategy part of the political opportunity structure shaped women’s movement organizations working on emancipation at the time but also set up the conditions and boundaries for the new women’s and feminist organizations that came afterwards. Lastly, a more volatile dimension in Belgium represents the establishment of a post-terrorist attacks security context contributed to the introduction of new parameters of collaboration between the state and feminist movement organizations.

Chapter VI. The routinization of collective action

The mobilizations and the demonstrations organized in Belgium and Romania on the 8th of March, for the International Women's Day or on the 25th of November for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women confirm, to some extent, the trajectory of the routinization of collective action within the framework of feminist movements. Nevertheless, spontaneous and reactive mobilizations existed side-by-side. Some of the protests were authorized, while others were not. The first two parts of this sub-section will tackle the four cases of mobilization by feminist groups and organizations, in relation to the routinization thesis. First, I will analyse planned and recurrent manifestations on the one hand, and the more spontaneous, reactive protests on the other hand. Second, I will explore authorized and non-authorized protests and the relationship with the police. The analysis provided in the two parts is cross-cut by country – Belgium and Romania, and by kind of groups – Street feminist informal groups or NGO-ized formal structures. Third, I will argue that the normalization of protests in relation to the feminist movement in Romania and Belgium can be seen as a mechanism that leads to the construction of internal diversity of the movement and to bridging social capital - in Putnam's terms (2000) - crucial for creating larger identities and solidarities, essential sources for collective action. Lastly, I will discuss the challenges faced by FMOs in Belgium and Romania in achieving this internal diversity and bridging of social capital together with the cleavages that intervene in the build-up process of internal diversity.

I. Reactive versus planned and recurrent mobilizations

First, feminist groups and NGOs in Romania and in Belgium engage both in planned, sometimes recurrent manifestations and reactive, spontaneous protests. In Romania, the protests and demonstrations organized on the 8th of March have been normalized since 2010 in Bucharest, where they have been organized, most of the time, by feminist NGOs, sometimes with the participation and collaboration of more informal feminist groups. In the same way, protests to end violence against women were regularly organized on the 25th of November – during the International Day for the Elimination of violence against women, or before this date, in October, as the weather was milder and organizers hoped to attract more people. During the recent years, mobilizations to end violence against women were organized under the umbrella of VIF network that regroups various feminist NGOs and NGOs working on violence against women and the protests were entitled *Impreuna pentru siguranta femeilor*

(“Together for women’s safety”), and were included in a wider campaign on the issue that reached its fourth edition in 2018.¹⁵⁴

By contrast, in Cluj it was informal feminist groups, especially around the A-Casa collective, together with friends from *Les Sisterhood* group in Cluj and help from international activists, that mobilized regularly since 2014, on the occasion of the International Women’s Day, under the slogan “Reclaim...”. Thus, in 2014 they organized a “Reclaim the night” march¹⁵⁵, in 2015 a “Reclaim the significance of the 8th of March Day”¹⁵⁶ protest and in 2016 a “Reclaim the space”¹⁵⁷ manifestation. In 2017 they organized a march – “Bring the fight further”.¹⁵⁸

In the same way, in Belgium, planned and regular mobilizations took place during the last years, on the 8th of March. In Brussels, in 2015, a gender non-mixed manifestation was initiated and organized by left-wing feminist groups and informal collectives such as *Feminisme Yeah*, *CFULB*, *Alternative Libertaire* collective¹⁵⁹ and *Fat Positivity*, but also by some more formal organizations such as *Garance*¹⁶⁰. The following years, other feminist organizations and activists joined the mobilization. Another planned and recurrent feminist mobilization in Brussels is the “Reclaim the Night” march, organized since 2014¹⁶¹, by an informal and undisclosed collective, in chosen gender mixity, without cis men.¹⁶² Both the 8th of March mobilization and the “Reclaim the night” started from a leftist basis, the inspiration of the first one is socialist and communist, while the second is anarchist-inspired and both are mobilized by informal non-hierarchical collectives mainly. However, they subsequently developed in different directions in terms of group composition. While the first one moved towards more internal diversity and bridging different strands of the movement, including feminist NGOs with more informal street collectives, the second one remained more homogeneous. Interviews and participant observation informed about the different

¹⁵⁴ <https://violentaimpotriva femeilor.ro/impune-pentru-siguranta-femeilor-a-4-a-editie-a-marsului-de-condamnare-a-violentei-impotriva-femeilor-la-bucuresti> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁵⁵ <https://acasacluj.noblogs.org/revendica-noaptea> accessed July 14, 2019

<https://challenges.openideo.com/challenge/womens-safety/research/reclaim-the-night> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁵⁶ <https://acasacluj.noblogs.org/revendica-8-martie-du-lupta-mai-departe> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁵⁷ <https://acasa.blackblogs.org/mars-revendica-ti-spatiu/> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁵⁸ <https://acasacluj.noblogs.org/du-lupta-mai-departe-hai-la-mars-de-8-martie> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁵⁹ <https://albruxelles.wordpress.com/about> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.lcr-lagauche.org/un-beau-succes-pour-la-manif-feministe-non-mixte-a-bruxelles-ce-8-mars> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁶¹ <http://www.radiopanik.org/emissions/panik-sur-la-ville/reclaim-the-night> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁶² <https://bxl.indymedia.org/spip.php?article17540&lang=fr> accessed July 14, 2019

composition of participation in the two manifestations, although both were feminist demonstrations with some overlapping membership of feminist activists participants, the crowds of protestors were rather different.¹⁶³ Even though the 8th of March mobilization brought in as well some feminist NGOs, such as Garance, other formal organizations did not want to join the protest, for different reasons, such as Vie féminine. Nevertheless, the overlapping membership in feminist groups and NGOs, or between professional work in feminist NGOs and the more militant activism in feminist collectives put the activists in this position in a delicate situation. One feminist activist and employee of a feminist NGO explains this tension:

When we organized the non-mixed demonstration of last year (2016) I have participated at its organization, but it was not Vie féminine and Vie féminine did not participate in the platform that organized this non-mixed demo, for different reasons with which I did not agree and it was slightly delicate because I organize a Manif that is not supported by Vie féminine, but I still work at Vie féminine.¹⁶⁴

Reactive, spontaneous mobilizations co-existed with the recurrent protests, planned in advance, equally in Belgium and Romania, with the participation of both formal NGOs and informal collectives. Among the reactive protests in Romania, the 2010 protest against the cuts in childcare allowances or “Mum’s protest”¹⁶⁵ and the 2012 protest against introducing rape in the mediation law¹⁶⁶ were repeatedly mentioned in interviews and feminist gatherings. The 2010 protest was organized in the context of the adoption of austerity measures by the Romanian government, measures among which the cuts to childcare allowances were included. The protest was initiated by a group of parents organized around the online forums miresici.ro and desprecopii.com and supported by Filia organization, whose back-then president thought that being initiated by those directly concerned would bring more legitimacy to the mobilization.¹⁶⁷ They framed the protest to exclude the childcare allowance cuts out of the anti-austerity measures package in economic terms, showing that the savings

¹⁶³ I.V. – Garance, Brussels, M.S. – Garance, Brussels, O.V. Vie feminine, Brussels participant observation Reclaim the night 2017

¹⁶⁴ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.garbo.ro/articol/Familie/3309/FOTO-La-protest-cu-bebelusii-in-fata-Ministerului-Muncii.html> accessed July 14, 2019

A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest; B.M. – Filia, Bucharest; C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; I.C. – Filia, Bucharest

¹⁶⁶ https://adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/foto-video-cat-mai-costa-violdomnule-mediatoromesajul-afisat-cei-protestatimpotriva-legii-medierii-1_510c04b84b62ed5875c654e2/index.html accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁶⁷ I.C. – Filia, Bucharest

resulted were infinitesimal for the state budget, “while people’s suffering was enormous”.¹⁶⁸

One member of Filia, who participated at the protest mentions:

In 2010, the law changed in the context of all austerity measures; it cut the new-born allowance, the trousseau, all that stuff. Practically, the idea was that women who were now pregnant woke up and realized that their indemnity changed (...) Filia was the only NGO participating at the protest. It was a parents’ protest, mostly mothers, because most of the people who are accessing these allowances are women and it was against the government and the austerity measure. There was a huge protest in front of the Ministry of labour, you know, against this thing...¹⁶⁹

On February 1st, 2012 a protest was organized against introducing rape in the mediation law, through amendments to the Criminal Code and feminist activists “pulled the triggers on all possible channels”, corroborating the mobilization with lobby at the Ministry of Justice and negotiation with other policy makers involved in this process.¹⁷⁰ The legislative initiative did not succeed. During the manifestation, protesters shouted slogans from “How much does a rape cost, mister mediator?” to “Rape cannot be bought” and *Transcena* organization, specialized on violence against women, that works with drama theatre therapy, organized a small theatre scene with an aggressor and a victim. Both formal feminist NGOs such as Front, Filia and *Transcena* participated, but also street feminist groups and collectives such as the Alternative Library as well as more loosely organized activists and supporters. In the words of an activist:

Many of our common actions were reactive... I mean, there were the protests to end violence against women that were somehow planned together, they were not necessarily reactive, but when there were common actions, they were generally reactive, that is to say, the introduction of rape into the law of mediation or the cuts of the indemnity for raising the children or all sorts of actions that took us to the street in certain moments, in a reactive manner, not necessarily thought-out, proactively calculated, and otherwise everybody walked in her direction... there were no such partnerships between feminist organizations, besides those in the area of violence against women. That's where we met each other in the middle.¹⁷¹

Feminist activists, NGOs and collectives also joined popular mass protests in Romania, as for example, the anti-austerity mobilizations in the University Square in 2012. They had a visible

¹⁶⁸ I.C. – Filia, Bucharest

¹⁶⁹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

¹⁷⁰ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest

¹⁷¹ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest

presence and coalesced together, challenging the dynamics of the mobilizations when they stood-up against racism, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia manifested during episodes of racist violence towards Roma protesters and anti-abortion promotion (Ana 2017, p. 1487). The feminist group in the University Square displayed ideological differences of which activists were conscious from the Slutwalk march. Feminists mostly associated with the Alternative Library, conveyed anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-authoritarian messages, radically positioning against international corporations, police and state repression, while feminists coming from NGOs expressed more liberal and democratic positions framed in terms of women's rights as citizens and taxpayers. Feminist activists, both from Street informal collectives and NGOs, participated as well to Rosia Montana mobilizations in 2013, or what has been called "The Romanian Autumn" but a feminist group did not emerged and moreover, many feminist activists or militants associated with the radical left scene or even those with a more democratic discourse, were rapidly demoralized by the nationalist and patriotic groups and discourses that formed around Rosia Montana, and subsequently demobilized.¹⁷² Some of the militants around Claca collective were even beaten-up.¹⁷³ One activist from an informal feminist collective recalls the atmosphere:

In 2013 I participated at one or two mobilizations, I think it was at the big one, all over the city and I felt that I had no place out there. On the one hand, I was glad that so many people were out in the street, people of all kinds. I enjoyed the diversity (...) and the fact that people of all ages, older and younger, intellectuals and non-intellectuals felt that they can do this thing, that is they find a place for themselves in this movement. I, on the other hand, I lost my fellows and we split and I got next to the extreme-right group. They were in popular shirts embroidered and with a swastika and I said I cannot believe I do this. And there is no contradiction, that we are the same part of the barricade? How is it possible?¹⁷⁴

Lastly, some of the feminist activists also engaged in Anti-Eviction protests organized by the Common Front for the Right to Housing¹⁷⁵.

In Belgium, some of the spontaneous, reactive mobilizations were much related to restriction regarding abortion, either in Belgium or in Europe, in solidarity with other feminist

¹⁷² A.M A-Casa, Cluj; B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; T.D. - Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; I.C. – Filia, Bucharest; C.S. 1 – Front, Bucharest; M.R. 1 – Front, Bucharest; C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; R.C. – A-Casa, Cluj

¹⁷³ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

¹⁷⁴ B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

¹⁷⁵ C.L.- Dysnomia, Bucharest; R.C. – A-Casa, Cluj; O – Dysnomia, Bucharest; C.C. – CPE, Bucharest; Participant observation carried out between January – July 2016

movements fighting for the right to abortion. Feminist activists also joined other spontaneous mobilizations than specifically feminist, with which they resonated or where they wanted to bring a feminist dimension and message that was thought to be invisible. Out of some of these spontaneous, reactive mobilizations, more long term initiatives were born and were further consolidated. For example, re-mobilizations around abortion, started in 2012, when feminist organizations and allies realized that the marches for life, organized by the pro-life movement in Belgium, became regular, every year on the 24th of March, with a new rhetoric and means of communication and with the constitution of a new group – generation for life that seemed to have an impact in the media.¹⁷⁶ Thus, different civil society actors, such as Centre d’Action Laïque (CAL), the Fédération Laïque de Centres de Planning Familial, the planning federation of Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) and other family planning federations, together with feminist associations, such as Garance and Université des Femmes decided to mobilize the same day - the 24th of March 2012 at Place Poelaert, before the Palais de Justice, in Brussels for the right to abortion.¹⁷⁷ The protest gathered more than 2000 people.¹⁷⁸ Out of this mobilization emerged the desire to organize a platform of associations to fight for the right to abortion, to have a greater impact in the media but also in relation to the public, as the platform wanted and did organize at federal level, trying to overcome the challenges related to differences in political context in relation to abortion in Wallonia and Flanders.¹⁷⁹ In Wallonia, family planning centres practice abortion, while in Flanders abortion takes place in specialized centres. The platform that emerged is called Abortion Right – Plateforme pour le Droit à L’Avortement en Europe et dans le Monde.¹⁸⁰ On the one hand, mobilization followed a logic of reaction to the amplitude of the pro-life movement, but on the other hand it built-up a logic of prevention as they felt they were mostly defensive and reactive in general, lacking resources comparable with those of pro-life movement and

¹⁷⁶ R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

https://www.rtb.be/info/belgique/detail_une-marche-contre-le-droit-a-l-avortement-rassemble-1500-personnes-a-bruxelles?id=9564813 2017 accessed July 14, 2019

https://www.rtb.be/info/belgique/detail_manifestation-pour-la-liberte-de-conscience-du-personnel-medical?id=7954771 2013 accessed July 14, 2019

<https://www.cathobel.be/2012/03/20/3eme-marche-pour-la-vie-a-bruxelles> accessed July 14, 2019

it was already its third edition as mentioned in the article

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.planning-familial.org/actualites/mobilisation-pour-le-droit-lavortement-24-mars-2012-bruxelles-002591>

¹⁷⁸ https://www.rtb.be/info/societe/detail_des-centaines-de-personnes-a-bruxelles-pour-le-droit-a-l-avortement?id=7736376

¹⁷⁹ Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS); R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.abortionright.eu> accessed November 29, 2018

through this platform they wanted to engage in a durable, long-term strategy.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, the federal structure of Belgium seems to challenge the capacity for organization and functioning of the platform at the federal level. One interviewee from Université des Femmes explains these impediments:

(...) the platform is losing its initial energy, because federating all the actors, the speakers, just speaking becomes more and more difficult. For example, in Flanders and Wallonia, Federation Wallonia Brussels, we do not seem to have exactly the same political stakes, that is to say that in Flanders they have the tendency to say "We do not have any problem in Flanders; there are no problems with public opinion"; There are problems with groups that enter the schools with sexual education, but for them there are no problems at the political level. Where in the Wallonia Brussels Federation we are saying "Yes! There are problems at the political level, already the fact that politicians say in interviews "we do not want to touch this law, we do not want to discuss this law because we are afraid of a backlash"; you see politicians who say that, in any case they said it two or three years ago, it is already problematic. Of what are we afraid?¹⁸²

Mobilizations for reaction targeted as well other European governments and were organized in solidarity with women fighting against restricting the abortion rights. One such mobilization was organized on January 29, 2014, when more than 2000 people gathered in front of the Spanish Embassy in Belgium and marched with torchlights towards the European Parliament.¹⁸³ Among others, members of CFULB and of abortion rights platform participated. Feminist activists from MALFRAP USE, Féminisme Libertaire Bruxelles and CFULB also organized a counter-manifestation in reaction to a “march for life” mobilizations on April 17, 2016 when several feminist activists were arrested.¹⁸⁴ On October 3, 2016, women gathered at Schuman between the Council of EU and the EU Commission and marched towards the Polish Embassy in Belgium, to protest against the law project in Poland attempting to further restrict abortion rights in Poland – already highly restrictive, quasi forbidden, by banning the right to abortion in the cases of serious pathologies found in the embryo (the possibility to abort in this case was one of the three exception to the prohibition

¹⁸¹ R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

¹⁸² R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

¹⁸³ https://www.rtb.be/info/belgique/detail_bruelles-2-000-personnes-soutiennent-le-droit-a-l-avortement?id=8188082 accessed November 29, 2018

¹⁸⁴ <https://albruxelles.wordpress.com/2016/04/18/regard-feministe-sur-la-repression-policiera-episode-2> accessed November 29, 2018

of the abortion).¹⁸⁵ All over Europe solidarity mobilizations with the Black Protest/ Czarny Protest were organized.¹⁸⁶

Feminist activists have also joined general mobilizations against the Charles Michel government and the Peeters law (what they call the equivalent of the French “loi du travail”) on September 29, 2016¹⁸⁷ or against the austerity measures imposed by the right wing government of Charles Michel in October, 2015.¹⁸⁸ Feminist activists from CFULB and MALFRAP USE also joined the organization of mobilizations against CETA and TTIP in Brussels on September 20, 2016.¹⁸⁹ This shows how the feminism movement exists not just separately, but in interaction with other social movements, characterized by various components, collective representations and dynamic boundaries (Ana, 2017, 1476).

II. A common scenario? Authorized versus non-authorized protest.

In Bucharest, the great majority of feminist protests were organized with prior authorization from the city hall, both the planned ones as those organized for the 8th of March or the 25th of November and the reactive ones such as the protest against the inclusion of rape in the mediation law or the one against the cuts in the childcare allowance. In Romania, the law guarantees the right for its citizens to organize manifestations and demonstrations, peacefully and without weapons.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, public meetings - rallies, demonstrations, manifestations, sports competitions, processions and the like - to be held in markets, on public roads or in other open air places, can only be organized after prior announcement.¹⁹¹ There are similar provisions in Belgium.¹⁹² In Romania, the organizers of the public assemblies shall submit the written declaration to the municipal, town or communal city halls on the territory of which they are to be held at least 3 days before the date of their

¹⁸⁵ Participant observation October 3rd, 2016

¹⁸⁶ <https://twitter.com/hashtag/czarnyprotest?lang=en>

¹⁸⁷ <https://francais.rt.com/international/26998-manifestation-contre-gouvernement-belge-loi-peeters> accessed November 29, 2018

¹⁸⁸ https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2015/10/07/en-belgique-une-immense-manifestation-contre-l-austerite_4784562_3210.html accessed November 29, 2018

T.M. – CFULB, Brussels; S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

¹⁸⁹ https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/detail_grande-manifestation-ce-mardi-apres-midi-a-bruxelles-contre-le-ttip-et-le-ceta?id=9408940 accessed November 29, 2018

T.M. – CFULB, Brussels

¹⁹⁰ Legea nr. 60/1991 privind organizarea și desfășurarea adunărilor publice

¹⁹¹ Art. 2 Legea nr. 60/1991 privind organizarea și desfășurarea adunărilor publice

¹⁹² Art. 26 from Belgian Constitution; the rules and regulations regarding the organization of manifestation differs from municipality to municipality (“commune”)

performance, mentioning some details about the manifestation, the organizers and those who are responsible and the route¹⁹³ and this request is to be approved or rejected by the advisory commission which can also modify some elements contained in the prior declaration of the group.¹⁹⁴ Feminist activists who organized authorized protests many times had difficult negotiations with the public authorities because the advisory commission often persuaded them to change the route or the time proposed by the organizers of the manifestation, in order to push them in more isolated places or desolated places at that hour or day. This was the case of the protest organized on November 21st, 2011 for the introduction of the protection order for the victims of domestic violence¹⁹⁵ next to the House of Parliament and Izvor Park in the afternoon. A member of Filia organization recalls:

“So next to Parliament we were given this batch, near the Izvor Park. There was no one; there is no one that November evening; no one walks through the Park on November 25th. It seemed weird, but I enjoy it because we were many people. On the other hand I had this dubious feeling that we were protesting in our allotted fixed space. Especially because we are used at protests to talk to people, to give a flyer, to discuss with people who are passing and there everything seemed very well guarded. We were having gendarmes. They did not impress me, but they made me angry that they were there. In the Parliament, I remember now that it was Friday afternoon and in the Parliament there was no one. Everybody was gone. So it was not like somebody gathered to see us.”¹⁹⁶

Another similar case was that of the protest against the introduction of rape in the mediation law, in winter 2012. Another member of Filia recalls that the authorities “did not gave us a place in the public square; they put us behind blocks, behind Manuc’s Inn”.¹⁹⁷

An exception to the authorized 8th of March protests in Bucharest, organized by feminist NGOs is the participatory performance *Istoria Artei Rescris prin P tratul Negru* (*Instrumentar revolu ionar*) (“The History of Art rewritten through the black square”

¹⁹³ Art. 7 the name under which the organizing group is known; the goal; place, date, time of start and duration of the action; routes of deflection and deflation; the approximate number of participants; persons empowered to ensure and respond to organizational measures; the services they require from the local council, the local police, and the gendarmerie.

¹⁹⁴ Art. (8) (1) The commission for the organization of the public assemblies is established at the level of all the local councils, consisting of the mayor, the secretary of the commune or the city, as the case may be, representatives of the police and the gendarmerie.

(2) In justified cases, with the approval of the organizers, the opinion boards may modify some of the elements contained in their prior declaration.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.ziare.com/stiri/proteste/protest-fata-de-violenta-asupra-femeilor-vineri-la-palatul-parlamentului-1135139> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁹⁶ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

¹⁹⁷ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest

(Revolutionary Toolkit’’) and organized on 8 March 2016 by the artist Veda Popovici that did not make the object of an authorization from public authorities. She transformed a contemporary art methodology of using the movement of the bodies/bodies in movement not just as a critique of the physical materiality of objects, but importantly by transforming it into an element of a larger critical discourse targeting patriarchy, colonialism, orientalism.¹⁹⁸ The performance included several female poses as the justice, mother, freedom, women worker, female believer, women warrior accompanied by a critical radical and historically grounded text explaining the different poses and that was read at the megaphone during the performance. Several feminist activists participated individually¹⁹⁹ at the performance. Some were part of queer feminist informal groups, such as *Dysnomia* or left movements for the right to housing and others were professional NGOs such as Filia, CPE or Front.²⁰⁰ Art. 3. From the law 60/1991 stipulates that the public gatherings whose purpose is “cultural-artistic, sporting, religious, commemorative manifestations, those occasioned by official visits” do not require prior declaration. This allowed organizers to eschew negotiation with the advisory commission that did not fit within the overall political standpoint and the message the protesters wanted to convey, while keeping them relatively safe from police repression. Thus, when police officers questioned about the manifestation, activists part of the collective performance explained that it was a cultural manifestation.²⁰¹

In Cluj, the previously mentioned marches organized on the 8th of March under the slogan “Reclaim the...”, by the feminist collective A-Casa together with Les Sisterhood and other activists and collectives were not authorized either. The reason why the organizers did not want to declare the march to public authorities is the fact that to obtain the authorization it is necessary to accept a pre-established itinerary, to give the names of the persons who are responsible for the march, but also to risk not being given the authorization.²⁰² The police “tolerated” the protesters and the march and accompanied them on their itinerary, to make sure that they marched on the sidewalk and not on the street and tried to discourage them to

¹⁹⁸ Participant observation March 8th, 2016

<https://www.feminism-romania.ro/86-discriminari-urbane/activism-stradal/1272-de-8-martie-se-lupta>
<https://www.scena9.ro/article/veda-popovici-istpria-artei-patratul-negru> accessed July 14, 2019

¹⁹⁹ Individual participation at the performance implies that activists participated on their own at the collective manifestation and not as representatives of an organization or a group.

²⁰⁰ Participatory observation on the 8th of March 2016.

²⁰¹ Participant observation March 8th, 2016.

²⁰² A.M A-Casa, Cluj, B.R. – A-Casa les Sisterhood, Cluj

use slogans considered crude such as “Patriarchy is all shit”.²⁰³ One of the members of the feminist group of A-Casa collective explains the relation with the police during the marches and why they did not want to declare them:

“I know that when you go to ask for authorization you are asked for a route, a name, a responsible person and if there is any incident during the march it is also the responsibility that falls on the shoulders of one person or a group of people and I did not think that was ok. And being a thing anyway, we had music, we had flyers, we could always say it was a cultural manifestation, so somehow I felt very sure that we should not have very big problems. In 2014 I remember that the police came to some people they saw with flags or banners or flyers in their hands, and we tried to explain them nicely about what this was all about and they did not have a nasty or aggressive reaction but they accompanied us on the route and tried not to let us go on the street because we were not such a big group anyway, and we could not resist to this too much.”²⁰⁴

For both authorized and non-authorized manifestations, organized by informal collectives or formal NGOs, the police and gendarmes intensively used information strategies, as theorized by Della Porta and Reiter (2006, 176), especially the use of audio-visual technology and also gathering of information through secret services, to spot activists and control protest through prevention, by identifying those who would potentially break the law and dissuade them without intervening directly.²⁰⁵ In Cluj, for the manifestations of the 8th of March, in Bucharest for Veda Popovici’s performance, for the protest against the tabloidization of violence against women by the media organized on the 25th of November 2012²⁰⁶, for the housing and anti-eviction protests where feminist activists were present as allies, the police continuously filmed the protesters.²⁰⁷ One activist from Front evokes the police filming during the protest against the tabloidization of violence against women:

A: Interestingly, at the television protest, the gendarmerie was much more interested, I do not know by whom because they came and filmed nonstop. So they were simply going through the crowd and capturing the faces in front of the people.

Q: I also saw this during the housing protest I recently participated.

²⁰³ B.R. – A-Casa les Sisterhood, Cluj; A.M A-Casa, Cluj

²⁰⁴ A.M A-Casa, Cluj

²⁰⁵ A.M A-Casa, Cluj; B.R. – A-Casa les Sisterhood, Cluj, C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; O.C. – Front, Bucharest

²⁰⁶ <https://www.feminism-romania.ro/presa/editoriale/998-violena-nu-e-divertisment> accessed July 14, 2019

²⁰⁷ A.M A-Casa, Cluj; B.R. – A-Casa les Sisterhood, Cluj, C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; O.C. – Front, Bucharest + participant observation

A: They were very vigilant. I was very amazed. I was talking to C. and I understand to ask who is organizing, what happens, but when they sit with the camera and shoot when they ask questions it's absolutely disconcerting. But C. told me this is how it happens. This is the procedure. I asked the gendarme who was filming me and told me that's the procedure. A database is created and if you appear ten times at these manifestations and at the 11th one there are bombings, these people will be questioned. It does not seem right to me.”²⁰⁸

In Romania, the legacy of the secret services, from the Communist regime is subject to much controversy regarding the question of policing methods to repress and demobilize activists (Abaseaca, 2017, 10). Many activists, especially those associated with the radical left, anarchist and anti-militarist movements are aware of the intimidation and infiltration tactics used by the state apparatus as they were subject to these strategies that reached up physical repression in the case of Anti-NATO protests.²⁰⁹ One feminist activist, long-term involved in various left wing groups, justice for all movements, describes that in Romania the state's response to mobilization is very prompt, precisely because the repressive apparatus is very disproportionate to the capacities of mobilization of the population.²¹⁰ She adds: “I imagine hundreds of people who do nothing, they have nothing to write about in the actual reports and then they spy on the smallest leftist who dared to say something anti-government”.²¹¹

Feminist activists from Cluj and Bucharest, also know about the police intensive use of information strategies also from other bigger protest such as the University Square mobilizations in 2012 or Rosia Montana protests in 2013. One activist from A-Casa mentions about the fact that actively involved militants are closely monitored:

Well, those who have been involved for many years are known to the police. I know that with the protest from Rosia Montana many protesters were fined and the most active received very large fines and we somehow tried to manage, to organize ourselves to go to court or to solve as best as we can. Actually a friend was telling me when a policeman took her family name, with her occupation. Those who are actively involved are well known by the police, with cameras.²¹²

²⁰⁸ O.C. – Front, Bucharest

²⁰⁹ A.M A-Casa, Cluj; B.R. – A-Casa les Sisterhood, Cluj, C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest;

²¹⁰ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest;

²¹¹ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest;

²¹² B.R. – A-Casa les Sisterhood, Cluj

Coercive strategies such as force and arms to control or disperse a demonstration (Della Porta and Reiter 2006, 176) were used against anti-Nato protesters when around 50 Romanian and foreign youth were brutally beaten and illegally detained²¹³. Why is this relevant for the normalization of feminist protests or feminist movement's relation with the repressive apparatus? Out of the pain and out of the lack of horizon that followed the violent repression of anti-Nato mobilization, the Alternative Library in Bucharest was born²¹⁴ an together with it the feminist reading group of Alternative Library, that allowed the time and space for regeneration of the movement on the left and radical left. The feminist group of Alternative Library was on the one hand one of the very few hubs of left feminist groups as an alternative to the NGO-ized liberal feminism and that on the other hand contributed a great deal to the bridge building and mostly discursive diffusion of radical left, queer versions of feminism towards the NGO-ized liberal feminism as it will be discussed in the following sections and sub-sections. This also reveals much about the kind of form of organization chosen as informal, self-managed group, and arguably the reticence to collaborate with the state and the need to build-up and spread a critical discourse. One feminist activist recalls the situation back then:

“Beyond the information that I know from my comrades that the Anti-Nato repression was a very critical point in the sense that there was already a generalized repression in Romania against the anarchist scene. There were more things, but we do not talk about them. Obviously Active Watch cannot write about the repression of anarchists but this thing completely killed the movement, because the exacerbated and grotesque violence and atrocities of the police and the atrocity of the situation scared the people bigtime.”²¹⁵

In Belgium, the 8th of March mobilizations and the Reclaim the Night marches were organized in Brussels initially with an authorization from public authorities. The Reclaim the Night 2014 was declared and authorized²¹⁶ as well as the 8th of March 2015 mobilization.²¹⁷ The mobilizations were supposed to happen on the sidewalk surrounded by police officers to avoid that protesters go on the street, or what kind of slogans to shout and what attitude they should have in the public place,²¹⁸ aspects that was resented as constraining²¹⁹ and

²¹³ Raport Freeex 2011 Libertatea presei in Romania 2011

²¹⁴ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest;

²¹⁵ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

²¹⁶ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

²¹⁷ S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

²¹⁸ <https://equimauves.wordpress.com/2014/06/14/pratique-et-ficele> accessed July 14, 2019

²¹⁹ S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

altercations took place during The Reclaim the Night 2014. Consequently, the following manifestations both the “Reclaim the night” marches and the 8th of March mobilizations, were organized without prior declaration and demand for authorization as activists wanted to impose themselves on the street and reclaim their right to occupy a public place.²²⁰ The 2014 Reclaim the Night march was organized by an informal feminist group whose members define themselves as “diverse, multiple and itinerant” and who organize “horizontally, without a flag or a hierarchy, trying as much as possible not to reproduce relations of domination” between them. The night walk is organized in chosen gender non-mixity – “without cis men, in order to reclaim the street during the night against sexist and police violence”. One activist who participated at various Reclaim the Night marches recalls about the first march in 2014, when they had an authorization from public authorities:

“A: I think the first version they did in 2014, they did a Facebook event. At the time there was more visibility. I knew people in the organization or close to the organization but not more than that. I think what they wanted to do was to create the equivalent of Slutwalk but they did not resonate for different reasons with the Slutwalk term, they wanted something that was non-mixed without cis men So it spoke well, anarchist side too. It was a good walk, but we had problems with the police.

Q: Even in 2014?

A: Yes, in fact what happened at the moment was that they had asked permission to parade - they made this strategic choice and we were quite numerous when we arrived at Mont des Arts and we had permission to parade on the sidewalks and so quickly we walked on the street and so at that moment the cops arrived truck in front of the truck, one behind the other and we could scroll, but surrounded by cops who were on the sides super oppressive it was qv that guys, it was completely crazy.”²²¹

After the experience of the first “Reclaim the night” march in 2014, feminist activists decided not to declare the subsequent mobilizations and to reclaim the streets and the right to be in the public space and they were severely repressed by the police.²²² Police violence and repression during the 2015 Reclaim the Night march was one of the elements that forced the organizers of the 8th of March mobilizations, among which CFULB, Malfrap-USE, Féminisme Libertaires, not to demand an authorization to protest in 2016, to stand in solidarity with those who were victims of police violence and reclaim the public space.²²³

²²⁰ S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

²²¹ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

²²² L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels, S.V. – CFULB, Brussels, M.S. – Garance, Brussels

²²³ S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

Nevertheless, in Brussels, if the non-mixed demonstration organized on the occasion of the International Women's Day was more tolerated by the authorities, the non-mixed night march continued to be violently repressed by the police the following years.²²⁴ Thus, Saturday, on the 11th of February 2017, during the night walk, the protesters gathered around 20.00 o'clock at Mont des Arts, some of them individually, others with friends or acquaintances; they exchanged songs, slogans, banners or torches that were prepared during the afternoon. The demonstration was not the subject of a request for authorization - a decision that politically motivated and connected to the interactions with the police during the previous Reclaim the Night marches. However, the lack of authorization did not seem to bother the police when they questioned the demonstrators that were gathered at Mont des Arts.²²⁵ One of the participants says:

When I went there, I already knew that the demonstration was not declared. I still had a big doubt that the police would piss us off (laughs). I knew it; I was suspicious about it. But I completely agree with the fact that it is important to reclaim the space during the night, to say that it is also our space, to denounce the violence.²²⁶

Around 20.30, about 150 people took the streets of Brussels' city centre, singing and chanting slogans. In a narrow lane, a man comes out between cars, with a telescopic baton in hand and begins to hit the protesters. Initially, the demonstrators thought it was someone from a counter-movement, a masculinist or a fascist but they quickly realized that it was an undercover police officer, the moment he aligned with the other police officers who began to surround and block the protesters in the small road.²²⁷ Police officers, armed with batons and shields arrived on board of several vans and surrounded the demonstrators. They threatened them with imprisonment unless they presented their IDs in order to get out of the police cordon. Considering that undocumented women took part in the demonstration, the choice given to activists to go out one by one by presenting their documents, was not really a choice

²²⁴ M.S. – Garance, Brussels; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels participant observation February 11, 2019

²²⁵ Participant observation 11th of February 2017.

²²⁶ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium

²²⁷ Participant observation 11th of February 2017, L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium: "After that, I was not scared anymore because once I realized that it was the cops hitting on us I was prepared. I knew that the cops were going to fall on us because police repression is a fact. And that we were there a few days after the events of Theo in France, it was almost logical in the state in which we live it is obliged that it happens. But by the time the guy jumped on us and started banging on us, I did not catch it was a cop and I was really freaked out, but a few seconds later it was a defense issue, we had to regroup, to defend ourselves ... "

for them. Real-time videos and messages on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube have also alerted other official feminist organizations about the situation on the ground.²²⁸ Official media portrayed the event as a protest that degenerated, with activists doing graffiti and the police intervening to stop them.²²⁹ The feminist community has been offended by this description of the events, founding it inaccurate and misleading. The next day, after the protest, alternative media, feminist blogs and the websites of feminist organizations began to publish articles condemning police brutality.²³⁰

A feminist activist recalls during an interview the outbreak of the violent clash with the police and also police's different response to the 8th of March mobilizations compared to the "Reclaim the Night" marches:

"We were in the demonstration when the undercover cop started to attack us. I did not really know that he was a cop, I really thought it was a masculinist who came to hit everyone in the demonstration, I never thought that ... I knew they were stingy because they were annoying from the first Reclaim the Night; that in 2016 last year at the March 8 non-mixed march we were still able to have discussions with them, it was still ok but I remember the discussions we had and their condescending side and everything but I did not expect...It's not that I did not expect violence, but I did not experience it and suddenly see this guy who just rush into the crowd to hit us it, was super surprising."²³¹

On March 31, 2018, police repression fell again on the fifth non-mixed night march - Reclaim the night in Brussels when 70 protesters were arrested.²³² The procession was once again surrounded by a police cordon formed by officers with shields, helmets, batons and several vans and police cars.²³³ The police placed Heras barriers covered with canvases around the encircled cortege and brutally extracted the protesters by taking them to the police

²²⁸ Uploaded videos that were showing the violent intervention of the undercover policeman were removed, few days after the Reclaim the Night March.

²²⁹ <http://www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/manifestation-de-feministes-ayant-degenere-a-bruxelles-138-personnes-identifiees-58a01b12cd703b98152c8bdd>
https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/detail_une-manifestation-feministe-degenere-dans-le-centre-de-bruxelles?id=9527922

²³⁰ <https://www.axellemag.be/violences-policieres-marche-feministe-bruxelles>
<https://www.agirparlaculture.be/index.php/entretien/408-joelle-sambi-nzeba-quand-exprimer-une-injustice-dans-la-rue-pose-probleme>
<http://www.garance.be/spip.php?article1047>

²³¹ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium

²³² <https://bx1.be/news/reclaim-the-night-manifestation-non-autorisee-70-arrestations-participantes-deplorent-latitude-de-police>

²³³ <https://reclaimthenightbruxelles.wordpress.com>
<https://www.lesoir.be/148995/article/2018-04-02/manifestation-feministe-bruxelles-accusee-de-violences-la-police-invite-les>

station where protesters were held until late at night. The collective around the Reclaim the night march 2018 explains:

We find it extremely paradoxical to ask permission from a patriarchal state to protest against it. We therefore refuse to negotiate with the repressive and liberticidal militia of the same state. In addition, the police, the authorities, are a concentrated combo of all the oppressions we fight against, sexist, transphobic, racist, homophobic, power by authority, to name but a few.

We are not at our test in the anarchist or radical left environments, we note that more and more events that are opposed to ask for authorization to protest in Brussels are almost systematically repressed. A week before the RTN, the demonstration for the right to housing was aborted by a police arsenal once again completely disproportionate.²³⁴

The routinization of collective action involves a common scenario for the protesters and the authorities, so that there may be a negotiation or agreement between the protesters and the police. It seems that while the 8th of March mobilizations are much more tolerated by the police even when not making the object of an authorization from the public authorities, the Reclaim the Night marches were violently repressed. Arguably, as the 8th of March is endorsed as the International Women's Day by multiple official bodies, from national governments to the United Nations the day gains more legitimacy and manifestations and celebrations are organized globally. Another potential explanation could be related to the fact that the group who organized the Reclaim the Night wanted to keep anonymity and was not known to the police, while the organizers of the 8th of March mobilization could be identified, coupled with the more strongly anchored anarchist basis of the Reclaim the Night organizing collectives.

While in Romania, information strategies seem to be more common, in Belgium coercive strategies (Della Porta and Reiter, 2006) were used, especially in relation to the Reclaim the night march. Feminist activists from CFULB were similarly arrested when they participated at a non-authorized counter-manifestation, to the March for Life in 2016.²³⁵ However, activists who are closer to the anarchist movement also talk about the use of information strategies by the police in relation to the larger anarchist movement and post-terrorist attacks

²³⁴ <https://reclaimthenightbruxelles.wordpress.com>

²³⁵ I.B. – CFULB, Brussels

framing of the actions as terrorist.²³⁶ Lastly, it seems that while in Romania, the fact that the police was accompanying the protesters during the 8th of March mobilization in Cluj or tried to alter the claims that were considered obscene and improper did not affected the peaceful development of the march, in Brussels efforts to alter the slogans or to confine the protests space were thought to be obtrusive and not well received. Talking about police repression during the Reclaim the Night in Brussels, one feminist activist explains the necessity of the feminist movement to bridge with other movements and invest more in this area:

“...what I found interesting, but it was a bit cynical, was to say well there the violence of the repression hit on people on which it does not usually befall – white women, and therefore it pushes them to invest also in the field of police violence more and the expressions of solidarity that followed this repression were huge and it was also because it was white women to whom repression had befallen ... so there are things that strike me a little.

I have the impression, I'm happy as I think that even if there are a lot of complicated elements I think there are still people who ask themselves good questions and I'm sure that there will be relevant answers and we will move forward in an interesting way. In the end I need to believe it.”²³⁷

III. From normalization to internal diversity. Bridging social capital.

In this section I argue that the normalization of feminist protest, the multiplication of mobilizations and their frequency and the regularity/periodicity of some of them, as for example the 8th of march protests, on the International Women’s Day, or on the 25th of November for the International day to end violence against women, contributes to a process of bridge-building between various feminist groups, across different social dimensions such as age, ethnicity, class, sexuality and between feminist NGOs and Street feminist collectives. Bridge-building between different feminisms is generated through various processes that will be further discussed in the following chapters. The focus of this section is on the process of bridge-building occasioned by the normalization of protests that contributes to networking through linking various groups and discourses and favours information diffusion, generating wider collective identities, essential for collective action and subsequent larger mobilizations. Thus, I argue that rather than announcing the decline and loss of strength of a movement, the normalization of feminist protest indicates movement’s democratization and broadening of its collective identity that becomes more intersectional.

²³⁶ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

²³⁷ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

Theoretically, I draw on Putnam's (2000) uses and function of social capital and empirically I will focus on various cases of feminist protests in Belgium and Romania at the basis of this study. There are different forms of social capital from "repeated, intensive, multistranded networks" to "episodic, single stranded and anonymous" ones or from more formally organized types of social capital as formal associations to more informal groups that organize informal kinds of social capital (Putnam, 2000, 20). One dimension along which social capital varies is constituted by the distinction between bridging, or the inclusive dimension, and bonding, or the exclusive dimension (Ibidem). While the inclusive, bridging dimension of social capital is outward oriented, encompassing people across different social cleavages, the bonding dimension is inward oriented and tends to cultivate exclusive identities and homogenous groups (Ibidem). Thus, bridging might foster the build-up of broader identities and reciprocity while bonding might enhance solid in-group loyalty and sturdy outgroup antagonism (Idem., 21).

When discussing the internal diversity of protest in different cases of mobilization against the Iraq war, Walgrave and Verhulst (2009) distinguish between two meanings of the normalization of protest. First, the normalization of protest as produced by different groups that stage separate events to defend particular interests contributing to the fragmentation of interest representation and an increase in smaller protest events to defend specific interests by particular beneficiary groups (Walgrave and Verhulst, 2009, 1356). Second, a rise in protest events by dissimilar groups in the same time, leading to an increase in large generalist protest events bringing together different groups of people (Ibidem). While the first normalization mechanism leads to external diversity, bringing various groups in the streets but not at the same time, the second one leads to internal diversity bringing a heterogeneous group in the street at the same time.

In the case of the feminist movement in Romania and Belgium, I use the concepts of bridging and bonding, internal and external diversity with an increased focus on the within movement dynamics and inter-relation and overlapping with other social movements. I will use the concepts of bridging and bonding to refer to processes that take place both within the movement, between different groups such as formal feminist NGOs and informal Street feminist collectives and across different dimensions such as ethnicity or class but also outside the movement, outward. I will concentrate more on the bridging /internal diversity

dimension, especially within the movement, as I demonstrate that within movement bridging is being occasioned by the normalization of protest that enhances the internal diversity of the movement. I will also touch upon the on-going process of external/outward movement bridging. As Putnam (2000, 21) argues, many groups concomitantly bridge across some dimensions and bond along others, the two dimensions being understood as “more or less” dimensions along which to compare various kinds of capital rather than “either-or” categories.

In Romania, the organization of Slutwalk Bucharest in 2011 represented a crucial moment in this process of bridge-building and build-up of internal diversity to which activists from both feminist NGOs and informal groups refer to and remained in the collective memory of the movement as an ideal moment of cooperation, negotiation and discourse diffusion across different groups. Bridge-building between queer informal Street feminist groups and more institutionalized strands of feminism culminated during the organization of Slutwalk Bucharest in 2011. How the proximity between the two occurred? Previously, spontaneous protests or more regular mobilizations were organized and increased in frequency after 2010. Various groups that previously were not in contact learn about the existence of each other through the different mobilizations that they organized, such as the Take back the night march organized by the informal collective around Lady fest in 2007 or the 8th of March and 25th November mobilizations organized by formal NGOs. Some feminists, previously involved in the organization of LadyFest participated at the creation of the radical left project of Alternative Library²³⁸ and in 2010 started organizing feminist reading sessions, which became consolidated and known as the Feminist Reading Group that existed until 2013. Alternative Library offered many feminist titles and was an alternative to Filia Centre’s Library – the only one on gender studies in Bucharest. Activists from Front Association started to mingle with those from the Reading Group and out of this encounter, the project of organizing Slutwalk Bucharest (*Marsul Panaramelor*) grew. It was related to the international context and the emergence of the first Slutwalk protest in Toronto on the 3rd of April 2011 after police officer Michael Sanguinetti declared that “women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized” (Rush, 2011).²³⁹ The protest went

²³⁸ From dissatisfaction with the police violence during the NATO summit in 2008, a few years later the project of the Alternative Library was born.

²³⁹ Rush, C. (2011). "Cop apologizes for 'sluts' remark at law school." *The Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/940665--cop-apologizes-for-sluts-remark-at-law-school> Accessed December 4th, 2018

transnational with more than 75 Slutwalk marches being organized in various cities such as Chicago, Boston, New Delhi, Berlin, Londra, Mexico city, Sydney, Vancouver, Dallas, Buenos Aires, Seattle, Seoul, Sao Paolo, Paris, Los Angeles or Glasgow.²⁴⁰

Slutwalk Bucharest was the moment of coagulation between queer informal feminist groups and more formal feminist NGOs, but also of different feminisms as the group brought together Roma feminist activists, feminists more active in anarchist movement, or more professional feminists working in NGOs, that started to meet in the courtyard of the Alternative Library to organize the march, write banners and brainstorm about slogans. It was the moment and space when a process of intra-movement bridge-building started, of convergence and familiarization among different feminisms in discursive, organizational and tactical repertoires terms, occasioning a knowledge exchange process, at these levels. It was a process of social capital bridging and internal diversity build-up between various feminisms. It involved contamination in terms of contentious practices, non-hierarchical organization and consensual decision-making and intersectional discourses where class, ethnicity and sexuality were interlinked with gender. Regarding the discursive contamination, activists remember that anti-capitalist messages and some “racist slippages”²⁴¹ provoked heated discussions²⁴² during the organization of Slutwalk:

It was a moment of hope for me, when the Slutwalk was organized, though after it faded away. I have learned that there are other groups that have feminist concerns, with other nuances and other directions but for me it was important that there was this moment when we did something together and we talked ... with all the differences and with all the quarrels. I do not know if you remember the anti-capitalist banner? It was a panic with an anti-capitalist message, and people began to worry. It triggered a little reaction and tension and eventually the banner existed and walked through the march.²⁴³

Moreover, from the beginning, feminist activists brainstormed and debated about the name to be attributed to the translation of “slutwalk” and especially of “slut” in Romanian language, some wanted to be more aggressive, other to choose a milder translation, but a translation that would not be against or pejorative for sex-workers, enumerating from *curva*, *pitipoanca*,

²⁴⁰ Ana, A (2011). “Cateva puncte de veder ecu privire la miscarea Slutwalk” Pandoras, Realitatea. Retrieved from <http://pandoras.realitatea.net/politica-societate/cateva-puncte-de-vedere-cu-privire-la-miscarea-slutwalk-23248.html>

Accessed December 4th, 2018.

²⁴¹ “Tiganca imputita” president basescu M Dragan nu e ok

²⁴² B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest, O.C. – Front, Bucharest, S.P. - ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa

²⁴³ B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

*lelita balcanica*²⁴⁴ or *tarfa* to decide in the end for panorama and to call the march Marsul Panaramelor.²⁴⁵

For some institutionalized feminist organizations such as Filia, Slutwalk was anti-system and conveyed a too radical message.²⁴⁶ Its back-then president did not want to associate the name of Filia with Slutwalk, arguing that it would look bad on the organization's CV and they risk losing potential funding.²⁴⁷ However, she agreed that members of Filia participate individually at the organization of Slutwalk, but without any affiliation mentioned.²⁴⁸ A class discourse or a political economy critique was inexistent in Filia until contact with the anarcho-queer feminism of the Reading Group and later the Feminist Centre 'Sofia Nadejde' (CFSN).²⁴⁹ One of Filia's leaders mentions about this process of contamination:

No, in Filia, I did not feel that there was a discourse about capitalism, neoliberalism, until there was contact with the informal feminist groups, mostly the girls from CFSN. Let's be serious, until then I did not feel that there was a discourse on capitalism or neoliberalism in Filia; I did not hear these words in my life. (...) It's okay that it started then, but it did not exist before. So it was a matter of influence from my point of view.²⁵⁰

In terms organizational practices and decision-making exchange, activists from Front association mention that feminists from the Alternative Library and the Reading Group had consistent knowledge about consensus decision-making and applied it during the organization of Slutwalk.²⁵¹ As Front was a newly created group, which formalized as an NGO when Slutwalk was organized, allowing them to get an authorization to march, Front adopted afterwards consensual decision-making as a corner stone of their functioning, being enthusiastic about it from the Slutwalk experience.²⁵²

²⁴⁴ Different terms used pejoratively as synonyms for slut

²⁴⁵ I.T. – Front, Bucharest, C.P. – Front, Bucharest

²⁴⁶ V.A.1 – Front, Bucharest

²⁴⁷ V.A.1 – Front, Bucharest, V.A.2 – Front, Bucharest

²⁴⁸ V.A.1 – Front, Bucharest, V.A.2 – Front, Bucharest

²⁴⁹ A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest

²⁵⁰ A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest

²⁵¹ F.M. – Front, Bucharest, I.T. – Front, Bucharest

²⁵² F.M. – Front, Bucharest; M.R. 1 – Front, Bucharest

Feminist activists, from different collectives and organizations describe the Slutwalk Bucharest experience in 2011 in praiseworthy terms as a great success,²⁵³ “very beautiful from the point of view of groups dynamics”,²⁵⁴ as “the moment of coagulation” among different organizations and groups with a lot of enthusiasm,²⁵⁵ “the cornerstone” and “a landmark in the history of Romanian feminism”,²⁵⁶ “an important moment”.²⁵⁷ In terms of bridging between different groups, one feminist activist from Front argues that Slutwalk represented a great success for them “precisely because we came to know each other to find out that there are other feminist groups, that there are women who studied, who have done gender studies in other countries that are even better theoretically armed than we are”.²⁵⁸ Other activist from the Alternative Library, highly involved in the LGBTQIA movement recalls that “it was interesting because there were people from the wide spectrum of feminism” who collaborated to organize the Slutwalk march that was “so daring and with a provocative name”.²⁵⁹ Although some of them knew about each other previously and maybe sometimes intersected, Slutwalk was the moment when they came together, learned about each other and negotiated across feminist perspectives, different ideologies and different standpoints. While bonding across general gender lines or precisely a loose belonging to the feminist ideology they bridged across sexuality, ethnicity, age and maybe less across class. Slutwalk was also a moment of outward movement orientation and social capital bridge with women not active in the feminist movement or who did not claim any feminist belonging. One activist from Front association recalls:

“The nicest and most memorable for me was the Slutwalk, you know? It was a team work with several groups of feminists and NGOs but rather more groups and it was for me the best thing we did and it came out the most beautiful and with much involvement. Mass media were interested in the event and many people came. I have some colleagues from the work that came to our protest, and I think that’s the only feminist protest that they ever joined, you know? But they came. I felt really cool that women who are not activists or who do not even claim to be feminist ... and basically that’s the thing - how do you attract these women? How do you do events to reach them without them being directly involved in this area of activism ... because activists come from the beginning. But how do you get to the other women? And at Slutwalk we somehow managed to do this, I do not know how it was ... I do not think

²⁵³ M.R. 2 – Front, Bucharest

²⁵⁴ M.R. 1 – Front, Bucharest

²⁵⁵ C.S. 2 – Front, Bucharest

²⁵⁶ F.M. – Front, Bucharest;

²⁵⁷ B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; T.D. - Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

²⁵⁸ M.R. 2 – Front, Bucharest

²⁵⁹ S.P. - ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

it helped that it was also mediatized in the rest of the world and that the media came but I still think we had a very good communication and very good exposure.”²⁶⁰

The bridge-building at the level of tactical repertoires and some degree of contamination at discursive level, between different feminist groups and organizations, continued afterwards, when the anti-austerity protests outburst, in January 2012. Feminist activists had a visible presence and voice and their participation influenced and challenged the dynamics of the winter 2012 protests (Ana 2017). They coalesced together to resist and stand-up against racism, xenophobia, sexism and homophobia manifested during episodes of racist violence towards Roma protesters and anti-abortion promotion (Ana 2017, p. 1487). The feminist group in the University Square had ideological differences of which activists were conscious from the Slutwalk march. Feminists mostly associated with the Alternative Library, conveyed anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-authoritarian messages, radically positioning against international corporations, police and state repression, while feminists coming from NGOs expressed more liberal and democratic positions framed in terms of women’s rights as citizens and taxpayers.

Out of this tension within the feminist movement, between a liberal feminism, mainstream, NGO-ized t, an anarcho-queer feminism trying to organize outside the dominant structures and a Roma feminism organizing both in NGOs and informal collectives, the possibility of bridging between different strands of the movement and building a more intersectional politics of hope, in which recognition and redistribution claims target different yet overlapping oppressions and injustices, was born.

In Belgium, a similar process of bridging social capital and building up internal diversity can be observed, as occasioned by normalized protests. However, as feminist protests become routinized, opening the possibility for bridging, bringing diverse groups together, not all the attempts of bridging are successful. There are different cleavages and challenges to bridging that will be discussed in the next section. In Belgium, the non-mixed mobilization for the 8th of March in Brussels, initiated by a few radical left and anarchist groups prompted collaboration between different collectives and groups, during the following years, after the first manifestation, and was considered to be a quite successful case of social capital bridging and building internal diversity. By contrast, the Reclaim the Night march was considered

²⁶⁰ C.P. – Front, Bucharest

more successful in maintaining bonds in social capital rather than bridging, as it was a quite homogenous and affinity group.

The 8th of March non-mixed mobilization was initially launched by Feminisme Yeah, the feminist commission of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) and of Jeunese Anti-Capitaliste (JAC)²⁶¹ that made a call to all feminists who would like to join, and it was mostly small informal groups of students such as CFULB and Malfrap (Militantes Actives et Libres pour un Féminisme Révolutionnaire Anti-Patriarcat) USE which is the non-mixed commission of Union Syndicale Etudiante, that responded, but also the feminist NGOs Garance.²⁶² There was also some overlapping membership between CFULB and Malfrap USE.²⁶³ The following years, CFULB became a reference group of the mobilization as they became deeply involved with the organization and made the call for mobilization together with Malfrap USE.²⁶⁴ There was also a strategic reason behind CFULB making the call for mobilization the following years, related to the fact that they wanted to get closer as well to other feminist groups and NGOs, such as AWSA (Arab Women's Solidarity Association-Belgium) or *Bruxelloises et Voilées*²⁶⁵ and worrying that Feminisme Yeah's affiliation with the LCR might dissuade other feminist groups from participating, considering the scissions within the left.²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Feminisme Yeah signed the manifest and the call of mobilization, participating at the march but they did not initiated the call.²⁶⁷ Some other feminist activists from CFULB also felt that there might be a political recuperation, instrumentalization of the march by politicians on the left, during the first year of the non-mixed 8th of March mobilization. One feminist activist, member of CFLUB mentions:

“So this year 2017 with the MALFRAP we organize ourselves the non-mixed manifestation. Because two years ago it was the libertarian feminism and in fact I think that there is a very very political instrumentalization, even if on the main lines we agree with them but again it can be scary ... And for example we participated in the march, and MALFRAP too which depends on the FGTB trade union and libertarian feminists, at one point during the demonstration, stopped in front of the FGTB trade union headquarters screaming how rotten they were. It's problematic when you know that there are

²⁶¹ <http://www.lcr-lagauche.org/feminisme-yeah-la-commission-feministe-de-la-lcrsap-et-des-jac>

²⁶² D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels

²⁶³ T.M. – CFULB, Brussels

²⁶⁴ I.B. – CFULB, Brussels

²⁶⁵ <https://bruxelloisheetvoilee.com>

²⁶⁶ I.B. – CFULB, Brussels

²⁶⁷ I.B. – CFULB, Brussels

people who are financed by the FGFB who are in the organization too and so that's why when I say there was a recuperation, quite mystical politics.”²⁶⁸

CFULB organized also the feminist week around 8th of March on ULB campus, collaborating with other groups and NGOs involved in the preparation of the mobilization. For example, during the feminist week, CFULB organized together with Garance self-defence workshops or initiation to boxing.²⁶⁹ The 8th of March mobilization allows and supports young feminists coming up to the forefront. Considering that the members of CFULB initiating the organization of the march are changing every few years, with new students taking the lead, a regeneration of the feminist youth base is engendered. A process of social capital bridge-building across age and generations was occasioned.

Bridging social capital across ethnicity and building-up of internal diversity was possible due to afro-feminist and Muslim feminist collectives joining the mobilization the following years for the 8th of March mobilization.²⁷⁰ As in the Romanian case of the organization of Slutwalk when “racist slippages” brought about intense discussions, in the 2015 8th of March mobilization the fact that a white woman wore a black face saying that women’s bodies would be colonized by man together with the fact that there was no black women in the march brought about heated discussions and criticism.²⁷¹ However, compared to the Reclaim the Night march in Brussels, the mobilization for the 8th of March was considered to be more diverse, bringing together different variants of feminism. One member of Garance recalls, comparing the 8th of March mobilization with the Reclaim the Night, that: “During the 8th of March demonstration, there was still more diversity, it is not huge, but it’s much more and there were all the feminists, not all but there were plenty of different feminist tendencies that were represented on organizational bases that are not their habitual ones”²⁷². The level of bridging between feminist NGOs and Street feminism informal collectives concerning different organizational forms and practices was higher in Romania, while in Belgium for the 8th of March mobilization it was still more informal feminist groups and collectives that joined, even if not exclusively as indicated by the participation of Garance or AWSA.

²⁶⁸ I.S. – CFULB, Brussels

²⁶⁹ T.M. – CFULB, Brussels

²⁷⁰ I.B. – CFULB, Brussels; S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

²⁷¹ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels; S.V. – CFULB, Brussels

<https://joaogabriell.com/2016/04/30/les-comparaisons-entre-la-non-mixite-femmes-et-la-non-mixite-racisee-sont-problematiques> accessed December 5th, 2018.

²⁷² M.S. – Garance, Brussels

However, bigger movement organizations such as *Vie feminine* did not joined the mobilization, although some of its employees and members participated, as it was the case of D.P. who was also a member of *Feminisme Yeah* and participated in the organization of the 8th of March.

IV. Cleavages and challenges to bridging. Internal diversity versus homogeneity.

While the normalization of protest opened a space for interaction and negotiation between different kinds of feminisms and different groups with various organizational structures, this process was not a smooth road, but it included bumps, stops, reflections and negotiations and mostly it included learning and exchange between ways of doing political work and feminist engagement. In Romania, the cleavage between feminist activists and women protesters lied athwart of the process of feminist movement collective identity build-up, reflecting as well the tensions that can be engendered by simultaneous strategies of bridging and bonding of social capital. There was a distinction reinforced between women who define themselves as feminists and who are actively involved in advancing gender equality and rank-and-file women protesters who were mobilizing at various moments in time, organizing strikes together with trade unions or protests against the cuts in childcare allowances, when anti-austerity measures started to be introduced. This last example is particularly telling as it provoked intense discussions about the right strategy to adopt by feminist activists, especially by the feminist NGO *Filia* involved in the organization of the “Moms protest” in Bucharest, in 2010 and in the larger advocacy campaign “Call for Mothers Allowance” in which various feminist and non-feminist NGOs and informal groups participated.²⁷³ While the idea of the protest was nurtured by the informal groups around the online forums *miresici.ro* and *desprecopii.ro*, NGOs supported the initiative and undertook advocacy measures or wrote protest letters to public officials to counteract these measures.²⁷⁴ Within *Filia*, prior to the protest, discussions took place about whether they should associate their name with a protest that “has nothing to do with feminism”²⁷⁵ and which is not organized by feminist activists or with the participation of feminist activists.²⁷⁶ One member of *Filia* recalls:

²⁷³ <http://ce-re.ro/g3p/proiect-146> accessed December 11th, 2018.

²⁷⁴ C.B. – *Filia*, Bucharest

²⁷⁵ B.M. – *Filia*, Bucharest

²⁷⁶ B.M. – *Filia*, Bucharest; C.B. – *Filia*, Bucharest

There was a coordination between the Filia Center and an informal environment; it's a website, two in fact. There was a strong informal group there. The site was miresici.ro and a site that I otherwise knew I was pregnant at the time - about children or something like that. And there was a group that organized itself quite strongly. I do not know if they have ever formalized or remained an informal group.

There was a discussion in Filia (...) I remember it very well, a discussion about the fact that this group has nothing to do with feminism, but eventually Filia opted to go together and I think it was a good decision in the end. Again to get rid of this thing of us talking amongst us and finally listening to other opinions.

Yes and it was a co-ordination, it was the same place and there was the same message that was finally transmitted.

But somehow this initiative came from women who did not necessarily identify themselves as feminists.²⁷⁷

Although revealing the cleavage and tension between women who are feminist and women who do not define themselves as feminist, this protest occasioned a social capital bridging, oriented this time outside the movement, towards women from other environments.

At the same time, there was a widespread idea among feminist activists in NGOs that women in general do not mobilize in Romania or that they do not join the feminist actions, implying some expectations from the part of the feminist activists towards women in general. However, when realizing that the feminist actions that they were organizing were not touching a wider public, being almost all the time amongst feminist activists, from different NGOs and groups, but mostly between themselves, a kind of feminist bubble or gilded cage, feminist activists started to question themselves and to reflect about strategies on how to connect with women outside the movement. One feminist interviewee, previously member of Filia and who subsequently became part of the informal group CFSN, resulted out of the scission of the Alternative Library, including its Feminist Reading Circle, recalls about the discussions they had at one of the event CFSN organized about neoliberalism and violence when “mainstream feminists” complained that women do not mobilize:

I remember we organized at CFSN an activity on neoliberalism and violence, the discourse on violence against women and the prison industrial complex and someone came from the mainstream part of the city to say that women do not mobilize on themselves and I had a moment of anger... and after that I had a moment of flashiness and I realized how many times I also said this thing I wanted to slam my

²⁷⁷ B.M. – Filia, Bucharest

head against the walls. And then I thought and I told her to be careful because we always have this thing within feminist NGOs – that women do not mobilize themselves, that women do not organize themselves, but two days ago I've been looking at one of the biggest strikes I've ever read about women workers and I want to ask you how many feminists have been there ... and suddenly everything went quiet (...)

My question is actually when we say that women have not revolted and that we - the feminists from Bucharest and three more cities, we come with the EU speech ... we are the feminism, right?... and we will spread it as if we would share the light, you know? Doesn't it actually work to silence?²⁷⁸

Even if currently feminist activists acknowledge the existence of different feminisms in terms of discourses and practices, the process of labelling who is a feminist and who is not both among activists inside the feminist movement or in relation to other women outside the movement still permeate the intra-movement tensions and conflicts.²⁷⁹ This reflects the tension between expanding the internal diversity of the movement through bridging of different kinds of feminisms such as queer, anarchist, Roma, radical, mainstream, liberal, intersectional and different forms of organization such as formal NGO-ized structures or more informal Street feminist groups and enhancing the affinity of each groups within the feminist movement through bonding strategies.

Before feminist protests became routinized, contentious versus non-contentious strategies constituted another significant cleavage among feminists in Bucharest, as it was also reflected at the 2011 Slutwalk protest or in the internal discussions of feminist NGOs. While Front, with its founding members coming from the Gender Studies Master programme to which Filia was close, functioning as a research centre next to the MA and the gender studies doctoral programme, took the lead in organizing the Slutwalk together with the Alternative Library and other feminist activists, Filia did not want to associate its name with it even though some of its members participated. Within Filia, there was a persistent negotiation and pressure towards its president from the new members at the end of 2000s to open up the NGO towards contentious actions when considered as necessary. Within Filia, there was a high turnover as well with its members leaving for other organizations such as Front, Agentia Impreuna, AnAlize or towards the gender equality governmental body Anes. One of Filia's member recalls about the period when the organization started to open up to more contentious practices:

²⁷⁸ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

²⁷⁹ M.R. 2 – Front, Bucharest; participant observation General Assembly Front 2016

“2008, when I told you that I did not understand ... Filia meant back then OB, AD, A.I., who were doing only research or scandal, and I was with TM and D.N. plus other colleagues at the (gender equality) master, and we were a cool team and many of us got involved in Filia. Of course not all of them stayed there but I stayed and later and AB joined (...). Then we made our small, small revolution because back then O.B. did not street activism, which is very strange because now she would climb on all the fences with banners but she did not want it, back then she made theory (...). And then T.M. came from Spain where she did a master; T.M. is a left-wing – “power, power in street power, what do you mean not to do anything, power in the street”.

And then we had to do such a thing with A.D. an enticement to make O.B. look like she wants. We made O.B look like he wants. Since then he liked it and she did not do anything else. And this is how Filia began its Street activity, in large part because T.M. was the ringleader... Not that without her it would not have been done, but would have been delayed.”²⁸⁰

In Belgium, challenges related to within movement bridging and internal diversity build-up occasioned by the normalization of protest were connected to cleavages along ethnicity, class, ableism lines, revealing that street informal feminist groups are affinity groups and as such might be oriented more towards bonding social capital rather than bridging, compared to more formal feminist NGOs.²⁸¹ This aspect was revealed by the difference perceived by activists when comparing the two regular protests during the recent years, the Reclaim the Night and the 8th of March in terms of protest participants and bases of organization. While the 8th of March mobilization managed to open up during the years and create more internal diversity for the mobilization, the Reclaim the Night was thought to be less successful in this endeavour.

For the 8th of March mobilization, after the indignation provoked by the use of a Black face at the 2015 march, evoked in the previous section, organizers contacted groups such as *Bruxelloises et voilées* or Awsa to bridge with feminisms other than the white privileged and also to avoid others instrumentalising or speaking in the name of non-white feminism just to fill in a gap in representation as the Black face claimed to be but considered to be racist.²⁸² One feminist activist, anti-racist, decolonial and anarchist, member of both a formal feminist NGO and informal groups mentions with respects to the 8th of March mobilization that - apart

²⁸⁰ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

²⁸¹ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels; participant observation Reclaim the night 2017; Professionalization Study Day 2016.

²⁸² L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels; S.V. – CFULB, Brussels; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; I.B. – CFULB, Brussels

from being impressed that assumed feminists protest without asking for an authorization - she was amazed by the fact that feminists from different political tendencies gathered together with no islamophobic slogans or messages on the banners considering that “there are well known people in Belgium that are systematically like this - woman object; one must choose”.²⁸³

By contrast, the Reclaim the night was considered to be based more on affinity with anarcho-feminism and less able to bridge social capital, to achieve internal diversity. One of the participants mentions that the Reclaim the night was organized “on an anarcho-feminist basis and thus the people who were present were the persons who had affinities with this trend. There was not a great diversity. There were no people with disabilities, there were a few racialized people, there were no children, no veiled women.”²⁸⁴ The same activist recounts that she participated at moments of organization of the 2016 Reclaim the night that was organized by a different group than in 2017 and she was struck by the distortion between the declaratory will to be inclusive and its lack of translation in practice in the sense of questioning the meaning of inclusivity that for her would have been to organize something from a basis that is not individual or belonging to an a priori group of people, to join the others and find what base do people share to start organizing from an identified shared base, with claims that are not a priori individual claims or shared a priori by a few people.²⁸⁵ In order to account for the lack of diversity and for organizing among people with shared affinities, the organizing collective for the 2017 march tried to get in contact with other feminist collectives organizing around ethnicity or veiling, but their attempt was less successful. The same feminist activist who criticized the lack of inclusiveness in practice during the organization of the 2016 Reclaim the Night was asked to put the collective in contact with feminist collectives organising from different bases. She recounts that:

“And after the demonstration from last year (2016), the team that decided to make the demonstration this year, through a common girlfriend, made a request to put them in contact with groups of racialized women, including veiled women to invite them to their activities, to this demonstration, and I refused ... in fact I said yes I will give you the contact but I will not introduce you – the request was to introduce them and I said no in fact. I cannot do that. I feel committed to breaking white solidarity. This is white solidarity, on your bases. If I relay your bases and I put pressure on groups that try to find

²⁸³ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

²⁸⁴ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

²⁸⁵ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

a way to exist, to make their voice exist and that do not have a lot of room, that have lives that do not allow them a lot of time to organize either... no actually! I will rather go to them, support their message, relay them, respond to their requests, but here what you ask me is ...”²⁸⁶

Thus, while both the Reclaim the night collective and the collectives around the organization of the 8th of March mobilization made concrete steps to join other kinds of feminism, in the last case they managed to bridge more and create more internal diversity. Arguably, the fact that CFULB who is not fundamentally a radical left group made the call for the organization of the 8th of March and not Féminisme Yeah, even though this one continued to participate, has opened the possibility for other groups to join the organization of the manifestation which has actually happened, compared to the Reclaim the night that was more clearly organized on an anarcho-feminist base. Feminist informal groups seem to be groups much strongly built on affinity, gathering people that feel good and close together, people who bond with each other and a certain environment.²⁸⁷ Recounting about an informal feminist group in Belgium, formed by former Femen activists and engaged considerably in civil disobedience actions – Lilithes, one feminist activist working in a formal organization but nurturing a project of an informal feminist collective around a cooperative feminist café mentions about Lilith:

“We met them precisely because it's really very interesting their mode of action - they do a lot of civil disobedience and everything and it interests me a lot this mode of action. And precisely we said yes that the group is open and all that and we said yes we as well are not an institutional group and everything and that in addition we do disobedience and all that. We need to feel good with each other and so we are like sisters. And it's about having an affinity group - that is to say that we integrate you into the group if we feel close to you. But who is it that we feel close to? Because we asked them the question, which is really, it's true that we are all white, we are all young, we are all thin and we are all middle class, that's it.”

V. Conclusions

Although some of the feminist protests have become routinized over the years, such as the 8th of March mobilizations or the demonstrations to end violence against women in Romania and Belgium, the Reclaim the night march in Brussels, reactive protests have been organized in parallel, supporting only partially the hypothesis of the normalization and routinization of mobilizations after the institutionalization of social movements. In Romania, feminists

²⁸⁶ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

²⁸⁷ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels

reacted and protested against the cuts in childcare benefits or against the introduction of rape in the law on mediation. In Belgium, many reactive and spontaneous feminist mobilizations were related to restrictions on abortion. In Romania and Belgium feminists have also joined the general mobilizations. Authorized or not by the authorities, the mobilizations organized around the 8th of March are tolerated by the police in both countries and this seems to be linked, on the one hand, to the legitimacy offered by the institutionalization of this day as International Women's Day by the international organizations and national governments and, on the other hand, to the participants. When compared to feminists in more formal organizations, informal feminist groups with an anarchist political perspective and more close to the anarchist movements are more susceptible to police repression, with more coercive strategies in Belgium and information strategies in Romania.

Beyond the concerns related to the routinization of demonstrations that accompanies the institutionalization of the feminist movement, such as worries related to the demobilization or the depoliticization of the movement, this research showed that far from being demobilized, feminists actively organized themselves to counteract and respond to perceived threats at different times. Similarly, far from contributing to the depoliticization of the movement, the normalization of feminist manifestations has opened the possibility of contamination, of creating bridges between different feminisms in terms of the discourses and tactical repertoires, fostering the creation of larger collective identities and internal diversity. This process was not straightforward, but involved negotiations and challenges. In Romania, going beyond the feminist / women divide and finding ways to build bridges outside the movement was a major challenge. In the same way, engaging in more disruptive actions such as demonstrations alongside advocacy actions required negotiations. In Belgium, going beyond declaratory statements of solidarity and building bridges and organizing beyond white, middle class, and abled feminism, starting from other bases and other feminisms, such as racialized women collectives, has been and it is still one of the major challenges.

Chapter VII. The process of co-optation

Engaging in a relationship with state institutions already implies running the risk of co-optation, considering the power imbalance between social movements, the state and the market, unless the movement chooses to always stand in complete opposition and to act as an antagonist, through contentious tactics. The process of institutionalization of social movements involves the risk of co-optation, which translates into instances of co-optation, with challengers sometimes altering their claims and tactics to fit without disruption into the normal practice of politics and sometimes altering the formal decision making and policy-making processes in the sense of their demands and goals. Feminist movement actors choose different strategies in function of the POS, the issue at stake, potential allies and the position of counter-movements. Here, it is crucial to emphasize the role of opportunities not just as objective structural factors, but as subject to attribution, being visible and perceived as such by the challengers in order to be operative as well as the “active appropriation of sites of mobilization”, rather than limiting to already existing mobilizing structures, as the dynamics of contention approach argues (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, 44). Thus, feminist movement actors might choose to operate through formal official channels either being involved in negotiation in official politics when they believe to succeed in affecting the decision-making process and public policies or posing themselves in opposition when for example the position of state bodies is aligned with that of counter-movements. On the contrary, feminist movement actors, might choose to operate on the field of protest politics

and adopt contentious tactics, when official channels are closed, when state actors ignore their demands or when they instrumentalize movement's claims.

The creation of gender equality bodies within the process of institutionalization has opened a window of opportunity for the feminist movement, as these governmental bodies often called for consultation or collaboration with feminist movement activists and NGOs. The debate on cooperation with these state institutions and the risk of co-optation or remaining autonomous and advancing the movement's agenda with its own means has sparked debates within the movement both in Romania and in Belgium. Most of the times, debates about co-optation translated in normative evaluations about the feminist movement as being co-opted, and consequently depoliticized and demobilized or not or prescriptions about the ways in which movement actors can avoid co-optation. Staying autonomous, not engaging with dominant, state institutions was one of the recipes that would have granted the success of avoiding co-optation. Today, part of the feminist movement actively collaborates with state institutions to advance feminist politics and the insistence on autonomy from the state, and fears of co-optation have been considered a privilege of a universal white feminist movement. Feminists in the South and the semi-periphery of Europe have argued that they cannot afford or do not want this type of autonomy. In line with previous studies (True, 2003), this research supports the idea that the debate on co-optation of feminist politics should be concerned with the affordance of not engaging with state institutions, instead of diagnosing the feminist movement as co-opted or prescribing recipes for avoiding co-optation by powerful institutions.

I. Co-optation in relation to the process of NGO-ization

I argue that the process of NGO-ization entails various instances of co-optation, depending amongst others on the actors with whom the movement engages in interaction or on the kind of relationship the movement establishes with those actors. Thus, co-optation is not only a dimension of social movements' institutionalization, but there are various instances of co-optation related to different dimensions of NGO-ization. Co-optation goes beyond the process of institutionalization of a social movement, being tangled with the other dimensions of NGO-ization – professionalization, bureaucratization and precarization through financial dependence – processes that are interrelated as well, mutually affecting each other. Becoming recognized as a legitimate partner by state institutions and participating in the decision-

making process through official channels comes along with a pressure towards formalization and professionalization. The state allocates some space within the framework of civil society where these organizations can exist; it gives them financial incentives, but also legitimacy to formalize themselves. The state shapes, but does not necessarily determines the framework within which these organizations can exist and participate and this is very much related to power differentials between the actors – the state, the market, social movements that shape their agency. In what follows I will first briefly explain how co-optation is related to the tangled processes of institutionalization, professionalization, bureaucratization and precarization through financial dependence and then I will analyse in-depth co-optation in relation to institutionalization in Romania and Belgium, by comparing NGO-ized feminism and Street feminist groups. Co-optation in relation to the other three dimensions of NGO-ization will be transversally analysed in each of the following chapters.

First, regarding institutionalization, co-optation revolves greatly around the debate autonomy/dependence. Is there a necessity for the feminist movement to engage in a relationship with state institutions? Can the feminist movement afford not to engage in such a relationship? Does entering in a relationship with powerful, dominant institutions which also embody the people forcibly implies running the risk of co-optation? In line with other scholars (Korteweg, 2017), I support and start from the idea that there is no a priori liberated subject and as shown in the previous chapters on the historical development of the feminist movement in Romania and Belgium, feminist movement actors were always involved in a certain relationship with state institutions and other political actors. How they are embedded in social structures includes power differentials that shape their agency, their autonomy²⁸⁸ and independence.²⁸⁹ Debates around the idea of a liberated subject, of a liberated position

²⁸⁸ "Autonomous condition, power or right of self-government," 1620s, of states, from Greek *autonomia* "independence," abstract noun from *autonomos* "independent, living by one's own laws," from *autos* "self" (see auto-) + *nomos* "custom, law" (from PIE root *nem- "assign, allot; take"). Of persons, from 1803. In Kantian metaphysics, "doctrine of the Will giving itself its own law, based on conscience." https://www.etymonline.com/word/autonomy#etymonline_v_18982

²⁸⁹ In "not, opposite of" + *dependant*, late 14c., "relying for existence on;" early 15c. as "contingent, related to some condition;" from Old French *dependant*, present-participle adjective from *dependre* "to hang down," from Latin *dependere* "to hang from, hang down; be dependent on, be derived," from *de* "from, down" (see de-) + *pendere* "to hang, cause to hang; weigh" (from PIE root *(s)pen- "to draw, stretch, spin"). For spelling, see *dependant* (n.). In some cases the English word is directly from Latin *dependentem* (nominative *dependens*), present participle of *dependere*. From early 15c. in the literal sense of "hanging down, pendent." From 1640s as "subordinate, under the control of or needing aid from an extraneous source." *Dependent variable* in mathematics is recorded from 1852.

appeared for example in Romania within feminist informal collectives associated with the radical left such as Dysnomia around some feminist manifestos – the Xenofeminist manifesto²⁹⁰ and *Manifestul gineceului*.²⁹¹ The main debate was organized around the idea of radical dislocation of subjectivation from a feminist perspective that would allow to speak on behalf of nobody and from nobody's place. The discussion concerned exactly the fact that people are embedded in social and political structures that make some freer than others but there is no a priori liberated subject. To take into consideration the inequalities and oppressions related to this structural embeddedness means recognizing the privilege one is upholding and clarifying the position from which one speaks. Thus, the main critiques were related to privilege. Feminist activists from Dysnomia considering that the two manifestos spoke from a rather privileged perspective in terms of education and economic position. They considered that to be able to speak on behalf of nobody and from nobody's place means also to obscure some experiences and visions of women coming from other classes and other social contexts.²⁹² Reaffirming the idea that autonomy and a supposed liberated subject imply actually privileges that not everybody affords, one of the feminist activists from Dysnomia mentions that for her feminism would involve practical prompt strategies that would help respond to everyday oppressions by taking into account the position of those oppressed and in this way being able to produce dignity and autonomy. In her words:

Well, this thing with nobody is – who can afford to talk like this? The vast majority of us, globally speaking, we cannot afford to kill it out philosophically that I don't know what... So you are confronted every day with being defined, with labels, with being disciplined and normed, and with these you must, to these facts you need to report right away every day, not in a horizon of ideational philosophy like this. That is, feminism must be primarily an immediate strategy of producing dignity and personal and collective autonomy. Not I do not know what ...

Sure we can stay on post-Heidegger and I don't know what continental nonsense and yes it's beautiful. But how does it help me as a person who lives a concrete oppression? That was not clear. It was not clear how the whole philosophical proposal could be translated into concrete tactics, through some

As a noun, from 1640s as "member of an independent congregational church, English Congregationalist." It is attested from 1670s as "one who acts according to his own will" and 1808 in the specific sense "person not acting as part of a political party."

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/independent>

²⁹⁰ <http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/index.html#firstPage> accessed December 19, 2018.

²⁹¹ http://ro.tranzit.org/file/Manifest_pentru_Ginecen.pdf accessed December 19, 2018.

²⁹² C.L.2- Dysnomia, Bucharest

practices, you know? Where are the practices? I mean, it was very bizarre. Nothing could be seen. And I'm sorry, a manifest that does not give me a 'how to' it's not working for me.²⁹³

The distinction between NGO-ized feminism and Street feminism becomes relevant again. Through processes of inclusion and marginalization some FMOs take up the path of formalization, institutionalization, cooperation with state institution through formal official politics while some other Street feminist groups prefer to stay autonomous, without disregarding the work of NGO-ized feminism, even though their philosophy and practice of feminism might be different. I argue that feminist NGOs engage in a relationship with state institutions out of a perceived necessity at a certain moment in time, either of ameliorating legislation and policies by accelerating and shaping some decision-making processes or dissuading and hindering those processes that are detrimental for women, for people, marginalizing and oppressing. However, this research shows that entering in a relationship with state institutions does not only entail the risk of co-optation, but also the potential politicization of certain issues. The way in which cooperation evolves and grows depends both on feminist movement organizations and state institutions. It depends on the level at which cooperation takes place – regional, federal, communities, in Belgium, and local or central, in Romania. It also seems to vary in function of the persons with whom they are in contact and their views on the issues at stake. Feminist organizations and activists have key strategic contacts who might constitute potential allies in respect to certain issues, in function of their willingness and priorities of the institutions they are part of and of their political partners. The research shows that there is a certain degree of mercantile cooperation and instrumentalization from the part of state institutions, but feminist movement actors are aware of it. An aspect that seems to grow in importance in relation to co-optation through institutionalization is the emergence of a neoliberal co-optation thought to be pernicious as it less clearly identifies with the feminist movement actors continuing to confront mostly the state which is becoming smaller, focusing less or not at all on actors on the market, including transnational global neoliberal processes involving them.

Second, co-optation through the professionalization of feminism includes the establishment and recognition of the profession of gender experts, in today's neoliberal economy, in which the frequency of the working contracts increased and their duration diminished considerably. Flexibilization, in one word, translates into a contractual relationship between feminist

²⁹³ C.L.2- Dysnomia, Bucharest

movement actors or gender professionals²⁹⁴ who sell their expertise to contractors – be it state institutions from governmental agencies, to city-halls or universities or private companies and multinationals. In a contractual relationship, gender professionals might sometimes be excluded from the process of decision-making, from the conception and implementation of projects. They are contracted to execute specific tasks related to their expertise. Aside from exclusion from the decision-making process, a contractual relationship might sometimes entail detachment from the movement basis. The multiplication and fragmentation of contracts to provide expertise, organizational or individual insecurity might contribute to prioritize the relationship with contractors, sometimes at the expense of women beneficiaries of those projects. Registering the profession of gender expert in the corpus of professional occupations reveals the intertwining between institutionalization and professionalization.

Third, co-optation through bureaucratization translates into channelling through a diversion of time/time misappropriation and it is tightly entangled with the dimension of precarization through financial dependence since increased bureaucratic demands are decided in a one-dimensional way by the funding bodies – be it supranational institutions, national state entities or private donors and which engulf organizational resources towards implementing norms and procedures stemming from the market, including accountability mechanisms to ensure transparency among others, at the expense of the actual work with the target population or other activities foreseen in the project.

Lastly, co-optation through precarization by way of financial dependence, besides channelling through time misappropriation due to increased bureaucratization, it places insecurity as a central concern for feminist organizations. Governing through insecurity translates into governing through precarization. The fragmentation and diminution of subsidies implies a multiplication accountability mechanisms. Co-optation translates into channelling through project-based work, donors' agenda and priorities, the necessity to constantly search for funds and prove the social needs to donors that tend to favour a one-shot approach to social problems.

Governing through precarization by way of financial dependence involves a concomitant process of alleviating insecurity through funds allocation and increasing insecurity through the fragmentation and diminution of funds. This was not the case previously in Belgium,

²⁹⁴ The distinction might yet be blurry.

when during the 70s the newly established popular education decree or other instruments of international cooperation in the framework of NGOs envisaged decennial plans and strategies for organizations recognized within their framework.

II. Co-optation by institutionalisation

To address co-optation by institutionalization I will analyse the following aspects that emerged during the current research: the debate around autonomy/dependence; instrumentalization and mercantile collaboration together with institutional discursive socialization and alliances within the sphere of formal official politics; occupying, securing a space in the arena of formal official politics. I also introduce the concepts of within movement co-optation and channelling and within movement autonomy to analyse and describe certain dynamics between groups and organizations.

A. Autonomy versus dependence

The debate autonomy/dependence of the feminist movement crystalizes into power differentials and financial dependence, as resented by movement activists and organizations, both in Romania and in Belgium. The understanding of autonomy in relation to financial dependence is stronger in Belgium than in Romania. This seems to be related to the fact that many non-profit organizations in Belgium, including the feminist ones are structurally subsidized by the state through different instruments, a peculiarity considering the acceleration of neoliberal governance and if we compare it with other European countries. However, as it will further be discussed in the chapter about precarization through financial dependence, the state reduced its subsidies as part of the austerity measures and this fact worried feminist NGOs and activists who gathered together and discussed intensively about it, trying to find alternative financial means.²⁹⁵ Considering that the state is the main donor of NGOs in Belgium, feminist organizations perceive their autonomy in relation to being or not being financially dependent on state subsidies. For example, the founder of Garance explains, referring to the organization, that “from 2000 to 2005 we functioned as an autonomous association that was very proud not to have subsidies; we self-financed through voluntary work on one side and on the other side through what we earned from trainings and other

²⁹⁵ participant observation - the day on professionalization at Sophia in 2016;

activities and I did that next to my job”.²⁹⁶ Under the pressure of an increasing demand, the organization expanded, with new trainers coming in and that required a more stable schedule, as the hardships in the lives of women made the functioning difficult without a fix schedule as it was too uncertain.²⁹⁷ The organization followed the path of institutionalization and professionalization increasing their financial resources from the state subsidies and trainings. However, another member of the organization and of the organization’s council of administration was concerned with this expansion, especially as the management wanted to buy premises for the organization, fearing that this will further condition the prices of the trainings insisting on the lack of autonomy concerning finances:

When you are autonomous, it's your money, you're very careful.

But who are the people who can afford it? People who pay lots of training and are the same you will find in all trainings. You'll find them at sophrology courses, you'll find them here but among women who really need the training, for example in Thuin there were 4 women in the group who were specific cases and they paid 5 euro just because it was done in partnership with Vie feminine through popular education and we could do it for free, just like that. But the paid training of the weekend?²⁹⁸

In the same line, CFULB as a non-institutionalized and non-professionalized feminist group, associates autonomy with financial dependence and their strategy to preserve autonomy is to refuse receiving money.²⁹⁹ For CFULB, formalizing as a non-profit organization – an ASBL in Belgium, does not imply automatically a decrease in autonomy; “questions of autonomy only arise when there is money involved”.³⁰⁰ As the state is a principal donor for feminist NGOs, collaboration with state institutions is considered as implying a potential co-optation risk because it is mediated by the financial dependence of feminist organizations on state as a subsidizing body. For CFULB members, limited contact with state institutions is a strategy to preserve their autonomy and capacity for reaction. One member explains:

I: You told me about the Institute for Equality. Did you collaborate with other state institutions?

R: No, we are hyper-autonomous. Because, for example I do not know if they have to ask, but I imagine so, if for each publication one must request the approval to publish this and that, it slows down the process, one cannot react directly, while we like to be in the action, we react a lot.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

²⁹⁷ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

²⁹⁸ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

²⁹⁹ I.S. – CFULB, Brussels

³⁰⁰ I.S. – CFULB, Brussels

³⁰¹ I.S. – CFULB, Brussels

Nevertheless, feminist organizations subsidized by the state for a long time, such as FPS, Vie feminine or Université des Femmes insist that despite the financial dependence on state subsidies, the kind of instruments and methodologies that put in place the financing mechanisms that NGOs can access, such as the popular education, allow organizations to keep their autonomy and be able to maintain the freedom to have a critical viewpoint towards state institutions.³⁰² Feminists working in these organizations agree and persistently emphasize the specificity of the Belgian case where through popular education the state is subsidizing civil society organizations to bring a critical perspective in its regard. While they do not hesitate to criticize the state when deemed necessary, one employee of Vie feminine mentions that occasionally this brought them problems as sometimes they lost subsidies because of criticizing the state.³⁰³ This did not dissuade the organization to change the strategy and they defend that they prefer to maintain the freedom of speech and the possibility to criticize public policies even if they might lose funds and that by now, the public authorities are aware of their *modus operandi*.³⁰⁴ Another feminist, employee of *Université des femmes*, draws attention on today's insecurity regarding public funds in the context of state shirking and austerity measures. She fears that this might allow for the disappearance of "this very precious Belgian specificity" through which "a group of associations that are funded by the public authorities have a critical impact, but who have it with real autonomy".³⁰⁵

Despite the fact that it is the NGO-ized feminism that has a longer tradition of collaboration with state institutions or politicians in Belgium, this research shows that preserving political autonomy is important for both NGOs and street feminist collectives. Answering to what does it mean to maintain autonomy in a practical way, an interviewee, leader of *Vie féminine* explains:

It means that we do not change our claims, and we do not change our practices because we have to fit in a box. It means that, at a given moment, when a minister, a parliamentarian says something that goes against the interests of women, we can have the freedom to say it, to denounce it. It means that politicians do not come to stick their noses in our practices, in our methodology, in our strategies and

³⁰² Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussels; R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels; D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels; A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels

³⁰³ D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels

³⁰⁴ D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels

³⁰⁵ R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

alliances or to reproach us that we worked with a certain person or entity. It means that it allows us to really keep a ... so our only vigilance is the realities of women's lives. That's what guides our project. And I think most political parties understood that. We have this freedom, I think. We have this freedom and we really care about it.³⁰⁶

Compared to Belgium, in Romania, regarding the autonomy debates, understandings and strategies, the focus falls more on power unbalances rather than financial dependence, although this last one is also accounted for and this is related, on the one hand, to a scepticism and suspicion towards the state and a different tradition of collaboration with the state, considering that during the state-socialist regime there was a kind of symbiosis, quasi-merging between women organization(s) and the political party in relation to the line to follow and, on the other hand, to the fact that after the fall of the communist regime the state did not subsidized feminist organizations, even less through financial instruments tha support organizations on the long-run.

In Romania, when feminist NGOs are recognized as legitimate partners by the state, they are sometimes invited to collaborate. Compared to Belgium, the degree of cooperation between the organizations of the feminist movement and the state is weaker. Frequent political changes prevent continuity in the relationship established between the two. Interviewees from different feminist NGOs mention that in the situations in which NGOs make alliances with "the enemy" (ie the state) the risk of co-optation is often present and sometimes co-optation becomes a fact, difficult to resist when power relations are unbalanced.³⁰⁷ This was the case of a START project carried out by the Department of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men together with the National Academy of Intelligence and funded by the European Social Fund - a 38 million euro project. It was a project aimed to contribute to the prevention and the fight against domestic violence, including the creation of an infrastructure dedicated to these objectives, but which finally appeared as a national fraud and a money laundering 'investigation'.³⁰⁸ The head and the project leader was Adrian Chesnoiu from the National Intelligence Service. Although the project was highly controversial with regard to transparency and the use of funds, some feminists, NGO members, or providers of services for victims of domestic violence, were hired as gender experts in the project. For service providers who are constantly struggling to maintain their activities in very precarious

³⁰⁶ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

³⁰⁷ C.P. – Front, Bucharest; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³⁰⁸ <http://www.decatorevista.ro/normalitatea-celor-38-de-milioane-de-euro> accessed July 14, 2019

financial conditions, the way the money from the project was used has been a waste, but they were not comfortable to criticize the project as they depended on the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES), which had responsibilities related to minimum quality standards for social service providers. On the side of feminist organizations, when some activists criticized some aspects of the project, those who were involved in the project declared that it was no longer possible to criticize now because they collaborated and worked with these state institutions.³⁰⁹ As some activists had employment contracts with the state for the START project, they no longer wanted to criticize but they did not let other feminist activists criticize the project either.³¹⁰ In addition, the very rigid confidentiality clauses prevented the experts hired in the project from speaking about it.

Another interviewee - an activist and former member of a feminist NGO, who was working at the time at the Department for Equal Opportunities and also in the START project, mentions on her Facebook page, sharing a newspaper article with the title "Fraud of 170 million euros for a quality life...":

"I am sorry to have worked in this project and I am happy to have left the project and the country in time. With this European project and my work in the Department for Equal Opportunities, my last hopes for a change for the better have died. I hope that the feminists and activists who remained there are more cautious and less naive."³¹¹

Debates around **autonomy versus dependence** that would entail a risk of co-optation appeared mostly in relation to state institutions and funding bodies, which might be public but also private. When feminist NGOs started to collaborate with governmental agencies and other state actors they were included to participate in the process of decision-making. Nevertheless, as power relations between the state and the feminist movement actors are usually unbalanced, mostly to the detriment of the latter, during negotiations, movements claims and proposals are altered.³¹² But feminist movement organizations do also come out of the official conventional political channels where decision-making takes place, to participate and organize contentious actions, when negotiations do not succeed through the formal means and official negotiations. The answer to the risk of co-optation was not to stop to

³⁰⁹ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³¹⁰ C.P. – Front, Bucharest; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³¹¹ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³¹² C.P. – Front, Bucharest

politically engage with state institutions, inherent to the process of institutionalization of feminism, but to critically engage with the political arena, choosing among more confrontational or collaborative tactics, or both, on different fronts, in function of the situation.

In the same time, the false debate around the pure idea of autonomy is also illustrated by the relation between formal feminist NGOs and more informal Street feminist groups with respects to the necessity of engaging both in negotiation in official politics, as feminist NGOs do, through lobby and advocacy, to improve laws and public policies, in contractual relationship with those who provide funds, to be able to accomplish the aforementioned goals, but also in contentious actions and self-managed organizing for other aims such as consciousness-raising, self-help, empowerment or political resistance, when activists are skeptical about the success of collaboration through official channels. Interviewees from informal feminist groups are in contact with activists working in feminist NGOs and are aware that some of the latter have radical and critical positions in relation to the activities of the NGOs where they work, but being in a precarious position, they cannot dismiss their job.

While acknowledging the fact that many feminist NGOs do not have "very radical and critical" positions, with some exceptions, the informal groups of Street feminism value the important work that the NGO-ized feminism does, especially in relation to lobbying, improving laws and public policies - things that activists in informal groups do not have the availability and willingness to do. An activist from the *Dysnomia* group says that NGOs:

"Omit a lot of marginal identities, omit what intersectional feminism does in the feminist struggle, omit the intersection of class, race, gender identity, sexual identity, their positions being rather liberal. But at the same time I think the work they do is important.

It seems to me that we should appreciate their work and I will not reject it; I will not suppress the work they do. There are women we know, with whom we have discussions, who have good political positions but who are part of this structure that works like that, it's the European project that works like that, that's why that money has been allocated."³¹³

B. Instrumentalization versus institutional discursive socialization

³¹³ R. – Dysnomia, Bucharest

Collaboration between public authorities and feminist NGOs might be perceived as mostly mercantile, infused with attempts of instrumentalization by politicians and state institutions. However, it also occasions a process of institutional discursive socialization or contamination (Della Porta et Mosca, 2007) whose degree of success increases when corroborated with the processes of inclusion through which feminist activists are hired in governmental bodies, such as the gender equality ones. In Romania, the collaboration between state institutions, especially between gender equality bodies such as ANES, and feminist organizations is considered mostly mercantile, in the sense of ticking a collaboration or consultation with the NGOs because there is a recommendation or an obligation to do so, from the EU or international bodies, with whom the country is bounded legally, through various conventions. Openness to collaborate varies from institution to institution and depends mostly on the government in power. Nevertheless, within the process of inclusion and participation, some feminist activists and professionals were hired within these new gender equality cells and they also contributed to the institutional socialization of some of the other employees. One of the oldest employees of ANES and former secretary of state of the Agency for a short period of time recalls about the process of knowledge exchange and feminist discursive institutional socialization:

I “We were a very young team then, very young, all university graduates. The youngest of us, X, was having a gender expertise because he had completed the master (gender studies master), was in the last year of master. We debated with him many issues... I was coming to work at 7.30 in the morning and was staying until the evening in interest of debating the issues and he gave me, the first time he put in my hand *Drumul catre autonomie* ("The Road to Autonomy") of Mihaela Miroiu and told me "Read it. After you read it, we talk". And then my world broke completely. That was it. Since then I started the master, but I did not finish it, I gave birth to my daughter, but I read a lot of literature, because he gave me, he was my supplier, my feminist literature dealer, and we slowly started to function as an institution as well, we also had a headquarters, we also had the necessary facilities,...”³¹⁴

This situation is reflective of the scholarly debates around the possible benefits of infusing feminist ideas and practices within the state. Feminist activists working in public institutions and gender equality bodies are likely to act like brokers (Diani, 2013) between official political actors and feminist movement actors and bridge between feminist knowledge and practice and more traditional ways of doing politics. However, in Romania, the feminist

³¹⁴ M.C. – ANES, Bucharest

discursive institutional socialization seems to have a greater reception on civil servants working in gender equality bodies rather than those in leadership positions, such as the secretary of state for gender equality, affiliated with political parties and much more bounded by the party line and interests. Even if reception seem greater in the case of civil servants, these too are constrained by the limits of the governance program, including the allocated budget.

Feminist discursive institutional socialization might also be hindered when feminist discourses and practices are instrumentalized and used not just to secure the legitimacy of fragile state institutions, as it is the case with gender equality agencies, under attacks on various occasions, but also for personal aims and political party interests. This was the case with ANES that was dismantled, reconfigured in department, direction, secretariat, to be restored afterwards as a national agency. One of the feminist activists, member of Filia and subsequently working as civil servant within the gender equality department, felt that during her period at the department, more than re-establishing the legitimacy of the institution, hoping in its reinstatement as an agency, the back then secretary of state instrumentalized her as a broker, using her resources and expertise in a superficial manner, without bringing any substantial changes but just securing legitimacy. She recalls:

And I worked 14 hours a day because ... When I came and worked with zeal at first X asked me what to do at first, saying that what do I suggest would be the things that we are going to do. Of course, this gave me even more momentum to stay there. She is a badass politician. She made me work for 10 months for free and built her platform now feminists are following her.

I did it without realizing it. Now I'm sorry.

Thus, I came with the proposal to talk with the NGOs. I have the list with all the NGOs in the country and I have all the contacts. I sent emails and I called everyone. They came. The girls came, Y. came from Iasi; they all came. No one has ever done that before, and I knew that. I knew and I gave those things that haven't been done previously and which I knew would attract the sympathy of NGOs, because I wanted for the department to actually work. I thought X wanted it too.³¹⁵

While in their collaboration and work with state institutions, feminist professionals and activists witnessed acts of corruption and fraud, it was difficult for them to reveal the malfunctioning within different state entities or the acts of instrumentalization because they

³¹⁵ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

were sometimes bounded by their working contracts with these institutions and they also feared that the unbalanced relationship would have hindered any acts of resistance.³¹⁶

In Romania, instrumentalization took place irrespective of the tactical repertoires used in relation to specific issues. For example, to put pressure for the adoption of the protection and restriction order for victims of domestic violence, feminist activists and NGOs fought on different levels, using different tactics, during the years. Through advocacy, they contributed to the drafting of various legislative proposals to revise the law on domestic violence, such as to include provisions for the restriction and protection order. Through street protest they searched to speed up the amending of the law. Two legislative proposals to amend the existing law were already written by the NGOs but they “died in the drawer”³¹⁷. NGOs considered that any of those two proposals was better than the existing law, deficient at many levels, including shelters and protection order and protested to speed up the process.³¹⁸ Before the November 2011 protest, feminists in NGOs received various calls from who wanted to participate and support the protest. Feminist activists rejected the demand, fearing a potential instrumentalization and argued that the job of MPs was to assume one of the two legislative proposals as initiatives in the Parliament, not to protest with them. One of the back then MPs and president of the Commission for the Equality of Chances between women and men, from the Chamber of Deputies and one of the authors of those calls to participate in the protest gave a street interview to a well-known TV station next to *Parcul Izvor* where the protest took place to make it look as though she participated in the protest and supported the claims of the challengers.³¹⁹ Finally, instrumentalization by the government in place happened when a few months later, the protection order was adopted through a presidential decree and the back-then president, Traian Basescu, officially presented the adoption decree as a present for women, for the 8th of March.³²⁰ Following up on the protest and on the process of adoption of the amended law as well as reflecting post-adoption to how the process was instrumentalized, one activist from Filia mentions:

³¹⁶ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³¹⁷ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

³¹⁸ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

³¹⁹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

³²⁰ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; A.T. – Filia, Bucharest

http://www.romaniatv.net/basescu-catre-jurnaliste-n-o-sa-mai-fiti-batute-video_19799.html accessed January 7th 2019

Look, I think the protest has contributed to something. But I would not say that the law passed because of the feminist protest. But it seems to me that even the protest and the little disorder that happened there was super instrumentalized by a certain government, of a certain government that first of all, from my point of view, had profoundly sexist policies you know? And now it is instrumentalized in certain ways by some institutions and I find it very problematic that feminist activists have been so ... that major criticism has now become that the protection order is not implemented correctly you know? as if ... this is the allotted space for protest. You cannot say sir, you are instrumentalizing. Or that the police is a fundamentally sexist or fundamentally racist institution. Somehow, all of these discussions now have become how do we train good cops who will know how to manage the cases, you know?³²¹

In Belgium as well as in Romania, when there is openness, interest and availability to more substantial cooperation, this depends on the civil servant or politician's interest regarding the issue at stake or on whether previous positive contact between politicians and NGOs has been established.³²² Some politicians might become key collaborators and allies on the long run, in the general effort to advance gender equality. Others collaborate only on specific issues, being interested in short term, punctual collaboration rather than becoming a lasting partner for dialogue. Punctual collaborations are fostered when there is a need for expertise on specific subjects from feminist organizations and professionals. One of the feminists working at *Université des femmes* explains how collaboration with state institutions and politicians varies, a mode of functioning validated by other feminist NGOs, both in Romania and in Belgium.³²³

Collaboration with politicians and state institutions is highly variable. It depends on the convictions of the politicians that we have in front of us, because the politicians also have their convictions despite the fact that they are cut off or not behind party lines, it depends on the interpersonal contacts also – there are people with which we get along well and others with which the current does not flow; it depends on the feminist convictions of the people who are behind. It happened to us to have very good support from the liberals. Yet we are against economic liberalism. We have good contacts with CDH³²⁴ women who are positioning themselves in a very feminist way. We are sometimes called by politicians because they want to reflect on issues with our expertise. It's very variable. We have contacts with political cabinets, but like all associations.³²⁵

³²¹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

³²² I.C. – Filia, Bucharest, Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussels; D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels

³²³ I.C. – Filia, Bucharest, Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussels; D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels

³²⁴ Centre démocrate humaniste (Humaniste democratic centre)

<http://www.lecdh.be>

³²⁵ D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels

In Romania, situations of mercantile collaboration appeared in relation to other institutions both at central and local level, as for example with the Ministry of Youth and Transport in a project realized by CPE in which they analysed the public policies for girls' protection against gender vulnerabilities and social exclusion and subsequently addressed the responsible institutions on several levels, such as health, education, youth, violence against women, with the aim to raise awareness among decision-makers about the existing shortcomings and to improve them through specific proposals.³²⁶ Representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Transport were barely present during the meetings and did not attend at the technical part that was addressed to them, but they asked for photos from the event, to put them on Ministry's website, to show their support for NGOs' initiatives and proposals.³²⁷ Similar experiences were noted by members of ALEG in Sibiu in relation to COJES³²⁸ – the consultative county structures of ANES where “partnerships are established for show or for state institutions to boast”³²⁹ or “where some structures were created, but they were purely formal” when counselling centres for domestic violence victims at local levels were to be established with personnel having no expertise in the area, working in marketing for example.³³⁰ Besides instances of instrumentalization and mercantile collaboration, when openness and willingness to substantial partnership took place, it seemed to be more sturdy with local level authorities, both in Belgium and in Romania. Not all local level authorities were open to collaboration, but in those cases in which there was willingness to cooperate at local level the partnerships seemed more robust.

Both in Romania and in Belgium, feminist activists who chose to work within state institutions and gender equality bodies came both from more autonomous, street, informal groups as well as from NGO-ized feminist groups, challenging the widespread ideas that only

³²⁶ A.S. – CPE, Bucharest

<http://www.cpe.ro/ce-facem/educatie/fete-echitate-toleranta-egalitate> accessed January 8th 2019

³²⁷ A.S. – CPE, Bucharest

³²⁸ In all the territorial administrative units in Romania (42 counties and Bucharest) exist and function *Comissile Judetene in Domeniul Egalitatii de Sanse intre Femei si Barbati* (COJES) under the coordination of ANES

COJES is an informative and consultative structure whose main responsibility is of promoting and implementing at local level the values and principles of non-discrimination and gender equality and is composed of representatives of the deconcentrated public services and other specialized bodies of the local public administration or of the local administrative authorities, trade union organizations and employers' associations, as well as representatives of the non-governmental organizations, appointed locally by the non-governmental organizations.

<http://anes.gov.ro/cones> accessed January 8th 2019

³²⁹ P.P. – ALEG, Sibiu

³³⁰ A.V. 1 – ALEG, Sibiu

the more formalized and professionalized groups are susceptible to be incorporated into official political structures or that activists in more radical, informal groups would completely dismiss the possibilities of engaging in more incremental change within the existing institutions. Feminist activists in informal self-managed groups, while having a different practice of feminism do not discard from the outset the work of NGOs as co-opted by the state or as neoliberal play-actors or state institutions as hierarchical patriarchal entities, but they are more suspicious and critical towards the kinds of engagements and alliances in which they would like to engage. One interviewee from the informal reading group *Dysnomia* emphasizes that she recognizes and appreciates the work that feminist NGOs in Romania do, even though they do not radically challenge the dominant institutions.³³¹ While her political work as a feminist, queer, anti-racist activist involves other tactical repertoires than lobby and advocacy that are more common for feminist NGOs, for her it is important that there are activists who want to use these tactics and do this kind of political work that aims to bring juridical changes and ameliorate public policies in gender related issues.³³²

C. Occupy the space: resistance to the current hegemonic order

Rather than just risking a blunt co-optation by institutionalization, I argue that feminist NGOs who engage in formal politics are actually occupying a space in the arena of formal official politics, securing opposition, first to the present hegemonic order, including the state, order that tends towards a normalization of the neoliberal consensus (Mouffe, 2000), as well as in relation to counter-movements and other antagonists, providing an alternative to the right-wing and radical right discourses that are gaining momentum during the recent years, in various countries. Debates and distress around co-optation are present within the feminist movement both in Romania and in Belgium. Critics of NGOs and NGO-ization argued that NGOs address issues only in a politically acceptable manner (Alvarez 1998, 306) and target a mere reform of the state that might actually create new dependencies and regulations for women (Lang 1997, 112) or as agents of imposed neoliberal reforms by Western states (Jad 2007). Without denying such critical stances as they are grounded in various instances of instrumentalization and mercantile cooperation, as shown above, I argue that, through their participation in institutional politics, feminist NGOs and activists occupy a space that otherwise would have been unoccupied, free and open to use by conservative groups,

³³¹ R., *Dysnomia*, Bucharest

³³² R., *Dysnomia*, Bucharest

counter-movements which on various occasions supported legislation and policies aiming to restrain various rights as for example the right to abortion.³³³

Feminist activists, both in Belgium and in Romania, expressed during the interviews an immediate concern and worry and a constant state of uncertainty regarding the pro-life movements, including its variations of pro-family organizations and the extreme-right.³³⁴ Feminist activists and organizations as well as LGBTQIA groups and NGOs are aware of the power imbalances regarding the pro-life movements in both countries, with support from extreme-right parties and groups and from the powerful Orthodox church in Romania, which have substantial financial resources and support not just at national level but especially at international level, being very well organized and with functioning branches all over the country. This power imbalances between actors are more significant and obvious in Romania, on the one hand, because the feminist movement struggles much more in terms of financial resources that are scarcer compared to the feminist movement in Belgium and, on the other hand, because the Orthodox Church as a powerful actor politically and financially, with enormous resources and financial support from the state, constitutes an influential ally for the pro-life movement, with frequent overlapping membership between the two, with a common nucleus targeting both the feminist movement and LGBTQIA movement.³³⁵ The argument of the necessity of constituting an opposition to pro-life movements, extreme-right movements, theorized now under the more general umbrella of anti-gender mobilizations (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017) goes in the same line with Chantal Mouffe's reasoning when theorizing and explaining the democratic paradox that the normalization of the neoliberal dogmas coincided with a capitulation by social-democrats to the neoliberal hegemony who do not challenge its power relations, just proposing small adjustments for people to cope with the inevitability of globalization, leaving an open-space for right-wing parties and organizations to advance

³³³ A.F.1, Filia, Bucharest; A.T. – Filia, Bucharest; M.R. 1 – Front, Bucharest; R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

³³⁴ A.F.1, Filia, Bucharest; A.T. – Filia, Bucharest; M.R. 1 – Front, Bucharest; R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels; I.B. – CFULB, Brussels

³³⁵ Participant observation Tranzit modificarea constitutiei & interviews: S.P. - ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest <https://www.feminism-romania.ro/presa/editoriale/918-proiectul-de-lege-privind-traumatizarea-pe-via-a-femeilor-care-solicit-avortul.html> accessed January 9th, 2019

Professor Garbiel Andreescu explains in an article published in Noua Revista de Drepturile Omului nr. 1/2012 Entirely shared by the website feminism-romania explains the long-term imbrications and overlapping memberships between religious, orthodox organizations and pro-life movements with a common nucleus who previously and subsequently mobilized and supported campaigns aiming to restrain LGBTQIA rights for example by soliciting to the Romanian Patriarchy to forbid “public manifestations of homosexuals”

unabated (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 5-7). Feminist activists and organizations insist on the dangers of giving up opposition to their main counter-movements and taking for granted the existing gained rights and emphasize the necessity to position themselves both in the area of institutional formal official politics as well as in the arena of contentious street politics in order to build-up and maintain an alternative to both the existing hegemonic order and the rising visibility of pro-life and extreme right movements, in a context of the weakening or withdrawal of feminists' potential social democrat allies.

In Romania, one of the strikes of the pro-life movements with the strong support of the Orthodox Church, within their long-term anti-abortion campaigns, was the legislative initiative by MPs Marius Dugulescu and Sulfina Barbu from PDL (Democratic Liberal Party) to establish counselling cabinets for the pregnancy *crisis* (my emphasis) and introduce the compulsory counselling for women who want to have an abortion. The compulsory counselling sessions would have included showing audio-video materials about the abortion procedures as well as information regarding the fact that “from the moment of conception, the embryo is a human being in the full sense of the word, whose life will cease following the medical procedure”.³³⁶ In the explanatory memorandum of the law, the deputies unilaterally promote and support the activity of pro-life movement organizations or religious organizations such as *Pro Vita Medica Timisoara*, *Fundatia Clinica Pro Vita Bucharest*, *Asociatia Filantropica Medical Crestina Christiana din Cluj* among others. The text of the explanatory memorandum reads regarding the pro-life movement:

“In the 11 years of counselling carried out by the Pro Vita Medica Foundation in Timisoara, more than 5,000 patients have been counselled for abortion. Those who later decided to keep the pregnancy (about 500) did not regret the decision they made, immediately attached to the child, did not abandon it and became happy and responsible mothers, being very grateful that at that crucial moment in their lives they had a trusted person who provided them with the necessary information, but also with concrete support. Women who have decided to keep the baby, care and love him like any mother who wanted the baby from the beginning, and their lives changed for the better.”³³⁷

³³⁶ Propunere legislativa privind infiintarea, functionarea si organizarea cabinetelor de consiliere pentru criza de sarcina from 19.03.2012, pp. 12-13

http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?idp=12593 accessed 9th of January 2019

³³⁷ Expunerea de motive a Propunerii legislative privind infiintarea, functionarea si organizarea cabinetelor de consiliere pentru criza de sarcina from 19.03.2012 p. 3

http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?idp=12593 accessed 9th of January 2019

During the conference of presentation of the legislative proposal, organized in march 2012, at the Parliament by its initiators, the room was physically divided in two by the way participants seated – on the right side were pro-life organizations such as Pro-Vita, the Families Coalition and allies such as religious organizations and on the left side were feminist organizations, representatives of the Antidiscrimination Coalition, LGBTQIA, Romani and human rights organizations. These last organizations coalesced to make opposition to the legislative proposal and organized a rigorous campaign with both domestic³³⁸ and international support³³⁹, among which CAL in Belgium, part of this research, until September 2012 when the proposal was finally rejected in the Parliament. One of the feminist activists and members of Front, who participated all along the process recalls:

It was a very spontaneous coalition, and strong enough against the idiot of Dugulescu and his banning of abortion, they wanted to introduce this. It was then when I realized a thing that you might not see otherwise or you are asking yourself that maybe it is the public opinion that wants this and so on. No. There is a very clear thing there.

It's Pro-Vita, which is an international organization based in the United States and so on and so forth, which is totally and completely anti-abortion. They have a lot of money, a lot of financial support, and they go everywhere and enforce laws of this kind. Behind them are a handful of people who also believe, as there are so many people who believe in the Church or who believe in banks whatever. They believe in this story, right? And they have a handful of hysterical supporters, but they set up private clinics, things like this.

Yes, ok, abortion is forbidden, but on the other hand the community says: "Look, they did this and that" and they pay a politician as they paid Dugulescu this no-one from Sibiu, country teacher, they put him out in the Parliament on the party line and on a lot of money to support this law.

So these are lobby manoeuvres, the law of lobbying in Romania. It does not exist. You do it on the black and this way phenomenal things are done. You have to go and see how things happen in order to clearly realize that this is actually happening and these are not stories.

It is against this stuff today that it is very hard to fight, very very hard because you can do what? Here I am with you, with T.M. and I.V. etc. creating NGOs, protesting and screaming three wimpy cats in the rain in the public market, and these people come some millions of dollars. You, who are you? Who are you to buy TV broadcasting space, what? There is such an explicit, absolute power imbalance.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Protest letter addressed to the Romanian government asking to reject the legislative proposal concerning the creation of crisis centers for pregnancy

³³⁹ International protest letter sent to the back-then Prime-Minister Victor Ponta, to the Ministry of Health, to the president of the Romanian Senate and to the President of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies <http://www.ecpi.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2012-05-21-NGO-Sign-on-letter-ROMANIA-FINAL.pdf> accessed January 9th 2019

³⁴⁰ M.R. 1 – Front, Bucharest

Apart from a good infrastructure – organizational and financial, with enormous financial resources and support from the Romanian Orthodox Church, the pro-life movement organizations and the Families Alliance have a good communication strategy, detaching themselves formally from the extreme right organizations, they bring women in the forefront, with rainbows on their websites, using from frontal to more subtle tactics as for example regarding anti-abortion, trying to obtain the recognition of the foetus as a human being in order to avoid other parliamentary procedures in their way towards banning abortion.³⁴¹

In Belgium, feminist activists fought both in the institutional arena, especially recently through the Abortion Rights Platform comprising feminist organizations or CAL - who is an important player in the abortion rights struggle - as well as through contentious politics and street protests and actions to defend the right to abortion or counter-manifestations organized when pro-life movement organizations took the streets. That was the case of the counter-manifestation to the pro-life mobilization in Brussels in 2016, organized by feminist activists from Malfrap USE, Féminisme Libertaire Bruxelles and CFULB on April 16, 2016 and when several feminist activists were arrested.³⁴²

What this research showed is that feminist activists, organizations and groups engage both in the official arena of politics and in contentious actions. Engaging with state institutions allows feminists to occupy a space in the official politics, to position themselves as pawns on a chessboard in relation to governmental agencies and state institutions as hegemonic institutions, but also in relation to counter-movements such as pro-life movements and the extreme-right and other antagonists. This reflects to a certain extent the idea of ‘war of position’ advanced by Chantal Mouffe, in the sense of constructing alternatives to the existing hegemony, contributing to construct more democratic and egalitarian institutions, radicalizing democracy (Mouffe, 2013, 16). It also resonates with Hodzic’s research on NGO-ization and feminism in Ghana where she finds out that Ghanaian feminists see not value in opposing the state “for the sake of taking a pure stance” but they try to regenerate state institutions, establishing collaborations with various public institutions but in the same time being critical about them, considering that they can be both “dangerous and generative” (Hodzic, 2014, pp. 233-234).

³⁴¹ A.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³⁴² <https://albruxelles.wordpress.com/2016/04/18/regard-feministe-sur-la-repression-policiere-episode-2> accessed November 29, 2018

D. Within movement autonomy

A last point to be discussed about co-optation in relation to institutionalization concerns the within movement autonomy. The question of “autonomy within” appeared both in relation to informal street groups and feminist NGOs at the crossroads between ephemeral structures to stable, durable structures, as a kind of perennation or stabilization process. In Belgium, the VigiPub collective – *Vigilance Antisexiste dans la publicité* was composed of activists who were members of *Vie féminine* and on the organisation’s website the collective was presented as a *Vie féminine* group. However, the relationship between VigiPub and *Vie féminine* was ambiguous. While the first thought about itself as an autonomous collective even though composed of members of *Vie féminine*, the latter considered VigiPub as a group that was attached to the larger organization.³⁴³ This created disagreements and confrontation when VigiPub’s perspective about its mission and aims, and especially way of functioning did not coincided with *Vie féminine*’s view. For example, when VigiPub wanted to sign a manifesto related to the right to abortion, *Vie féminine* disagreed and did not allow them to do so.³⁴⁴ Moreover, *Vie féminine* would have wanted to hire someone to work for VigiPub, aspect with which VigiPub members did not agree.³⁴⁵ All these elements made VigiPub collective doubt their actual independence in relation to *Vie féminine*. One of VigiPub member recalls:

“We were a small collective, a bit of a free electron but obviously linked to the *Vie féminine* because we were members. But we were doing anti-pubs actions, we stuck stickers in the street and at one point we wanted to sign a document on abortion as a VigiPub group and *Vie féminine* told us no, you cannot, which made us realize that we were not so independent. And *Vie féminine* has asked for money on behalf of VigiPub, saying that we will be able to hire someone part-time. And that's money coming in for *Vie féminine*, and then we said if there is one of us who is hired, the others will have nothing to do because we are going to expect everything from the person who is hired and our actions were on commercials and it takes time to search on the internet and we will transfer this to the employee. And then we had the impression that VigiPub was used just to have money coming in”³⁴⁶

A similar issue arose when a group of volunteer interns of LMSF that formed a collective to prepare some actions for the International Women’s Day, reflected on the question of

³⁴³ S.T. – Isala, Brussels

³⁴⁴ S.T. – Isala, Brussels

³⁴⁵ S.T. – Isala, Brussels

³⁴⁶ S.T. – Isala, Brussels

stabilizing the group as a perennial structure, after the actions around 8th of March ended and as an autonomous structure in relation to LMSF. LMSF wanted the group to continue its existence and agreed to support with resources provided the consistency of its actions and objectives with those of LMSF.³⁴⁷ The group decided not to continue. In Romania, an instance of within movement co-optation appeared when a group of students from the Gender and Minorities MA in Bucharest developed the project of feminism-Romania, an online feminist platform within the MA program, with the support of some professors and doctoral students associated with Filia Centre. After the website was created and became active in terms of content and activity, the problem of the website's property appeared between Filia and the group of students that developed the online platform, which later became Front association. In order to resist the pressure of handing over the website to Filia, discussions about the group's formalization and institutionalization emerged.³⁴⁸ One of Front's founding members and part of the project of the online platform feminism-Romania recalls:

“And of course in the discussions about website's creation this issue was raised – dude, it would be better if we would have an NGO because we could tie somehow the website to the NGO so there would be no pressure from anyone who... It was claimed that the website must have an institutional affiliation, that we cannot leave it like this - the master ends and who's the website. That was one of the arguments on the basis of which the girls from Filia put pressure”³⁴⁹.

These were cases in which a formalized and institutionalized structure had difficulties in letting go informal collectives that grew within its parameters.

The issue of “autonomy within” did not entail tensions when the intention of the parties involved in a collaboration were clarified before the partnership started. This was the case of an autonomous group of women created to organize a self-training of knowledge exchange around questions of women and health such as gynaecology, breast health, self-defence, maternity, the history of feminism among others and who met for a year, once a month, for a weekend, to tackle a chosen theme, prepared in advance. The group's idea emerged in relation to the NGO *Femmes et santé* who wanted to share and create knowledge and experience around women and health issues, but the group developed autonomously, without financing and in an informal manner, maintaining autonomy from *Femmes et Santé*

³⁴⁷ S.T. – Isala, Brussels

³⁴⁸ O.C. – Front, Bucharest; M.R. 2 – Front, Bucharest

³⁴⁹ O.C. – Front, Bucharest

organization. The drive of the group to develop separately and autonomously from *Femmes et santé* was related to a desired freedom to develop the content and activities of the group, to have ownership over their experiences without having to account for their actions to the organization.³⁵⁰ One of the members of the group explains their reasons to develop autonomously as well as the way this decision was received by *Femmes et santé*:

In fact, we realized that what we wanted to do - it might embarrass us to have a commitment to the institution "Femmes et santé" because it is really a very small institution. And we really wanted to do things the way we wanted, and to have the possibility for things to happen that we do not have to be accountable for. So for us it was important to have autonomy, to be more comfortable in moments of sharing, that belonged just to us. But this being said, it is an experience that we shared with "Femmes et santé" and they are very happy that for us it happened this way because their goal is also that women develop their autonomy in relation to health issues. It was no problem for us to choose autonomy, not to be below their institutional authority. It was not a problem. They were happy.³⁵¹

Another example of unhindered development of autonomous structures within an existing collective is the case of the feminist group from A-Casa collective which evolved into a more separate group during the years, even if members of the feminist group from A-Casa are members of the A-Casa collective, not all of the members of the feminist groups are also part of A-Casa. Evolving autonomously implied that the group developed activities and projects that needed not to be related to the A-Casa collective or that they stopped using the internal accounts of A-Casa to discuss issues concerning the feminist groups, and choosing to communicate separately.³⁵² Moreover, it also involved establishing the organization and way of functioning of the group from scratch, involving in this process also people who were not members of the larger A-Casa collective and not taking over automatically the principles and modes of organization of A-Casa, such as consensual decision-making, but discussing how they would like to function.³⁵³

III. Conclusions

This research showed that feminist activists, most of the time, are aware of the potential risks entailed by collaborating with the state, risks of co-optation, channelling, mercantile

A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels

³⁵¹ A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels

³⁵² A.M. A-Casa, Cluj

³⁵³ A.M A-Casa, Cluj

collaboration and instrumentalization stemming greatly from an unbalanced power relationship. However, they view alliances with the state as both dangerous and constructive, considering that mobilization alone does not suffice and other strategies that do not just target but also involve institutional state actors are needed. In light of this, feminist organizations sometimes collaborate with the state and sometimes are critical towards it. Cooperating with the state does not automatically imply giving up a critical stance or renouncing to contentious actions. When institutionalized tactics failed, organizations adopted more disruptive repertoires. Nevertheless, as power relations between the state and the feminist movement actors are usually unbalanced, mostly in favour of the first, during negotiations, movement claims and proposals are altered and in most extreme cases feminist voices are censured or activists are silenced. The answer to the risk of co-optation was not to stop to politically engage with state institutions, thought to be unaffordable by many activists, but to critically engage with the political arena, by occupying a space in the formal official politics, to foster norm diffusion or institutional discursive socialization, to secure opposition to the current hegemonic order that normalizes neoliberalism and to provide an alternative to the right wing and radical-right movement and discourses that are gaining momentum during recent years. One of the members of *Vie féminine* explains the necessity of engaging with state institutions at practical level:

In fact, what I have rapidly understood is that it is not enough to mobilize and have a good claim to make it succeed. There are strategies to develop, also alliances with politicians because we can have different women MPs who come from different parties and who create solidarity and collaborate around an issue. But all this needs to be fostered and maintained, it is necessary to have contacts. So at a given moment I understood that all alone one does not go very far and that one needs alliances as well with other women's organizations and with politicians.

Not everyone is the same. We are we and they are them.

As a feminist I am happy to say we are part of the checks and balances and they are the power even if they are not in government – they are still politicians. I do not make this confusion; for me it's clear. We are not together around everything and for everything.

Women's organizations must be able to master the issues they want to work on, their modes of action, their demands and their alliances. It is them, above all, who decide. But at a given moment the alliances must be realized. Something that revealed as important to me during my trajectory is the importance of platforms. So on the repudiation we brought around the table 52 organizations that allowed for a change to be produced.³⁵⁴ It was based on the fieldwork of *Vie féminine* that we arrived to do this. On the issue of maintenance claims, we started from a group of single women with children created by *Vie féminine*

³⁵⁴Plateforme repudiation Juin 2001 <http://www.viefeminine.be/spip.php?article143>

in 1973, and then we asked women's organizations to be together on a platform. We obtained the service of maintenance claims. (...) So I believe in strategic alliances between women's organizations on very specific issues because we must keep the diversity of feminisms. There are topics on which we will never be able to work together. But there are others where it's important to do so.³⁵⁵

Chapter VIII. The professionalization of the feminist movement in Romania and Belgium

I. Gender experts between the sociology of professions and the professionalization of social movements

In sociology, professionalization is used to describe changes in a job that indicate the effort to improve the quality and the attempt to gain privileges enjoyed by the professions such as, for example, self-control and the ability to control input (Bruce and Yearley, 2006, 245). Thus, professionalization is a famous strategy for occupational categories and occupational groups seeking to improve their position (Ibidem). The professionalization of social movements is linked to transformations in their organizational structure, a formalization that goes towards the work in NGO structures and to changes in funding models associated with the increased orientation of leaders of movements towards a professional career.

While the sociology of professions is a vast field that that is highly fragmented (Morrell 2007; Sciulli 2005), academic interest in professions and professionalization permeates sociological and historical debates in contemporaneity. Some scholars focused on the defining features of professions (skills based on theoretical knowledge, acquired through education and training, ethical standards, the organization of the profession et cetera)³⁵⁶, others concentrated on aspects of power and stratification (Sciulli 2005; Allen 2003; Siegrist 1990), discourse and identity around professions (Evetts, 2006; Aldrige and Evetts 2003;

³⁵⁵ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

³⁵⁶ Millerson (1964, 4-5) summarizes and discusses the various characteristics of professions put forwards by various scholars. See, for example, Phillip Elliott, *The Sociology of the Professions* (New York: Macmillan, 1972)

Doolin 2002) or gender and professions (Kuhlmann and Bourgeault 2008; Blättel-Mink and Kuhlmann 2003; Kunzel 1993).

Professionalization refers to the process of transformation of an occupation into a profession (Millerson, 1998 (1964)). Etymologically, occupation comes from the Latin root *occupo* (-are, -aui, -atum) that refers to size to oneself, to take possession (Glare, 1968, 1234; de Vaan, 2008, 89), to take up a position, to occupy, fill up a place, area or a business, activity (Glare, 1968, 1235). Profession comes from the Latin root *profiteer* (-iteri, -essus) and refers to: (1) state openly, to declare, to avow; (2) to make a return of (property, etc.) to the proper authority; (3) to give an assurance of promise, to offer one's support, to volunteer; (4) to make profession of, lay claim to, to profess to be; (5) to make one's business or profession practice, to teach professionally, lecture in (Glare, 1968, 1476). The two main meanings – to avow, declare and to profess something publicly translated into the division of two semantic fields after the Middle Ages a wider one referring to public confession or avowal and a more restrictive one referring to the practice of an occupation (Halley and Sciulli, 2009, 208-209). But the opposition between occupation and profession is reflective of both the preoccupations of the first school of thought developed in the field of sociology of professions and the subsequent fragmentation of the field reflecting one of its main scissions, namely between the Anglo-American school concerned with studying professions in particular – the professions approach, and the continental one focused on the broader socio-economic and socio-cultural formations, the middle classes or the economic and cultivated middle classes and their occupations – *Burgertum* approach (Sciulli, 2005; Halley and Sciulli 2009). For example, while in French language, profession might denote any occupation, in English it has a more technically restricted meaning (Geison 1984 cited in Halley and Sciulli 2009).

The differentiation between occupations and professions was fundamental to the first stage of development of the sociology of professions in the Anglo-American world, stage associated with functionalist approaches, focused on work content, aiming to establish specific characteristics of professions (Parsons, 1954; Greenwood 1957) or to disentangle the professionalization process (Wilensky 1964). A second stage developed during the 70s by Anglo-American sociologists critical of the structural-functionalist approaches adopted earlier. The so-called revisionists or neo-Weberian theorists concerned with power and monopoly rejected the idea that professions can be distinguished from other expert occupations based on essential, invariant basis, empirically and analytically, considered that

professions, with monopolies, introduce vicious consequences to the occupational order and stratification system to which they are restricted (Halley and Sciulli, 2009, 206; Sciulli 2005). A third stage developed after the end of 1980s, consistent with revisionists, but combining some elements from the early functionalist approaches to professions and the continental Burgentum approach, in a sociology of expert and middle class occupations that tends towards typological relativism in Sciulli's (2005; see also Halley and Sciulli, 2009) view.

Remaining faithful to the long-lasting effort and importance attached to definitional integrity and the project of identifying an ideal type, Sciulli (2005) argues for the empirical relevance of a definitional project of professions and proposes three invariant qualities that distinguish professions from other expert and middle-class occupations: social esteem; responsibility for the well-being of individuals and communities and for the governance of professions to which end professions maintain ongoing deliberation; and the institutionalization of expert services and disinterest (Sciulli, 2005, 935-937). However, other scholars criticized his claims for the identified professional characteristics as being constitutive rather than tangential and relative, comparing him with traditional scholars interested in identifying the qualities of professions such as Goode (1969), falling into trait theories criticized for their failure to account for differences across historical processes (Torstendhal, 2005; Morrell, 2007).

To analyse and explain the professionalization of the feminist movement, in this chapter I draw both on the sociology of professions and the literature on the professionalization of social movements. Taking into account the previous approaches in the sociology of professions, I follow Morrell's (2007) multi-layered framework on professions and professionals that involves a move from previous ontological/epistemological definitional bases reposing on fixed categories, ideal forms, necessary and sufficient conditions that have dominated the field to semantic/practice-theoretic bases that take into account the heterogeneity of the field. Based on a thorough review of the literature on professions, Morrell (2007) identifies three arguments: knowledge, organization and professions that form the basis of his definition of professions, following the classificatory scheme proposed by Aristotle in his *Categories*. First, the argument of knowledge "involves reconstruction of the account of professional as expert by re-valuing forms of expertise, recognising the role of discursive practices, thereby calling attention to the limits of expert 'knowledge'" (Morrell, 2007, 14). Second, the argument of organizations allows to consider the interactions between

occupational groups across organizational frontiers, accounting thus for potential mutations or hybrid forms resulted from different intersections between identity and discourses challenging the accounts based on work content, considering that “individuals also construct and negotiate their identity in the process of interacting with others” (Morrell, 2007, 18). Third, accounting for the maintenance and reproduction of dominant value system based on an alleged expertise, the argument of power pays attention “to equity and to the perpetuating and reinforcing influence of established professions on ideology, and examines received accounts of the professions as a source of social good” (Idem., 23). Apart from building up on the existing perspectives in the sociology of professions as well as accounting for the drawback and limitations of the previous approaches, this definition is appeals also through the modifications brought to Aristotle’s classificatory scheme in that the approach is self-referential and semantic rather than ontological; that the category of difference is considered as contingent and constructed and not essential and; that it adds the extra-layer of syntax that accounts for the multi-layered approach informed by the review of literature (Morrell, 2007, 24). Thus, away from a definition based on descriptive categorization using sufficient and necessary conditions such as x is a profession if it shares certain characteristics, Morrells’s definition of profession analyses profession in terms of the three arguments and the Aristotelian conceptions of properties and differences resulting in a semantic and practice-theoretic definition “let X be a profession; what do the arguments of knowledge, organization and power mean for X” (Morrell, 2007, 26-27).

This definition is particularly useful for analysing the professionalization of the feminist movement and the development of the profession of gender expert as it allows to capture the development of expertise as that of a discourse, whose knowledge is both situated and constructed.

In the sociology of social movements, it was resource mobilization scholars that first analysed and theorized about the professionalization of social movements, arguing that growth of the amount of resources available for the institutional support of social movements, contributed to their professionalization, by encouraging short-term or long-term career aspirations of activists, without having to sacrifice financially (McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977). Unlike classical movements, modern social movements become more and more able to secure the resources needed, especially in terms of manpower and money, outside its

membership base, self-oriented and concerned with their personal grievances (McCarthy and Zald, 1973).

Besides the part-time participation of lawyers, doctors or other professionals offering free of charge services to SMOs or the temporary full time positions covered by programs that encourage individuals to devote their time to worthy causes, such as the volunteer programs of universities or the exemption from military service programs, McCarthy and Zald (1973, 15) argue that while they contribute to an increase in the manpower pool available for social movement organizations, what actually reflects the major change influencing the careers of social movement leadership is the growing institutionalization of dissent. As a result of massive increase in funding during the 1960s in the US, it became possible for professionals to pursue a full-time career in social movements related areas (McCarthy and Zald 1973). Thus, lawyers and social workers became attracted to careers in social issue-related movements as well as activists who were provided with career options in consulting organizations or social action agencies (McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 15-16).

Thus, while the classical movements relied on the mass mobilization of its base which represented also its beneficiaries and main contributors, modern social movements relied on paid staff. The disjunction between movement organizations and beneficiaries was occasioned by a disconnection between movement base and resources that contribute to increase the potential of survival of SMOs after the aggrieved groups were satisfied (McCarthy and Zald 1973). Leadership plays a crucial role in the professionalization of social movements (McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977; Staggenborg, 1988). Resource mobilization scholars argue that the transformed funding patterns that prompted the professionalization of social movements changed the career patterns of social movement leaders who became social movement entrepreneurs that might manufacture grievances with no relationship to a pre-existing grievance structure or make them more likely to be publicly heard (McCarthy and Zald 1973). Unlike McCarthy and Zald (1973) who suggest that movement professionals become movement entrepreneurs with regards to financial availability, Staggenborg (1988, 593-595) shows in her study on the pro-choice movement in the United States that the two maintain the distinct roles, with movement “entrepreneurs” as initiators of the movement that prefer informal structure and might resist the formalization of SMOs run by professional leaders that are not initiators of the movements.

Critics of the resource mobilization theory, especially regarding elite patronage and professional SMOs argued that new social movements were launched by indigenous leaders and groups that mobilized the very beneficiaries of those movements, acting as classical social movements in contrast to the modern professional social movements (McAdam 1982; Jenkins 1986). For example, the civil rights movement, initiated by indigenous leadership, mobilized primarily the southern black community (McAdam 1982). Unlike McCarthy and Zald (1973) who maintained that support for a cause and sponsorship comes from outsiders who are not the main beneficiaries, McAdam (1982, 26-29) argued that elite involvement “seems to occur as a response to the threat posed by the generation of a mass-based social movement” with a larger range of possible results stemming from elite-movement interaction than resource mobilization tended to suggest, including the risk of co-optation before or after the elite support as the organizations seek approval or continuous backing. Although critics of resource mobilization agree that elite support plays a crucial role in the emergence of professional social movements, they consider that it is not elites who initiate professional social movements, but instead it is the political pressures generated by indigenous movements that push elites to get involved in insurgency (McAdam, 1982, 35; Jenkins 1986). Finally, while some scholars agree that the elite support which contributed to the professionalization of social movements and resulted in channelling them towards moderate goals and institutionalized tactics (McAdam 1982) contributed to diffusing the possibilities of radical mobilizations (Piven and Cloward, 1977), others argue that professional SMOs build-up on the victories of the indigenous movements, playing an effective role by closely monitoring the government, doing lobbying and litigation (Jenkins, 1986). Adding on this, Staggenborg (1988) argues that it is professionalization coupled with formalization that facilitate coalition work.

Professionalization and the constitution of a body of experts around gender and sexuality were at the core of more recent NGO-ization literature that largely analyzed the feminist movement (Roy, 2015; Alvarez, 2009; Jad, 2007; Lang, 1997) as well as the LGBTQIA movement (Paternotte, 2016; O’Dwyer, 2013). Different hypotheses were tested and claims were analyzed, but much has been done so within a normative perspective (Hodzic, 2014). Professionalization has been described as an opportunity for knowledge production that could serve as a base in making expertise-based claims that could fit the new wave of evidence based policy making (Kantola and Squires 2012; Laforest and Orsini, 2005). While, on the

one hand, this could serve as legitimacy to participate and influence policy making³⁵⁷, on the other hand, it requires organizational development and stability, shifting the focus on fundraising activities and resource maximization that would ensure a growth in consultancy services (Lang, 2013; Kantola and Squires, 2012). While this trend is suggestive of the managerialist dynamics of neoliberal governance (Chasin, 2000), it is thought to entail a detachment from the movement base and beneficiaries, while ensuring a donor-driven agenda since NGOs do not receive just resources from funding bodies, but also agendas, discourses and practices (Aksartova, 2009), including a shift towards policy advocacy rather than public contestation (Lang, 2014).

Within the NGO-ization literature, other scholars argued that professionalization involves the hiring of professionals in NGOs that are not part of the movement and who do not see themselves as activists but rather as doctors, lawyers, social workers and who are not sensitive to the movement's goals and ideals not to its practices (Helms, 2014, 32). While these scholars argued that hiring professionals from outside the movement would entail a process of depoliticization in NGOs, others argued that professionalization might also foster the political engagement of these professionals who previously were not active in the movement, creating new activists (Bernal and Grewal, 2014, conclusions ch.). Moreover, professionalization was thought to create new categories of women and new divisions among women, between the professionals working in NGOs, the beneficiaries of NGOs programs and activities and those who are excluded from participation in the NGO work (Bernal and Grewal, 2014). To consider that NGOs serve as vehicle and locus to differently positioned and subjectified women – from the North and South, the rural and the urban, middle-class and poor, with different sexualities, fluid genders or cisgender, heterosexual, abled or not, old and young, ethnically diverse and other, helps demystify the idea of women as a homogenous category and showing that feminist struggles are also struggles among women diversely situated and with different subjectivities (Bernal and Grewal 2014, 17; LeeRay Costa 2014).

The normativity of the debate regarding professionalization is a last aspect that was under scrutiny of scholars interested in the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement (Hodzic, 2014; Bernal and Grewal, 2014; Roy 2017). This stance persists because of a continuous glamorization of an autonomous feminism, outside the state, a sort of anti-

³⁵⁷ Lang (2013,72) shows that there is evidence that in civil societies that lack professionalization, policy influence of NGOs is low and a case in point is Japan

institutional feminist politics and viewing of women as a homogenous category where internal struggles and differences are dismissed to preserve harmony and unity among women that fight for a common goal, to end patriarchal and sexist oppression. The previous chapters on the history of the feminist movement in Belgium and in Romania showed allow to conclude that feminist engagement was never completely outside the state or outside formalized structures of associations that some of the groups adopted as a form of organizations, while others remaining loose and informal. Moreover, women were never a homogenous category, despite the fact that common goals have brought them together in different configurations at different points in time. Critics of NGO-ization feared that professionalization would bring an end to everything that was radical about feminist activism and politics, disregarding inequalities and crises within the movement as well as omitting the possibilities of shifting feminist configurations (Hodzic, 2014, 244). Aiming to step out of the normative tangles, Lang (2013, 71) defines professionalization as “the authority of institutionalized expertise over the authority of other claims, be they coercive or moral in nature”, allowing NGOs to gain public and institutional recognition through their function of professional experts.

If the sociology of professions contribute to an understanding of the build-up and development of gender experts and gender-related occupations in terms of content, discourses and identities, as well as the consequences to the stratification order and occupation system, the social movements theories illuminate about the process of professionalization of social movements activities, especially its intricacies with other transformation processes in social movements such as the disjunction between movement’s beneficiary base and movement’s funding, that would entail a gap between movement’s professionals and movement’s base.

The present research shows that the main motivations of feminist organizations to become professional are related to: a desire for continuity - which is sometimes also linked to increased demands for training, internships or services offered at a given moment by an organization and that entails an organizational capacity growth; a need for a salary which is at the same time a recognition for the exhaustive work of the militants and a source of survival; a need for legitimacy to be considered as legitimate partners either by the state entities or international organizations, or by other professional associations in the field.

Five dimensions of the professionalization process of the feminist movement have been identified in Belgium and Romania. The first is the buildup of a profession, which corresponds to the meaning given by Richard Wittorski (2014), to the transformation of an activity into a liberal profession, animated by the idea of a service, born in the context of a free market, where individuals must develop a discourse about their contribution, in order to gain a place on the market. The second is the versatility of work in professional organizations, the multiplicity of functions and skills and their modification and continuous improvement. The third dimension corresponds to the development of expertise in the field, acquired through university gender and sexuality studies or through trainings organized by professional feminist organizations themselves. A fourth dimension corresponds to obtaining a professional distance by maintaining a separation between emotions and work where a detached attitude is considered favourable. The last dimension, more specific to the professionalization of social movements, is the cleavage between paid professionals and activists and volunteers.

A. The organisation dimension

The organization dimension of the professionalization of the feminist movement is characterized by two aspects: one is related to the work content of gender professionals and the other, which goes beyond work content, focuses on interaction, revealing how professionals' identity is constructed and negotiated through interaction:

- (1) Versatility, referring to the multitude of skills and competencies that professionals must constantly develop in order to adapt to changing work situations and the multiplicity of functions undertaken within the framework of the organization, which can be also translated in multiple different working contracts in the same organization.
- (2) web of interactions among actors - professionals within and outside the movement, activists and volunteers, pro-bono professionals and among roles that actors embrace in a certain context – as a militant, NGO professional or volunteer, which shape both the process of professionalization and the identity of feminist movement professionals.

First, versatility is associated, on the one hand, with the multiplicity of skills and competencies that those working in feminist NGOs must constantly develop, and on the other hand, to interchangeable functions that one is susceptible to undertake within the organization – alternating between trainer, fundraiser, campaign manager, project manager, project assistant, gender expert, communication officer, psychologist, accountant, researcher, historian and other. In Belgium versatility is related more to the multitude of abilities and know-hows from different domains, leading to various tasks within the same one job. In Romania, while accompanied by the wealth of skills and tasks, versatility is translated into different official functions one has within the NGO, in the same time, or at different times – functions that are being delineated through different contracts generated by the project based type of work.

During interviews, when asked about their position, job within the organization and the requirements associated with it, many interviewees, after a short reflection, pointed towards their job's versatility, no matter if they were in managing positions or staff members³⁵⁸. A popular position title in Belgian NGOs, including feminist NGOs is that of “animatrice” – facilitator. One employee of *Vie féminine*, that managed one of the organization's “houses” – Masion Mosaïque, in Laeken suburb, in the North-West of Brussels and who was hired as a facilitator recalls the moment when she was employed and describes her job:

Oh yes, this ... as a facilitator I thought I would lead/facilitate a working group, gathering. But not at all. In fact it is an official status of facilitator but the job is not the job of a facilitator. The job is rather a job of... it's a hyper versatile job; it is a job of place coordinator.

For example, I am here, in this house, I coordinate the house – that is to say that I do as much of... I handle very practical things related to the rent, now I have to call the plumber because there the heating that does not work anymore, there is no toilet paper. Similarly, I am the one who searches for subsidies to finance certain projects, for all the collaborations and partnerships, which also stimulate projects, new projects according to existing realities. I also organizes the coordination of the place with the different weekly activities, I manage the team of volunteers, I organize trainings for the team of the volunteers and then I also manage all the individual situations so it is super versatile in fact - also everything that is activity reports, records. I do a lot of different things so it's great because it's super

³⁵⁸ I.I. - *Vie féminine*, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels; O.V. *Vie féminine*, Brussels
R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels; N.C. *La voix des femmes*, Journée d'étude 2, Brussels; I.V. – *Garance*, Brussels

versatile, but it's hard to describe as a position because it's a job that, in the end, brings together many different things...³⁵⁹

Thus, she was acting both as a manager of the house and an executive, focusing on the implementation of projects and programmes, but also doing trainings herself, managing individual situations or solving administrative issues.

In Belgium, versatility also indicates a form of responsibility towards subsidizing bodies, especially when NGOs are accredited to receive structural funding from popular education or development NGOs. The boost received from the subsidizing bodies to meet with their expectations, is seen as something rather positive, as a form of growth and improvement, either in terms of knowledge or organizational practices³⁶⁰. One of the employees of *Le Monde selon les femmes* in Brussels, explains:

"When I started here, I had to take care of the association's management - I had done project management but not organizational management, so with more complex forms of accounting that even the Cooperation³⁶¹ did not use, but that here in a very healthy way, the association had put in place. For three years I worked as an accountant too in the organization. That's what's very difficult, it's the polyvalence. And so it requires you to be very very curious. We must – for me it was with pleasure, read a lot, seek, listen, meet, be very attentive. One cannot be in a purring at *Le monde selon les femmes* because one has - in addition now that we are accredited by the state as a cooperation NGO, a lot of interpellation."³⁶²

Compared to Belgium, in Romania, the specificity of versatility, associated with the multiplicity of functions that one undertakes, is related to the overlapping of multiple jobs simultaneously, which in turn is linked to the specificity of project-based work – a widespread form among Romanian NGOs. Thus, one is hired on different positions as gender expert, project manager, researcher and so on. Most of the times professionals in feminist NGOs cumulate contracts from projects, serving different functions, in order to have a full time job³⁶³. As an example, an employee of the *Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate* (CPE) (Partnership Center for Equality) reports that in one and a half years she has been employed in four different projects where, depending on the nature of the project, she has held various

³⁵⁹ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels

³⁶⁰ S.B. – Garance, Brussels; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

³⁶¹ Subsidizing state body and mechanism

³⁶² P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

³⁶³ A.V. 2 – ALEG, Sibiu; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest; P.P. – ALEG, Sibiu; V. – Aleg, Sibiu; S.P. - ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa; A.S. – CPE, Bucharest

positions as gender expert, project manager, public policy, and strategies expert in the field of equality between men and women, or other:

A: And I started as an entry level project assistant. It just turned out that it was not just a project assistant position - I started as a project assistant and after one project I got four employment contracts on four projects and already in a few months I moved to the expert level so to say. But it was such a rapid acceleration.

Q: But the employment contract was based on the project?

A: Yes, it was based on the project. The working hours, as it was supposed to be according to the project: two hours a day, three hours a day – it depends, so that you can accumulate up to twelve hours a day. I have reached four employment contracts on four different projects.³⁶⁴.

Job versatility can transform into a source of workload pressure, with health consequences. One employee of CPE explained that she got a foot in the door, when overwhelmed by health issues, she felt she cannot perform “to the maximum anymore”, “working on fifteen fronts, doing thirty jobs, with no backup or solidarity” and raised the issue with the managers and colleagues to find a solution³⁶⁵. In Belgium, similar experiences of workload pressure resulting from job versatility, the multiple and different task one has to perform, were resented by feminist activists in professional organizations³⁶⁶.

The web of interactions that characterizes the organization dimension of the professionalization of feminist movement refers to both interactions *within* the movement and with actors *outside* the movement and the different roles that actors might embrace in various contexts. Not all the interactions, but some of them are relevant in producing patterns of interaction and spaces of interaction within the process of professionalization and meaningful results in terms of identity build-up and processes of politicization, de-politicization and re-politicization. The major actors involved in this web of interactions are:

- (a) professionals from outside the movement such as lawyers, psychologists, communication and digital experts, who can either work as (pro-bono) *consultants* in feminist NGOs, devoting a limited amount of time outside their main job to causes of

³⁶⁴ A.S. CPE, Bucharest

³⁶⁵ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

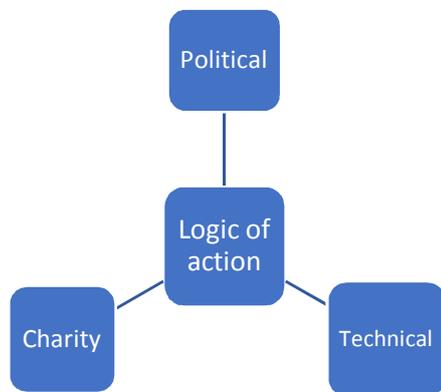
³⁶⁶ M.S. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

interest for them or who can be hired permanently within feminist NGOs, practicing their profession as a main job in NGOs; (not necessarily feminist)

- (b) Interns, generally from outside the movement, but with tangential interest in NGOs' area of activity. Demands for internships have increased due to shifts in universities' policies and difficulties on the labour market (occasion politicization)
- (c) Professionals from various domains, who define themselves as feminists and who contributed and participated at movement's actions and who generally integrate a feminist perspective in their profession. They might work in feminist NGOs as professionals in their domains or they might be active contributors within the movement but without performing their job in civil society organizations.
- (d) Volunteers in feminist NGOs who devote some of their work and time to feminist NGOs. The work they do in the NGO as volunteers is not necessarily (and most of the times) related to their paid job
- (e) Feminist (and gender equality) professionals who developed their career as experts and professionals in the area of feminism and gender equality, receiving specialized education and training
- (f) Feminist (and potentially overlapping with other social inequality struggles) activists who contribute to the feminist movement struggle, especially through their political work, who might be part of different informal collectives more close to Street feminism – collectives that might overlap with the work of other social movements, through membership and an intersectional perspective to their organizing and actions.

Some of these categories of actors might slightly overlap at different points, but distinguishing between them helps reveal various tensions engendered by their interaction within the process of professionalization, directly or indirectly, with both positive generating potential or more pernicious effects on the movement, in terms of politicization or de-politicization, advanced professionalization or movementization. In what follows, I analyse these tensions and their potential effects, by loosely distinguishing between actors from outside and inside the movement.

Fig. 2. Losing your feminist soul - the triad logic of action: political, technical versus charity



Regarding interactions with actors outside the movement, the increased specialization and the growth of the NGO sector, opened possibilities for employment for professionals from outside the feminist movement. Feminist organizations sometimes hire professionals who were not necessarily engaged in the feminist movement, because they need certain skills and competencies, knowledge or expertise³⁶⁷. This brought about concerns regarding the potential risk of depoliticization by hiring people who are unfamiliar with the collective history of feminist struggles, who do not share feminist values and principles and are not devoted to advance movement goals³⁶⁸. This path is much more obvious to capture in Belgium than in Romania, by comparing historically different strands of the feminist movement who professionalized and detached from the feminist movements, in terms of principles and practices, functioning autonomously from the movement most of the times. In Belgium, feminist activists look back and reflect about the professionalization of family planning centres and of battered women shelters rooted in the feminist struggles of the second wave, where a detachment from feminist principles, occurred through professionalization and renewal of the professionals, where adherence to feminist principles, or having militant roots were not conditions of employment or work within the sector.

³⁶⁷ O.V. Vie feminine, XM FPS, AP Vie feminine, CR2 CPE

³⁶⁸ S.B. Garance; I.V. Garance; Journée d'étude; C.B. Filia

A risk of depoliticization emerges at a time when feminist professionals³⁶⁹ are being replaced by professionals in different areas who are not attached to the feminist movement principles and values, personally or in their practice. One feminist activist and historian in Belgium, participating at one of the workshops during the study day on professionalization in Brussels, explains how this process of distancing and detachment from the militant base of the feminist movement has progressed, especially in relation to family planning:

"We are more or less witnessing the same debate, even if there is no awareness today, ie if the family planning are largely an emanation of the feminist movement, because if the shelters for battered women are an emanation of the feminist movement, saying today in these movements that you are a feminist or an activist is problematic. Just to say how it has evolved. It has evolved in this particular manner because of the professionalization, that is to say that we work in the family planning as we work at Delhaize; it's a job like any other. We have to work a certain number of hours and it is not five minutes more or five minutes less. There are problems because there is a mismatch between the project and the person. So I think it's an essential question to ask; there is a logic of a certain form of institutionalization and professionalization; one must really think that there is a political logic that led to this."³⁷⁰

In Romania feminists working in NGOs have expressed as well concerns regarding the transformation of NGO work into a job like any other³⁷¹, selling expertise and services in feminist NGOs similar to selling anything else in a capitalist system of which civil society is an integral part and that would not function otherwise, since selling one's ideology would be more difficult³⁷². One member of Filia argues that the professionalization of feminism in Romania during the last twenty five years, was profitable for some people, in the phase of capitalist development, during the transition period from the state to the market economy:

"A moment of awakening was when I realized that people really think about this as a job and they take money. It seemed to me they take a lot of money, especially after SOP HRD projects appeared (...) And I work all day with poverty rates and threshold – 100 euros and then I see a salary like this...it gives me a headache. For many people is profitable to do this (...) And when it's not about money, it's about the CV - you're building your resume. You get a better job. When you enter the mainstream civil

³⁶⁹ Professional feminists – persons who are either working in feminist NGOs and who are experts in one of the areas related to feminist, gender and sexuality or professionals in a different domain but who have an integrated a gender expertise or a feminist lens in their work, or individual gender experts grounded in the feminist movement.

³⁷⁰ Study day professionalization organized by Sophia and Université des Femmes, Brussels 2016

³⁷¹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

³⁷² C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; M.R. 2 – Front, Bucharest

society, it helps you in this neoliberal system. For me, the first alarm sign was that if we would really be anti-system activists, fighting systemic injustice, it should be harder. I mean, you should not feel like you can actually go on."³⁷³

Some feminist activists see depoliticization occasioned not just by replacing feminist professionals and activists in NGOs by professionals, detached of the movement base and principles but also by a generational shift and renewal. One activist and leading figure of Garance explains the potential negative effects of professionalization, such as losing the critical and political regard towards issues of concern and more generally, stepping out of a feminist analysis framework:

"I say this at the international level: the problem of the professionalization of feminist associations is that we lose precisely our feminist soul, our feminist reading or the renewal of a generation that we see, for example, in the family planning where the old ones who have fought na na ni na na na retire, the new ones arrive - they did not participate in the struggle, they don't know the stories, they are just professionals, sexologists ... And so you really have to row to keep it a place with a critical reflection and not only individual consultations, but also a political project around these issues."³⁷⁴

Most of the concerns of feminists working in NGOs coalesce into a generalized worry of losing a critical analysis, through feminist lenses of the issues that the movement wants to address and either dealing with them in a technical, detached and de-politicized manner or from the perspective of charity logic. Another ex-employee and now volunteer at Garance, who was active during the feminist movement from the 70s explains the difference between dealing with issues of concern from a political perspective versus from a charity logic:

The fact that it is professionalized means that there are more resources but it also means that we sometimes step outside the feminist analysis and we are just in a perspective of help, such as the help for homeless, and there is less analysis behind this way of working and for me to be militant and professional it is not at all the same thing.³⁷⁵

Regarding interactions with actors outside the movement and especially in Romania, feminist NGOs often welcome and encourage the contributions of professionals from various domains, such as lawyers and psychologists particularly for organisations who directly work

³⁷³ C.B., Filia, Brussels

³⁷⁴ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

³⁷⁵ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

with victims of violence or discrimination cases³⁷⁶. The prevalence of pro-bono consultants in Romanian NGOs compared to Belgium is presumably related to the more limited financial resources and capacity of feminist NGOs to hire long term professionals. In Belgium, it is more collaboration with key-resource persons that might contribute with their expertise to organization's needs.

The difficulties on the labour market, the policies of the universities, employers that ask for professional experience from young graduates or job-seekers³⁷⁷ have translated into an increase in demands for internships in the NGO sector. This adds to the institutionalization of gender studies that produced a few generations of gender studies graduates in Romania and in francophone Belgium just more recently as well as to the institutionalization of gender expertise and more specifically the official recognition of the profession of gender expert and technician in the corpus of occupations in Romania. Demands for internships might come from persons who do not necessarily envisage a career in the gender and feminist area, but other domains such as communication, administration and other³⁷⁸, while other demands might come from gender studies graduates in their university programmes³⁷⁹ or from persons who would like to at least to integrate a feminist perspective in their future career if not developing one in the feminist field. In Romania, since project-based work characterizes a substantial part of the work NGOs do, it happens as well that the project "dictates" the demands for internships. Such an example is a project on reproductive rights, ran by Filia and in which different activities were foreseen, among which recruiting interns and developing an internship programme in the organization³⁸⁰. One Filia employee, working in the project mentions:

"After that we had a project that was funded by Open Society Foundation (OSI) on reproductive rights ... and that had several components ... it was advocacy, to realize some videos, to organize roundtables and events. I was simply on the research side and *we had to have* (my emphasis) some people in internship and I just used this opportunity to write and read about what happens with the reproductive rights, because it was all the stuff with Dugulescu"³⁸¹

³⁷⁶ AV1 ALEG; PP ALEG; SP Accept; AT Filia

³⁷⁷ S.H. – Isala, Brussels

³⁷⁸ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels

³⁷⁹ F.M. – Front, Bucharest; M.D. – Filia, Bucharest;

³⁸⁰ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; R.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³⁸¹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest;

In this case, the pool of recruitment included the gender studies MA at SNSPA in Bucharest with which Filia had a privileged relationship since initially the organization was created as a centre to support gender studies at the university and especially the newly established master. Since some of the members and employees of Filia were also professors at the gender studies MA, there was an adumbral relationship filled with concealed power between some of the MA professors/ Filia members and MA students/Filia volunteers/ Filia interns. This power relationship was denounced, as expected, mostly by students³⁸² and will further be discussed in depth in the power dimension section. Here of interest is the fact through projects, the demand for internships is also created and supported. This internship positions were filled with the help of some MA students who resented a relative pressure to be involved in the project when some of their professors and Filia employees were arguing that if those from the master who are more sensitive to gender issues do not get involved, the chances for other people from outside the movement to be involved in feminist projects and initiatives are very low³⁸³. The line between internship and volunteering was ambiguous, allowed for ambiguous work conditions or remuneration. Student's work in this project was not remunerated. However, during the last years, that coincided with a change in leadership and organizational membership but also a slight detachment from the gender studies MA and SNSPA as university, Filia opened more to participation from outside the feminist circles and the gender studies MA, towards youngsters from other universities, who might not have previous contact with feminism but also changed its policies in terms of volunteering and remuneration³⁸⁴.

This dynamic was particular to the closeness between a feminist research NGO and a newly developed gender studies programme at the university. However, the demands for internship increased in Romania in the same way as in Belgium, due to difficulties encountered by young people on the labour market, the increased demand for volunteering and internships that would count as practical experience, prior to being hired or the changing policies of universities that more and more incorporate into their programs compulsory internships, including in NGOs. In Bucharest, after Front associations was created, some of the students from the gender studies MA at SNSPA did their compulsory internship at Front as well.

³⁸² Front, Filia

³⁸³ R.T. – Filia, Bucharest

³⁸⁴ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest + +

In Belgium, employees of feminist NGOs observed a change concerning the profile of those who come for internships or volunteering (the lines not always being clearly delineated – the boundaries are vague and shifting sometimes), with an increase in young people's participation. One employee of Vie feminine mentions that they have more young women during the recent years, for internships or volunteering, in the light of building up a professional career based on professional qualifications and who either do administrative work, those who are searching for an administrative job or others with a higher level of studies who and who want to gain a practical experience on the ground, such as teaching for example *Français Langue Etrangère* (FLE)³⁸⁵. Another employee from LMSF recalls that:

Yes, we have more volunteers now because there are more people. What has greatly increased is the demand of trainees to do internships because of several things: job difficulties – this is clear and the change of universities and schools' policies asking for internships. So we have a lot of requests.³⁸⁶

Beyond the risk of depoliticization, potentially drawn by the opening of the feminist NGO sector towards people from outside the movement, including young people non-socialized with the feminist principles, there is also a potential for politicization of those people who enter for the first time in contact with the feminist ideas and practices, not having had previously a grassroots experience of mobilization within the movement. One of the effects of this increased demand for internships and volunteering including in feminist NGOs is the politicization of a new young generation of people. Certainly, the politicization of young people in feminist NGOs might be different than the one in autonomous informal Street feminist groups, but the increased visibility of NGOs and the potential opportunities for employment and professional career makes them more demanded. Some of the young interns subsequently followed a career in feminist and gender NGOs or related domains such as shelters and service-providers in the area of violence against women or integrated a feminist perspective in their new place of work, bridging between feminist movement organizations and the feminist cause and other social causes³⁸⁷. One interviewee's first contact with gender and feminism was through the NGO LMSF where she did an internship and a training which

³⁸⁵ Many feminist organizations, especially those who want to touch through their work also women who do not speak French, offer courses of FLE, trying to do it from a feminist perspective, deconstructing in the same time stereotypes and myths related to gender and sexuality. Vie feminine is one of the main feminist organizations who offer this kind of courses

³⁸⁶ P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

³⁸⁷ M.D. – Filia, Bucharest; R.T. – Filia, Bucharest; C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

fostered her desire to continue being active in this area³⁸⁸. She did not manage to find a job in a feminist NGO, but started a job at *Centre d'accueil Croix-Rouge pour demandeur.se.s d'asile. Pierre Bleue* in Yvoir as a lead expert on a women's project. She integrated a feminist perspective and methodology in her work at the Red Cross and actively collaborated and developed projects and activities with feminist NGOs such as Femmes et Santé, LMSF or Garance³⁸⁹. Over the time, she enhanced the collaboration between the Red Cross centre in Yvoir and feminist movement organizations, occasioning up to a certain level a bridge-building process between migration and feminism as social causes and movement organizations related to it. It also enhanced the practice of intersectionality in their work, fostering a step outside the white and/or middle class circles.

Through exposure of outside professionals and potential employees to a feminist working environment both politicization and the risk of depoliticization are possible outcomes. Turnover and organizational renewal, related to generational shifts or often to difficulties on the labour market, in relation to which the NGO sector offers new openings, might foster depoliticization as the job openings in the NGO sectors might attract people for whom the job in a feminist organization is like any other job, potentially entailing a detachment from the feminist principles and practice. However, just as depoliticization is a potential outcome, politicization of new employees with no a priori feminist engagement is also a potential outcome. The current president of Vie féminine recalls her experience in relation to her own politicization. She started working at Vie féminine, more than 25 years ago, being employed as a facilitator at Maison Mosaïque in Laeken – “the heart of the movement, because the Vie féminine movement started in Laeken early last century”³⁹⁰, but she did not have knowledge about the domain as she was trained in a different area. She discovered “the life of the movement” as a facilitator, through her work with women, even though back then she would not call herself a feminist³⁹¹. She explains:

³⁸⁸ C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

³⁸⁹ Participant observation *Centre d'accueil Croix-Rouge pour demandeur.se.s d'asile. Pierre Bleue* in Yvoir: 16.1.2017, 23.1.2017, 6.2.2017, 13.2.2017, from the part of Femmes et Santé NGO.
C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

³⁹⁰ A.P. – Vie féminine, Brussels

³⁹¹ Ibidem

*Neither Vie féminine movement at the time was not calling itself feminist; this transformation came after 2000 and was accompanied by a public

“So at the time I did not call this feminism, but soon I found myself in contact with life with realities that were familiar to me and I put words on these experiences by working with women especially migrant women or with migrant origin– I have a migrant background, I discovered realities largely unknown and unexplored and on which we worked a lot, we mobilized especially on the question of the repudiation of the Moroccan woman until we got changes in the law and everything.

So working with women, their realities of life, the injustices they lived, the structural inequalities they lived, I discovered them from the fieldwork here.”

Today, she reflects about the way her militancy and activism within the feminist movement was born. For her it was possible to become engaged with feminism because the job was paid and she considers that being paid to do activism is rather a chance³⁹². Many women would not have had the opportunity to be involved in feminist activism, if they would not have been paid. On the one hand this is related to the need to have a paid job for many women, in order to earn a living and on the other hand to the added burden of unpaid domestic work and childrearing. Engaging in paid work in NGOs might be the only viable option for some women, especially for those with a family, single mothers, considering that in many feminist groups that organize politically across different militant actions, onsite nurseries and daycares are very scarce and this constitute a major impediment. One of the founding members of CFULB explains:

When I started again wanting to get involved in activism I could not especially I did not have time because my daughter was little; now she is twelve so I can go out two hours, three hours without her. But it was very very concrete – there are almost never onsite daycares and nurseries even in the strand of the feminist movement who has money and who could do it. Vie feminine does it and it's really good.³⁹³

Feminists, both those who work in the feminist NGO sector and those who have a different job but engage outside their job in the feminist movement, seem to agree that when you have another job on the side and potentially domestic work, the time devoted to the movement is more reduced than when you work in the feminist sector, both finding it difficult to balance work, family and feminist engagement³⁹⁴. A.P. explains:

³⁹² A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

³⁹³ A.G.M. – CFULB, Brussels

³⁹⁴ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; N.C. La voix des femmes, Journée d'étude 2, Brussels

“My activism was born when I was hired at *Vie féminine*. And for me it was not a matter of time. Obviously we are in the context of an employment contract. There were activities and women were available within a certain time schedule and I could not say ah well no it does not suit me, I'm not there. So I was there, the activities had to continue. And then on the other hand when I say activism is not just activities. It is to be supportive all the time. When we have this feminist grid we are supporting all the time, no matter where we are. So at some point there are choices to be made. I have a family life, I have children, I have grandchildren now. It has always been a balance. Because my activism is important as my family is important. It was necessary to find a balance. But at one point it's a whole. It does not mean that I bring my at work. It's not that. But I find that, with hindsight, we are very lucky to be paid to be feminist activists. And it's unique in Belgium and unique in the sector. I cannot put myself in this logic where you say my activism is from 9 to 16h; after I do not care. No no. The life of women is not compartmentalized like that. I do not think it's the professionalization; I think it's a way to project oneself into one's work. It is not possible to function as a clerk, it is not possible.”³⁹⁵

But the what fosters politicization rather than depoliticization by opening the feminist sector, through NGO-ization and particularly through professionalization, to participation and employment from outside the movement? It seems that it is the transfer of knowledge and knowledge exchange that maintains and reproduces a feminist politicized space. Transfer of knowledge/ knowledge exchange is particularly important in feminist NGOs but not only; in street feminist groups, autonomous collectives it also plays a crucial role, but in a different manner. The role played differs with respects to the structure of the organization/group and to the more hierarchical or more horizontal functioning. For feminist NGOs whose structure impose a stricter division of labour process we witness more a transfer of feminist knowledge and practice towards those who enter the field from NGO feminist professionals, while in informal groups, the process is more of knowledge exchange. The risk of depoliticization is also not similar. NGOs as structures are more durable in time and when there is a high turnover of staff without knowledge exchange and socialization into the feminist practice, the risk of perpetuating a depoliticized structure, detached from feminist principles is higher compared to autonomous groups. Autonomous groups are more fluid and in general with a shorter lifetime. Their members create and re-create political groups in function of the political needs at a certain moment. An exception to this kind of functioning of informal groups is that of CFULB which through its creation and development as a university club, when its members finish university and gave up participation in the club, they pass the group

³⁹⁵ A.P. – *Vie féminine*, Brussels

and its legacy to other students interested to engage in the feminist struggle, especially at the university but not only.

A former intern of LMSF and volunteer at Isala, explains that during her encounter with feminism and feminist practice during her internship it was important that some of the employees of the organizations took the time to teach the newcomers about methodologies and ways to adopt and integrate a feminist grid in professional environments and how to work from a feminist perspective, although this practice was not yet generalized at the level of the organizations: “So me and C. we were the last two trainees of P.H., and she wanted to take the time to reflect about mentoring because it is something that interests her a lot – the transmission. So she really reflected a lot about this and how to transmit and how to have someone she can guide, teach and share things.”³⁹⁶

In informal, autonomous feminist groups knowledge exchange is an important way of propaganda and politicization of spaces and people. The risk of depoliticization is lower and the stake is different in informal groups compared to NGO-ized groups where through the fact that an NGO is an organizational structure with legal personality makes it more prone to persist even with very few or not at all active members, as an empty shell or with a high turnover of members. One member of Dysnomia explains for her the political importance of the groups’ existence in relation to knowledge exchange and production:

It seems important to me that we continue to educate ourselves and grow and learn and so on. We learn from each other, we find things that concern us – the safe space and the community and the support that I have already told you about. And a thing that I did not believe but D. convinced me that it is so because I was with my modesty and convinced that I was not capable and I no longer have the energy to do more activism I minimized somehow the importance of the Dysnomia but D. told me that it really is very important because it is also a form of propaganda, because we learn and perpetuate these ideas and develop them. And look we launched the fanzine and we carry forward these ideas. However, it also requires a dedication to go weekly, to follow-through, to read...³⁹⁷

Within the movement, two kinds of interactions characterize the organization dimension of professionalization, both cross-cut by the paid/unpaid work divide: (a) between professionals in NGOs and activists in Street feminist informal groups that might either hinder the build-up

³⁹⁶ C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

³⁹⁷ I.A. – Dysnomia, Bucharest

of coalitional politics between NGO-ized and Street feminism or on the opposite, through overlapping membership to rather foster bridgebuilding. (b) between professionals and volunteers in the context of a precarious sector that professionalizes. Sometimes, the boundaries between volunteers and militants are vague.

First, the divide between professional and militants is nurtured by an underlying form of ethics of engagement according to which it seems immoral to gain money out of a social injustice, thus to earn an income based on the precarious and marginal position of certain categories of people in the society. Out of this underlying form of ethics, two perspectives have emerged: one that emphasizes the rise of a new stratum within the middle class, around NGO professionals that build-up their work and emancipation while working with oppressed, precarious people; and another one that reveals the expectations from a feminized sector that is not yet able to offer decent working conditions, to continue engaging in precarious work based on the principle of immorality of earning money out of a social injustice. An intersectional critique helped many activists to critically reflect about their positions within the field and about their privileges, deconstructing once again the myth of a homogenous movement. This allowed them to continue their engagement, while acknowledging their privileges and the fact that not all women experience oppression similarly³⁹⁸.

Regarding the first, one activist from Filia reflects critically about some of the work done in feminist NGOs in Romania, especially those concerning the integration of vulnerable women on the labour market, emphasizing the fracture between NGO professionals and women beneficiaries:

I believe that intersectionality creates a suspicion in your mind, regarding the general discourses about women and awareness that many times, many of us, actually emancipate on the back of others; that kind of suspicious mind regarding the ease with which we say that we are all together. Because you ask yourself, wait – for whom do I train baby-sitters? I train baby-sitters so I can go afterwards with the discourse you can be a career woman because you can work as a baby-sitter.³⁹⁹

Another militant from Dysnomia and other informal collectives explains about her engagement in the anti-eviction protests that reveals an inherent class tension, and the way

³⁹⁸ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

³⁹⁹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest;

she tries to do equitable political work with marginal and precarious people, by acknowledging privileges and situating herself as a subject:

We cannot say equal relations because we are not equal, we are not the same but the relationship must be equitable, fair and transparent and non-invasive on our part, you know? I never want, I have not said or treated myself as if I am like these people, as we are the same. We're not the same, you know? I mean, we're educated differently, meaning I have more privileges, that's what I see in my life in one way or another. There is an inherent class tension in these things that is very important and I'm not going to pretend that it does not exist or at the moment, for example, it is a fundamental scepticism that is important and a cool suspicion of the people in the working class and Roma in the same class towards non-Roma and those who are more privileged. Those who come from a ...middle class, but I do not think I come from a middle class, from a class ... that has a more stable capital, you know?⁴⁰⁰

Regarding the second aspect, professionals and activists in NGOs, constantly reflect on the question of what does it mean to take an income based on the existence of a social problem, to end up benefiting financially and to have a better life out. One interviewee, a former member of an informal feminist group in Bucharest and also of an NGO working with the LGBTQIA community, recounts how she felt this tension:

You know that there exists this inequality in the society and for you it is transformed into a job that gives you money and helps you live better. At the same time it is too difficult for me to distinguish the limits between my identity and my work as for many activists (...) But it is also a question of self-esteem, to know what value has the time you invest. And I think that I dedicate so many hours of my life, stress, nerves and mental health and I think it deserves to be paid. How else could I dedicate all this time and all these resources that I have and that I do not have and at the same time to live?⁴⁰¹

Besides questioning and reflecting about being entitled or not to earn a salary out of their militancy or of the social problem, many interviewees, NGO professionals, both in Romania and in Belgium confess that they or their colleagues, work more hours than what is stipulated in their contract⁴⁰². Some of them describe this in terms of self-exploitation. The founder of Garance in Belgium, mentions that she calculated how much she worked at Garance from its creation in 2000 until the end of the first programme contract in 2012 and

⁴⁰⁰ C.L.1 – Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest

⁴⁰¹ (S.P. – ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa)

⁴⁰² S.P. - ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest; A.V. 2 – ALEG, Sibiu; I.V. – Garance, Brussels; S.B. – Garance, Brussels

the result was three and a half years of full time work, unpaid⁴⁰³. Even if engagement and work varies according to various factors such as one's relationship with the organization, interviewees professionals in feminist NGOs confess to have a great workload. One interviewee from Garance, previous employee and current volunteer explains the titanic work described as self-exploitation, done by its president: "Irene Zeilinger who is the director pfff, she is hired on part time contract 3/5 time while she does two full time jobs. This is self-exploitation. So I think that unfortunately it is not possible to do otherwise in the NGO world."⁴⁰⁴

Moreover, for most activists, professionals in feminist NGOs or militants in informal street collectives, the barrier between their professional and militant life and their private life is very porous⁴⁰⁵, sometimes their militancy extends all over activists' lives, being a strong part of their identity, with health consequences among which burnout that would be more thoroughly addressed in the last chapter. One interviewee, member of Filia, explains her relationship with feminist activism and professional NGO work:

Because I made a job out of this (NGO work) and although it's a job, it's not a healthy job in the sense that if the program ends at 5 o'clock you go home and go out to the park and walk your puppy. No. It's a job where nothing ever ends and there are no more weekends and there is no more, no ... somehow it became an identity, that is, a part of our identity, that is, at least of my own, not to speak on behalf of all, but strongly of my identity.⁴⁰⁶

For the majority of feminist activists both in NGOs and in informal street groups, their political work and militancy and their private life are conflated, amalgamated at different points, if not totally. Some mention that they would not have afforded to engage in feminist activism if extensively if their work would not have been remunerated and consider that being paid to do feminist activism is rather a chance⁴⁰⁷. Other feminist activists, especially in Belgium where the feminist NGO sector offers more jobs, with more stable contracts than in Romania, confess that they became engaged more widely within the feminist movement subsequent to their employment in a feminist NGO. Contrary to Arundati Roy's formula that

⁴⁰³ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁰⁴ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁰⁵ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; S.B. – Garance, Brussels; A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest; E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels

⁴⁰⁶ A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest

⁴⁰⁷ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

NGO work transform activism into a nine to five job, the vast majority of feminist activists working in NGOs are doing political work that goes beyond the eight hour working schedule, with important personal and emotional investment. When explaining this idea during the interviews, feminists working in NGOs compare their job with other jobs such as administrative jobs, public servants, dentists and so on and differentiate their work especially through what it represents this continuum of professional and private, personal life where the two are amalgamated. One activist from *Vie féminine* mentions:

Me I cannot put myself in this logic where you say my militancy is from 9 to 16h, afterwards I don't give a toss. No no. Women's lives are not compartmentalized like that. But that's a way. I do not think it's the professionalisation. It's a way to project oneself into one's work. It is not possible to function as an official it is not possible.⁴⁰⁸

Many feminist professionals working in NGOs agree with the fact that many NGOs subsists thanks to enormous volunteer work. However, volunteer work appears as a fundamental contradiction for some, when people are doing the same work, but some of them are paid while others are not and this might entail tensions⁴⁰⁹. The current president of *Filia* explains that she tries to remunerate some of the volunteers by employing them in different projects, when it is possible but emphasizes the difficulty in doing so in conditions of scarce resources:

It's hard when you depend very much on funding and you can say ok feminist involvement and so on, but people who work, the girls who work with us need to pay their bills and rent, to buy food and then you cannot have a discourse against the employers who exploit their employees and you to say the work in our organization is based on volunteering ... it is important to give them some economic independence so that people ... to pay them in a way, because they cannot be volunteers all their life and get involved so actively. They can be volunteers punctually, once in a while and for this... we have a lot of challenges to ensure the continuity of a salary in the organization, for example.

Within the professionalization process, the fact that feminist organizations are able to ensure permanent employers, under specific contracts, with similar working hours as in other domains, brings to the forefront tensions and challenges in ensuring collaboration and bridge-building with the non-professionalized strands of the movement, such as activists in informal feminist collectives, who have jobs and engage in militancy outside working hours. For example, the organization of coalition or network meetings becomes problematic when

⁴⁰⁸ A.P. – *Vie féminine*, Brussels

⁴⁰⁹ I.V. – *Garance*, Brussels; M.S. – *Garance*, Brussels

feminists working in professional NGOs propose that the meetings take place during office hours, when for volunteer activists it becomes impossible to participate because they have another job that does not allow them to leave. This aspect is more visible in Belgium than in Romania even if it is also present in the latter case. In Romania, the precariousness of the labour market and of the NGO sector, the difficulties of finding a job, but also the more porous boundaries between the work stipulated in the contract and the working hours one actually performs, allows for a greater flexibility to work-related compromises. In Belgium, the question of organizing meetings during working hours has generated much discussion and activists often problematize this aspect during the interviews. For example, an interviewee, member of Isala, an organization of volunteer activists and professionals, working on prostitution from an abolitionist perspective and also member of several informal groups and professional organizations, says:

It's interesting in terms of how a structure that is institutionalized manages the militancy and I felt a little bit the same when I was at the World March of Women. So, I was an activist, a volunteer, and then there was I.I. - who was also a volunteer, and there was another young person from Liège, and then all the other people from the meeting were employees who came to the meeting during their working hours. And I realized that in Belgium for a lot of people it is an additional thing to do besides their work but it still fits within their working plan and hours, so they organize the meetings during the day. Between noon and 14.00 it's still ok but in the Brussels World March of Women, the meetings are in the morning so at one point I said is good but I cannot come. And the World March wanted to make a separate meeting to organize for the 8 of March and they wanted to schedule the meetings on weekdays and on weekdays; but on weekdays women work so they will not come. (S.T. - Isala)

Nevertheless, the rapprochement between the *NGO-ized* feminism and *Street* feminism is done through bridgebuilders. This is illustrated by the fact that many of the women activists work as professionals in feminist NGOs and in the same time are part of informal, autonomous groups associated with *Street* feminism. The overlapping mandates are much more visible in Belgium than in Romania. By focusing primarily on work in professional feminist organizations and on gender professionals themselves, these diverse forms of participation and organization and the overlapping memberships generating tensions inherent to the process of professionalization of the feminist movement, are rendered invisible in existing research.

Some of those working in professional organizations, seeing the flaws and benefits of both NGO work and informal groups engage in both kinds of groups. In Belgium, the organization *Femmes et Santé* was looking for ways to pass the baton to younger women's groups to pass on knowledge and practices about health issues. A group of women was created around this proposal. They reflected about the project proposal and decided to carry it on, but outside *Femmes et Santé*, independently. One participant explains their motivation for autonomy and the relationship they had with *Femmes et Santé*:

In fact we realized that what we wanted to do - we might have embarrassed ourselves to have a commitment to the institution *Femmes et Santé* because it is really a very small institution. And we really wanted to do things the way we wanted, and to allow things to happen – things that we do not have to be accountable for. So for us it was important to have autonomy to be more comfortable in moments of sharing, that would belong just to us.

That being said, it is an experience that we have shared with *Femmes et Santé* and they were very happy that for us it has been like that, because their goal is also that women develop their autonomy in relation to health issues. It was not a problem that we chose autonomy, that we were not doing the project below their institutional authority. It was not a problem. They were happy. (O.B. – Garance)

An interviewee who works at *Garance* and who also participated in the autonomous group around women and health issues, recounts her experience regarding her participation and commitment to both *Garance* and the informal. The double membership and participation in professional and informal feminist groups and organizations was an issue raised and discussed about, by other feminist activists.

But the two experiences I talked about - working at *Garance* and developing an autonomous knowledge sharing group showed two aspects that are important to me. Here, at *Garance*, the content is more important for me and in the autonomous health group it was the form that was very important, so the form of the learning and here it's the content, the form too but it's really the content, you know... And so I would like to do something that combines both. (ED, Garance)

B. The knowledge dimension

The build-up of a profession is materialized in the process of construction of a body of knowledge and practice rooted in the contributions of professionals to the society, legitimized by the needs and demands for those contributions. The build-up of gender expertise within

the feminist movement is based on exchanges and knowledge production by an informal network of multiple actors – formal or informal, from feminist and gender studies scholars, feminist NGO professionals, activists in informal feminist collectives or policy officers in gender equality agencies and last but not least women, marginalized and oppressed people based on their sexual and gender identities, ethnicities, abilities or economic and social location among others. In the build-up of gender expertise, within feminist NGOs and informal groups, two processes play a significant role: collective knowledge production and knowledge diffusion that can take the form of transfer or exchange. These processes represent also an ideal type of producing feminist knowledge and expertise that are sometimes challenged in practice by unequal power relations that translate in a constant negotiation, sometimes struggle. The discursive practices at the basis of knowledge production are imbued with power relations, that challenge the actors involved and who aimed towards an equitable process, drawing also attention to the limits of expert knowledge. The institutionalization of expert knowledge implies a formal or informal recognition from official decision-makers that pushed further towards professionalization and favours in general the knowledge production by institutionalized and professionalized NGOs in the detriment of the knowledge production of informal collectives. This recognition of NGOs as formal entities, gives them legitimacy to participate in the decision-making process in the official arena, enhancing in turn the divide produced by institutionalization through processes of inclusion and marginalization, between formal NGOs, included and informal collectives, excluded.

Thus, in what follows I will first briefly explain the need for feminist and gender expertise as explained and justified by feminists in NGOs. Second, I will discuss the institutionalization of the acquisition of gender expertise through university programs and NGO trainings as well as state recognition of this expertise. Lastly, I will go in depth in comparing the knowledge production and diffusion within the feminist movement that is at the basis of the consolidation of a profession, by comparing the NGO-ized groups and the informal autonomous groups in Romania and Belgium.

First, regarding the need to work in different areas and societal issues from a feminist perspectives could be well illustrated by the examples of domestic violence shelters or of gender studies research centers. The need for prevention programs and services for violence against women that come from a feminist perspective has been the driving force behind the

development of the several associations in this study. Members of ALEG in Sibiu, of the "Break the silence about sexual violence" network or of the network for "Prevention and combating violence against women" (VIF), in Romania, explain why it is important that services related to violence against women should be carried out from a feminist perspective and by independent organizations and not by the state. From their experience of working with victims and public institutions, but also from their collaboration with other European networks dealing with the issue of violence against women, feminist professionals have realized that under the guise of a neutral approach, there are attitudes of condemnation of the victims when they access various public services and institutions, undertaking the risk of re-traumatization in relation to the lived experience of violence. *Garance*, in Belgium, is working on feminist self-defence. Initially, the organization operated autonomously, without funding, but the demand for trainings, both from the institutions and from women increased significantly and members of *Garance* decided to professionalize⁴¹⁰.

The need to deconstruct patriarchal, elite, heteronormative, white knowledge and reconstruct knowledge from marginalized experiences became the focus of many autonomous feminist, queer, anti-racist groups but also of feminist NGOs who focused more on women's experiences, sometimes having difficulties in integrating an intersectional perspective. Nevertheless, the lack of representations of experiences, identities in the dominant knowledge that was universalized, fed the need to fill in this void and gave an impetus to produce knowledge starting from one's own position, standpoint, erased in the dominant knowledge. Some NGOs professionalized and institutionalized in order to ensure continuity in knowledge production and diffusion from a feminist perspective. Thus, the lack of training in gender studies, the lack of feminist research or of support for feminist researchers has contributed to the development and professionalization of the *Université des Femmes* in Belgium, on the Francophone side, or of *Sophia*, Dutch-speaking and French-speaking, or of the *Filia Center* in Romania.

The development and acquisition of gender expertise is done through graduate university programs in gender studies or specific seminars and trainings offered by the NGOs working in the field. In Romania, there are several MAs in gender studies, since 1998 and in the French-speaking Belgium the first master's degree in gender and sexuality studies started in

⁴¹⁰ Rapport Garance

2017. Women's organizations also offer training in gender studies such as *Université des femmes* through its one year training, organized every year or *Le Monde selon les Femmes*, which organizes trainings within a shorter time-framework, from a few days to one month, but more intensively, such as their training for gender trainers that lasts three weeks, with full-day courses every working day.

In Romania, the professions of expert and technician in equal opportunities have been introduced in the register of occupational classifications in Romania - COR (*Classificarea Ocupatiilor in Romania*), receiving thus the institutional recognition that reinforces their legitimacy both in relation to the state and the market, and as well within civil society and in relation with beneficiaries.

This institutional recognition was the fruit of the long-term advocacy work carried out by feminist organizations, especially by *Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate* (CPE) (Partnership Center for Equality). One of the CPE employees who worked before at ANES - the National Agency for Equal Opportunities recalls the process of introducing these two professions into the corpus of occupations in Romania:

"I come from ANES initially, and ANES was very interested in our work at the CPE, especially when, in 2006, CPE introduced a request to include the profession of gender expert in the COR. But this request was met with several refusals by the Ministry of Labor. In 2014 - ANES has always expressed support for this request, there were no more obstacles. Obviously the proposal has been subject of some modifications because you cannot expect the proposal to appear exactly as you submitted it, but it has been introduced. And this is a very good result of CPE's advocacy policy extended over a long period of time – nine years of advocacy for a theme (she laughs), but it is a result that would not have been achieved if the CPE would not have insisted. (M.T. - CPE)

Though it might come as a surprise the fact that CPE lobbied for the institutional validation of “equal opportunities” expertise and not for “gender expert” as a profession, this might allow to further develop and build-up and intersectional perspective on equality and social justice policies and programs and to avoid perpetuating the idea of women as a homogenous group, but to consider their diversity in terms of social locations and subjectivities.

Several interviewees in Belgium, who work in feminist NGOs, also stress the importance of being recognized as an expert as it gives them the legitimacy to participate in the decision-

making process on gender policies. In relation to this aspect, an interviewee of *Le Monde selon les femmes* explains:

"And that's important to understand because in Belgium it's very different from France; if we want to move certain things we have to be recognized as an expert and the expertise is recognized only when we are institutionalized, but institutionalized with employees. In Belgium it's like that, in France it's not like that. We have lots of discussions with X we say "no, we will not be invited into networks to do things if we are just militants. You need to be recognized as a professional of the theme you are working on". And so we have to accept this strategy. (P.H. - LMSF)

Table 15. The knowledge argument in feminist NGOs and informal groups

Knowledge	Ownership and diffusion	Knowledge production
Organization		
NGOs	Transfer Feminist pedagogy	Vertical, Collective Permanent Creation of tools
Informal collectives	Exchange	Deconstruction & Horizontal, Collective Ephemeral

The process of knowledge production in feminist NGOs, even though collaborative, tends to be more vertical than in informal collectives, the knowledge produced becomes perennial though the creation of tools that can be shared and used by other actors. NGOs construct trainings and subsequently sell them, either to public or private institutions such as schools, migration centres, transport hubs or individuals that either want to train themselves to pursue a career in the area or need certain tools and workshops in order to learn how to manage or approach traumatic experiences for example. In Belgium, the production of trainings orientated to train future instructors and experts or to empower vulnerable or potentially vulnerable groups or structurally oppressed people is much more institutionalized and standardized than in Romania; trainings are long-lasting, through the creation of toolkits. This is related to the greater organizational stability achieved through greater financial stability, ensured by the long-term structural financing by the state, of some feminist NGOs in Belgium.

The collective process of construction of knowledge involves circular movements of interaction and exchanges between NGOs and grassroots women, at the base of the movement. Even though it is a “collective” process it is also a vertical process in that NGOs have more the monopoly over processing the knowledge from the field; the movement of knowledge production goes from the top to the bottom or from the bottom to the top and vice versa, in a circular movement. Working with grassroots women brings NGOs great legitimacy both in their relation with the movement base and other organizations but also in relation to state institutions, concerned with issues of representation. In Belgium, the legacy and attachment to the popular education as a philosophy and methodology of working in the associative sector and its institutionalization through the official recognition and financing of NGOs make this process of knowledge production to start from the bottom, from the movement base, because the methodology is based on a collective work of emancipation. One interviewee, counsellor on popular education at the Ministry of Culture, Childhood and popular Education talking about the decree instituting popular education in Belgium, she explains the principle of collective work at the basis of this methodology:

Basically it really says that we give money to associations to empower people and the method at that time was called "see, judge, act!". So it is a collective process, a group process, it is not at all individual work.

You bring people together and starting from what they live, from their reality they assess the situation, make observations and they arrive to make judgments such as “we do not agree with this, with discrimination, this revolts us, it's not okay, it's against the law” and from there they set up actions. So it's not only to be able to denounce, but also to be able to change society, to transform it into a more egalitarian society. And that's the foundation of popular education.⁴¹¹

One employee of Vie feminine, explains how they apply in the work of the organization the practice of knowledge construction with women at the base of the movement, showing their role as NGO workers to facilitate the process, to make bridges and connections and to bring the issue on the agenda of the organization, transforming it into strategic actions:

And then there will be one who will say “yes I heard about it”, maybe it's going to be me who will start a group to build a project. So we can quite easily facilitate things and really create links, because the realities of women are enormous and it also facilitates the construction of knowledge, not of

⁴¹¹ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels

knowledge... yes it is knowledge, the construction of a grid of analysis. But rather than starting again each time, it is possible to share the knowledge and re-appropriate it. What is good is that there are women participating who remain for a while, who sometimes get involved strongly in strategic places and they make this link there, but there are also really punctual participants or people who come and then life is difficult for them, so they come when they do not have a job and then one day they will find a job and then we will not see them. We're going to see them again at some point because reviewed their schedule and found another rhythm and they will come back to an activity.⁴¹²

To better illustrate the importance of the collective process of construction of knowledge and action as the basis of popular education, I shall give the example of Garance, the feminist self-defence organization that has been officially recognized as a popular education organization. Although their work is highly appreciated within the overall feminist community and both NGOs such as Université des femmes and informal groups such as CFULB establish collaboration projects with Garance to learn about and get training on feminist self-defence, some raised the issue that the work they do is not entirely based on the methodology of popular education. The popular education decree was reviewed and the initial meaning of popular education developed during the 70s was altered during the years, allowing for the incorporations of a wider range of organizations, as for example those that pursue the goal of empowerment through a specific kind of methodology and type of intervention such as the case of feminist self-defence. The counselor on popular education at the Ministry of Culture, Childhood and popular Education explains her view on how Garance's work might diverge from the initial methodology of popular education but also how their recognition is a result of modifications of the decree in order to make it more inclusive:

So today, in my mission, in my work, I am evaluating the decree to see how could we make it more inclusive.

But there is a lot of resistance. There is a lot of resistance in the sector even to evaluate the decree because they are afraid that it opens too much.

Garance is an interesting example because normally and historically – and I have the culture, for me popular education it is at Vie féminine you create a women's house, the women come and then they speak and after that from there you see what you do. And Garance is a specific subject: it is self-defense. So it's not like that, women come for self-defense and training is already planned before. So there are lots of people who say it's not popular education, it's training, but it's not popular education.

⁴¹² O.V. Vie feminine, Brussels

Compared to Belgium, in Romania, the lack of a structural funding and the project-based work functioning of the NGOs make that many times the issues to be addressed are identified a priori as well as the target groups, when writing the projects, by NGO workers, before contact and exchanges with those groups although afterwards, if the project is accepted, encounters will take place to better define the way the issues will be addressed⁴¹³. However, some organizations managed to alter this dynamic and to consolidate links with local grassroots groups of women, subsequent to implemented projects and to reverse the logic of circulation of issues and of knowledge production. Such an example is a local group in Valea Seaca that got consolidated following a project implemented there by Filia and E-Romnja organizations⁴¹⁴.

Knowledge production in feminist NGOs also involves doing research that would either feed the one's own organization activities, claims and demands, policy-recommendations or the creation of tools or other movement organizations. In their interactions with policy-makers this translates into evidence-based claims or through collaboration into evidence-based policy making. For example, Garance in Belgium developed an action research together with and financed by the *Société des transports intercommunaux de Bruxelles* (STIB) regarding elderly women and their expectations regarding STIB. However, after a few years, the organization stopped working with STIB as they realized that the collaboration only implied delivering the research that was appropriated by STIB, thus losing ownership and track regarding the way the research was used and if it was used as they were not involved in any decision-making or policy process⁴¹⁵. Regarding evidence-based policy-making, in Romania, a task force to develop a procedure for implementing and reporting on violence against women in the light of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention was created in 2015 and considered as a rather successful experience⁴¹⁶. The taskforce was coordinated by the Superior Council of Magistracy and involved NGOs working in the area of violence against women particularly organized around the two networks: Break the Silence against Sexual Violence and VIF and responsible state institutions such as the Justice Ministry, the Labor Ministry, the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, the General Inspectorate of Romanian Police or the Health Ministry.

⁴¹³ A.S. – CPE, Bucharest; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

⁴¹⁴ A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest

⁴¹⁵ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

⁴¹⁶ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest; M.C. – ANES, Bucharest; A.V. 1 – ALEG, Sibiu; P.P. – ALEG, Sibiu; C.S. 2 – Front, Bucharest; D.M. – Transcena, VIF, Bucharest

Compared to feminist NGOs, in feminist informal collectives the process of knowledge construction involves usually a smaller number of people and it is more inward oriented. The process of creation of a safe space for sharing and discussing, before opening up and eventually theorizing about and politicizing experiences, is primordial. Although, in popular education a similar focus on the process of gathering together, of space creation itself and collective knowledge production is found, the action dimension accompanying this process subsequent to identifying a problem is almost compulsory, while in informal collectives the discursive practices and actions are concomitant and might be sufficient on their own. In most informal groups, figuring out the meaning of a safe space and how to construct it, is an important process in the build-up and consolidation of the collective⁴¹⁷. The creation of safe spaces is a dynamic, open-ended and ongoing process in which the bodies, discourses and practices exist, are performed and negotiated within a space that is created, re-created and inhabited through a creative tension of unfixed boundaries that would potentially allow the safe co-existence of persons with different life experiences who would participate according to their own possibilities at a certain moment. One former member of Fat Positivity group explains this dynamic process and the need for innovation in terms of organizational practices in order to create a safe space that is inclusive and malleable enough to account for different group configurations and estates:

In groups like Fat Positivity we have always made it a point of honour to respect the diversity of our paths in terms of mental health. This can be due to the fact of having bipolar people or people at risk, or people who have problems, depressive phases, to try to find room for everyone. So we paid great attention to all that. It worked and it did not work. There have always been people who were not listened to or who asked for a place that is a little different? To take into account the needs of everyone is very innovative in terms of organization; to spend time negotiating spaces that are different. We will not all be involved in the same way, according to our needs, our abilities. So I have not felt anything like that because there are people who fell into depression or had moments when it did not really go well and we tried to show consideration and care. But there were plenty of times when it was messed up because suddenly you had to invent, how to take care of each other and ... (deep breath) you always have people who are more sensitive and people who are more depressed than others who are less supportive.

⁴¹⁷ A.M A-Casa, Cluj; I.S. – CFULB, Brussels; T.M. – CFULB, Brussels; A.G.M. – CFULB, Brussels; O – Dysnomia, Bucharest; C.L.2- Dysnomia, Bucharest; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

Previous experiences and challenges regarding the construction of safe spaces brought to light new perspectives about the meanings and experiences of “safe” in different informal collectives emphasizing the dynamic process of learning by doing and producing in the same time. Compared to feminist NGOs, knowledge production in informal groups is more experiential, establishing the working framework being part of the process or if established a priori can be more easily altered during the process if needed. Thus, the working frameworks are less rigid, with more fluid boundaries allowing for a freer production of knowledge, with fewer constraints, allowing for everyone to contribute according to the needs and possibilities, letting the group configuration and dynamic to serve as guide and leaving room for unpredictability. One member of Dysnomia recalls the process that led to the creation of the first Dysnomia fanzine :

That's what we did with the zine. Well, we started planning it last June this time (laughs), and we launched it this year. We had meetings, we established themes, we observed, we discussed, we recorded. Our discussions were based on those themes that were completely reformulated and became entirely different themes according to what we read. But it was very cool that it coagulated because we did not have a fixed term such as now we are working fast during one month to produce some texts. And sometimes we felt like we are never going to do this, but in the process it coagulated and people wanted to say things, we read the texts we liked and we were saying that we can write about them for the zine, we can do something, maybe make a drawing, or maybe we can watch this movie and write a review. And so at this rhythm, somehow fluid and without pressure it actually worked.

And the texts in the zine were very well connected to each other, because it was about everything we read and influenced us this year. That's how they got tied: we all had a similar theoretical and affective base related on what we were reading And we are very fond of this fluid and pressureless rhythm. We can meet now and write about this and do this.

Ok if we're in the mood we read this for Monday and we will talk. If on Monday we wake up and we no longer have the bust, we do not do that anymore. This will makes us to want to meet even more the next Monday. Everyone according to their own possibilities.⁴¹⁸

However, fluid boundaries and a rhythm without pressure does not imply lack of organization in the process of knowledge production; it just implies a more open-ended process in terms of potential transformations and outcomes. Boundaries can be fluid on single or multiple grounds, in terms of time management, content, group composition. The development and functioning of the informal collective initially created around an idea coming from Femmes et santé organization and which developed as an autonomous group shows how collective

⁴¹⁸ R. – Dysnomia, Bucharest

knowledge production in informal autonomous groups can be both fluid in terms of content creation and actions but in the same time organized. A group of nine women, some of them working in formal NGOs such as Vie féminine or Garance decided to form an autonomous working group around the theme “women and health” to reflect in-depth about related chosen topics, develop instruments and instruct themselves collectively and autonomously about those topics. The group met once a month, for two and a half days, during one and a half year, in a place where they would “not be bothered by anyone, including children or partners” to build a thematic knowledge exchange training around issues such as gynecology, breast health, self-defense, childbirth, contraception, abortion from a feminist perspective⁴¹⁹. They worked on documents, watched movies, used games and did public performances. One of the participants explains that despite her initial skepticism regarding the consolidation of the group and of the initiative she was impressed at the end of the project by the knowledge and tools they built:

It was really nice to see the big binder that we had at the end, with all the documents gathered, with everything we had, everything that we created together - we made drawings, we did lots of things! To see the diversity of productions in fact that emerged from this training. We realized that we are able to produce tools, to produce traces and also to be structured. I had a doubt about it at first. I said to myself that we will never manage to respect this structure, there will be some who will be absent ... For me it was also likely to work the first time, the second and then to stop going. But in fact we were all there every weekend, everyone was there. It was really great.⁴²⁰

Knowledge diffusion is an important dimension in the process of consolidation of a body of feminist knowledge. While for feminist NGOs, diffusion happens via transfer of knowledge already produced within the NGOs, and transferred during trainings or mentorships during internships, in informal groups diffusion happens more via exchange and sharing. Feminist pedagogy plays an important role in ensuring a benevolent way of transmitting knowledge, from a feminist perspectives. Employees of Garance who were giving trainings on feminist self-defense, participated at specific trainings on feminist pedagogy to learn how to transmit knowledge and practice regarding self-defense⁴²¹. Vie féminine developed the concept of feminist popular education. One intern from LMSF explains how employees of the

⁴¹⁹ O.B. – Garance, Brussels; A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels

⁴²⁰ O.B. – Garance, Brussels;

⁴²¹ O.B. – Garance, Brussels

organization were very interested to explore, reflect and conceptualize ways of transmitting feminist knowledge and practice:

P.H. was really...so me and X we were the last two trainees of P.H. and she wanted to take the time to think about mentoring, because transmission is something that interests her a lot. So she really thought a lot about this and about how to transmit and how to have someone she can guide to learn and share things.⁴²²

Feminist knowledge produced through research in NGOs is also transmitted through seminars, conferences and workshops. For a long time this was Folia's main objective and while during the recent years activism and advocacy added to their strategic action directions, research remained one of their main pillars, feeding the other two. Similarly, focused on research and education, Université des femmes aims to deconstruct "the dominant knowledge, bourgeois and patriarchal that provides legitimacy for unjustifiable class and gender social relations" and to rebuild a knowledge inspired by the scientific works of feminism and rooted in women's life conditions⁴²³. Through their annual training cycle, Université des femmes facilitate and offers unconditional access to university-level knowledge for adults on topics related feminism and gender. Feminist NGOs also use the knowledge produced through research and fieldwork in the different communities to feed their raising-awareness campaigns. For example, Vie féminine Namur made a documentary on domestic violence entitled "Violences conjugales, quand les murs parlent, il faut oser entendre" ("When the walls are speaking, we must dare to listen") based on testimonies from women who underwent through experiences of violence in couple and of practitioners in the area, from NGO workers accompanying these women, lawyers and others. They organized movie projections accompanied by debates together with some of those who testified in the documentary, to raise awareness among practitioners and women victims, including prevention in high schools targeting the age 16-18, when young people enter in couple relationships⁴²⁴.

Feminist knowledge diffusion in informal groups take the form of exchanges more rather than transmission and it happens mostly in smaller groups, after ensuring a safe space.

⁴²² C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

⁴²³ <http://www.universitedesfemmes.be/index.php/universite-des-femmes-bruxelles> accessed May 6, 2019

⁴²⁴ Participant observation November 25th, 2016
https://www.rtb.be/info/regions/namur/detail_un-dvd-parce-qu-1-femme-sur-5-risque-d-etre-victime-de-violences-conjugales?id=9327669 accessed May 6, 2019

Feminist knowledge exchange is part of the knowledge production process in which exchange and production are concomitant. Transmission takes place through zines, blogs and online communities that play an important role as they allow for the anonymity of the members of the group or to better manage the access of the person to the online communities, being able to have closed groups. Feminist in informal groups search less to be visible in the public spaces, compared to feminist NGOs, as for many of them their non-normative expressions of the self might not be safe in the public spaces. This goes hand in hand with their inward orientation, towards the consolidation of the group as a safe space and towards informal street feminist groups as being affinity groups. However, the importance of anonymity in informal groups and the need to preserve it, together with the construction of a safe space mostly among people with on strong affinities is not an aspect harmoniously accepted within informal autonomous groups. There are several tensions that some might consider constructive⁴²⁵, as pull and push tensions regarding the issue of visibility and going public, between those who believe it is important to become visible and to go in public and those for whom is very important to preserve anonymity and to stay in a safe space. For some, the reticence to sexpress publicly is political. For example, I.A. from Dysnomia was skeptical to launch their first zine saying that for her it is embarrassing to make a rag and to want to launch it. For others such as O. from Dysnomia is important to go public and discuss about their issues of concern expressed through written texts in the case of the zine, in order to open a wider dialogue with other groups and spaces as she had the feeling that feminist groups in Bucharest remained rather segregated. Another member of Dysnomia, explains the positive aspects of these tensions as long as there is a benevolence behind, insisting on the political dimension of the reserve to express publicly:

Yes, I also believe in the necessity of public expression and assertion. But it was a difficult road, it was not all smooth. There is a reluctance of expression, the reluctance and the restraint of public expression that I believe is political. It has a political explanation in the gender and colonial pressure. I.A. tells me it's not that simple. As if these were simple, never mind... It's not that simple, anxieties, personal problems and so on and so forth...

What can I say now?

This is how I feel that, somehow this is what I believe ...

Eh do you know how I see the situation?

It's a constructive tension. This is how I see it.

I'm pulling from one side.

⁴²⁵ C.L.2- Dysnomia, Bucharest

Maybe I.A. and others push from the other side.

But you know everything, everything we do is out of love anyway. I mean, my criticism is not obvious, it is not even a big critic but a kind of observation ...⁴²⁶

C. The power dimension

The power dimension of professionalization is cross-cut by the organizational and knowledge dimensions. In the case of feminist NGOs, the NGO or ASBL structure itself as defined by the law imposes a hierarchy in the organization with well-defined functions, increasing the chances that a vertical functioning of the organization happens in practice, despite the efforts in many feminist organizations to function more horizontally. This translates into power differentials and relations within the organization. Compared to NGOs, one of the main characteristics of feminist informal groups and collectives is to secure the most possible a horizontal functioning and non-hierarchical relations. However, differences in resources such as time availability and in experience in other collectives might contribute to the fact that some members of the collective accumulate more power. In terms of the knowledge dimension, NGOs often value or establish professional distance as a certain mode of functioning as part of a work culture translating on one hand into a differentiation between the interests of the organization that professionalizes and the interests of those who work in the organization and on the other hand in a distance between those working in the NGOs and the beneficiaries with whom they work. This generates power relations between those who represent the interests of the organization, reinforced also by the hierarchical organization and those who work in the organization. It also generates power relations between those working in the NGO, who have the knowledge and expertise in their field and the beneficiaries who are subject of trainings, campaigns, services. In street feminist collectives, differences in knowledge and know-how about feminism can also contribute to power relations between the members of the collective. In what follows I will explain and illustrate these cases with empirical evidence from both Belgium and Romania.

Table 16. Power, organization and knowledge

Power	Organization	Knowledge
Feminist NGO	Hierarchy imposed by the	Professional distance

⁴²⁶ C.L.2- Dysnomia, Bucharest

	NGO structure	
Street feminist collectives	Differences in resources & experience	Differences in knowledge & know-how about feminism

The hierarchy within the professional feminist organizations or feminist organizations in the process of professionalization is an issue raised by several interviewees⁴²⁷. The challenge raised by feminist professionals is related to finding ways to operate more horizontally, manners to deconstruct relations of domination encouraged by a hierarchical functioning specific to the structures of NGOs or the working environment that favours the accumulation of power. One of Garance's employees - an organization specializing in feminist self-defense, which functioned autonomously in its first years of existence, explains in relation to hierarchical functioning:

What I would like is that Garance develops - even if it is already partly the case - it is to develop more the teamwork in a really horizontal manner because we are in a structure of ASBL and thus the law on non-profit organizations imposes a type of structure with General Assembly, Board of Directors, hierarchy in the team - in the end it does not impose a hierarchy but we need a direction must ... And I would be interested to see how one could function differently in terms of hierarchy, thus to deconstruct the relations of domination that are specific to the workplace and the non-profit organizations. So it is a structure that is imposed and it is by the existence of this very structure that this type of functioning is imposed.⁴²⁸

Other interviewees link the hierarchy and the professional distance also to a certain mode of operation where it is necessary to refer the activities to a hierarchical superior or to ask permission to operate structures that have well-established plans and objectives in advance. There is less autonomy and freedom to carry out more participatory projects or to co-construct and co-produce the form of participation. There is more wealth and freedom in the co-produced content than in the form of participation and the way of production. Nevertheless, there is ongoing reflection about the mode of functioning in order to identify how to have a militant dimension while being professional. A culture of work sets in as professionalization advances, with a specific working contracts, regular team meetings, team-buildings in Romania, organizational audits or even joint committees in Belgium that enhance a hierarchical way of functioning.

⁴²⁷ M.S. – Garance, Brussels; O.B. – Garance, Brussels; A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; C.S. 2 – Front, Bucharest; O.C. – Front, Bucharest; M.R. 2 – Front, Bucharest

⁴²⁸ O.B. – Garance

By contrast, in feminist informal groups, differences in time resources and experience in militancy might contribute to accumulation of power by some of its members. Differences in time resource and participation in informal groups might contribute to the accumulation of power by some members who by their availability may take on organizational charges in the group, gain more visibility and ultimately have more weight in the decision-making process⁴²⁹. Differences in experience in militancy and informal autonomous collectives sometimes gives more legitimacy to some activists in the organization and decision-making in the group. However, to counter this aspects, activists in informal collectives value the principle of contributing in the group according to one's own possibilities, managing these differences, trying to transform them into an asset rather than a disadvantage.

In relation to the knowledge dimension, power develops through professional distance, consolidated also by the hierarchy and the work culture, thus the organizational dimension. Having knowledge about the management of the organization, about the interests of the organization is reinforced and validated through the position one occupies in the organization. Having more knowledge, expertise, including know-how on certain issues translates into power differentials puts the staff of an organization in a power relationship compared to the beneficiaries of their activities. This also contributes in a mode of working in which the knowledge and expertise NGO staff is having allows them to manage situations and interactions with beneficiaries in a *professional* manner, meaning avoiding personal involvement and relationships between the professionals and beneficiaries. , a separation between emotions and work. Herman (2013, 69) shows that this professional distance also produces a break with the idea of feminist solidarity. But what this research shows is that this scission is rather exacerbated by the power relations that result from an inequality of basic resources, whether it is rather at the symbolic level within the framework of NGO-ized feminism and maintained by the status related to different hierarchically structured functions, or rather to the level of cultural capital in the context of street feminism.

The separation between emotions and work, in order to maintain this professional distance, creates tensions and reflections. On the one hand, for some organizations, not to invest personally in emotional sharing with beneficiaries is sometimes a valued strategy, precisely

⁴²⁹ I.B. – CFULB, Brussels; O – Dysnomia, Bucharest

to keep this professional distance, to maintain professionalism. For example, one of the employees of the CPE in Bucharest was criticized for lacking professional distance, when she shared personal experiences with the beneficiaries, during a project about the integration on the labor market of women in situations of precarity and marginalization. She explains :

"I've had some inside criticism that I'm too involved, that I do not have to do therapy with them, or give them examples of my personal life and its evolution. It was hard to receive this criticism even if the intention was good, it was very sharp. And I found that it helps women to see that someone who works has gone through the same difficulties. Professionalism, distance something like that." (M.M. 2 – CPE)

However, in other cases, personal involvement with specific cases led to collectivization and politicization within NGOs of certain problems that some women's groups face. This was the case with an the politicization of the situation of undocumented Roma women in Romania within some feminist and Romani feminist NGOs. During the field work in a project organized by Filia organization in partnership with E-Romnja organization, one of Filia's leaders and employees met an undocumented Roma woman who faced many difficulties related to the lack of identity documents and she initially decided to help her solve this problem. Understanding that this issue is spread, she decided to politicize the case in order to raise awareness with respect to authorities and public opinion.

Challenges to ensure a fairer distribution of power or to deconstruct relations of domination, due to diverse factors from the structure of the organization to social status differences, to differences in knowledge were issues constantly raised, within the organizations and by the interviewees⁴³⁰. One employee of Vie feminine explains how the challenge of working non-hierarchically in a diverse group in terms of experiences and positions translates into differences in legitimacy that affect participation in decision-making and having a voice within the organization:

I think that one of the things that for me was a challenge at one point was to create an internal functioning that is consistent with the values defended, in the sense the way we decided things, the way we worked. There is nothing to do, but 40 volunteers who are ... it's a mixed public so there are people who don't know to read and write in there, there are people who are from immigration, there are people who did Romance studies, there are young women, so you have a great mixity. And at the beginning

⁴³⁰ A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest; I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels; O.B. – Garance, Brussels; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; S.B. – Garance, Brussels; M.S. – Garance, Brussels

you felt this diversity, you felt a difference in terms of legitimacy, regarding how the decision was taken, who decided, whose words were heard mostly, etc. And it's a bit of a mini-company, it's a bit ... so in the end for me, for us it was important to be able to find a functioning where each, where the words of each of us are legitimate and everyone can express, where everyone feels equally comfortable, no matter what type of speech, to be able to speak, to really build a project together.

It was a challenge to me because sometimes there is reproduction, but there is also a reproduction of relationships of domination between women themselves and sometimes in a feminist association, women have the tendency not to see it ... "It's good, we are between women, so we are all equal" but it's not because we are all women outside the framework of patriarchal domination that for this reason there is no more domination.⁴³¹

In relation to professional distance, professionals in feminist organizations take into account the difficulties they may face on the ground and try to create spaces for sharing to decompress or to create tools to protect themselves or to better manage interaction between personal and professional life. An interviewee of *Le Monde selon les Femmes* specifies with respect to the pressure resented when working with difficult topics and situations:

The problem is when and where does it stop when you are a political activist? And that's a question and there may be suffering. There can be. And so the friendly discussions, the moments of listening, of relaxation, easing and solidarity between women, between women and men too.⁴³²

In informal feminist collectives, differences in knowledge and know-how regarding feminism or certain issues within feminism, but also differences in views political views or regarding ways to organize collectively might create power relations and tensions and bring in conflictual situations. One way of managing conflicts in A-Casa collective, was to bring in a neutral persons from the outside, whom they trust and who have more experience than them in group organizing and to facilitate the process of solving a conflict⁴³³. In the autonomous collective created around Femmes et santé in Belgium, one of the challenges during the gatherings they organized in view of training themselves and building knowledge around women and health issues, was to deal with differences and inequalities in experience and knowledge that contributed to the fact that some of them felt more legitimate in different moments to speak and to feel respected⁴³⁴. In Dysnomia group in Bucharest, knowledge about feminism translated into power relations in the group and knowledge exchange and

⁴³¹ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels

⁴³² X.T. LMSF

⁴³³ A.M A-Casa, Cluj

⁴³⁴ O.B. – Garance, Brussels

construction was not always egalitarian, allowing everyone to have a voice and legitimacy to express their views. One member of Dysnomia explains how she resented the power relations within the group:

That's definitely what is desired, but you realize there's a hierarchy. And today I had a revelation that practically we have so deeply integrated and internalized hierarchization and capitalism and it is almost impossible to have a group in which to pretend that everything is horizontal and everything is perfectly equal, as it happens in the feminist circle. And we actually suppress what is happening, because it is impossible to be so, there is impossible not to have at least once, a relationship of power. And it is clear that there are certain relationships of power and there is a person who is more in charge of organizing and who has dealt more with the organization of the zine. And somehow this person behaves as if she has full knowledge of feminism and criticizes other people if they do not not address the theme of feminism as intense or criticizes their perspectives as being invalid from a feminist viewpoint or not sufficiently good. And I often have this feeling of my feminism, as I experience it and understand it, as is never good enough, it's never quite complex, it's never enough politically correct, it's always going to be something that I am going to say wrong. And yes there is a person or two who somehow behaves like this mother of feminism and other people who admire her very much and somehow imitate her behavior and that person discusses about the girls from the groups when they are not present, as if there is something wrong with them and the group must be something like that kind of group therapy what we do. And to even quote the person "What do we do with X? Because X was a little nervous on a certain day when she presented her arguments."⁴³⁵

At the same time, this research shows that professionals from outside the feminist movement have come into contact with the feminist movement by working in feminist NGOs and subsequently they engaged in a more militant manner within the movement or have adopted at least a feminist framework while remaining in the environment of professionalized feminism. This research also shows that in the process of professionalization there is a movement between professionals, feminist professionals, and feminist activists. For example, volunteer activists in informal groups work in professionalized feminist NGOs, either because their group has chosen to institutionalize and professionalize, or because they need a job, considering it very lucky "to be paid to be a feminist activist", especially in Belgium where the state allocates way more subsidies compared to Romania. At the same time there is also a movement of feminists working in NGOs towards activism in the informal groups, because they wish to have more autonomy in their actions, to be able to have ownership of their own contributions and work, to have more horizontal forms of engagement, with greater

⁴³⁵ O – Dysnomia, Bucharest

freedom of organization, action or speech. The figure below shows this movement. There are also demobilization processes related to burnout but also remobilization.

Fig. 3. Mobility within feminist NGOs

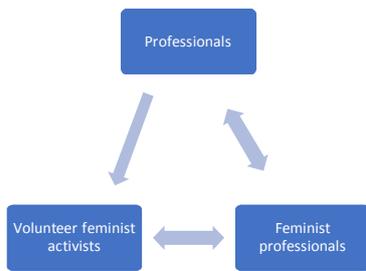
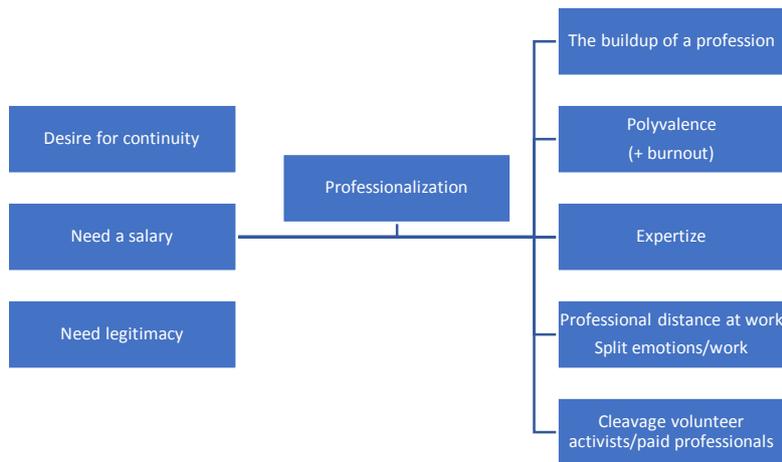


Fig. 4. Professionalization



II. Conclusions

In this chapter I have identified five dimensions of the process of professionalization of the feminist movements in Belgium and Romania and explained them in relation to the organization, knowledge and power arguments theorized by Morell (2007). The five dimensions are: (1) the build-up of a profession; (2) the versatility of work in feminist

organizations; (3) the development of expertise; (4) professional distance; (5) the cleavage between paid professionals, activists and volunteers. In relation to the organization argument that enlightens about the process of identity construction of feminist professionals through interactions with various actors, including occupational groups, I have analysed versatility and the web of interactions among different actors within the feminist NGO sector. First, versatility has emerged as a constant both in feminist organizations in Belgium and in Romania. It is associated, on the one hand, with the multiplicity of skills and competencies that those working in feminist NGOs must constantly develop, and on the other hand, to interchangeable functions that one is susceptible to undertake within the organization. Versatility developed as a characteristic of the work of professionals in feminist NGOs in relation to the kind of funding mechanisms available to organizations. In Belgium, versatility also indicates a form of responsibility towards subsidizing bodies, especially when NGOs are accredited to receive structural funding from popular education or development NGOs. The boost received from the subsidizing bodies to meet with their expectations, is seen as both as something rather positive, as a form of growth and improvement, in terms of knowledge or organizational practices but also as a form of constraint related to the accountability mechanisms and the bureaucratic work they have to do. In Romania, the specificity of versatility, associated with the multiplicity of functions that one undertakes, is related to the overlapping of multiple jobs simultaneously, which in turn is linked to the specificity of project-based work – a widespread form among Romanian NGOs. Job versatility can also transform into a source of workload pressure, sometimes with health consequences for feminist professionals.

Second, the web of interactions between various actors within the feminist NGO sector refers to both interactions *within* the movement and with actors *outside* the movement and the different roles that actors might embrace in various contexts. These interactions shaped the professionalization process, specifically the professional identity build-up, with challenges and consequences related to depoliticization, politicization and re-politicization. Regarding interactions with actors outside the movement, the increased specialization and the growth of the NGO sector, opened possibilities for employment for professionals from outside the feminist movement. Feminist organizations sometimes hire professionals who were not necessarily engaged in the feminist movement, because they need certain skills and competencies, knowledge or expertise. Additionally, the difficulties on the labour market, the policies of the universities, employers that ask for professional experience from young

graduates or job-seekers have translated into an increase in demands for internships in the NGO sector and feminist organizations take more and more young people as interns. While the opening of the feminist NGO sector towards people from outside the movement who might not be socialized with the feminist principles exposing themselves to a potential risk of depoliticization, there is also a potential for politicization of those people who enter for the first time in contact with the feminist ideas and practices, not having had previously a grassroots experience of mobilization within the movement. For many professionals, the fact that they could do a paid work in feminist organizations is what allowed them to engage with feminism as otherwise they would not have been able to do so. There are several challenges related to the balance between private life, including domestic work and childrearing and work, since a precarious economic position and the charge of domestic work does not allow everyone to be able to engage in militancy and political work. What seems to foster politicization rather than depoliticization by opening the feminist sector through professionalization, to participation and employment of people from outside the movement is the transfer of knowledge and knowledge exchange within an organization that helps maintain and reproduce a feminist politicized space.

Within the movement, two kinds of interactions are relevant for the organization argument of professionalization, both cross-cut by the paid/unpaid work divide: (a) between professionals in NGOs and activists in Street feminist informal groups that might either hinder the build-up of coalitional politics between NGO-ized and Street feminism or on the opposite, through overlapping membership to rather foster bridgebuilding. (b) between professionals and volunteers in the context of a precarious sector that professionalizes. Sometimes, the boundaries between volunteers and militants are vague. First, the divide between professionals and militants is fostered by an underlying form of ethics of engagement according to which it seems immoral to gain money out of a social injustice, thus to earn an income based on work that aims to improve the conditions of those oppressed and marginalized. Out of this underlying form of ethics, two perspectives have emerged: one that emphasizes the rise of a new stratum within the middle class, around NGO professionals that build-up their work and emancipation while working with oppressed, precarious people; and another one that reveals the expectations from a feminized sector that is not yet able to offer decent working conditions, to continue engaging in precarious work based on the principle of immorality of earning money out of a social injustice. Second, regarding interactions between professionals, militants and volunteers the boundaries are porous. There is a lot of overlapping between professionals and militants since some feminists work in professional

NGOs and are militants in informal groups, occasioning a bridge-building between NGO-ized feminism and Street feminism. While many feminist professionals working in NGOs perform more than the hours stipulated by the contract, feminist NGOs are supported enormously by the work of volunteers and both in Belgium and in Romania, activists believe that volunteer work maintains many organizations alive. Through professionalization, feminists working in NGOs have a more fixed working schedule and work-related commitments that sometimes challenges bridge-building and the construction of coalitions with militants in more informal groups. This seems to be more the case in Belgium where sometimes meetings are scheduled during the working hours, when militants that have jobs outside the feminist NGO sector are not able to attend.

In what concerns the knowledge argument, the build-up of a profession is materialized in the process of construction of a body of knowledge and practice rooted in the contributions of professionals to the society, legitimized by the needs and demands for those contributions. The build-up of gender expertise within the feminist movement is based on exchanges and knowledge production by an informal network of multiple actors – formal or informal, from feminist and gender studies scholars, feminist NGO professionals, activists in informal feminist collectives or policy officers in gender equality agencies and last but not least women, those marginalized and oppressed. In the build-up of gender expertise, within feminist NGOs and informal groups, two processes play a significant role: collective knowledge production and knowledge diffusion that can take the form of transfer or exchange. These processes are sometimes challenged in practice by unequal power relations that translate in a constant negotiation, sometimes struggle. The discursive practices at the basis of knowledge production are imbued with power relations, that challenge the actors involved and who aimed towards an equitable process, drawing also attention to the limits of expert knowledge. The institutionalization of expert knowledge implies a formal recognition in Romania through the formalization of the professions of gender expert and technician or informal in Belgium, implying recognition from decision-makers that gives feminists in NGOs legitimacy to participate in the policy-making process in the official arena. In turn, this enhanced the divide produced by institutionalization through inclusion and marginalization, between the knowledge produced within formal NGOs, included and the one produced by informal collectives, excluded.

Related to the power argument, within feminist organizations, the NGO or ASBL structure itself as defined by the law imposes a hierarchy in the organization with well-defined functions, despite efforts in many feminist organizations to function horizontally. This translate into power differentials and relations within the organization. By contrast, for feminist informal groups, to secure a horizontal functioning and non-hierarchical relations is a crucial aspect in their mode of organizing. However, differences in resources such as time availability and in experience in other collectives might contribute to the fact that some members of the collective accumulate more power. Moreover, NGOs often value or establish professional distance as a their mode of functioning, translating, on the one hand, into a differentiation between the interests of the organization and the interests of professionals and, on the other hand, in a distance between professionals in NGOs and the beneficiaries with whom they work. However, in street feminist collectives, differences in knowledge and know-how about feminism can also contribute to power relations between the members of the collective.

IX. Neoliberal bureaucratization and feminist movement organizations

I. What is neoliberal bureaucratization?

Neoliberal bureaucratization is the third component of NGO-ization. Before defining neoliberal bureaucratization, following the work of Hibou (2015) and explaining its relation to the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement, I will review some important elements from the literature on bureaucratization that will help me distinguish its neoliberal

characteristics. Since long time ago, scholars pointed out to bureaucratization as affecting different actors and organizations, if not the whole society, contrary to the widespread popular image of bureaucracy as being specific to the state apparatus. Weber (1994) argued that bureaucracy characterizes not only the state administration, but also the economic life, political parties, churches, local communities, banks, cartels, cooperatives, factories or lobbies, being a necessary element of capitalism, stemming from a need for predictability and calculability. Among its main features are the division of labor, technical and rational specialization and professional training, delimitation of areas of responsibility, evaluation through impartial procedures and hierarchical organization (Weber, 1994). The superiority of bureaucracy lies in the role of technical knowledge as bureaucracy exercises its domination based on knowledge, making it specifically rational (Weber, 1994, 24-26). Weber argued that the rational, technical specialization and training is what makes bureaucracy inescapable, to which the future belongs (Weber, 1994, 156). The universal and powerful domination of bureaucracy in the society, based on rationality and control that limits the possibilities to renew the social norms in society was emphasized by Castoriadis (1988) but compared to Max Weber he argues that it characterizes both occidental societies at the time as well as eastern bloc, around URSS, varying only with respects to the intensity of the bureaucratic system. Claude Lefort, with whom Castoriadis founded the review *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in 1949, apart from emphasizing the encompassing functioning of bureaucracy, penetrating various spheres of the social life, he insists, similarly to Weber, on the role of hierarchy and bureaucrats' own contributions to bureaucracy and who have a "common aim to form a milieu apart from those whom they dominate, to participate in socialized power, and to interdefine each other in a hierarchy which guarantees them either material status or prestige" (Lefort, 1974, 48). The bureaucratization of the society through the proliferation of norms, rules and procedures that affect multiple domains of life gains its force through the rational logic on which it is based. But how does bureaucracy distinguishes today in neoliberalism from its previous conceptualizations?

Beatrice Hibou, argues in her work – "The Bureaucratization of the World in the Neoliberal Era" (2015) that there are two main features of neoliberal bureaucracy that distinguishes it from its previous versions. The first one concerns the private character of the norms, rules and procedures that invade our everyday life that emerged from the private sector, from the market and the enterprise world and which she calls "formalities". The second characteristic is the intensification of the formal nature of bureaucracy through a process of abstractization

and generalization that wipes out meaning of mental operations that make these processes, by equalizing formal representations with the realities themselves (Hibou, 2015, 16). But the proliferation of formalities stemming from the private world was emphasized as a characteristic of bureaucracies previously. In contemporary world, its neoliberal character stems from financialization and flexibility, Hibou (2015, 19) argues, and these make it more general and autonomous. Financialization, reconstitutes managerialism through financial control ensured by financial data and accountancy indicators, through the management of numbers and the assessment of performance based on quantification and mathematization (Idem., 21). Flexibility, the more evident characteristic of neoliberal bureaucracy replaces the hierarchical and pyramidal structure of the previous bureaucratic forms, promoting the development of more horizontal relations. Through outsourcing, contracting, alliances, cooperation, partnerships and the dismantling of the work force flexibilization supports a fluid capitalism characterized by mobility, ready to adapt and change (Hibou, 2015, 22-24).

The second feature of neoliberal bureaucratization concerns the high degree of formalization resulting from operations of abstraction as mental representations of real life and that aims at enclosing the complex reality into general and formal categories, norms and practices that stem from the private sphere (Idem., 24-25). They rationalize and govern people and trajectories within the society. The role of imaginary and fiction at the basis of the process of abstraction through norms and procedures integrated into a mode of government produce political and social effects through because fiction transforms into practice. In this sense Partha Chatterjee (2004, 60-75) talks about the possibilities of transforming empirically assembled populations, thus categories of governmentalities into morally constituted communities. What explains the spread of an increasing number of rules and regulations is the pursuit of transparency and equality of treatment, risk management and security that serve as a justification for standards, rules, certifications, evaluations and control procedures.

Neoliberal domination, Hibou (2015) argues, is ensured through a process of reduction of meaning and invisible chains at play in the extensive use of auditing and also through the production of indifference within the society. The reduction of meaning is expressed through a process of normalization that ensures control at a distance mediated by the extreme expansion of norms, indicators, ratios, figure, indicating the shift from hierarchical, direct surveillance (Idem., 87). The extensive recourse to auditing in neoliberalism ensures the domination of neoliberal bureaucracy through the guise of consensus and voluntary

acceptance of formalities that seem neither compulsory nor restrictive. The atomization of the process of assessment, explained by the formation of standardized procedures makes difficult to understanding of the whole process, favoring a micro-level perspective exploiting people's sense of responsibility through the norms internalized (Idem., 89-92). The production of indifference is a social production, a systematization and formalization of government at distance through norms, indicators and depersonalized procedures to ensure objectivity, neutrality and effective justice that is ensured with the complicity of a whole category of professionals even if passive or unconscious (Idem., 93-106). The government at distance through depersonalized formalities creates homogeneity that contributes to professionals' loss of meaning of their action and of individual cases (Idem., 95).

Neoliberal bureaucracy is subjective, dynamic, in permanent evolution and elusive playing on expectations and demands considered to a certain extent legitimate such as transparency and on (in)voluntary contributions and participation of people in a process of negotiation and potentially divergent encounters leaving space for indeterminacy (Hibou, 2015). This indeterminacy is ensured by the flexibility and adaptability of formalities such as frameworks, guidelines leaving room for improvisation and negotiation on the one hand and for resistance and counter-practices on the other that modify their extent and effects (Idem). However, Hibou (2015, 131-133) argues that resistance and struggles are over different kinds of formalities – norms, rules, procedures, without questioning the neoliberal logic, but feeding it. Since not everything is confined to formalities, informalities emphasize violations of these formalities, compromises in the process of negotiation of norms and rules emphasizing their potential overlapping and interplay, leaving space for improvisation and implementation, freedom and creativity, inclusion and exclusion in an overall embodiment in abstractions stemming from the market and the enterprise, creating tensions and processes of exclusion (Idem. 142-145). Sharma (2014, 94-108) analyses the paradoxes that stem from the bureaucratization of empowerment as a category of governance or as self-governance opens both possibilities for NGO women to use bureaucratic techniques as a subversive tool but also to train clients in these methods.

This framework allows me to better situate the neoliberal bureaucratization in relation to the process of NGO-ization of the feminist movement and most important in practice, in feminist NGOs' practice, in order to disentangle the inescapable logic of formalities and informalities stemming from the world of management, enterprise and the market affect the functioning of

feminist organizations and analyze some of its effects. The increased demands for transparency, considerations of presumed risks, demands for anticipation and predictability of NGOs' actions as well as calculability through formal categories, codes, indicators serve as justification both from the part of donors, be them public or private, to enforce a logic of work based on norms, rules and procedures and from the part of NGOs and professionals working within to enclose their actions in a rational and objective framework and to ensure continuity and transparency of their work. Neoliberal bureaucratization as elusive, diffuse and adaptable takes specific forms in practice through interactions with other fields. In this case, NGOs' interaction with state or donors, private or public, takes the form of an encounter of different interests that might be conflicting, antagonistic but which through negotiating a way to work together construct and share a common mode of operation inspired from the private, enterprise sphere. Accountability mechanisms and procedures are set up as a tool of management and retrospective control and enforced through reports and audits that take an enormous amount of time and have the effect of emptying time resources of professionals and activists both to reflect on their practices and work directly with people.

The interactions between feminist NGOs and the state and donors help formalize this *modus operandi* based on accountability, predictability and calculability in order to ensure a presumed fair and transparent implementation of actions. The institutionalization of these norms, rules, codes and procedures that are part of this mode of operation also help to create and consolidate a specific language which is the NGO language but which has the common root with other domains affected by neoliberal bureaucratization which is incarnated into management and market vocabulary. This NGO language creates and reinforces categories and ensures the domination of these formalities. Its power stems from the appearance of it being non-compulsory. NGOs can adhere and follow the guides that establish norms and procedures in donors' call for tenders if they want to apply for funds. Moreover these norms, rules and procedures contribute to the creation of new subjects and new markets both for professionals and for the target groups. Target groups are defined in terms of their vulnerability and their characteristics are a priori established and verified through indicators. Those who are part of the target group need to confirm their belonging, membership by filling in papers or bringing evidence. Through normalization and standardization of these rules and procedures people become managed in a rational and technical way, based on scientific knowledge and know-how and contributes to establish and reinforce the professional distance between professionals and experts in NGOs and the group to whom

they address. This contribute to the government at a distance that Hibou (2015) places at the heart of neoliberal bureaucratization.

Norms, rules and procedures whose unabated proliferation is ensured by neoliberal bureaucratization are incomplete and leave room for negotiation and improvisation. They show however who is complying and who is not, but also who is included among the professional organizations that are included as privileged partners of the state or private institutions for in the decision-making process, for public policy making or their implementation through projects. However, capacity to comply with these externalities depend on NGOs organizational capacity which might on the one hand operate a process of exclusion of those organizations who cannot comply and on the other hand might reinforce professionalization in order to ensure the capacity to comply with the norms and rules in the sector. Under the guise of freedom of choice and a voluntary acceptance of these norms and procedures NGOs are also faced with the cost of non-compliance and potentially loose funding or work completely autonomous from a financial point of view which limits their possibility of transmission or capacity to offer services. This shows once again the power of externalities coming from the market and enterprise world were financial resources are today highly concentrated.

II. Why comply? Predictability, risk management and transparency

With neoliberal bureaucratization, demands for predictability, calculability and transparency are increasing⁴³⁶. In Romania and Belgium, organizations need to predict which activities, how many, when and what kind of activities do they foresee, how many participants, what target group and what results do they expect. They need to provide a solid justification regarding the needs of the target group and subsequently for the actions they want to implement in order to solve the identified social problems. They also need to provide justification that the activities were implemented as they said they will and for the participation of the target group defined through specific characteristics. In Belgium, NGOs that are accredited as popular education NGOs or as development NGOs need to elaborate and propose a multiple year plan, five years in general – a Program Contract with specific themes, clear objectives and activities and they have to work a specific number of hours and

⁴³⁶ A.S. – CPE, Bucharest; C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; A.T. – Filia, Bucharest; A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

evaluate the working plan before⁴³⁷. Garance, *Vie féminine*, *le Monde selon les femmes*, Université des Femmes and Femmes Prévoyantes Socialistes are all recognized under different axes on popular education and some of them on all. The process of elaboration of the Program contract is laborious and time-consuming, but as many feminists in NGOs emphasize it has a long duration of five years, even if reports are yearly. Asked about the process of elaboration of the five years plan of *Vie féminine*, including the directions for action, the objectives, one member of *Vie féminine*, subsequently working for the government in the area of popular education tells me that the plan was established within this specific line of financing, took a long time and was a participatory process. She explains:

So in fact it was a participatory process of one year and a half. And in two years from now we're going to elaborate a new action plan, establish what are the problems that women have, what are their issues. It was a very long process. And finally, from there, we have to choose six themes and then we will formulate objectives.

It is directly related to funding in order to be recognized as association working in popular education which is the main source of funding for *Vie féminine*. Afterwards there are punctual subsidies. But structural funding is from popular education. You must elaborate a work plan over five years, with themes. It's a five year work plan where you have to determine your themes, your objectives and evaluate the work plan before. Every five years.⁴³⁸

Belgian NGOs consider themselves fortunate to have this so called structural financing from the state as they are aware of the scarce financial situation and struggles of the feminist movement, including feminist NGOs in other countries as for example in Romania where there is no structural funding for the NGOs which function on a project based work, meaning punctual funding for a shorter period of time. However, to be recognized in popular education, requires an elaborate process of introducing the demand with a program, themes and axes for which they want to be accredited. The organization that is making the demand need to practice popular education for one year before introducing the demand, then the work of the organization is evaluated and if it receives positive notice it will have a temporary arrangement for two years with a scarce amount of money, in which the organization needs to comply with the program that she proposed and after two years is evaluated⁴³⁹. If the organization passes the evaluation and if it becomes recognized it needs to elaborate the five-year plan explained above. However, as one interviewee says “popular education enters a

⁴³⁷ A.B. *Vie féminine*, Brussels; C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

⁴³⁸ A.B. *Vie féminine*, Brussels

⁴³⁹ S.B. – Garance, Brussels; A.B. *Vie féminine*, Brussels

logic in which it is more instrumentalized because you get used to calculate everything you do”⁴⁴⁰.

The important thing to retain is that NGOs need to define plans and projects established in line with specific models, guidelines that detail the specific rules to follow to introduce the accreditation request, to fill-in specific standardized forms for defining themes, objectives, the actions taken to achieve them and for evaluation – all these inspired by the management stemming from the market and the world of enterprise. Organizations *choose* to apply for accreditation and *voluntarily* follow them.

By contrast, in Romania feminist NGOs function on a project-based work and for each project application they need to define the aim and the objectives of the project, to provide a justification for the issues they want to address, sometimes including scientific data, to explain how the project will be implemented, disseminated and assessed. The projects can last from a few months to a few years, generally two or three maximum. As the organizations do not dispose of any structural financing, the general aim of the organization is subsumed and achieved through the various projects implemented, with their objectives and their actions. This means that there is much fluidity in the general direction for action that the organization follows, in the sense that it can be permanently reshaped in practice through the projects implemented. Predictability is needed but this is demanded in terms of each specific project. Feminist NGOs are unable to establish long term plans for the organization outside the framework of projects. However, when they try to do so, much additional voluntary work from the part of the employees or volunteers is done.

It is relevant here to remind the distinction operated by activists in feminist NGO in Romania regarding access to financing. In Romania, feminists working in NGOs consider that there is a difference between the period of pre-accession to the European Union and post-accession vis-à-vis the demands of predictability and calculability from donors. In the pre-accession period, during which many NGOs were founded, there was more flexibility in terms of respecting the rules and procedures to follow in order to apply for funds, to respond to calls for projects and even to implement them. It was a learning period in which compromises and negotiations between the funding bodies and NGOs took place with more

⁴⁴⁰ A.B. Vie feminine, Brussels

facility. One of the interviewees explains the fact that before entering the European Union when "there was not so much institutionalization and bureaucratization, if it seemed to you that you did not write something correctly or you wrote something in the beginning of the project that made no sense afterwards, you could write to the funder to explain it and it was possible"⁴⁴¹. After entering the European Union, donors were more rigid in terms of predictability and calculability. A feminist working at the CPE explains that "when you write the project, you have to think seriously about what you want to include, because if you did not have the inspiration to include it at that moment, it's too difficult to do it afterwards, with a lot of additional acts"⁴⁴². Thus, more norms, rules and procedures were added in this second period that NGOs had to apply, if they did not foresee something correctly or as stated in the initial documents, or if they found a different or a particular reality on the ground and they couldn't adapt informally, but had to notify the donor, additional paperwork and procedures to follow were requested. Sabine Lang's recommendation for states and donors to "let NGOs talk failure" (2013, 221) in order ameliorate the conditions of participation of civil society organizations in the process of governance is relevant, but it seems that within the process of neoliberal bureaucratization, one norm calls another, one rule calls for another rule so that even when it is possible for feminist NGOs to talk failure, the domination of neoliberal bureaucracy is ensured through an increased body of externalities that organizations need to apply⁴⁴³. One member of ALEG mentions that they devote a lot of time in the organization to the "bureaucracy required by the donors that is enormous with notifications each time you do not fit into a budget line and these notifications imply a lot of attachments and many explanations and very heavy periodic reports"⁴⁴⁴.

Even though there are differences in Belgium and in Romania regarding the bodies that seem to be the intermediaries of these norms and rules that seem to be able to be enforced through a financial dependence, discussed in detail in the next chapter, the source, the form, the shape of these norms, rules and procedures is common – management and enterprise world of the private market. Thus, it does not seem to matter if the funding body is public, the state government, or supranational, through the EU or private American Foundations or Norwegian Funds. Neoliberal bureaucratization, here of NGOs, is heterogenous and yet

⁴⁴¹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

⁴⁴² M.M. 2 - CPE

⁴⁴³ M.S. – Garance, Brussels; Sibiu; A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; I.V. – Garance, Brussels; A.V. 1 – ALEG, Sibiu

⁴⁴⁴ A.V. 1 – ALEG,

universal, the norms, rules and procedures take different forms, can be adapted leaving room for negotiations and informal adjustments, disguising choice and voluntary compliance, but they are all expressed and translated into the language of management and the market.⁴⁴⁵

The public discourse about ensuring transparency, security and taking into account risks that seems particularly reasonable penetrates the daily activities of the NGOs and the way of working that they adopt. The paradox is that all these rules, norms and procedures are visible, to ensure transparency, but in the same time they ensure an invisible domination by the fact that they are rendered acceptable and reasonable through their rationality, objectivity and impartiality. Important to point here is that there is a process of co-production of neoliberal bureaucratization through the co-production and application of these norms and procedures, the elaboration of guides and manuals, guidelines and good practices to which all actors participate not just the state or donors, public or private but knowingly or unknowingly also NGOs. And this is because this mode of functioning seems to go against corruption, elite and vested interests and ensures transparency and equitable application. For example, what adherence and valuing of the Multi-agency risk assessment and case management in cases of violence against women by feminist NGOs that work in the area and that must be understood not as a critique of the model itself which seems to be centered on victims' or survivors' needs and interests by taking into account all the actors including institutional ones that might be involved in the process and potentially ensuring financing through the state, is that this model has been elaborated in the language of norms and procedures stemming from management and enterprise world, but which are spread both to the state and civil society sphere and take direct effects through their application. One interviewee from ALEG explains to me that when using this approach the institutions involved "should work together, come together when a case occurs, especially if it is a case that meets the characteristics of a high risk case. Risk assessment questionnaires are also used when the victim comes into contact with certain institutions if a threshold passes to a multifunctional case conference"⁴⁴⁶. And the role of feminist NGOs working on violence against women as independent actors is to ensure that the victim/survivor's interests are taken into account⁴⁴⁷. Thus, questionnaires are used to assess the case of the victim in terms of risks and from there on certain procedures are

⁴⁴⁵ Changes on the popular education decree regarding the criteria to identify the popular classes Welter (2013, 7)

⁴⁴⁶ A.V. 2 – ALEG, Sibiu

⁴⁴⁷ A.V. 2 – ALEG, Sibiu

to be followed to ensure an impartial treatment of the case in the person's best interests and the role of the NGOs working with a feminist perspectives is to ensure that they avoid a potential re-traumatization of the person. Once again, the important aspect here is not the normative evaluation of this case management procedures for violence against women cases but the expansion and use of externalities coming from the management and enterprise world.

The rhetoric of transparency had also penetrated the NGOs practice, as it shows integrity, morality and ethics in the way things are done. However, this has the perverse effect of reinforcing the bureaucratic procedures as a logic of action that are used to ensure this transparency. One interviewee from LMSF in Belgium tells me about the 2011 moment when they organized the international gathering of Femmes et Santé. While in the organization they tried to contort pharmaceutical laboratories or private sponsors and go against the big capital and private interests, organizing outside, they created an organization – ASBL, for the organization of these meeting in order to ensure transparency among those who participated in the platform organizing the meeting. She explains that it was just a strategy to attain transparency:

So that's it, this association was created to manage the money, but it also allowed not to do it under a private account which would have been more embarrassing. It was to play the transparency among the around twenty people involved in it.

And at the same time this non-profit organization was dissuaded. We created the platform just for that and then it was finished.

And so for me it can go through an institutionalization but why is so? It was not only, it was not for the tax, it was for the transparency between us. To be sure that I – since I was managing the money, did not have the money in my bank account, it was in another bank account and there were other people who had access to it. And that's what I mean when I question the logic that by institutionalizing it becomes only for professionals. This is not true. I gave you a recent example from 2011. And in 2014 everything was closed.

So sometimes it's a strategy to achieve different goals that you cannot achieve otherwise.⁴⁴⁸

Thus, individual responsibility comes into play and contribute to the domination of norms and rules because it seems reasonable to ensure a collective process of management of funds that is thought more transparent. A new entity was created, rules and procedures were followed to do this work. Hibou (2015, 91) emphasizes here that domination is ensured without the intention of people to participate to it, “through self-control and interiorization of

⁴⁴⁸ P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

norms, encouraging and even demanding freedom, playing on people's sense of individual responsibility".

III. Governing at a distance? The role of accountability

Compliance to the norms, rules and procedures to which NGOs adhere when applying for funds, either structural or through projects is ensured through reports and evaluation. Even though burdening, many NGOs workers find it reasonable to justify the money that they received⁴⁴⁹. However, the neoliberal specificity of this form of bureaucratization, the increased formalization of control and its increased frequency through regular auditing or screening – in Belgium, for NGOs that are recognized as development NGOs. For example, one employee of LMSF mention that being recognized as a development NGO imply that they have to pass a lot of evaluations and exams, being controlled every year⁴⁵⁰. Another person who was an intern at the association at the moment when they passed the so-called screening explains that this is a procedure through which NGOs are evaluated in order to see if they will continue to have access to financing and that as an NGO you always need to fit into some boxes in order to get the funding from the state and this implied among others formalizing the procedures, gathering procedural documents with a lot of criteria to be fulfilled such as financial, at the level of partnerships and many more⁴⁵¹. What she found special was that there was an external, private enterprise that carried out the screening for the state, an audit firm⁴⁵².

This shows how the life of the NGO is monitored, controlled through the people who work there, but most importantly their functioning is being validated. But this control is not being a close and hierarchical type of control as in Weber's model of bureaucracy, but it leaves the possibility for negotiation and discussion or for innovation and creative ways of contouring certain norms or rules or adapting them in order to fit the reality on the ground. Referring to the same process of screening of LMSF, the intern at the time explains that it was a complicated process also because the requirements from those auditing were high and that they did not have any knowledge about the reality on the ground⁴⁵³. Impossible demands

⁴⁴⁹ Study day - PROFESSIONNALISATION ! NOUVEAUX DÉFIS EN TEMPS DE CRISE, November 30, 2016, Sophia, Brussels

⁴⁵⁰ P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

⁴⁵¹ C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

⁴⁵² C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

⁴⁵³ C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

were being made and a lot of pressure put on NGOs who gathered themselves to discuss this issues. LMSF was positively evaluated and passed the audit. However, this process shows also the role of informalities in neoliberal bureaucratization as emphasized by Hibou (2015) since there is always a certain flexibility that allow organizations to negotiate the terms of applying the rules such as the implementation of their activities of example. To take Hibou's formula, neoliberal bureaucratization is an in-situ process that is shaped both by formalities and informalities, in a continuous interaction between different domains – the state, NGOs, private firms, the juridical area, the medical domain and so on that gives its specificity and these characteristics of adaptability and flexibility.

A specificity in Belgium is that NGOs which are accredited for structural funding, at least some of them gather together and coalize their efforts in order to coordinate among themselves and increase their negotiating power with donors when they do not find a way or do not want to comply with certain rules and demands from the subsidizing bodies. A telling example in this case concerns the modification of decree on social cohesion that pressured organizations in terms of diversity, mixity of their participants. For one of the houses of Vie feminine, Maison Mosaïque the subsidies from the Social Cohesion represented 50% of their budget and the subsidy was renewed every five years⁴⁵⁴. The pressure to open to mixity men and women would have implied for them to change their working philosophy, rooted in the work with women. One of the employees of Maison Mosaïque mentions that after political struggles they had the subsidy but other smaller associations which did not have the same capacity for political pressures had to adapt to the new regulation⁴⁵⁵. However, organizations gathered together at the initiative of Vie feminine to put pressure on the minister and deputies to make their demands heard when they change the decree. The president of Vie feminine explains how they organized in the platform, to question some of the new norms and rules imposed by the changing decree:

In fact for the moment there is a reflection on the decree of social cohesion and it is at this level there - because alone we are not going anywhere. Vie Féminine Brussels created a small platform of several women's associations and they have made a joint approach to the minister, to deputies, to make heard their proposals for the new decree.

⁴⁵⁴ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels

⁴⁵⁵ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels

And so among the elements that they pointed out is the aspect of the non-mixity; there are other aspects also, because they are worse than the pure bureaucrats by obliging us to do a certain number of hours, while we are not in the sphere of professional integration, we are in field work popular education.

So they are trying to keep maintaining pressure and raising awareness more widely.

Yesterday we were still talking about this decree and we have not seen anything yet. We are waiting for the proposal.

They are writing the decree. So if the new decree speaks of non-mixity, we will not let it go, it will be political via the parliament.

Accountability is ensured also through discipline and self-management as for example in many organizations, those who are responsible for writing and implementing a project, they are also responsible for everything related to reports, evaluation and justifications for the donors, related to the way the money was spent, how many hours did they work, together with documents supporting that evidence⁴⁵⁶. Following the process of development of a project from the beginning until the end allows participants to see how the entire process unfolds against a hyper-specialization in which implementation, dissemination, evaluation would be attributed to different persons. However, at the level of accountability, the fact that everyone is responsible for their own project that they develop – which once again seems reasonable because those developing and implementing a project know better about it and would be capable to provide the necessary reports for evaluation and justification documents in financial terms, actually plays again on individual responsibility emphasizing once again the neoliberal characteristic of bureaucracy as extended to the civil society sphere, including feminist organizations. In short, it cuts down responsibility to the individual level, as everybody is responsible for their own project. If organizations are larger and with bigger financial and organizational capacity, they have the support from accountants that help them keep and organize their evidence and justifications for the various projects which eases the work but individual persons remain responsible for the projects that they developed.

The power of control and accountability, through participating in audits, through reports, evaluations, indicators that have to be met stems not only in their formal character as they are duly described in manuals and guidelines and contracts and that ensure this government at a distance since NGOs voluntarily adhere to them when they apply for funds and since they seem objective and neutral, based on empirical facts, but also through informalities. As these

⁴⁵⁶ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; O.V. Vie feminine, Brussels

norms and rules are based on a process of abstraction, they will always be incomplete (Hibou, 2015), as their names specify – framework, guidelines, disguising their compulsory, constraining character and leaving room for maneuver, arrangements and negotiations in practice. For example, when the popular education decree was changed in 2001, Vie feminine lost subsidies because the decree changed the norms and criteria based on which working hours were calculated and they managed to negotiate with the donors to establish separate conventions for women’s literacy and creativity aside that will give them additional funds to cover the hours that were previously covered⁴⁵⁷. Previous employee of Vie féminine, subsequently working for the government on popular education explains how this happened:

In 2001 when they changed the popular education decree, the only association that lost money was Vie féminine because they changed the criteria for counting. Since Vie féminine is very decentralized, there were a lot of hours that were not recognized because they were above the cap hours.

So the cap hour, but as Vie Féminine is very decentralized, there were many many hours that were not recognized. Therefore, to overcome this because there was only Vie feminine that was in this situation, they negotiated financial agreements in addition to those on popular education. They had a convention for feminist literacy, another convention for creativity. For both they receive 60000 euro more than their contract on popular education because there was a problem in the decree.⁴⁵⁸

This shows the incompleteness of formalities that are based on processes of abstraction and the fact that they cannot encompass all the complexities of the reality on the ground. Thus, they can be refined and adapted that goes from formal conformity to negotiations, there where is needed, and these gives additional power to these norms and rules as it seems that they are not imposing and constraining but there is room for maneuver.

In Romania, accountability through control and evaluation takes a considerable space and time in NGOs institutional life. However, control through the European donors seems slightly tougher than in Belgium with state donors and while informalities play a role in the sense that NGOs might find some ways to contour rules in order to adapt them to the reality on the ground, it seems that the capacity of negotiation is definitely lower as everything is *objectively* assessed through documents, indicators, records and minutes, presence lists and estimates that there is not too much room for direct, informal negotiation with donors⁴⁵⁹. Compliance with rules and norms is ensured through the fact that the national agency which

⁴⁵⁷ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels

⁴⁵⁸ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels

⁴⁵⁹ A.T. – Filia, Bucharest

represents the intermediary body regarding the management and distribution of European Funds can come at any moment during the implementation of the project to verify that the activities unfold as written in the projects and that other issues in terms of security and transparency are ensured. One member of Front explains how she was stressed during the implementation of one of her first projects in which another member of the organization had to choose the location for some activities in the project, a location that she considered ultimately inappropriate because the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training managing the Youth in Action Funds supporting the project could come and check, although ultimately the location was changed:

I had asked X to send me pictures of the location. X told me not that everything is ok and so on. And I confirmed to X that the location and ten days before the event I actually searched more on the internet for the location and it seemed to me more like the kind of pub where you cannot bring the participants and I was very stressed. That was a very stressful situation. I was very stressed that the agency could come anytime because you had to announce the events, the agency knew all the time when and where the events took place, you had to let them know. I mean, it was in the application and if something did not fit with that application, the application written in September, the project took place in June, that's a little bit stupid. So if the project is not being managed exactly as you have written in the application you have to write notifications. The agency knew all about the story and I had some trainings with them and they have some people with whom I had the feeling that you cannot really negotiate much with. And to me it did not seem as a good location. It seemed like a dark pub in which I saw some beer taps and so I told X.⁴⁶⁰

The possibility to have an external control from the funding bodies during the implementation of the project exerts a lot of pressure on NGOs to comply with the rules and norms. And this seems reasonable as those who wrote the project, voluntarily defined the way in which a project would be ran. This goes back to the need to foresee and predict to a very detailed extent your actions, leaving little space for maneuver in Romania where the vast majority of funds come from European bodies or other international or private funds. A similar example also from Front association is the organization of the second European Feminist Camp, again through a Youth in Action funded project in which the organization lost money, being on the negative at the end of the project as they did not manage to justify everything and fit all the expenses on each specific budget line⁴⁶¹. Everyone in the association was very stressed during the reporting and evaluation period and the back then

⁴⁶⁰ I.T. – Front, Bucharest

⁴⁶¹ O.C. – Front, Bucharest

president who dealt more with reporting and justifications resented the whole process as being draining⁴⁶².

It seems that evaluation, reports and justifications are in general resented as a very stressful process, affecting the well-being of the those who have to deal with it. One of the very few interviewees who told me that she learned to manage better control and evaluation for the subsidizing bodies, who worked at Vie feminine told me about a friend of hers from Garance who feels sick and stressed every time when she needs to write the reports and insists that people should stress less about the evaluation and for this a feminist empowerment training should be done, to teach feminist NGOs professionals how to deal with evaluations and reports:

For example my friend O.B. de Garance she makes great projects and when she has to report she is sick, so I tell her come to my place with your computer

And I have to coach her: tell your friend what you did in the project.

So I think that you have to train girls and that's feminist empowerment, in order to do it as a formality, you do not have to put so much energy.

And anyway you tell yourself that there is no one who reads the report.

So for me in the end the seventeen reports is hyper boring because they all want different documents and you have to quibble but if you do not tie yourself in knots over it, you make a document and after each time you add a little.⁴⁶³

However, no matter how workers in feminist NGOs manage the evaluation procedure in a stressful or less stressful way they still have to comply to some norms and procedures. And if they want to make this process less stressful they have to learn other rules and procedures that would ease their way of working and for this various forms of feminist management are developing. The main idea is that norms and procedures call for more norms and procedures even though in this case it is with the aim to ease a process. Thus, once again one can find ways to adapt and transform their practices in a way that better suits them but this mean nevertheless to follow other rules and procedures stemming from the market, pointing towards domination of neoliberal bureaucratization both through its flexibility, leaving space form arrangements and through an ever high number of norms, rules and procedures.

⁴⁶² O.C. – Front, Bucharest; informal discussions with members of Front during the fieldwork

⁴⁶³ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels

All this process of control and verification through evaluations and reports ensures the domination of norms, rules and procedures that under the guise of flexibility and rationality render them acceptable as they appear as non-compulsory, objective and impartial. For flexibility to work and for that negotiations and arrangements can take place additional procedures and paperwork are needed to justify those modifications. This has an increased impact on the well-being of NGO workers as it is resented as a very stressful process and most importantly because this control procedures plays on individuals responsibility for their projects that they implement – “each of us is responsible all the way”⁴⁶⁴. Both in Belgium and in Romania feminist in NGOs deplore at unison the enormous amount of time spent to comply with an ever increasing number of rules and procedures and most importantly that this happens at the expense of the work that they actually want to do such as research, campaigns, direct work with women in relation to specific issues, advocacy and so on.⁴⁶⁵. One employee of Université des femmes deplores a generalized pressure that she feels to enter ultraliberal logics in which you have learn complex management of funds and accountancy that monopolizes you and makes you lose autonomy and moreover that you need to make your project “look sexy” in order to be able to obtain the funds and implement it⁴⁶⁶.

The enormous amount of time spent to bureaucratic that would allow external control in the name of transparency, both for projects and activities developed by their association, including sometimes for their salaries that contributes to diminish the time spent on the actual activities for which they access the various funds leads to cooptation by time misappropriation as NGOs have less time to devote to those activities that could contribute to changes in the society, especially in the area of gender equality in general but also even less time to subversive activities outside the frameworks of projects or work plans defined in lines with the requirements of the funding bodies. It is relevant to show how feminists working in NGOs explain the bureaucratic burden that they resent:

⁴⁶⁴ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

⁴⁶⁵ P.H. – LMSF, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; O.V. Vie feminine, Brussels; I.V. – Garance, Brussels; R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels; C.S. 2 – Front, Bucharest; P.P. – ALEG, Sibiu; A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest; M.T. – CPE, Bucharest; V.A.2 – Front, Bucharest; A.V. 1 – ALEG, Sibiu

⁴⁶⁶ R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

All the money that you receive is administrative. You do not imagine how it is a lot of work. You need to justify everything and it's super complicated.⁴⁶⁷

We need this money, but while we are doing this we are not on the fieldwork.⁴⁶⁸

So we get paid to do things in order to justify that we are paid, so it's a bit of a joke. I understand that there needs to be a minimum of control, but sometimes it becomes very very heavy and it prevents us during that time to do the work for which we are really paid.⁴⁶⁹

It's killing us. It takes an enormous energy.⁴⁷⁰

It's a too heavy bureaucratic cost.⁴⁷¹

It makes our work extremely difficult all the bureaucracy and all the reports that we are supposed to do.⁴⁷²

It does not matter if it is the city hall or other, you need many copies, many prints.

Somehow it prevents you from doing your job as counseling, as prevention is what it is that you have to write a lot, many and many times the same thing in other papers and documents.⁴⁷³

You know it's clear that nobody likes to do administrative papers, but sometimes they shove it down your throat if you get some funding.⁴⁷⁴

In Belgium, government representatives seem to be aware of this bureaucratic burden and emphasize that they are in a process of bureaucratic simplification by introducing more precise guides to apply for the funds and to reduce the amount of paperwork needed for the evaluation and reporting process. V.P. from Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities explains that they are trying to simplify the procedure by favoring an approach based on trust:

We try to improve this in a general way I in Belgium. So at the level of reports that must be submitted, the activity reports. And now on the evidence and supporting documents we work with the principle of trust. We start from the principle that we have confidence in the fact that the association will spend the grant that we give and therefore we try every year over the legislature to reduce the number of supporting documents.

At the very beginning the association was supposed to give the receipt with an accounting book. Now they are asked to simply submit a table of expenses and receipts and if in the chart control one sees that there is a problem there then one asks for more information, accordingly.

⁴⁶⁷ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁶⁸ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

⁴⁶⁹ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁷⁰ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁷¹ R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels

⁴⁷² C.S. 2 – Front, Bucharest

⁴⁷³ P.P. – ALEG, Sibiu

⁴⁷⁴ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest

For the moment we are really trying to simplify, so to have a process of administrative simplification. So before the request for subsidies we really try to guide on the website of our administration, there is already a subsidy guide, we try already to explain clearly: “this is how to do it”, to introduce the grant and then after that orally the advisers here in the cabinet and also the service of the administration can explain to the association the type of project that the organization is finally eligible or not.⁴⁷⁵

IV. The power of language: formalities, new subjects and new markets

Neoliberal bureaucratization in the feminist NGO sector is being reinforced through the formalization of norms, rules, procedures, techniques co-produced through guidelines, manuals, forms in which procedures and techniques by donors who establish a culture of call for tenders and by NGOs on the one hand by responding to sponsors’ requirements and on the other hand through using a similar language and sometimes modus operandi to develop kits, manuals and other instruments that would guide them through their activities, formalizing them, giving them homogeneity and continuity in their application. Thus, they establish and exchange good practices written in a sufficiently homogenous language in order to be shared but also sufficiently imprecise to leave room for adaptation to different contexts, for example countries. There is a consolidation and formalization of an NGO language inspired from management studies and the enterprise world.

Moreover through the proliferation and formalization of these norms, rules and procedures within civil society and among feminist organizations new women subjects are created: both in terms of beneficiaries and target groups and professionals, but also a new market is created for experts and consultants. While in Romania the new market for gender equality professionals is being shaped by the formalization and institutionalization of the profession of gender experts and technicians, in Belgium cooperation with different employment agencies support feminist NGOs financially by subsidizing some of their employees. Different jobs and positions are being transferred from the enterprise world to the NGO world such as program manager, project manager, project assistant, trainer, facilitator, volunteers coordinator and so on.

⁴⁷⁵ V.P. Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Brussels

A. The power of language of formalities

Within feminist NGOs, both in Belgium and in Romania, the managerial language proliferates and is co-produced through interactions with other fields and intermediary bodies, specifically subsidizing bodies, public or private establishing a common *modus operandi* based on rationality, good governance and good practices, efficiency and impartiality evaluated through criteria and indicators, by auditing mechanisms, that ultimately monitor the institutional life of organizations. This is not without tensions between a feminist logic based on specific values and principles stemming from the history and development of the feminist movement and the managerial logic stemming from the private sector and adopted across different areas within the society. And this tension is echoed in Belgium through reflections about the invasion of neoliberal norms and practices that pushed towards the institutionalization and professionalization of the movement and aroused the development of feminist forms of management but which also meant the acceptance of a logic that was not the logic of the feminist movement⁴⁷⁶. Today, while feminist NGOs in Belgium take a step back to reflect about the contradictions and clashes between a private, managerial logic and their feminist identity, mission and project as showed by the organization of gatherings, meetings and study days to discuss these issues, until now adding a feminist dimension to the managerial, by developing feminist forms of management, means however to work within a logic stemming from the private, enterprise world. As a mode of governance, neoliberal bureaucratization based on the proliferation of management techniques implies rendering the population, target groups or beneficiaries (depending on the language) manageable in accordance with a logic that will render them useful for the society, will help them integrate into the society, or more specifically on the labor market. In Romania, integration on the labor market was one of the main themes or at least dimensions adopted within the projects developed by feminist NGOs with EU financing because it was a central objective within EU's financing policy and governance strategy. In Belgium, with the new changes for example in the social cohesion decree the organizations resented the pressure to take into account the integration on the labor market dimension⁴⁷⁷.

⁴⁷⁶ Study day "Professionalization! New challenges in times of crisis" organized on the 30th of November 2016, in Brussels

⁴⁷⁷ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

Through the formalization of information about problems and issues at stake for women and technical ways to manage or solve them expressed in guidelines and manuals a process of knowledge production unfolds that transforms through a process of abstraction the realities of persons and situations into generalized forms of knowledge and know-how that can be used in various contexts and can be exchanged through examples of good practices. It is the adoption and formalization of this language that constitutes a source of domination of neoliberal bureaucratization that is a fluid and indeterminate process, in movement, possible to be adapted to different contexts. Talking about changes within the organization, one interviewee from CPE in Romania mentions changes at the level of *target groups* and a move towards the private sphere:

What changed was somehow the target group because at the time we were working very hard with people in government institutions that had a gender mandate and trade union mandates and now we have moved quite a bit to the area of employers and HR. We expanded to the diversity management area and to the work-life balance area. And another direction that we have adopted since and we continued with it is somehow linked to direct support for women in vulnerable situations, to support them in accessing the labor market.

Thus women become a target group, certain women become a specific target group, domination becomes vulnerability, equality and inequality are expressed through inclusion or exclusion preponderantly in relation to the labor market and it is technically solved through diversity management and so on. Inequality, domination and violence are managed through performance indicators and criteria to be met in projects and actions and are assessed by the funding bodies. The question or the danger would be that the inequality between men and women, between different groups of women, gender violence might evaporate by procedures and actions that aim to manage this issues and which are reflected through performance indicators. And feminists are conscious of this danger and by rooting their actions in direct contact and collaborative work with women in the field and not on private surveys they try to contour this logic⁴⁷⁸. However, as explained earlier, forms of accountability, through reports and evaluations, justifying and showing how the criteria and indicators have been met might enter in contradiction with the logic of transforming women and their realities in categories, codes and boxes. And here again responsibility plays an important role to ensure the dominance of neoliberal bureaucratization. In this sense one former volunteer and employee of Filia explains:

⁴⁷⁸ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; S.T. – Isala, Brussels

When I was volunteer, I was doing within the organization what matched the organization's vision and if I had a more radical vision on a particular topic and did not match one of the organization, I was doing it independently, outside, I was much more free. When I became an employee, I saw the legal limitations, what the contract means, what responsibility means, to have the image of the organization on your shoulders.

Well, if one thing does not happen and an indicator does not come out of the project, the donor does not say that I did not succeed to manage this event, he says Filia was not able to do I do not know what things the organization assumed to do and received money for it. And the organization suffers, and somehow this responsibility is a bit limiting in terms of what you can do. I feel like I was doing so much more before.

Language can also easily become instrumentalized, consciously or unconsciously to fit the indicators or criteria established through directions of actions, programs and projects. Intersectionality for example became a criteria to access various financing sources and it translates into target groups ticking various boxes to show different belongings and for many activists in NGOs this equated with the instrumentalization of the intersectional discourse in the practice of NGOs⁴⁷⁹.

B. New subjects and new markets

Women become subjects to be governed, administered, managed through gender governance⁴⁸⁰ and mainstreaming at all levels of society. The beneficiaries of different measures, programs and actions are targeted such as raising awareness campaigns, violence prevention, self-defense trainings, counselling and support for victims of domestic violence, alphabetization courses or integration on the labor market trainings, empowerment for the young girls or for women 55+ or trainings for gender professionals etc. Experts and trainers transfer these formalized procedures, norms, rules to beneficiaries, women, subjected to act both to different degrees in different organizations according to the market principles of efficiency and competitiveness. This is not without tensions and struggles between different logics, a feminist logic and a market logic. Here the fluctuating lines between the public and the private play a role in the ongoing feminist struggles to contribute and support women to gain in autonomy over their lives against capitalist and patriarchal domination and exploitation and the means that they have that affect the actions they initiative to attain these goals, regulated by these procedures, norms, rules stemming from the market and applied

⁴⁷⁹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; A.S. – CPE, Bucharest

⁴⁸⁰ Van Der Vleuten Anna (2016) regional social and gender governance

both by public or private subsidizing bodies in their relationship with feminist NGOs. In Romania, many of the projects financed through European funds require the identification of target groups according to specific criteria and subsequently various documents that would serve as proofs that the beneficiaries correspond to those criteria, many times not taking into account an intersectional perspective of the subject social location. The control mechanism is in place, regulating the *management* of these target groups, including the relationship between feminists in NGOs that assure these activities and the persons who participate. One interviewee from CPE in Romania explains that when filling in the forms that would later serve as a proof for the subsidizing body regarding the participation of the identified target group, they already have to identify as a vulnerable category, one among others, but many persons do not know which box to tick because they either feel they belong to multiple categories or they may not identify themselves as vulnerable and the fact that NGOs trainers have to do this work at the beginning of the activities without prior consciousness raising or discussions about discrimination or marginalization impairs on their mode of working with women:

And the reporting side, when you go with a set of I do not know how many six, seven documents per participant and she needs to check on the vulnerable category she belongs to you know? And you have women, you have Roma people, people with disabilities, and they do not know where to check, but according to POSDRU you tell them that they have to check on the woman, because your target group is women and then they check it as women. But the personal tendency is to check in all three boxes or just one or none because one may not feel vulnerable among women.

And you theoretically you have to do this from the first day. So you do not even get to do any raising awareness or to get to explain them and they have to check.

And again a lot of attention when ticking the documents because often for example I had people who did not know what the CNP⁴⁸¹ is and finished the course and you saw when you reviewed the documents in the office that they did not fill in correctly or filled in differently, for example once an address, another time another address, or she is from the county but she has a floating visa in another county and then she is not eligible anymore! It sucks! It's hard to check each set of documents for seven, eight documents per participant, to pay them the grant on time, no matter if reimbursements are made or reimbursements are not made, no matter if you have money, or you do not have money.

You have built a relationship with them, you win their trust and then there can be a rebound as it happened – it was not us who were making the payments but the implementor and they called you because they had your number as a trainer: “where is the money? you lied to us”. Bad, very bad.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ Cod numeric personal

⁴⁸² A.S. – CPE, Bucharest

Another specificity in Romania regarding European funded projects is that a certain sum of money is given to the beneficiaries from the targeted *vulnerable* categories in order to allow them to participate at the specific activities developed within projects. For example, one SOP HRD project developed by CPE aimed to train a certain number of young women between 16 and 35 years old who have difficulties to integrate on the labor market⁴⁸³. To allow women from the identified vulnerable category to participate at the trainings and seminars, a subsidy of 250 RON for each participant was allotted. However, as different NGOs develop these kind of European funded projects with a labor market dimension, NGOs from the wide sphere of civil society, thus not necessarily feminists, contributed to a competition between organizations and projects over the target groups, in which sometimes the amount of the subsidy weighted in the decision of the persons from the target group to participate or not because those persons are poor. Other persons from the target group were also skeptical about the courses since some of them were not done seriously, for real and felt that it would not bring them anything new in terms of knowledge or know-how. An employee from CPE, working in this project at the time explains this situation with reference to the competition between projects or the skepticism of beneficiaries:

There were some people responsible for target group, generally from the respective communities. And then those people went and struggled to persuade people to attend the courses. There have been some subsidies. Unfortunately, there were many projects like this and there was somehow a competition between the projects and the amount of money people were getting and including some people who either did not trust this kind of projects anymore because they knew they were not seriously done and they would not receive any new information, or they wanted more money, so they were not really motivated by information as to why they were motivated by money.⁴⁸⁴

The European funded projects SOP-HRD were a specific kind of projects developed by feminist NGOs, but not all of them since this funding required cash-flow within the organization and a certain organizational and financial capacity that not all organization could afford. However, other kind of European funds and projects such as Youth in Action at that time, functioned on the same criteria. In general all projects developed with various funding identify beneficiaries, target groups to which the formalities of neoliberal bureaucratization extends to which all actors involved contribute consciously or

⁴⁸³ <http://www.cpe.ro/ce-facem/piata-muncii/integrarea-si-promovarea-femeilor-pe-piata-muncii/>

⁴⁸⁴ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

unconsciously, by establishing first of all a definition for that subject category, with specific criteria and indicators that would help to rationally, objectively, and impersonally identify the persons in those categories, as well as through validating those subject categories by filling in forms and documents necessary for a transparent process. Ultimately and once again its power stems also from the “voluntary” act subscribing to certain categories.

In Belgium, where NGOs seem to have more power of negotiation over rules and procedures in relation to either the subsidizing bodies or other state institutions that might participate in the process of managing certain categories of people such as social security or employment entities are faced with challenges and difficulties regarding this process in which, as mentioned earlier, tensions between a feminist practice and a neoliberal management shape the interaction. For example, in their interaction with the Centre public d’action sociale (CPAS), employees of Maison Mosaïque from Vie féminine were persuaded apart from giving attestations and other documents to prove that the women registered to their courses attended the courses, to also give information about regularity of attendance of those women to their courses to prove that they are active in their search for employment. Since Maison Mosaïque did not want to enter this logic, considering that is not their work to give this information since their work focuses also on the empowerment of women not just on language courses or other trainings, the CPAS started to dissuade women attending the courses at Maison Mosaïque under threat that they would suppress their social benefits. One of the persons who manages Maison Mosaïque explains:

You see we have the employees from CPAS who call and ask "is this woman coming to your course, is she coming regularly, does she work well" and we do not answer that. It's not our job.

No, it's not our role but there are plenty of associations, the civil society sector is really divided in relation to this, there are plenty of associations that enter this game thinking that it is kind of normal to do so. It's crazy! And thus it works with a lot of associations.

And as we each time we pack up and that in addition we do a work of strengthening women so we are not only doing linguistics and grammar, but we do a lot of things, so now, here the antennas at Bockstael, what happens is that when women register with us, it happens more and more often that they have to cancel their registration because otherwise their benefits are withdrawn.

So they tell them "if you register at the Mosaic House you will have your allowances withdrawn" and therefore they are forced to look for another school. Blackmail yes. So they have to look for another school. We tried to contact the CPAS to request an appointment because it is illegal what they practice and everything. We cannot contact them! Until now we have not managed to have an appointment.

Oh no, it's absurd, it's completely stupid! So it's getting harder and harder with the institutions.⁴⁸⁵

Other organisms related to the socio-professional integration such as FOREM in Wallonia also asks for presence lists from partner organizations such as Vie feminine that translates into sanctions for those persons because for example if the person was late at courses or missed a certain number of courses she will be penalized at the level of her social allowances⁴⁸⁶. Vie féminine maintain that is neither their job nor philosophy to do so and thus they lost some partnerships or financing because they were refusing to do so.⁴⁸⁷ However, it is not just the NGOs that suffer from losing subsidies for example in the cases in which they do not conform, but also women who would have potentially attended their courses, or who attended but couldn't do so anymore because of the sanctions. Thus this state bodies or subsidizing bodies consolidate and strengthen the position of those NGOs which are complying with certain control rules and procedures while marginalizing the others. This contributes to ward off potential subversive elements.

Compared to Romania, in Belgium NGOs sell their trainings. Certainly they are pressured to do so, in order to gain in financial independence. However, it reinforces the rules, norms and procedures coming from the market, the offer and demand mechanisms among others. It creates new markets for new beneficiaries and might contribute to reinforce the gap between different socio-economic classes. Although feminism and gender equality are continuously under threat nowadays, they also became a form of cultural capital with a high value attributed among certain elites. Its acquisition might be limited to those who have a certain economic capital when the prices of the trainings high. It is a partial independence because NGOs still rely on subsidies in order to ensure a more egalitarian access to their trainings. Thus, their trainings and courses become accessible mostly through subsidies from popular education, development NGO, social cohesion and so on. Once again, NGOs participation in the production of neoliberal bureaucratization might be conscious or unconscious but nevertheless produces its effects. The trainings and courses that become accessible through subsidies target a certain category of women, vulnerable, marginalized, migrant, seniors, without employment, young etc. A difference is created between those who can afford to pay the trainings or courses and those who cannot and who access them by being targeted by

⁴⁸⁵ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels

⁴⁸⁶ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels

⁴⁸⁷ I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels

NGOs and state partners in their endeavor to manage these categories of people and their problems.

As I previously mentioned the feminist logic clashes with the neoliberal bureaucratization logic. NGOs reflect about accessibility of their trainings and activities in terms of price, language and the women they manage to reach⁴⁸⁸. One of the main activities of Garance are the self-defense workshops organized on a recurrent basis and which are paid activities. For a two days workshop, participants pay from thirty, forty euros to eighty euros in function of the socio-economic category they are part of and in function of the moment when they subscribe for the training because the earlier they subscribe the cheaper it is. One member of Garance explains this system and condemns the logic behind it, considering that this approach privileges a certain category of women privileged enough economically and who have a certain stability to be able to plan in advance:

Our normal activities are revenue-generating.

They are still accessible through the institutions because people do not afford themselves to pay them. This is it. Here we are on the same wavelength. But it's cheaper than before. Before it was 70 euro for a weekend. It seems that it is not expensive. I will not pay 70 euros. Not even 10.

Now they have made the Ryan air system – the earlier you buy the less expensive it is and all that. So they say it's accessible to all women.

But what we see is that women, I'm going to say it and it's not a negative label but not educated women or women in a crisis situation will not come when it's 40 euro. They will go in emergency when it is 70 euro.

And if they reserve months in advance the same day they have something else, or children, or work, they drop the 40 euro. We see this. It does not help the women that need this. Who will pay attention? People who know how to manage, who again have the time, who plan their money and everything but the woman in distress she is not going to do that.⁴⁸⁹

To spread their feminist self-defense practice to other people and organizations and not hold the monopoly on it, Garance engaged in a process of knowledge and know-how transmission by developing trainings for professionals in self-defense that were longer and included also feminist pedagogy. In order to make it accessible Garance formalized a certain kind of an agreement with participants in which either participants will pay half of the formation and the

⁴⁸⁸ S.B. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁸⁹ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

rest of it will be paid by giving ten free self-defense trainings for Garance⁴⁹⁰ or reimburse everything through free self-defense trainings for Garance⁴⁹¹. Other organizations that want to transmit knowledge and know-how such as LMSF also organize paid trainings that are revenue-generating activities. One of the interviewees, a former intern and employee at LMSF explains that she worked during the internship for the association and in exchange she could attend a training that cost 3500 euros and that she could not have paid:

Before starting my internship they needed someone and so they offered me two things. First they offered to hire me as an employee for a month and then start my internship in September.

So I started my internship in September - it was the training 'Gender as a condition of sustainable development'.

And it was a three-month training every day. In fact the training was the people from French-speaking Africa who came to train on the theme of gender here in Belgium, via LMSF. So it was non-residential people who stayed three months in Belgium and LMSF served as a liaison between the trainers and trainees.

And it was on that I was doing my internship.

I was doing the liaison on all logistics, show them the strategic places in Brussels, help them with the transport, hospital. And in exchange I could follow the training for free because it was a training that cost 3500 euro.⁴⁹²

Some other organizations such as Université des femmes organize their long-term training over the course of the year that are more accessible in terms of price, each session costs five euros and this is possible make the training accessible in terms of price thanks to the subventions that they receive. However, in terms of the public that is reached some other feminist activists while they appreciate greatly the work that Université des femmes is doing they have the impression that the trainings touch a public that is still somehow in contact with the feminist movement, with the result of the knowledge transmission staying inside, within the movement, touching little the persons outside⁴⁹³.

In Romania, feminist NGOs do not sell trainings because they think it does not work yet and the partner institutions are expecting them to do the trainings and workshops for free. Feminist NGOs are happy if they have access to certain institutions such as schools or high-schools because sometimes even the access is restricted, but those institutions most of the

⁴⁹⁰ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁹¹ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁴⁹² C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels

⁴⁹³ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

times expect them to do activities for free⁴⁹⁴. CPE in Bucharest, in order to sustain the activities of the organization while providing support for women in a precarious situation, created a social business – MamaPan, a bakery⁴⁹⁵. MamaPan was founded as a social business: on the one hand it is a business being sales and profit-oriented and on the other hand a social enterprise, both through the employed persons who are part of a group in difficulty from an economic and social point of view and who thus found a job, as well as through reinvesting profits for social activities⁴⁹⁶. The target group were mothers who have many children or single mothers. As CPE who felt that they have a limited potential to support women in precarious situations if they do not offer them a job, in the same way Isala members emphasized the necessity to find a way to support women with whom they work and who want to leave *prostitution*⁴⁹⁷, sex work, in the sense of providing them an alternative workplace⁴⁹⁸. CPE's president explains how they arrived at the idea of founding a social business:

We went in this direction to provide concrete support to women in vulnerable situations whom we encountered over time including in our qualitative research endeavors, but also in programs of personal development training, and we came to the conclusion that the only the way we can get things done is to offer some jobs. That was on the one hand and on the other hand I saw it as a business potential that would support the organization's other activities.⁴⁹⁹

The social enterprise example is a rather a singular example of a development of a social business among the feminist NGOs in Bucharest but which received rather positive feedback from the feminist community. However I used this case as it shows particularly clear the transfer and penetration of the market principles and mode of organization within the civil society sector. It also shows again the power of neoliberal norms and rules stemming from the market through their flexibility and adaptability, showing that business can also have a human face, can be social, can serve the ethics and morale of those who are employing, spilling over sectors, outside the market. Through trainings, workshops, sold or not, social enterprises feminist NGOs co-produce neoliberal market externalities within the NGO sector and adapt them to this area thanks to the flexibility and adaptability of norms, rules and

⁴⁹⁴ A.V. 1 – ALEG, Sibiu

⁴⁹⁵ M.P. – CPE, Bucharest; C.C. – CPE, Bucharest

⁴⁹⁶ <https://www.mamapan.ro/povestea-noastra/> accessed May 22, 2019

⁴⁹⁷ The term “prostitution” is the term used by the members of the organization

⁴⁹⁸ S.T. – Isala, Brussels

⁴⁹⁹ M.P. – CPE, Bucharest

procedures stemming from the market, ensuring thus their spread and domination, no matter if this process is conscious or unconscious. There is a part of autonomy that NGOs have and they make use of it in this process which renders it even more powerful as it seems that actors act freely, voluntarily, with minimal reasonable constraints. It seems that in order to exist feminist NGOs compulsorily participate in this process as already neoliberal externalities are spread also at the level of state institutions and new public management inspired governance.

In Romania, feminist NGOs do not target just vulnerable categories of women but among their beneficiaries are also women who want to get involved into entrepreneurship and business as it was for example the case with SEFA- Sanse Egale pentru Femei Active⁵⁰⁰ (Equal Chances for Active Women) organized with Romani Butiq and KCMC with the aim to qualify women in this area. The recruitment of the beneficiaries was realized through various meetings with the target groups and the selected persons (more than 460, since indicators are important) have received training courses in entrepreneurship and business, including raising awareness about equality of chances, discrimination on the labor market and the instruments that people can use to protect or defend themselves⁵⁰¹. Another example is of a project developed by Filia whose results were published in the book “Parteneri egali, competitori egali: integrarea dimensiunii de gen în procesul de elaborare a politicilor publice” (Equal partners, equal competitors: Gender mainstreaming in public policy making)⁵⁰². Thus, more clearly here the market and entrepreneurship world blend together with the NGO world, reinforcing and establishing categories of beneficiaries, privileged enough or potential successful women in the business world or as in “equal partners, equal competitors” to ensure the inclusion of gender in the new public management arrangements within governments public policies.

New women subjects are thus created and their position consolidated: on the one hand the beneficiaries and the different categories of women they are targeting and on the other hand feminist NGO workers, from different kind of managers, trainers or experts. As previously mentioned the position of experts is formalized in Romania through their inclusion in the official corpus of professions. New markets are also created – the NGO labor market,

⁵⁰⁰ The acronym “sefa” means boss, chief

⁵⁰¹ A.T. – Filia, Bucharest;

<http://kcmc.ro/proiecte/finalizate/s-e-f-a-sanse-egale-pentru-femei-active/> accessed July 14, 2019

⁵⁰² C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; I.C. – Filia, Bucharest

although precarious. While in Romania, most of the working contracts of the feminist NGOs employees are project-based with some employees cumulating many working contracts to ensure a full-time position, in Belgium feminist associations manage to offer more stable contracts, many of them offering permanent contracts thanks to structural subsidies or through collaboration with employment agencies or social security agencies. In Belgium, there is a difference between small and newer associations such as Garance, who professionalized, over the last ten years and older organizations such as Université des femmes or older and bigger organizations such as Vie féminine or FPS in terms of the contracts duration.

NGOs in general, and feminist NGOs in particular, in Belgium constitute a new potential labor market on which people can be *integrated*, employed. In this sense, feminist organizations in Belgium finance the working contracts of their employees with the help of subsidies from different state organisms, either some of them through the structural funding for their activities or many others through partnership with social security and employment state organisms as for example Maribel Social Fund that aims “to create additional jobs, to reduce the difficulty of work and improve the quality of services”⁵⁰³, Agents contractuels subventionnées (ACS), Aide à la promotion de l’emploi (APE) and so on. There are different conditions to be met to access this kind of funds and specific criteria for both the association as employer and also for the beneficiary. Some of the are requiring co-financing⁵⁰⁴. Many documents need to be provided in order to prove that the two parts comply with the requirements and after the person is hired, during the process, various accountability and control measures are being set un in place in order to verify for the compliance to the rules, norms and procedures. For example, for the APE the person needs to be registered to the FOREM, FOREM that asks for presence lists of the participants⁵⁰⁵ showing the long chain of responsibility and accountancy that link both beneficiaries and NGOs, both NGO employees and beneficiaries of projects and so on. Moreover, just as in Romania feminist NGO employees cumulated various contracts from various projects to make a full time job, in Belgium a salary, depending if the person works on a part-time, four fifths contract, three fifths contract or full time is ensured from various financing sources from these organisms through a mosaic of contracts and partnerships, demanding a complicated bureaucratic

⁵⁰³ <https://www.apefasbl.org/les-fonds-maribel-emploi>

accessed July 14, 2019

⁵⁰⁴ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁰⁵ O.V. Vie féminine, Brussels

process in terms of rules and procedures to conform, requiring an *innovative* and intense fundraising activities to find the rest of money needed to co-finance the working contracts⁵⁰⁶. Some employment subventions are permanent while other are temporary thus within a working contract if a certain proportion is ensured by a permanent contract and other proportions are ensured by temporary contracts that end and a certain point, the worker is put in insecurity regarding her job⁵⁰⁷. One member of Garance explains the struggle to ensure decent contracts within the organization, the pressures some of the employees might resent and the process of organizational expansion on the model of offer and demand as Garance's decision to professionalize came mainly from an increased demand for self-defense and the mechanisms at play that ensure once on this path you keep on going, with norms and rules demanding for more rules and procedures and so on:

Because they are paid one fifth of this, two fifths of that, one fifth from the funds of Garance – this is a salary. Yes, but in the three fifths, if you work three fifths, there is one fifth that comes from here, one fifth that comes from there, one fifth temporary, one fifth permanent. It's super complicated. And that puts women at risk. I'm not paid. The day I will not like it, I'll leave. But the one who has two fifths guaranteed, one fifth for six months, she feels it, we feel it, the body feels it. And after that we have to continue the project. But I do not agree with this too much. This is not said yet openly. But you see it, as in the teaching, that we continue the project to keep the salary. But it's not for women. Now they are doing projects for the disabled and all that but I wonder: I have a sister-in-law mentally disabled for one year and a half. I have parents who have always been disabled. But it's not for them. It is for small disabilities to say we are disabled but not for the real disabled or for the real poor.⁵⁰⁸

In Romania, the situation in the feminist NGO sector, as a new labor market sector is similar in the sense of salaries being ensured sometimes from a mosaic of sources. The difference is that in Belgium some of these sources are permanent, ensuring a potential greater stability and they are coming from the state. Feminist organizations such as Université des femmes try to ensure the funds needed to complete the contracts from the public sphere, through calls for projects or to make requests for voluntary subsidies, since apart from adopting an anti-capitalist position in their work, the director of the organization does not see how they could correspond to the objectives of a private enterprise⁵⁰⁹.

⁵⁰⁶ S.B. – Garance, Brussels; S.T. – Isala, Brussels

⁵⁰⁷ D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels; Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS); S.B. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; S.T. – Isala, Brussels

⁵⁰⁸ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁰⁹ D.H.- Université des femmes

V. Resistance to neoliberal bureaucratization: struggles and challenges

Feminist activists in NGOs are aware to a certain extent of the penetration of neoliberal discourses and practices in their work and within society and struggle to deconstruct these discourses through their actions and campaigns and to resist to the extension of a management inspired *modus operandi* in their work, many times brought in by subsidizing bodies or state institutions with which they collaborate. This reflects the tension between the logic of feminist sector, now a part of it a professionalized feminist sector and the neoliberal bureaucratic logic. When they encounter the bureaucratic logic, feminist ideas and ideals of achieving gender equality, ending up gender based violence and the subjugation of the poor intertwined with racism and paternalism, are transformed into clearly defined aims and objectives, policies based on economic criteria and on the social demand and managed through processes of abstractization that transform them into categories and indicators that render them calculable, measurable and justifiable through managerial techniques and procedures of accountability and control.

However, as neoliberal bureaucratization extends to the feminist NGOs sector, through the normalization of discourses about rationality, calculability, security and transparency, feminist organizations struggle and resist in their practices and actions. Many of the examples provided in this chapter show this. When LMSF organized the 2011 Femmes et Santé international gathering, they engaged to organize the meeting and did so without financing or support from pharmaceutical companies and labs or even UN women that would have obliged them at least to expose their logo⁵¹⁰. They asked the support of universities, of ULB and of volunteers, including volunteer translators and organized the meeting with these resources, away from constraining subsidizing bodies public or private. Filia, when they developed a project that included a research on the impact of the financial crisis on women and had their final report sent back by the donor, which argued that they should not have engaged with the austerity measures and asked to change their report, they did not fully comply with the demand⁵¹¹. Another example, in Belgium when public donors wanted to impose gender mixity to feminist organizations as a way of working, while their practice was in gender non-mixity, NGOs gathered together, opposed this measure and resisted, even

⁵¹⁰ P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

⁵¹¹ C.B. – Filia, Bucharest

though some organizations were more successful than others in this endeavor and this is related to their organizational and financial capacities.

A more general resistance against neoliberal discourses and policies comes from Vie feminine who, in their actions and campaigns, continuously condemn the flexibilization and precarization of work and make claims and alliances with people, organizations, politicians and other entities which share the same vision, to continue the fight against exploitation, to ensure that a different discourse and different voices are heard, and to deconstruct the vision that laws – such as the Loi Peters and policies which support flexibilization and ultimately precarity, are either good or unavoidable⁵¹². They also do a great deal of work to strengthen women who are victims of these neoliberal measures, to inform them and to be next to them in order not to feel isolated⁵¹³. For example, feminist organizations gathered since March 2012 in the socio-economic feminist network – La Plateforme féministe socio-economique, to hit the big red button concerning government's economic measures and apply the 2007 law on gender mainstreaming⁵¹⁴. Another example, many of the organizations in this study are part of the network – Plateforme Créances alimentaires, gathered to denounce nonpayment of child support and the consequences on women, single parents and children⁵¹⁵.

The mechanisms through which neoliberal bureaucratization spreads and imposes in the NGO sector are based on the mirage of choice, on the voluntary acceptance of certain condition, rendering invisible the costs of non-compliance. One employee of Garance explains that organizations do not enter this logic without continuous reflections, but they seem to arrive sometimes at a dead end:

But at the same time it is not without reflections, because it is clear that the associations reflect on that. But how can you do that when there is the call for projects that gives you that, it is a number of hours that you have to do, that you do it even if you would like to do otherwise, how can you do in this context?

Because it's being said that it is the *choice* of associations. Associations make the choice to professionalize. But what type of choice?

For example Garance it really questions me. In their pathway they decided to professionalize because there was a big demand for self-defense, so there was a need for more means, financial means, staff, women and all that. But after it becomes part of this logic, a bit like a business - "we offer services

⁵¹² O.V. Vie feminine, Brussels

⁵¹³ O.V. Vie feminine, Brussels

⁵¹⁴ <http://www.viefeminine.be/spip.php?rubrique496>

accessed July 14, 2019

⁵¹⁵ <http://www.viefeminine.be/spip.php?article2869>

accessed July 14, 2019

because we must subsist, we offer services, we sell them, there are people who pay us for it". How we can feed these kinds of reflections long-term and not getting stuck in this kind of logic.⁵¹⁶

This is why, following Foucault (2008), it is important to shift the perspective from the market as imposing norms, rules and practices from the exterior towards those who are part of it, the individuals, groups whose labor, contrary to previous economic accounts on labor, including the Marxist ones, is an active factor of production and this is what makes it neo-liberal. Thus, it is important to look at these. In neoliberalism, the worker is an active economic subject, homo economicus, produced through practice (Foucault, 2008, 223). When techniques of the self encounter technologies of domination a specific mode of governance takes place. One achieves freedom through practices of the self in a specific environment, milieu stemming from norms, rules, conventions specific of that milieu. The encounter of the market and civil society NGOs, SMOS, as well as other spheres of the society such as the state, becomes formalized and institutionalized through neoliberal bureaucratization which under the guise of choice and freedom, freedom that stems from the practices of the self in a specific environment gives the possibility of using / exposes a certain modus operandi stemming from the market, getting its legitimacy from the rationality at its basis, calculability and measurability and from considerations of security and transparency, being however flexible enough to leave space for adaptability, by practicing this *freedom*. This is why, as expressed by M.S. from Garance, organizations seem to have inescapable choices in their modus operandi, as in order to be able to practice, they inescapably practice through these norms and procedures stemming from the market. This is consistent with Hibou's (2015) and Weber's (1994) inescapability of bureaucratic arrangements. But the domination of this modus operandi, of neoliberal bureaucratization stems from its free and volunteer practice and co-production. It is more interesting to situate M.S.'s reflection about the inescapability of neoliberal bureaucratization since apart from being an employee of Garance she was also part of an autonomous community where she wanted to explore political engagement, to a certain extent outside or at the margins of the capitalist system and part of autonomous self-defense feminist collectives. While for informal street feminist collectives, organizing autonomously and informally might be a way to resist hegemonic modes of organization and functioning, many of the activists from these collectives are aware and insist that everyone is part of and co-produces the capitalist hegemonic system. For example, many of them previously or concomitantly worked in NGOs although they

⁵¹⁶ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

contested certain ways of functioning and practices, also because they needed to live, that is to earn money and be able subsist and as previously explained, NGOs open a new market and create new subjects⁵¹⁷.

VI. Conclusions

Neoliberal bureaucratization of feminist organizations translates in practice in the proliferation of norms, rules and practices stemming from the private sphere, specifically the market and management domain into the mode of functioning of these organizations. The formal nature of these externalities intensifies through different mechanisms. First, people, women, social facts and phenomena are transformed through a process of abstractization into categories, codes, indicators – rationalization procedures that would render them as objective and impersonal. This leads to the second mechanism in which thanks to these rational, objective, neutral categories, codes and indicators, people and phenomena can be evaluated, assessed and ultimately controlled and managed. Lastly, this is ensured through financialization that supports the extension of accountability and control procedures at the level of state institutions, donors – public or private and through flexibility: at the level of workforce through its dismantling favoring contracting; at the level of the control realized more horizontally and at distance rather than hierarchically and close; at the level of norms and procedures themselves supple enough to leave space for adaptation and negotiation to different context and environments. Guides, guidelines, frameworks, manuals, best practices serve to orient NGOs when responding to call for tenders, when organizing different actions or to inspire them in their daily practices. Their global dimension should not be ignored as many of these guidelines and practices are exchanged and circulate at international level and through their imprecision and flexibility can be applied to different contexts. Why feminist NGOs would comply? Demands for predictability, calculability, transparency, security, risk management, equal and objective treatment make their application seemingly unavoidable. Their form makes them seem non-compulsory, as they serve to orient and leave room for maneuver and arrangements in their application. Feminist NGOs appear to voluntarily apply these externalities when they choose to apply for funds, respond to call for tenders from the

⁵¹⁷ R. – Dysnomia, Bucharest; B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

state or private donors, and partnerships with various institutions. It ultimately plays on the responsibility of people from these organizations to be accountable about the use of funds and the management of people, cases, situations. Feminist NGOs resist in practice either in the application of these externalities or in their relationship with other actors, state institutions or donors. However, it seems that resistance concerns more the content of these rules and practices and modes of accountability and control rather than completely subverting these *modus operandi*.

How does this translate in practice in the case of feminist organizations in Romania and Belgium? Both in Romania and Belgium, organizations need to predict which activities, how many, when and what kind of activities do they foresee, how many participants, what target group and what results do they expect. They need to provide a solid justification regarding the needs of the target group and subsequently for the actions they want to implement in order to solve the identified social problems. They also need to provide justification that the activities were implemented as they said they will and for the participation of the target group defined through specific characteristics. In Belgium, NGOs that are accredited as popular education NGOs or as development NGOs need to elaborate and propose a multiple year plan, five years in general – a Program Contract with specific themes, clear objectives and activities and they have to work a specific number of hours and evaluate the working plan before. Organizations *choose* to apply for accreditation and *voluntarily* follow the rules and procedures. By contrast, in Romania feminist NGOs function on a project-based work and for each project application they need to define the aim and the objectives of the project, to provide a justification for the issues they want to address, sometimes including scientific data, to explain how the project will be implemented, disseminated and assessed. The projects can last from a few months to a few years, generally two or three maximum. As the organizations do not dispose of any structural financing, the general aim of the organization is subsumed and achieved through the various projects implemented, with their objectives and their actions. This means that there is much fluidity in the general direction for action that the organization follows, in the sense that it can be permanently reshaped in practice through the projects implemented. Predictability and calculability are requested to ensure a transparent use of funds intended for the management of certain populations that become the target groups of procedures and practices meant to a better integration and functioning of these people within the society. While in Belgium structural financing provides a certain stability and ensures the capacity for organizations to establish more long-term strategies and

objectives, in Romania, feminist NGOs are caught in short-term logics fostered by a project-based work. In both countries, organizations follow an increased number of bureaucratic procedures that are required a priori to the development of actions which translate into the co-production of new norms and rules to be followed in the established strategies, to attain the specified objectives and ensure the implementation of specific foreseen activities. In Romania these efforts are multiplied by the fact that they are realized more often, as projects last for a shorter period of time. This also demands creativity and innovation each time they respond for call for tenders since rarely donors finance similar projects.

The implementation of foreseen strategies and projects through various actions is verified through mechanisms of accountability and control in both countries. To this end indicators serve as evidence as well as an increased number of documents that justify the participation of the target groups, the characteristics of the target groups, the number of hours and activities realized and so on. While both in Romania and in Belgium, feminist organizations find it reasonable to justify the money they received and to ensure transparency regarding the activities they develop, they find the evaluation and reporting procedures as burdening and stressful. Through auditing and evaluations, the activities of organizations are monitored and controlled. While in Belgium, there is more room for negotiation regarding accountability procedures and during the implementation phase, in Romania, especially post-EU adhesion the capacity for negotiation is lower and possibility to make changes or to adapt the foreseen actions is more limited and when possible, it requires an increased amount of paperwork and application of other norms and procedures. Everything is *objectively* assessed through documents, indicators, records and minutes, presence lists and estimates that there is not too much room for direct, informal negotiation with donors. In both countries, accountability is ensured also through discipline and self-management as for example in many organizations, specific persons are responsible, sometimes as project manager, project assistant and so on, for writing and implementing a project or specific activities. The process of control and verification through evaluations and reports ensures the domination of norms, rules and procedures that under the guise of flexibility and rationality render them acceptable as they appear as non-compulsory, objective and impartial. For flexibility to work and for that negotiations and arrangements can take place additional procedures and paperwork are needed to justify those modifications. This has an increased impact on the well-being of NGO workers as it is resented as a very stressful process and most importantly because this control procedures plays on individuals' responsibility. Moreover, both in Belgium and in Romania

feminist in NGOs deplore at unison the enormous amount of time spent to comply with an ever increasing number of rules and procedures and most importantly that this happens at the expense of the work that they actually want to do such as research, campaigns, direct work with women in relation to specific issues, advocacy and so on. This translates into cooptation by time misappropriation.

Within feminist NGOs, both in Belgium and in Romania, the managerial language proliferates and is co-produced through interactions with other fields and intermediary bodies, specifically subsidizing bodies, public or private, establishing a common *modus operandi* based on rationality, good governance and good practices, efficiency and impartiality evaluated through criteria and indicators, by auditing mechanisms, that ultimately monitor the institutional life of organizations. This raises tensions between a feminist logic based on specific values and principles stemming from the history of the feminist movement and the managerial logic stemming from the private sector and adopted across different areas within the society. Through specific language and a process of abstraction, information about women, their realities and problems are formalized as well as the technical ways to *manage* them, expressed in guides, guidelines, manuals. It is the adoption and formalization of this language stemming from the market that constitutes a source of domination of neoliberal bureaucratization that is a fluid and indeterminate process, in movement, possible to be adapted to different contexts. Both in Belgium and Romania, feminist NGOs develop kits, tools and manuals that formalize and standardize their practices.

Moreover, through the proliferation and formalization of these norms, rules and procedures among feminist organizations new women subjects are created: both in terms of beneficiaries and target groups and professionals. Also, a new market is created for NGO workers, experts and consultants. While in Romania the new market for gender equality professionals is being shaped by the formalization and institutionalization of the profession of gender experts and technicians, in Belgium cooperation with different employment agencies support feminist NGOs financially by subsidizing some of their employment contracts. Different jobs and positions are being transferred from the enterprise world to the NGO world such as program manager, project manager, project assistant, trainer, facilitator, volunteer's coordinator and so on.

The feminist logic clashes with the neoliberal bureaucratization logic and feminist NGOs both in Belgium and in Romania constantly reflects about this tension and try to find ways in which they can counter and resist the neoliberal logic with its externalities stemming from the market. Feminist activists in NGOs are aware of the penetration of neoliberal discourses and practices in their work and within society and struggle to deconstruct these discourses through their actions and campaigns and to resist to the extension of a management inspired modus operandi in their work, many times brought in by subsidizing bodies or state institutions with which they collaborate. NGOs reflect about ways to render more accessible their trainings and activities in terms of price, language and the women they manage to reach. They publicly condemn the laws and policies that marginalize certain categories of women and keep them in precarity. They try to negotiate with donors when they want to impose modes of functioning that are conflicting with their overall philosophy. However, the capacity of negotiation is greater in Belgium than in Romania and this is potentially related to the proximity and more direct contact with the subsidizing bodies and the state institutions with whom they collaborate. Feminist organizations also organize autonomously, outside the NGO framework for actions and campaigns that want to be more subversive. In Belgium there is more of an overlapping membership of feminist activists that both work in NGOs and are part of informal collectives. In Romania, while there is collaboration between NGOs and informal collectives for more contentious actions such as protests, flash-mobs and other street actions, there is less overlapping compared to Belgium.

Even though the type of funds, structural or project-based, and NGOs proximity related to donors, public or private affect the way neoliberal bureaucratization unfolds and affects feminist organizations in Belgium and Romania the modus operandi remains the same. The penetration and proliferation of norms, rules and procedures stemming from the market happens through a conscious or unconscious process of co-production, a participative process by donors, NGOs and other relevant actors. It is a kaleidoscopic process, in which new moves of actors, new norms and procedures, refined rules or new arrangements, create shifting configurations in a multidimensional and dynamic space, mediated by power, resistance and language that bring together heterogenous practices, domains, actors into a mode of functioning based on a common framework, stemming from the market and management world.

Chapter X. Precarization: financial dependence and burnout in the feminist movement

“I don’t believe in this nonsense about time. Time is just common, it’s like water for a fish. Everybody’s in this water, nobody gets out of it, or if he does the same thing happens to him that happens to the fish, he dies. And you know what happens in this water, time? The big fish eat the little fish. That’s all. The big fish eat the little fish and the ocean doesn’t care.”

“Oh, please,” I said. “I don’t believe that. Time’s hot water and we’re not fish and you can choose to be eaten and also not to eat—not to eat,” I added quickly, turning a little red before his delighted and sardonic smile, “the little fish, of course.”

“To choose!” cried Giovanni, turning his face away from me and speaking (...)

(Excerpt From: James Baldwin. “Giovanni's Room”)

I. Introduction

Within the feminist movement, more precisely the NGO-ized part of the feminist movement, financial dependence represents one of the main mechanisms, specific to the sector, through which the dominance of the neoliberal bureaucratization is exercised and through which governmental precarization is deployed. The professionalization of feminist organizations as an intermediary mechanism lays down the adequate professional framework and structure that facilitates the spread and penetration of norms, rules and procedures stemming from the

market (or their implementation, to better emphasize the management vocabulary). Feminist movement organizations need money to professionalize and they need to professionalize in order to get money. They appeal to donors, the state, public or private, adopting highly formalized norms, rules and procedures stemming from the market, that enclose the reality through processes of abstractization and generalization. The interrelationship between professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization is a dynamic connection that fosters a perpetual process, seeming like a work in progress since there are always improvements to be made, to set up new norms and standards for the profession reflecting the polyvalence of gender experts and professionals and to adapt to new externalities. This creates a generalized feeling of insecurity and uncertainty, instability and fear, that in neoliberal context became of form of governing through fear and insecurity. The NGO sector becomes precarized in a move of governmental precarization towards the middle of the society. Governing through insecurity and precarization is a dual process in which there is an external form of dominance from entities such as donors in this case be them the state, international entities or the corporate but there is also self-governing, when organizations to alleviate fears of insecurity sometimes anticipate expectations and adhere to informal norms.

Beyond the idea of donors as embodying the neoliberal evil and NGOs as the morality guardians, neoliberalism is embodied in everyday practices shaped in the case of the feminist movement today by the financial dependence relationship that is governing the functioning of the institutionalized civil society. Financial dependence constitutes into the exchange channel between donors – public or private, international organizations, states or businesses and institutionalized feminist organizations. Through this financial dependence channel, money is exchanged in return for the respect of norms and procedures stemming from the market that constitutes into a *modus operandi* of organizations which allow for the control of their activities through accountability mechanisms. This transaction happens in an environment that mirrors the functioning of the liberal market. Before the actual transfer of money and import of norms and procedures and accountability mechanisms happens, organizations enters the market of call for tenders. Organizations are constrained to enter into the competition either for accreditation or in responding to call for tenders. But this constrain is disguised as freedom since organizations act freely and freely choose to enter the market of call for tenders or accreditation. Not all the organizations who apply for recognition for example in popular education or development in Belgium get accredited and not all the organizations in Belgium and Romania who respond to call for projects see their proposals

accepted. An a priori market logic is established. After the transaction happens, for those organizations whose projects are accepted or who receive accreditation in Belgium, money, subsidies come with instructions for use, these conditionalities that establish the respect of norms and procedures which will guarantee the implementation of accountability mechanisms that allow for the control of NGOs' activities. Beyond co-optation or channelling as efforts of some hegemonic groups or elites to control in a top-down, hierarchical manner the activities of the organizations or to undermine their goals and reorient them through a vertical power relationship, the spread of neoliberal norms and rules is ensured through a horizontal network of practices in which negotiation and resistance are possible and where control is ensured through accountability mechanisms, through monitoring and reporting. This echoes the transformation of power relationships from vertical control to horizontal that channel, "orient" and seemingly do not impose. Channelling is happening through suffocation and asphyxiation by demands for professionalization to access funding and especially by the neoliberal bureaucratization that swallows or reorient the resources of organizations (some of them given by donors) towards the implementation bureaucratic norms and procedures stemming from the private management that allow for the control of the activities of the organizations. The value of time is increased and channelling takes place through time misappropriation. The dialectic freedom and constraint, corruption and transparency is at great play. Organizations freely choose to apply to subsidies and subject to the bureaucratic demands, inoffensive in appearance as they are set up to ensure a transparent use of funds. This fits today's anti-corruption rhetoric that gains momentum and the transparent use of funds.

It is the financial dependence that maintains this channel through which externalities and informalities flow continuously, are improved, ameliorated, innovated, with a lot of creativity. This channel, ensured by financial dependence, is not only characterized by organizational and personal insecurity and uncertainty, stemming from the dependence relationship itself that rests upon voluntary contributions of donors, but also by precariousness of workers and beneficiaries, a precarious and unstable work environment, stemming from very scarce resources. The neoliberal specificity of today's financial dependency mechanism compared to the financial dependency of feminist organizations during the previous waves is given by the fragmentation of the sources of funding, each with different accountability devices that rely on increased bureaucratization, the growth of contractual and consultancy relationships that often involve exclusion from the decision-

making and might foster a long term potential depoliticization by decoupling NGO workers from the actual possibility of establishing a long term relationship with the same community (beneficiaries in NGOs jargon). This is not to say that feminist organizations, professionals and activists working within do not have autonomy.

To ensure the continuous flow of externalities stemming from the market and the domination of neoliberal bureaucratization, through the mechanism of financial dependence and within the framework set up by professionalization, the entrepreneurial self of feminist activists working in NGOs comes at great play. The standards set by the profession – with the impetus and requirements from donors, to establish accountability mechanisms to ensure transparency and compliance to quality standards are necessary today to access funding. Here comes the role of informalities that help ensure the capacity to apply formalities, abstract norms and procedures, stemming from the management and financial world, that are not necessarily suited to the daily life of movement organizations. The role of informalities was explained in relation to neoliberal bureaucratization. What does financial dependence has to do? It sets up the conditions, the channel, the specific mechanism through which informalities are deployed. Why? Because the financial dependence not only comes with norms and rules, demands for transparency and accountability chains required from donors. It comes as well with scarcity of resources and precariousness. Organizations and activists working in NGOs need to be creative, innovative and make a silk purse out of a saw's ear as one interviewee put it to be able to do their work and all this within the framework of norms and procedures stemming from the market. Feminists working in NGOs need to demonstrate at this point the entrepreneurial capacity, the entrepreneurial self that would allow them to cope with the proliferation of norms, rules and procedures stemming from the market and accommodate them with the feminist aims, values and practices of feminist political work. In order to touch the communities whose needs they want to meet, in conditions of scarce financial resources, organizations are challenged and tested in their entrepreneurial and innovative capacity.

In conditions of scarce resources feminist activists and professionals working in NGOs sometimes work in uncertainty and fear, on the one hand that they might lose their jobs, either because of cuts in funding, mostly in Belgium, or because they might be unable to secure future funding through new projects and, on the other hand, that they might not be able to continue to deliver their activities to the different communities of women. Here the process governing through insecurity or what Lorey (2015) called governmental precarization comes into play. According to Lorey (2015) governmental precarization as governing

through insecurity, in neoliberalism is not based on the distribution of precariousness in the society using hierarchies and discriminations based on structural inequalities that creates the Other, the marginalized, those who are not protected by the state of insecurity but this process is normalized in the society and individualized based on ideas of self-responsibility of creating oneself. The ambivalence of freedom and subjugation in the process of precarization is at stake. In order to be precautious in this uncertain environment, organizations might voluntarily anticipate and adhere to informal norms and expectation they might anticipate from donors and engage in a process of self-governing and self-regulation that support the mechanisms of dominance and governing through insecurity. The pressure of working in a precarious environment that characterizes both feminist activists and NGO workers as well as the population whose needs they address, together with the pressure to constantly innovate and create in conditions of financial scarcity and deal with the polyvalence of their job related to professionalization and the necessity to deal with the intensification of neoliberal bureaucratization, brings many NGO activists and professionals to experience burnout. Faced with this situation organizations try to respond through by encouraging care and creating spaces for sharing and collective support. Feminists working in NGOs workers struggle to do a lot with few resources, to ameliorate, improve their standards, the quality of their work and what they are capable to deliver that would prove on the one hand to the donors that they are capable to secure professional standards, work transparently and be accountable and maintain legitimacy among the population through what they deliver. This adds to the underlying hardship of working with precarious populations, who experience marginalization and trauma. In this context, care might represent the radical politics of resistance, playing its counterpart to the domination exercised through governing by insecurity, precarization and bureaucratization. In what follows I will address financial dependency and precariousness in feminist organizations; the role of informalities, self-precarization, the entrepreneurial self; and lastly, burnout among activists and professionals working in feminist organizations.

II. Funding mechanisms and financial dependence

In Belgium, the financial resources of feminist organizations include public structural subsidies, subsidies allocated through calls for projects that are mostly public, or money that results from the sale of trainings at the level of the organization. In Romania, the financial resources of feminist organizations come from calls for projects at European or international level. Persons working in feminist organizations can also be contracted as gender experts at

the individual level. Even though in Belgium, the structural subsidies represented a relatively secure and long-term income, at least for the biggest, oldest organizations, the recent years cuts in subsidies, their offsetting and/or gradual replacement with call for projects marked the beginning of a trend of fragmentation of sources of funding. Each organization's financial resources are formed of a mosaic of subsidies, from various donors. In Romania, apart from very few feminist organizations such as CPE, that received a structural grant during the first years of functioning, most feminist NGOs had to make do from the very beginning with an unstable and mixed budget, resulting from their participation on the call for tenders market. CPE, was created as an extension of the Women's Program of the Soros' Open Society Foundation. CPE passed through an organizational restructuring and continued to receive subsidies from Soros Foundation - a part conditioned by the attraction of other funding. CPE's preapproved budget was released when the organization was able to attract the complementary part of the funding. Although there is difference between feminist organizations in Belgium and Romania in terms of funding, and this difference concerns specifically the sources and the duration of funding, in both countries though at a different pace there is a growth in the fragmentation and multiplication of the sources of funding and an increase in contractual and consultancy relationships. Thus, while in Belgium, most of the funds composing the budget of feminist organizations are structural and public, initially meaning more long term, and now more fragmented and short-lived, in Romania, funds come from European and international donors and are short term. However, the point of interest here is the fragmentation and multiplication of sources of funding with their bureaucracy and accountability mechanisms and their gradually diminishing duration for which they are allotted. This is important in order to grasp the way financial dependence today feeds the neoliberal bureaucratization and professionalization. When entering the call for tenders market, feminist organizations need not only professional expertise in the area in which they are specialized – feminist research, violence against women, lobby and advocacy to ameliorate public policies and so on, but also know-how to build up the files and to respect the procedures and follow the applicants' guidelines when responding to call for projects. In short, organizations need to translate their everyday practices into abstract terms that are already set-up by donors in their guidelines and application procedures in their invitations to tender and subsequently to respect the accountability mechanisms, monitoring and reporting procedures. This reflects the polyvalence that characterizes the process of professionalization and intensification of norms and procedures to follow stemming from the management and market, specific to neoliberal bureaucratization. Interestingly, in Romania, where these

processes are more intensified, due to the multiplicity of donors and the absence of more structural funding, the gender studies MA at SNSPA Bucharest, included in its cursus, a project management course, in which students learned how to write and implement projects with a feminist or gender dimension. Both in Belgium and in Romania, financial dependence characterizes the relationship between donors and feminist organizations. But feminist organizations almost always depended financially on donors or members contributions. Today, members' contributions are very scarce in both countries due to an increased precarization of members and of the communities with which organizations work. Those who have money, the donors, finance organizations in order to govern together and manage social problems and populations. The specificity today is that this relationship between donors and organizations becomes an exchange relationship: money for projects, programs and services. But the hidden, invisible additional cost of this transaction that organizations pay is the import of norms and practices stemming from the private management as their *modus operandi* that allow for the implementation of accountability mechanisms that allow for their activities, to be traced, monitored, evaluated.

In order to better understand the challenges raised by feminist organizations' financial dependence today, in the context of and in relation to the professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization of a part of the feminist movement, I will first briefly explain the subsidizing structure and mechanisms in both countries. In the French-speaking Belgium, organizations obtain structural financing through popular education and NGO development mechanisms, and specifically for the Brussels region from the Social Cohesion. Additionally, organizations answer to call for projects from mostly public entities, but also private foundations or companies to supplement their budget. At the level of NGO staff employment contracts and salaries, feminist organizations establish partnerships with various state employment agencies to finance them. To begin with, popular education is often referred to as continuing/permanent education, but should not be confused with continuing vocational training. Its development is linked to the process of industrialization of the French-speaking Belgium in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which favored the growth of strong trade union and workers' movements. Around these unions and movements, a whole network of associations has developed, involving many different groups in the society, including women, who started working in the field of emancipation. During the 1970s, the idea of financing these associations in a structural way, emerged and popular education was institutionalized by the adoption of the decree of 8 April 1976 which set the conditions for the recognition and

granting of subsidies to adult education organizations, in general, and to organizations for the socio-cultural promotion of workers.

Popular education is not just a financing mechanism, but also a methodology of work that aims to make people actors in their own lives, emancipate them and give them the means to empower themselves to act in society in a critical and enlightened way. To give a general idea about the sector, organizations following a specific procedure of certification, can be recognized as popular education organizations and receive grants in four areas: (1) citizen participation, education and training; (2) Training of animators, trainers and associative actors; (3) Production of services or analyzes and studies; (4) Awareness and information¹. There are 270 associations recognized in popular education and a dozen feminist organizations. The feminist organizations recognized in popular education and that were part of this study are *Vie féminine*, *Garance*, *Université des femmes*, *Le Monde selon les Femmes* and *Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes*. Feminist activist and popular education counselor A.B. mentions that today, there is less money compared to the 1970s when the decree was written, with austerity measures involving cuts in subsidies for civil society organizations⁵¹⁸. This involves additional resources that need to be redirected to search for funds and additional bureaucratic work at the expense of the regular activities, gradually channeling the resources of the organizations into bureaucracy, adding to their organizational insecurity and work pressure. The president of *Vie féminine* explains regarding the changes over the years of the popular education decree:

The decree of 1976 was much more favorable financially than that of 2003. We lost, we had to build up a restructuring plan, we fired people, following that. So it is still a bit paradoxical because at the same time we are very much attached to this decree and it is part of the collective history. The decree is important in terms of structural funding; but on the other hand it is not enough and we have to go and get money elsewhere. We have to look for complements to the Walloon Region. One-off projects are abandoned all the time and it becomes a little tiring because we would like to have a decree that recognizes and finances us and after we do our work on field instead of being busy compiling documents and files of requests for subsidies.⁵¹⁹

This leads to the distinction regarding popular education as working methodology to which feminist organizations are very attached because it is part of their collective history as the *Vie*

⁵¹⁸ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels

⁵¹⁹ A.P. – *Vie féminine*, Brussels

f eminine interviewee mentions in the above excerpt and popular education as a financial mechanism that raises problems not just in terms of the various changes that the decree suffered and that involved financial losses for certain organizations that had to search for financial supplements, multiplying the sources of funding, but also in terms of bureaucracy and procedures to follow both a priori in order to become recognized and subsequently to comply with the accountability demands.

As a working methodology, popular education involves a collective process, not an individual one. There are three crucial elements: the process, the collective work and the emancipation. What matters is not the result or success itself, but the process in which people participate. Collective work is essential in the process, insists the popular education counselor and feminist activist A.B.⁵²⁰. She further explains that despite the fact that some people may need individual support, the goal of popular education is not to help each person as a public service, but collectively, to empower them and change society for all. It is in this methodology that feminist organizations saw the subversive potential to work towards the collective emancipation of women, including and especially women from popular backgrounds.

However, as a financing mechanism it involves a cumbersome and laborious process of certification and recognition, and subsequent bureaucratic procedures of monitoring and reporting, in the name of transparency. Apart from Garance, all the other formal and professionalized organizations that participated in this study are older organizations, founded before the 90s and which obtained popular education certification and recognition before Garance applied. After several years of financial autonomy, faced with increased demands for feminist self-defense trainings and with increased financial difficulties to support this demand, Garance decided to follow the path of professionalization and to this end seek accreditation within the framework of popular education⁵²¹. The path of Garance represents a relevant case to show the intricacies between financial dependence on one hand and professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization on the other. In order to access financing and to be eligible for subsidies, the organization had to professionalize and to professionalize they had to enter the path of neoliberal bureaucratization, by adopting all the norms, rules,

⁵²⁰ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels; A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels

⁵²¹ Annual Reports Garance

procedures that would help better define their objectives, categorize, quantify, frame their actions and activities, their beneficiaries and so on. *Garance* developed a five-year strategy to achieve professionalization in order to allow for the expansion of activities and greater recognition in popular education for different axes⁵²² and "the recognition dossier was nevertheless a little book with everything they wanted to know"⁵²³. The bureaucratic monitoring of the life of the organizations becomes obvious when entering the path of professionalization. Accountability mechanisms are set up in place through continuous monitoring and reporting. The founder of *Garance* explains that during the process of obtaining recognition they experienced financial strain:

The only possibility we have seen for subsidized funding is popular education and we have come a painful long way. In 2006 the file for accreditation was submitted; we had a period of transitional recognition for two years in 2007 and 2008. In 2009 we had our first program contract for five years and we are in our second program contract. So the first seven years we were stuck in a category of very low financing packages. We had 11000 euro 12000 euro a year and it was not much. And during that time we had to survive with project subsidies which is completely exhausting because we are always busy running left and right to have 5 euro here, 3000 euro there and with that a mosaic of sources to finance the jobs.⁵²⁴

The initial financial strain functions as a *vis*. The promise of being released from this pressure of insecurity if complying with the norms, rules and procedures required by the donors is considered to be a sufficient enough motivation to go through the process⁵²⁵. However, the comfortable position⁵²⁶ given by the possibility to access financing or to even secure more structural, recurrent subsidizing comes with the price of implementing a durable *modus operandi* based on professional standards that are continuously, monitored, evaluated and sanctioned. Once accredited, the subsidizing contract renewal depends on the organizations' capacity to comply to norms and standards, voluntarily adopted and co-constructed together with other actors, such as the subsidizing bodies. Other subsidizing mechanisms in Belgium such as the Belgian Development Cooperation – DGD for *Le Monde selon les Femmes* that is accredited as a cooperation NGO or Social Cohesion, function in a similar fashion in terms of rules and procedures to comply with and of accountability

⁵²² *Garance* Report 2008

⁵²³ S.B. - *Garance*

⁵²⁴ S.B. - *Garance*

⁵²⁵ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels; S.B. - *Garance*

⁵²⁶ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels;

mechanisms. Apart from the structural subsidies, feminist organization in Belgium respond to call for projects to complement their budget and they also establish partnerships with other state institutions especially employment agencies such as Maribel or Actiris to finances some of their employment contracts. Lastly, some feminist organizations sell their trainings and secure additional funds to their overall budget.

In Romania, public funds are very scarce or non-existent and feminist NGOs generally turn to foreign donors such as the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway grants or the NGO Fund – financed by the same EEA and Norway grants. Embassies also fund some small projects. To access these funds demands considerable know-how: about the conditions of eligibility that push organizations to professionalize in order to be able to comply with, about the specific language used in the applicants guidelines, imbued with norms and procedures stemming from the management and market sphere, about writing projects and implementing them in this specific language and about accountability mechanisms. Feminist organizations distinguish among two periods after the fall of the state-socialist regime, regarding donors' practices. Before entering the EU sponsors were more flexible, there was less bureaucratization and 'a less expert attitude'⁵²⁷. This allowed feminist professionals in NGOs to negotiate with donors, the terms of projects implementation or to explain when some aspects did not go as planned in the initial funding application. This initial flexibility of donors allowed to bring local issues and knowledge to the forefront, but also to gain expertise—and competencies, learning about project management. After EU accession, NGOs were awarded according to their organizational capacity. The more grassroots feminist organizations did not conform to the European donors' requests and, to survive, entered in partnerships with bigger organizations or state institutions who had the organizational capacity and resources to apply for European funds, such as universities, ministries and hospitals⁵²⁸. The intertwine between financial dependence, professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization becomes obvious. During the first phase, feminist organizations in Romania *invested* in their *organizational and financial capacity-building* and in their know-how both in the area of *civil society building* and consolidation, *project management* and *fundraising*, but also gender technical knowledge and expertise. With financial support from foreign donors they professionalized, they *learned* how to build-up a democratic civil society with foreign experts coming to exchange good practices, to give

⁵²⁷ C.B. - Filia

⁵²⁸ C.B. - Filia

training and hold workshops, to transmit this kind of knowledge codified and framed in the neoliberal slang of management and market vocabulary. Behind this language, the neoliberal ideological charge can be noticed. However, its adoption, though voluntary seems to be less conscious as the management and market slang proliferates and extends to many levels and domains within the society. In Romania, various entities appeared over the years, companies, organizations that offered trainings in European structural funds and in project management, to translate this specialized language and know-how stemming from the market to those who wanted to access these funds.

A. Fragmentation of subsidies, multiplication of accountability chains and channelling

In Belgium and in Romania, the financing modes for feminist organizations differ. However, the mechanism, the channel of financial dependence functions similarly in fostering professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization, albeit to different degrees. In Belgium, feminist organizations are still heavily financed by the state and this is also rooted in the historical legacies and pathways of development of various movements and the interlink between them, the workers movement and the first waves of the feminist movement. Structural financing is granted for longer periods of time and allows for the establishment of mid and long-term strategies for feminist organizations. In Romania, financing is project-based, awarded for shorter periods of time, through different subsidizing mechanisms related to European funds or other international funds. This implies short to mid-term strategies and a higher degree of organizational uncertainty, including related to the jobs of feminist professionals. In both countries professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization were underlying processes that imposed as ongoing conditions to secure access to funding. Despite the difference in the source of funds and their duration, some similar processes and consequences stemming from financial dependence and its interlink with professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization stem.

Sure that the duration on which funds are granted and the number of subsidizing bodies have a certain number of important consequences for the feminist organizations, especially on the duration and the kind of strategies organizations can adopt, on the kind of employment contracts they can offer to their employees, on the pressure regarding organizational insecurity and individual uncertainty. These aspects mark the some differences regarding financial dependence in Belgium and Romania. However, both in Belgium and in Romania

the budget of feminist organizations is composed of a mosaic of financing sources. Although in Belgium, the structural subsidies still represent the biggest part in the composition of the budget, there was a multiplication of the sources of funding based on invitations to tender, following changes and cuts concerning the way the grants were awarded and since the structural subsidies were not enough to cover the functioning of organizations, they had to search for complements of subsidies. The president of Vie féminine explains how it is tiring to write projects and build up files to respond to call for projects using resources that might be lost, since there is a competition between the projects submitted and not all the organizations will be awarded the grants:

Yes it is a real problem because so there are the structural subsidies, there are the complementary subsidies that must be sought and then there are the calls for projects.

There are plenty of calls for projects, politicians today make a lot of calls for projects and therefore it is tiresome obviously when an association...

I can see how the women's associations need this money so they are going to get it, but while we are doing this we are not on the field. And there are files that sometimes do not succeed because they receive three hundred requests and they must choose one hundred and by the force of circumstance we did work for nothing.

It is quite problematic. The big problem of the moment is the loss of energy to make subsidies files.⁵²⁹

In Romania, the mosaic of financing sources translates into a mode of work at the level of organizations that is project-based that translates into a mosaic of activities and actions as the epitome of the functioning of professional feminist organizations. Organizations constantly respond to calls for projects to secure their functioning. Donors have funding programs that are time-limited. The NGO Fund financed by the EEA and Norway grants was developed during the period 2009-2014. The European Social Fund (ESF) had a first funding program - the Human Resources Development Sector Operational Program (HRD OP) between 2007 and 2013 and after a second - the Human Capital Operational Program (HC OP) between 2014 and 2020. The NGO Fund offered more limited financial resources compared to the ESF. These donors provided funding for projects lasting from a few months to two years, in general. In addition, the change between the various operational programs financed by the ESF also implied changes in the conditions of granting, while the process was already very heavy bureaucratically. In Belgium, the cumbersome bureaucracy of the ESF has prevented

⁵²⁹ A.P. – Vie féminine, Brussels

feminist organizations to apply for grants from this donor⁵³⁰. As long as there were calls for projects by state institutions or politicians, organizations preferred to respond to these calls. In Romania, the mosaic of funding ensured through call for projects that translates into a project-based work mode of functioning circumscribes the strategies and activities of feminist organizations.

What is most important is that the financial dependence mechanism sets up the possibilities and limits of professional feminist movement organizations' activities. The neoliberal specificity of today's financial dependence mechanism is that through the multiplicity of funding sources or more specifically, through their fragmentation and the spread of call for tenders and project-based work, there is also a multiplication of norms, rules and procedures that organizations have to adopt, including a multiplication of the accountability mechanisms. For each funding, structural or project-based, accountability mechanisms and procedures are established as a management tool for retrospective control. Financial dependence empties the time and other resources of feminist organizations that are channeled towards the introduction of demands for subsidies, thus creating files and writing projects, or towards reports and audits. The heavy accountability mechanisms and the necessity to introduce demands for subsidies, ensure the channeling through time misappropriation. Both in Belgium and Romania, feminist activists deplore the increased bureaucratization demanded by donors prevents them from being on the fieldwork, working with women or mobilizing their reactive capacity for various issues⁵³¹. Once again the real force of channeling through time misappropriation is given by the multiplication of accountability mechanisms from donors that also ensures the surveillance of the organizational life. In Romania, this aspect is exacerbated by the project-based work that is the epitome of feminist organizations' functioning. In Belgium, while the structural functioning might seem to put feminist organizations in a more comfortable position, with slower, less heavy accountability mechanisms but however, yearly reports for structural subsidies, evaluations and screening processes and the increased number of demands for subsidies that organizations introduce in order to complement their budget empties their resources. This reflects the control and the

⁵³⁰ A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels; D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels; I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels

⁵³¹ A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; C.P. – Front, Bucharest; O.C. – Front, Bucharest; E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels; C.S. 2 – Front, Bucharest; A.B. Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels; D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels; I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; I.V. – Garance, Brussels

proliferation of neoliberal norms and the expansion of control through neoliberal bureaucracy and technology at all levels of the society. In the case of feminist organizations, financial dependence is only a mechanism that ensures channeling through time misappropriation, and ultimately controlling and ensuring the spread of neoliberal externalities. Activists working in feminist organizations line up to deplore the heavy paperwork to introduce demands for subsidies and the accountability and control mechanisms that prevents them to be on the ground. This affects the reactive capacity of feminist organizations and the kind of relationship they are able to establish and maintain with the communities they are working with.

Using the resources of feminist organizations for predictable, well-planned actions and the bureaucratic activities related to the accountability towards donors, through projects, leaves fewer resources available for non-predictable and reactive types of action. The consequence of project-based work is loosening the reactive capacity regarding urgent and imperative things. In Romania, activists in feminist organizations deplore that project-based work decreases involvement in grassroots activism and contentious actions and diminishes the freedom to act on imperative and pressing issues⁵³². They give the example of a gang rape case that involved seven young men from Moldova region who were tried in freedom after raping a young girl⁵³³. One activist from Front Association regrets that feminist organizations and the larger feminist community did not mobilize in a public action of protest to criticize the manner in which the case was handled by authorities, considering that activists are caught up with project-based work and bureaucratic activities. She says “they did not have time or they had other priorities. other priorities like projects, you know?!”⁵³⁴. “And it seems to me that this activism where you do not react although it is a very important and serious matter – because you realize that sexual violence at least in Romania it is a critical and serious issue and it would be a huge priority but you lose yourself with other things like projects”⁵³⁵. The potential trigger point that the gang rape case represented was not sufficiently exploited – interviewees emphasize, as to mobilize public and constituencies in wider movement against sexual violence⁵³⁶. Nevertheless, the Network Break the Silence

⁵³² C.P. – Front, Bucharest, S5, S9

⁵³³ <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/cei-sapte-vasluieni-care-au-violat-o-fata-de-18-ani-pana-la-lesin-obligati-sa-vina-zilnic-la-politie-14622045>

⁵³⁴ C.P. – Front, Bucharest

⁵³⁵ C.P. – Front, Bucharest

⁵³⁶ C.P. – Front, Bucharest

against Sexual Violence wrote an open letter to the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis questioning the trial in freedom of the offenders and questioned authorities, especially the Ministry of Justice, about the way the Directive 2012/29 / EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime was transposed and implemented and also sent a solidarity message with the abused girls and women and their families⁵³⁷.

In general, there is a multiplication of responsibility and accountability chains that channel feminist NGOs activities to those devoted comply with norms, rules and procedures encoded in neoliberal bureaucratic procedures and to activists' great frustration prevents them to reflect on their work and practices and to work with their communities. In a rather counter-intuitive manner, instead of fostering more autonomy, the multiplication of sources of funding entails financial fragility and organizational insecurity.

Besides, channelling through time misappropriation due to the fragmentation of funding and the multiplication of accountability chains and constant fundraising efforts, feminist NGOs face a series of other challenges stemming from the financial dependence relationship with donors and related to the content and mode of work. In Belgium, while popular education as a working methodology, as it was initially developed, goes against the marketization and liberalization tide through the fact that it focuses on the process and not on the results, as a financial mechanisms enforces control over the way activities are deployed. The popular education counselor of the Cabinet Alda Greoli, Minister of Culture, Children and Popular Education in the Government of the French Community explains that there is no control over the content of the activities but through evaluations and accountability mechanisms that bound feminist organizations to the subsidizing mechanism:

What is very important is that there is no control over the substance. They (associations) can do what they want, they can criticize the policies, criticize the state, criticize what they want; we, the public power wants fund a methodology and a way of working, but not the content and not the result, and that does not exist in any other country ever. Go to see in their activity report. They are evaluated, they are

⁵³⁷“do not accept to be blamed for the abuse suffered, call the NGOs to inform you about the rights you have and to get support in difficult situations.”
<http://aleg-romania.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SCRISOARE-DESCHIS-Nu-uitati-drepturile-victimelor.pdf>
accessed July 14, 2019

still accountable and obliged to report their activities to show that they have worked, how many hours and all that but we will never say, we will never look at the content.⁵³⁸

Feminist organizations in Belgium accredited on popular education agree almost in unison that the state pays associations so they would criticize it. However, they also stress the constraints and exigencies of popular education, to comply with different norms and rules that end up guiding their activities. One member of *Garance* complains about the conditions imposed by popular education, to cover a certain number of activities outside Brussels, in the other provinces, while they already have a lot of work in Brussels, to cover a certain number of hours in different places, which puts a lot of pressures on them. She concludes that they pay expensively for the money they receive⁵³⁹. Popular education also regulates cooperation between organizations accredited through this financing instrument. Feminist organizations who wanted to cooperate, in the field of popular education, in Belgium, encountered bureaucratic difficulties linked to the sharing of the number of "working hours" among organizations that cooperate, because the donor is suspicious and fear not to double its grants⁵⁴⁰.

While in Belgium it seems that, especially through popular education, donor do not interfere too much about the actual content, although through calls for projects money might be offered to tackle a certain social issue, in Romania the gap between donors and NGOs' perceptions about the needs and the pressing issues that different groups and communities face, weights heavier. For example, a member of an LGBTQIA organization in Bucarest mentions that even though HIV prevention is still very necessary "there is this perversity linked to the fact that you have to prove this need to the sponsors, to prove that it is sustainable and the donors unfortunately dictate the social movement to a certain extent, even if it is not completely". Another example: ALEG Association which laid the foundations of a specialized service for women victims of sexual violence, working within a feminist framework, a unique service in Romania, created with the resources of the NGO Fund, failed to obtain again financial resources to support this service after the project finished. The donor rejected their project, claiming that the association had not proved the need for the service, while ALEG insisted that there was a real need based on the very experience of the pilot

⁵³⁸ A.B. Counselor popular education at the cabinet Alda Greoli, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education in the Government of the French Community

⁵³⁹ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁴⁰ M.S. – Garance, Brusselss

project. This contributes to difficulties in ensuring continuity of services and activities within a framework of project-based funding. Feminist organizations need to constantly innovate and prove entrepreneurship and creativity each time they ask for funds as donors want something new and innovative. Thus, it is difficult to ensure the continuity of activities and services when donors give money for original, never seen project proposals. The purpose here is not to evaluate the need, but to show that behind donors' objective, impartial, transparent process of evaluation of the project proposal according to objective criteria lies the power to decide a social need that seems not to fit with the reality on the ground claimed by NGOs. I will just mention that while in Romania some infrastructure have been developed in the area of domestic violence (that might include sexual violence as well), for victims of sexual violence outside the family who are protected by the Penal Code, there are no specialized services. One of ALEG members explains this situation:

We think it's very important to work from a gender perspective, from a feminist perspective in the area of sexual violence, because it's very easy to re-traumatize if you do not help the victim understand that the causes of the violence she suffered did not depend on and were not related to her, that she did not do anything wrong. And this approach is lacking when the intervention is done by state institutions and that is why what we bring is an added value but, unfortunately, it is not important enough for some donors.⁵⁴¹

Through financial dependence, the mode of working, including time and schedule, the actions, including the compositions of communities of women with whom NGOs are working are channeled. But once again I do not understand channeling as the efforts of hegemonic groups to undermine the movement and reorient it away from their substantive goals, towards the acceptance of moderate reforms as Coy and Hedeem (2005) define it. But this also does not mean that I do not consider the existence of powerful actors that mobilize in anti-gender campaigns at different levels of the society and the processes of resistance in which feminist groups and organizations engage. As I argued in the chapter about co-optation by institutionalization, feminist organizations and activists that engage in the arena of formal official politics also engage in resistance and provide alternative discourses to the right-wing and radical right discourses. They engage in resistance towards the normalization of neoliberal consensus, especially at the level of discourses and engage in practices of institutional discursive socialization regarding feminist perspectives and values. However, in

⁵⁴¹ A.V. 2 – ALEG

line with Hibou's (2015) arguments about the spread of neoliberal externalities and informalities – neoliberal bureaucratization, it seems that you push the devil out and the demon slips in. What I understand here through channelling refers to the additional costs that organizations have to pay when they exchange money from donors for programs, actions, services: time whose value highly increases in neoliberalism and the implementation of norms and practices stemming from the private management. Organizations have to adopt and integrate in their daily work of a certain *modus operandi*, certain ways of doing things, a certain number of hours, with certain beneficiaries, in specific regions or provinces and they have to leave a trace for each of their activities, ensuring that accountability mechanisms are in place. The consequence, apart from implementing norms and rules stemming from the market as *modus operandi* together with accountability mechanisms, is also redirecting their actions from their activities with the communities, services towards their professionalization and bureaucratic activities through time misappropriation. These processes are intensified today to an unprecedented level, through the multiplication of the sources of funding, their fragmentation that multiplies the norms and procedures to be adopted and that might take slightly different forms according to various donors but with the private management core, that multiplies the accountability mechanisms and increases enormously the time devoted to these activities and diminishes the resources and energy for actions in communities or for collective reflections.

B. Precarization through insecurity – a neoliberal mode of governing

When discussing about the financial resources of feminist organizations or about the employment contracts and conditions of professionals working in these organizations, two things recurrently appeared both in Belgium and in Romania, even if accompanied by specific differences. The first aspect is related to the way in which the kind of subsidies organizations have shape the kind of strategies they are able to develop, in terms of duration, more long-term or short-term. While in Belgium, feminist organizations that receive structural subsidies consider themselves rather privileged, compared to their comrades in other countries, as they are able to ensure a certain organizational security and long-term strategies, financed by the state, in Romania, the project-based financing raises concerns among feminist organizations about securing the continuity of their actions and of their structures. The second aspect concerns the kind of employment contracts that organizations are able to secure to their employees and also questions about the turnover of feminist

professionals. Again, while in Belgium, with certain differences among organizations, long-term working contracts are being able to be secured, in Romania, with few exceptions, feminist professionals are employed on a project base, sometimes cumulating different contracts to ensure a full-time job. Despite these differences, both in Romania and in Belgium, organizations and professionals are concerned about the security of their job or of their organization. In Belgium, concerns over security became acute also following financial cuts and restructuring in subsidies, as part of austerity measures. In general, the point that I want to make is that feminist organizations and feminist professionals working in these organizations are constantly preoccupied about security/insecurity of their own and of their organization that seems to be related to their financial dependence to subsidizing bodies. The debate about autonomy/dependence, freedom/subordination greatly discussed in the NGO-ization literature comes to the forefront again. Starting from this observation of the centrality of security/insecurity of feminists and organizations when discussing financial dependence and building on the work of Isabell Lorey (2015) about the state of insecurity and the government of the precarious and Michel Foucault (2008) on biopolitics, I aim to de-center the debates around feminist NGOs' financial dependence away from its seemingly depoliticizing, demobilizing and other effects, extensively discussed in the literature, and to try to disentangle the hidden mechanisms and instruments of neoliberal domination through precarization and the places and modes of resistance specific to the feminist movement, especially its institutionalized and professionalized part.

The discussion about security/insecurity in relation to financial dependence on donors brings us to some issues raised in the previous chapter about neoliberal bureaucratization. The expansion of neoliberal bureaucratization, meaning the proliferation of norms, rules and procedures but also of informalities was related by Hibou (2015) to concerns about security, transparency, risk-management. Security comes again to the forefront. The adoption of and participation to the creation and implementation of formalities and informalities stemming from the market was possible through concerns over security and transparency. Hence, preoccupations with security/insecurity seem to be potentially manageable by implementing norms, following rules stemming from the market, complying with donors' demands to ensure organizational security and job stability for feminist professionals, being able to avoid to fall in precarity. However, building on Lorey's (2015) argument, today's precarization does not produce just subjects, that fall into precarity as a category of order denoting the distribution of precariousness in relations of inequality, but it also involves governing

through insecurity as a central concern. Precarization involves governing of feminist professionals in NGOs through insecurity over their job and over the survival of their organizations.

Before discussing precarity and precarization within the feminist movement, especially the feminist NGOs sector, in relation to financial dependence on donors, I will make some conceptual clarifications following Lorey's (2015) analysis of the precarious that I use. Lorey (2015) defines the precarious as both the cause and effect of domination and security and distinguishes among three dimensions: precariousness, precarity and governmental precarization. Building on Butler (2009, 13) who understands precariousness as a shared condition of human life, Lorey (2015, 11-12) defines precariousness in its socio-ontological dimension of lives and bodies, inherent to the human and non-human, as a relational condition, existentially shared with others because lives and bodies are social. Precarity refers to the effects of "political, social and legal compensations of a general precariousness", denoting "the striation and distribution of precariousness in relations of inequality, the hierarchization of being – with that accompanies the processes of othering" (Lorey, 2015, 12). It covers naturalized relations of dominations, it involves certain positionings in relation to insecurity, without involving the agency of those positioned or modes of subjectivation (Ibidem). The last dimension of the precarious is covered by the dynamics of governmental precarization that is related to the birth of biopolitics, starting from the eighteenth century, as an attempt to "rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race..." (Foucault, 2008, 317). Governmental precarization is understood as a political-economic instrument, historically related in Western societies to the bourgeois sovereignty, but which in neoliberalism is being normalized (Lorey, 2015). Precarization understood as governmental opens the possibility to inquire about the relationship between "an instrument of governing and conditions of economic exploitation and modes of subjectivation, in their ambivalence between subjugation and self-empowerment" (Idem., 13). Again, we see here, as in the case of neoliberal bureaucratization, the necessary co-production and participation of individuals through self-governing and self-regulation.

Financial dependence functions both as a channel through which governmental precarization is being deployed and as an instrument that helps to hierarchize, classify and distribute precariousness in relations of inequalities – on the one hand showing who is conforming and

who is not, who can be protected and ensured security, away of precarity, and who is not, and on the other hand managing the residual precarious – the others, for whom the state delegates and ensures management through civil society organizations. Through discourses of precarity, feeding the fear and constant focus on insecurity, donors – the state, corporations, international governance institutions consolidate their power by promising feminist organizations who comply with their subsidizing rules and procedures, to relieve them from fears of organizational and job insecurity for their members. This is why, in Belgium, many organizations make the efforts to be accredited to receive structural funding, which is long-term, to be able to ensure organizational and job security for the professionals working in these organizations. However, this is not always the case. During the study day on professionalization, one of the main focus was the scarcity of financial resources among feminist NGOs and organizations long debated contemporary challenges in in their work. Feminists in Belgium, they all deplored, one one hand, the general precarization of women with whom they are working⁵⁴² - something confirmed over and over again throughout the interviews and, on the other hand, the precarization of the NGO sector, both of professionals and organizations themselves⁵⁴³. Feminist professionals in different organizations criticized the new discourses about austerity and the current lack of funds in popular education translating into cuts in subsidies, sometimes compensated through call for projects that fragments even more their financial ensemble, already resembling a mosaic, increasing their financial insecurity⁵⁴⁴. If some organizations accredited through structural funding mechanism are able to ensure job security for their employees, in terms of offering an indeterminate employment contract, this is not the case for all organization. During the study day, one feminist professional mentions about the situation in her organization, where even though recognized through the popular education mechanism, they are still not able to offer secure jobs: “we still work with fixed-term contract, of one year, of six months, with calls for projects, we have training courses, we make calendars and we sell them and it brings us a little. Regarding membership fees, we are all volunteers and why should we pay membership fees.”⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² Participant observation study day “Professionalization! New challenges in times of crisis” organized on the 30th of November 2016, in Brussels

⁵⁴³ C.P. LMSF, Isala, Brussels; D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels; I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels; O.B. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; A.P. – Vie feminine, Brussels; I.V. – Garance, Brussels; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels; E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels; Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussel

⁵⁴⁴ Study day professionalization

⁵⁴⁵ Study day professionalization

Besides the desire to respond to increased demands for feminist self-defense, the promise to alleviate insecurity – of jobs and organizational, by accessing structural funding, contributed to Garance’s decision to professionalize and seek accreditation from popular education.⁵⁴⁶ However, after a few years of accreditation, the organization wrote in its yearly reports that it "was still not able to offer sustainable jobs because their income still depended too much on specific projects" (Garance report 2007). There was uncertainty about the future of the organization and the fear of losing the jobs that were guaranteed through different grants. At the end of 2008, the organization wrote in its annual report:

"We have introduced many grant applications well in advance, before the end of the year, in order to get answers as quickly as possible, and despite these efforts no response was received until the end of the year. Therefore, the year 2009 is uncertain and our jobs are in danger. Once again, we live by our own example, the consequences of a lack of investment in the safety of women through primary prevention."(Garance Report 2009)

Organizational insecurity and job insecurity, as central preoccupations of feminist professionals in NGOs, is being maintained and governed through precarization. Insecurity is ensured by normalizing precarization under neoliberal conditions in the sense of managing a certain threshold and not by preventing precarity; more specifically, by “regulating the minimum of assurance while simultaneously increasing instability” (Lorey, 2015, 2). Thus, associations seek to professionalize to alleviate organizational and jobs insecurity, sometimes searching for structural funding and a certain security might be ensured at the expense of distributing precarity together with a simultaneous increase in instability, through various governmental instruments. The following excerpt from an interview with one member of LMSF illustrates this situation of stability/instability with respects to the financing, specifically from “cooperation and development”:

So the funding that comes from cooperation and development is a structural funding?

Yes that's it.

For what period is it granted?

We do not know; it changes all the time, because the ministers change and so change the rules. So normally here it was for ten years, then now it' is granted for five years and then now we are in a period of austerity and it would be for 3 years, but they gave us the 'yes' for one year (laughs). But in the

⁵⁴⁶ S.B. – Garance, Brussels

beginning it was possible “to put the key on the doormat”. It means it was possible to close down. When we were four I should always be financially ready to eventually give the dismissal documents to our employees. We have lived for years with a lot of financial fragility.⁵⁴⁷

Once again danger, insecurity became central concerns for feminist organizations that regulate their moves and actions. Governmental precarization as a way of governing people affects the way militancy is practiced today in the feminist movement and is tightly related to processes of professionalization and neoliberal bureaucratization. Governance through precarization under neoliberal conditions is characterized by the ambivalence between freedom and domination, self-determination and subjugation, self-government and government by others (Lorey, 2015), just as freedom and constraint, expressed through externalities and informalities characterizes neoliberal bureaucratization. One of neoliberal specificity of governmental precarization is the move towards the middle of society, reconfiguring conceptions of middle class that is being restructured and reorganized and the creation of new middle classes through a push towards entrepreneurship. Two points I want to make here. First, the move towards the middle of society of precarization affects the way militancy is practiced in the sense that feminist activists become more precarious and it becomes more and more difficult to have a job and be a militant in the same time, thus people searched for ways to professionalize their militant work, contributing to the development of a new sector that could offer potential employment. One of the employees of *Vie féminine*, active as well in informal Street groups explains this transformation:

The militant engagement changed. Before if you had people who engaged in an association you did not even need to have standing members, to run the duty office because it was the same ones who did it. Now this does not exist anymore. To do militant work you have to be paid because you need a job, because everyone is precarious. And the relationship to militancy has changed and so within the movement there are less people who contribute through members contributions. For example in Brussels, there are many women who come to our activities but who are not members of *Vie féminine* and there is no obligation. We do not tell them you have to contribute to the association to come. So it changed also who contributes, who participates. And in addition there is this desire for flexibility and I think it should be kept because if we address a precarious public we cannot ask undocumented women who have no money to contribute.(...) I think we have to reflect about this because the public funding will decrease and we know it, so we have to do something.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ X.T. LMSF

⁵⁴⁸ D.P. *Vie féminine*, *Feminime Yeah!*, Brussels

The second point I want to make concerns the functional effect of governmental precarization as regulations that are supposed to protect against existential precariousness that is the hierarchized difference in insecurity stemming from the categorization of shared existential precariousness and defined as precarity (Lorey, 2015). The neoliberal specificity of this process of governmental precarization is that in addition to the liberal ordering of precarity and categorizations of people by differentiating between those worthy of protections and those who are not – marking the Others, is the actualization in individualized governmental precarization of those who are normalized in neoliberalism (Lorey, 2015, 15). This is happening through a shift in the precarious under neoliberalism towards the middle of the society where is normalized (Lorey, 2015). How does this translates within the feminist movement, especially its institutionalized and professionalized part? It translates into a reordering of the distribution of precarity among women, among feminist NGOs professionals, militants in informal groups and women with whom feminist organizations work, as their beneficiaries, their public. It intensifies and multiplies this differentiation in shared precariousness in the move towards the middle of the society. Within the movement it also calls for reflection and review of the privileges and differences between women while searching for the commonality in this shared precariousness. How do feminist NGO professionals, as a new emerging class, position themselves in relations to the women they work with, as sometimes they are more privileged, sometimes less privileged in terms of precarity and in relation to the women they work with. Different categories of women (and men) that did not meet the norm of the free sovereign bourgeois white subject backed up by property were precarized as well as those who threatened this norm (Lorey, 2015, 36-37) as for example feminist activists and professionals constantly do. This creates and maintains a tension that can be productive between feminist professionals in organizations and different categories and groups of women with whom they work. This makes me think about Angela McRobbie's (2011) questioning about precarious work in new creative, entrepreneurial field and the production of gendered neoliberal subjectivity (Larner and Molloy, 2009) discussed as well in the online article "Is passionate work a neoliberal delusion?"⁵⁴⁹. Even though McRobbie refers to young women becoming small-scale cultural and creative entrepreneurs questioning, following Lazzarato (1996) if such actors can be considered as a kind of freelance creative proletariat, I believe this enquiring can be extended to the feminist NGO sector. Can feminist NGO professionals be considered as a new precarious class? McRobbie

⁵⁴⁹ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/is-passionate-work-neoliberal-delusion/> accessed June 21, 2019

concludes that we would not do justice to those doing *truly* disadvantaged jobs, by considering that “graduates in performance art have been proletarianized”⁵⁵⁰. The acceleration, deepening and extension of this process of hierarchizing precarity in inequality through governmental precarization is based under neoliberalism on the individualization of precarization and on individual responsibility under an imaginary of managing one’s own position through self-governing. Feminist activists and professionals while reflecting on the distribution of precarity, about their own privileges and disadvantages compared to other women, might find that beyond these hierarchizations that potentially distance women, to find the potential for resistance in the shared precariousness and disentangle the modes of domination through precarity and precarization exacerbated by a normalization of insecurity discourses and practices. The following excerpt from an interview with one volunteer and then employee of Garance illustrates the tensions and reflections about differences in privileges and precarity in relation to different groups of women with whom she worked while at Garance:

And the difference is also that when I was employed I really had a new audience with which I did not work before. So before being hired I worked with a rather Belgian-Belgian women audience⁵⁵¹ of middle class who was paying to participate to the activities of Garance. And in fact when I was employed I totally discovered another audience and other realities of life and security of women. So that is really a major change for me. And so it really questioned me, it showed me my privileges, it ... While with the group I worked with before I felt at an equal level of privilege see less because I was a single woman, with a child, and that I was unemployed and I was in fact precarious, in fact very precarious regarding financial means and I worked with an audience that for the most part was not. And when I was employed at Garance I was working with a precarious or more precarious public and I was going up the ladder because I was paid, I had a job and I worked a lot with women who were more precarious. I changed my position. So initially I was not in a privileged position and then I became. The contrast completely turned upside down in fact.⁵⁵²

Governing through regulating precarity, thus regulating this hierarchization of the shared existential precariousness in inequalities translates in practice within the institutionalized and professionalized part of the feminist movement in regulating the relationships between different categories of women through neoliberal bureaucratization. More clearly, this hierarchization is produced and reproduced through the implementation of externalities such

⁵⁵⁰ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/is-passionate-work-neoliberal-delusion/> accessed June 21, 2019

⁵⁵² O.B. – Garance, Brussels

as indicators that create categories in which women are boxed or accountability practices from donors, such as the presence lists – more or less detailed. This form of production and reproduction of hierarchies to distribute precariousness in inequality, supporting the process of othering is visible both in Belgium and in Romania, within feminist NGOs. Everybody is ensured a certain form of security, or the promise to alleviate insecurity depending on the maintenance of this distribution of precariousness in relations of inequality. Thus, for example in Romania, reaching the indicators, meeting the projects' objectives, especially for the SOP-HRD projects is a condition for NGO feminist professionals to be able to secure their salaries or to be able to offer the small allowances to the women who participate at their trainings⁵⁵³. More than a form of channelling in social movement's term, this is a practice of hierarchizing and distributing precariousness in relations of inequality among women. In Belgium, this can be illustrated through the partnerships established between employment organizations and NGOs for the accompaniment or training of women who have difficulties in entering the labor market. For example, *Vie Femme* had partnerships with FOREM which is an employment agency in Wallonia who asked *Vie feminine* to give them attendance lists in order to be able to apply sanctions on allowances for people who missed the sessions. However, for *Vie féminine* it was not acceptable. These attempts to regulate through insecurity by distributing precariousness and managing it through control practices, a sort of peer control by women among women using exactly the structural inequalities cross-cutting women as a non-homogenous category, in supporting the distribution of the existential precariousness shared by all women (and people in general). We can see once again here how governance mechanisms in neoliberalism make extensive use of ambivalence: the commonality and difference in the shared precariousness, the freedom and domination, constraint, empowerment and subjugation and so on. But specifically out of this ambivalence the potential for resistance arises. *Vie feminine* refused to rat women out. In relation to this situation, one of the feminists who works for *Vie féminine* explains:

We cannot do this, because we know that if the person arrives late it's because those women have a lot of difficulties, things to manage that fall on their backs and that it is not our role to denounce them; if we try to accompany them, we do this in a trustful and confidence relationship (...) And sometimes there is also funding that we did not get, we had projects that were refused, because there were things that we could not accept.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵³ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

⁵⁵⁴ O.V. *Vie féminine*

In Romania, concerns about insecurity become exacerbated through the project-based-work which, compared to Belgium, implies a short-term logic that functions as a reminder at shorter and shorter intervals, thus more frequently, for feminist NGOs to write proposals to respond to calls for projects, if they want to be able to secure employees' salaries and the continuation of the functioning of the organization, with its activities. Thus, there is a role played by the imaginary of self-sovereignty based on which is created the illusion of being capable of managing the conditions of existential precariousness, of affecting the capacity to ensure security through self-creation and self-governing. Lorey (2015, 26) argues that it is in these moments when people perceive that they can influence the conditions of existential precariousness that biopolitical governmental self-governing appears. Governmental precarization through self-governance will be discussed in relation to burnout and self-regulation in the next section. Here I just want to emphasize that trying to alleviate insecurity, organizational and job insecurity, feminist professionals in NGOs in Romania, constantly search for funds and respond to calls for projects. They might strategically choose to invest in projects that would bring more consistent sums of money within the organization even though the cost might be higher, such as burdening the organizations with bureaucracy, as it is the case of the European funded projects. One member of Filia, explains the constant stress and fear related to the organizational uncertainty and reveals nevertheless the illusory character of being able to manage organizational security:

I'm referring to compromises like this: if we're getting into this project, as we did in S.E.F.A⁵⁵⁵, that is a SOP HRD, there's a bigger salary, but it is loading us with bureaucracy, but we think that if we have a bigger salary, we can bring more money into the organization, and that's some kind of informal policy at the level of the organization, but it's not a sustainable survival method (...) and you think, you're worried, that at one point I super panicked. I am applying for funding and if you have one funding application rejected, two rejected, then three rejected, and you realize that you have nothing and you are asking yourself: ok what are we going to do, because all our work contracts will end then. Ok volunteering but people have to live, eat; maybe one, two months you can eventually resist but feminists need to eat too.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ Ș.E.F.A. - ȘANSE EGALE PENTRU FEMEI ACTIVE

<https://centrulfilia.ro/?causes-category=sefa-sanse-egale-pentru-femei-active> accessed July 14, 2019

⁵⁵⁶ A.F. 2 – Filia, Bucharest

Both in Belgium and in Romania, the fear of insecurity is manifested also at the level of jobs through the fragmentation of working contracts. In Belgium, while the situation varies in function of the organization in that some organizations manage to offer a higher number of stable permanent contracts than others, while also having fixed-term contracts, there is a fragmentation regarding the sources of funding of those contracts. This means that there is a mosaic of funding sources composing sometimes a working contract, some are financed through structural funding, others through contracts for reducing unemployment, subsidized contractual agents⁵⁵⁷ financed by the state or through projects to complement, when necessary⁵⁵⁸. The main idea is that contracts are composed of a mosaic of financing sources. For example, Université des femmes one of the few organizations that manages to offer only permanent contracts has twelve contracts, two and a half financed through popular education and the rest are covered by different state agencies and funds such as Maribel Social Funds whose aim is to create additional jobs, reduce the hardship of work and improve the quality of services⁵⁵⁹. One employee of Université des femmes who previously worked at La Maison Plurielle, an NGO working in the area of violence against women, explains that during her work in this last association there was a very precarious equilibrium to ensure organizational stability including of employment. They had to play with employment assistance allowance on one side, optional grants on the other, calls for projects from another, spending a lot of time to look for other sources of funding and worrying because they did not know how they will be paid the following month⁵⁶⁰. This fragmentation of the working contracts that are ensured by a mosaic of subsidies sometimes amplifies job insecurity for feminist professionals. One volunteer and member of the board of directors at Garance explains how the fragmentation of the sources of funding ensuring employment contracts might intensify this feeling of insecurity:

At Garance all the money they receive goes into administrative stuff. We have already talked but you do not realize how much it weights. I say it because I see it. I see it and I realize. It is necessary to justify and it is very complicated. Because they are paid one fifth of this, two fifths of that, one fifth from this fund and this is a salary. Yes but in the three fifths, you have one fifth temporary, one fifth permanent, it is super complicated. And that puts women in insecurity. I'm not paid. The day I do not

⁵⁵⁷ ACS – Agents contractuels subventionnés

⁵⁵⁸ D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels; I.V. – Garance, Brussels; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; Y.S. Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS)

⁵⁵⁹ <https://www.apefasbl.org/les-fonds-maribel-emploi> , accessed June 24, 2019

D.H.- Université des femmes, Brussels

⁵⁶⁰ E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels

like it, I'll leave. But the one who has two fifths guaranteed from this, one fifth guaranteed for six months she senses it, we feel it, the body lives it. And then after that we have to continue the project. But that I do not agree too much. This is not said yet openly. But you see as, in the teaching that we continue the project to keep the salary.⁵⁶¹

In Romania, as professionalized feminist organizations work on a project basis, short term oriented or, at best, medium term focused, employees are usually contracted for a few months, a year, exceptionally two years. Feminist organizations often try to combine and enchain different contracts from different projects in order to be able to offer more continuous employment to women activists who have been employed primarily with a short-term contract. Sometimes organizations manage to do it and sometimes not. Organizations manage to keep some people and are forced to let others leave. The turnover in feminist organizations in Romania is high. If the presidency or management are more or less stable, the other employees change quite often. Activists and staff working on short-term projects are under heavy pressure. There is also a constant tension resented by feminist activists between acknowledging the limited nature of the working and the desire to continue to be actively involved in the feminist movement, between working for women's emancipation and just having a job. Sometimes they continue to work for the organizations as volunteers, hoping that they will have another contract, once other projects have been accepted and will warrant additional funding. This fragmentation translates into the fact that a full-time employment is ensured by cumulating different projects, that might also mean different job positions, supporting the polyvalence of work feminist professionals discussed previously discussed in relation to professionalization:

I had a beginner position, as a project assistant. But it soon turned out that it was not only project assistant, that from a contract I changed to work under four contracts on four projects at the same time and in a few months I passed to the expert level. It was a quick acceleration.

But was the employment contract was based on the project?

Yes, depending on the project. Labor standards varied according to the project, two hours a day, three hours a day; you could accumulate up to twelve hours a day. We had four contracts of employment for four different projects.⁵⁶²

There is always this ambivalence in the process of governmental precarization, between the promise of security for organizations who comply, away from fears or organizational or job

⁵⁶¹ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁶² A.S. – CPE, Bucharest

insecurities and a concomitant instability, between regulating the minimum guarantee of security while simultaneously increasing uncertainty (Lorey, 2015, 2). This fragmentation, based on short-term contracts and precarious working conditions, but also on different temporalities, with one person coming for a project, another one going, increases turnover and contributes in neoliberalism to the individualization of precarization while normalizing it in the move to the middle and maintaining nevertheless the hierarchizing distribution of precariousness. While in Belgium, feminist organization struggle and some of them manage to offer permanent contracts and longer-term employment compared to Romania, we can observe the similar trend of fragmentation of subsidies supporting the working contracts, specific to neoliberal context. This individualization and fragmentation contributes to eroding the capacities for collective action and organization regarding labour protection. In Romania, the trend seems to be accelerated and job insecurity, short-term contracts are widely accepted as a characteristic of the NGO work and a risk that feminist professionals assume when entering this sector:

What I know is that I'm working on the project basis, thus for a limited period and that one really works in function of the projects. I know that very soon there will come a period when there won't be projects anymore or very few and I realize that I will eventually have to look for another job. There's a risk when you work in an NGO, it's a risk you assume.⁵⁶³

C. Precarization, self-governing and burnout

In her theory about governmental precarization under neoliberal conditions, Lorey (2015) develops the argument of the double ambivalence of governmentality that is, on the one hand, being governed by others and governing oneself, but also within the biopolitical governmental self-governing, between subjugation and freedom, regulation and empowerment that should be understood as simultaneous mechanisms. Governing through insecurity started from the eighteenth century as a liberal political and economic mode of governing based on liberalism that “turns into a mechanism continually having to arbitrate between the freedom and security of individuals by reference to this notion of danger” (Foucault, 2008, 66). The mechanism of governmental precarization as a mode of governing through insecurity, as a liberal mode of governing was based on the public/private division and on the gender specific division of labour that produced and reproduced in turn the

⁵⁶³ M.T. – CPE, Bucharest

autonomy/dependence separation. Lorey (2015) argues that this contributed to the hierarchization and distribution of precariousness based on structural inequalities and discriminations, that created and marked the Others, being thus a heteronormative, gendered and racialized process. Those who were entitled to autonomy, were the white heterosexual males, that the welfare state seek to protect from insecurity. Why is this important? Because as Lorey (2015) argues in neoliberalism, while retaining these striating and hierarchizing mechanisms, governmental precarization in neoliberalism does not solely repose through marking the others. In its move towards the middle, it normalizes and individualizes precarization a process in which the precarious are isolated and individualized, often working on short-term jobs in precarious conditions of employment (Lorey, 2015, 5-6, Lorey, 2006). In this process of normalization and individualization, the role of participation of the individual in the process of self-governing and self-creation becomes crucial and comes to the forefront in neoliberalism through self-responsibility mechanisms, individual risk management under the mirage of the possibility of autonomy.

What does this mean for the feminist movement in this process of NGO-ization, under the so-called condition of financial dependence of feminist organizations? While in the previous section I focused on the aspect of governing by others and external mechanisms and pressure that translated into organizational and job insecurity within the NGO-ized part of the feminist movement, in this section I will concentrate on the role of self-regulation and self-governing and the way it translates both at individual and organizational level. However, I would like first to emphasize that in the move of governmental precarization towards the middle of the society, incorporating the NGO sector, valuing entrepreneurial skills of feminist professionals for job creation, the still functioning hierarchizing mechanisms based on structural inequalities do not make at all a new homogenous class of feminists working in the NGO sector, but one structured by class and ethnic divisions.

In this section I would like to analyze the way self-governing as constitutive part of the governmental precarization translates within the feminist NGO sectors, both at individual and organizational level, mediated by financial dependence. The interlink between neoliberal governing instruments such as governmental precarization and neoliberal bureaucratization and feminist activists motivation to engage within the movement and to work for social change (often in a romanticized form) contribute even more in the social movements sector to dilute the boundaries between work and private life and give rise both to dynamics of

empowerment and freedom through collective care and self-care but also of self-precarizations, including sometimes auto-exploitation, exploitation and competition within feminist movement organizations. Conditions of financial resources that are more and more fragmented, more and more scarce and which give rise to concerns about organizational insecurity and job insecurity for feminist professionals coupled with the political feminist engagement as an ideal, for the cause, for the sake of contributing to ameliorate women's lives and not as a profession, create certain tensions, relevant for the dynamics of self-governing and self-creation within feminist organizations. Being engaged for the cause, because one believes in it and earning money while doing it, through professionalization is sometimes resented as a tension, as taking advantage of a social injustice by earning money while fighting against it and sometimes is resented as a great opportunity, comparable to a certain extent to the entrepreneurs in creative industries that work for passion. In both senses, when feminist engagement as professional work in feminist organizations, serves as a self-regulation mechanism for governmental precarization in neoliberal context. At least two things are at stake here. First a long lived devaluation and non-recognition of women's work, historically, politically and economically anchored relegated to the domestic sphere to care and reproductive work that served to support the autonomy of the male breadwinner in the development of capitalism (Federici, 2004). Second, an ideal, romanticized vision of political engagement, outside any economic mechanism, a political work idealized as non-work, non-profit which under neoliberalism becomes contradictory, almost impossible in conditions of more and more precarious working conditions. Related to this second point, volunteer work in conditions of professionalization of the civil society sector in general, and of the feminist movement in particular, becomes a technique of self-government, self-precarization, of creation of one self by devoting to one's ideal of contributing to social change. In conditions of financial dependence and scarce financial resources, feminist professionals in organizations try to do a lot with few money, to use the expression of one interviewee from ALEG, in Sibiu⁵⁶⁴. They feel the pressure to be constantly creative and innovative, to be able to do the many things considered necessary with few resources and to be able to secure future funding. There is a spillover effect from (political) work over the private that is characteristic both to NGO-ized feminist groups and Street feminist groups that enhance the chances of burnout, together with other factors, internal and external to the movement. What is specific to the process of NGO-ization, especially with its dimensions of professionalization and

⁵⁶⁴ P.P. – ALEG, Sibiu

neoliberal bureaucratization, in the context of financial dependence used as a channel for governmental precarization, is that feminist professionals, especially those in leadership positions, not only feel the pressure of insecurity for themselves and for the organization, but also for the people employed and to counter this they are in an almost never-ending endurance run to secure complementary funding that would ensure salaries. The workload pressure in conditions of scarce financial resources and financial dependence is enhanced by the professional-militant tension, doing your job and doing more than your job because one is engaging for a political cause, out of commitment for social change, that contributes to burn-outs within the feminist movement.

Both in Belgium and in Romania, feminist professionals in NGOs feel proud to do a job that is meaningful for them and considered to be part of their identity. But why would work as feminist professionals in NGOs or of feminist militants be more a part of one's own identity than any other job part of someone's identity? It seems that the structural sexist and racist oppressions suffered by those involved in the movement, including those who work in professional organizations, and which affect so many aspects of the daily reality of those subjugated and the collectivization of efforts to fight against these oppressions creates the possibilities of self-creation and liberation from subjugation while working with others for a collective emancipation. The professionalization of parts of the movement, in the NGO sector coupled with financial dependence, the scarcity and fragmentation of funds, commitment to individual and collective emancipation gives the possibility in neoliberal context of self-government and self-precarization as this commitment serves both as internal and external legitimation for self-exploitation and exploitation, together with blurring the boundaries between work and private life. This blurring of boundaries between work and private life, more specifically the spillover of work in other areas of one's life is not specific to the feminist movement or the NGO sector. In neoliberalism this serves for self-precarization of other categories of people who do passionate work (Lorey, 2006; McRobbie, 2011). What is specific here is that this commitment for individual and collective liberation from structural oppressions works to legitimate the blurring of these boundaries and the hard work activists do that sometimes transform into exploitation and self-exploitation. Many feminist professionals mention that is not a healthy work place since it is impossible for them to go home after work and leave the things that they work on behind, because the injustices that

they witness for them and for others, affect their life and the life of others and question them permanently⁵⁶⁵.

I'm afraid to say some nonsense. But I want to tell you that sometimes I thought why didn't I do a secretary or a job, or another job super simple where I would not have been as involved as I am. It's true when there is something that goes wrong you are so involved that everything touches you. You're not like a dentist. You cannot tell yourself in the evening: I finished my work-day and I go to sleep. There are things that follow you and that are chasing you all your life and sometimes it's hard because you think it would be easier to do something that does not affect you but at the same time I'm so happy not having done otherwise, because that's what makes me now, every day when I arrive at work, I'm happy to be there. I am really happy. Because I tell myself that I'm doing a job but I'm doing something that I love, that I respect and what I'm doing now I would be proud at the end of my life to tell myself that I did all that and that I did not just look at society and tell myself that I do not agree with it - I'm really trying to change it.

Beyond what might be potentially understood and criticized as a hierarchized value of work, or a paternalistic attitude in an endeavor to help others, this is surely also a process of self-creation and self-help and the two are interrelated and the boundaries are very fragile as to what is collective emancipation and equitable relations within the movement and outside, in an endeavor of care of oneself together with others in this shared subjugation and shared existential precariousness that is at the same time something that is common and that differentiates one from the others. Feminist activists constantly reflect about this issue of self-creation in relation to their work and the way this translates into their relationship in the work with others, about the ways they can make the work with others for emancipation be based on equitable relations, where there is a risk for hierarchical and paternalistic relationships⁵⁶⁶.

What I want to emphasize here is that activists in feminist NGOs, especially those in leading positions, pass great amount of time in between their activities with women, bureaucratic paperwork and search for funds to ensure the security of jobs for the employees and in conditions of scarce and fragmented funding, funding that fluctuates or diminishes, translates into an unbalance between the capacity of work employees can deliver and the resources at

⁵⁶⁵ A.F. 1 - Filia, Bucharest; E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels; R.S. – Université des femmes, Brussels; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

⁵⁶⁶ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; C.L.2- Dysnomia, Bucharest; O – Dysnomia, Bucharest; C.B. – Filia, Bucharest; O.B. – Garance, Brussels; I.I. - Vie féminine, Maison Mosaïque, Brussels

disposal. One interviewee, explains this situation from her experience as a coordinator of Maison Plurielle in Charleroi:

When I was working there was a half-time administrative assistant, a half-time facilitator, a three fourths social worker to take care of the socio-professional insertion, a full time psychologist and I full-time coordinator. We were given as a mission to do - be careful, information and awareness, the training of doctors, police personnel, a little bit of everyone, social workers obviously, the reception and monitoring in the short and medium term of the victims - needless to say that this was already a lot. And in addition to this awareness campaigns, so posters and so on. While we were not even five, with a small budget, we were not paid for our activities. So it was not possible because in addition I spent my time trying to find ways to survive because the budget envelopes were too small and there is a game that is played at the level of subsidy settlement that makes that you never receive all the money you are entitled to because we will tell you the proofs did not correspond to the rules.⁵⁶⁷

While some organizations try to be attentive towards the different possibilities and capacities for to over-work of some of the employees, the limits are very fragile and commitment to the cause serve both for self and for the others to work more than the contract, to work more than one feels she can. Both in Belgium and in Romania it seems difficult for those working in feminist organizations to draw the boundaries regarding the amount of over-work that one can do and also to express these difficulties within the organization, to ask for help or discuss it collectively⁵⁶⁸. Sometimes there is a peer pressure as well to over-work, beyond one's possibilities. Sometimes this stems from underlying expectations of persons in leadership positions who work very much⁵⁶⁹, sometimes from scarce resources and insecurities regarding one's work that put additional pressure to people to work more, prove themselves, sometimes entailing even competition dynamics⁵⁷⁰. One interviewee from Filia told me about one of her colleagues that "put all her energy in the work and waiting for everyone to do that" and while she felt exhausted she could not say no out of commitment and out of the pressure she resented⁵⁷¹. She adds that "X has been pushing me a lot to produce, to read, to do, to do. I could not keep up, so I was very exhausted and drained and I was trying to keep, I was running all the time. And she had these expectations from everyone to work like this"⁵⁷². In a

⁵⁶⁷ E.A. – Université des femmes, Brussels

⁵⁶⁸ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; O.B. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; D.P. Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah!, Brussels; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels; I.V. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest; A.V. 2 – ALEG, Sibiu

⁵⁶⁹ I.V. – Garance, Brussels; M.S. – Garance, Brussels; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

⁵⁷⁰ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

⁵⁷¹ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

⁵⁷² C.T. – Filia, Bucharest

similar manner, one employee from Garance explained that she resented similarly, different rhythms and availabilities on the one hand from employees and on the other hand from volunteers, especially compared to the leader of the organization who gave a lot of her time and her life to the organization⁵⁷³, an aspect raised by other colleagues as well⁵⁷⁴. She resented from the beginning that the missions proposed were over-ambitious and they were related to constraints coming from popular education that subsidized their activities and this caused tensions between paid and non-paid staff⁵⁷⁵. Beyond the heavy working pace to which one tries to adapt, the structure in place that adopts from the corporate culture does not encourage to express one's limits regarding work rhythms that are too intense, while paradoxically this is exactly at the basis of self-defense practice, to be responsible and express your own limits⁵⁷⁶.

Moreover, in Romania, the project-based work, short time affects the work dynamics and opens even more the possibility for over-work, exploitation and self-exploitation, on the one hand out of commitment and on the other hand hoping to ensure one's possibility to continue working in the organization, to do feminist work, the cause to which activists devote while being paid. One employee and leading figure of ALEG explains that many people working through projects accept to work beyond the limits of the contract and this helps the organization to survive:

The project dynamics guides very much staff dynamics. And with what we are very luck is that people are willing to work a lot over the contract, beyond the contract's time limits and beyond the norm in the contract, most of them. But this on the long-run is not ok and you cannot have this claim from any new employee for a certain period – as if yes he will work with us forever. After all, he or she has a firm responsibility for what's in the contract, and people are forced when the contract ends to find something else. And he continues to help us but in his spare time.

Similarly, for many feminists working in professionalized organizations, volunteering represents another contradiction. While recognizing that the volunteer work is indispensable to keep on going with the activities of the organizations, many do not find it fair. One employee and then volunteer from Garance explains that while differentiating between militants outside professionalized structures that do volunteer work and volunteers in

⁵⁷³ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁷⁴ I.V. – Garance, Brussels; M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁷⁵ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁷⁶ M.S. – Garance, Brussels

professional organizations, she finds it unfair that she is paid as an employee while one of her colleagues doing the same work as a volunteer, is not paid⁵⁷⁷. To her it seems impossible to do otherwise than through volunteering and self-exploitation when depending on external scarce funding⁵⁷⁸. While recognizing the hard work, the over-work that the leader of the organization is doing as well as trying to offer correct employment conditions, many employees and volunteers of Garance resent this tension of overwork that seems for some to be inherent to the process of NGO-ization of the movement, and of the NGO world:

It's true that Garance makes great efforts to hire people in a fair manner, but the problem is that we depend so much on external financing that it is quite impossible sometimes.

X who is director pff... she is employed with a three fifths time contract while she does twice a full time job. This is self-exploitation. So I think that unfortunately it is not possible to do otherwise in the associative world. But I also believe that if there is other than the precarious work it is not possible to do otherwise...⁵⁷⁹

In Romania, the project-based work and the job insecurity adds to the pressure to overwork, to prove oneself as devoted and available to do much more than what the contract requires, for the cause, hoping to have the working contract renewed with a new project, when there is the possibility. For example, at CPE there was a moment when many projects finished, employees received some evaluations questionnaires, and some of them were asked for what salary are willing to continue working. One of the interviewees working at CPE tells me about what she calls the martyrdom culture within the organization, the pressure to stay late at work and in the context of the projects that were ending with the fear of not knowing if you can continue working there or not⁵⁸⁰. In this period, one of her colleagues did not have her contract renewed⁵⁸¹.

This tension and juggling between feminist activism and financial dependence on donors that translate into continuous efforts to secure funds for the organizations including salaries for staff, but also to respond to the burdensome bureaucratic demands that accompany these funds and the polyvalence of tasks being needed, was associated by activists with an increase

⁵⁷⁷ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁷⁸ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁷⁹ I.V. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁸⁰ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

⁵⁸¹ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

in burnouts within the feminist movement⁵⁸². While burnout has been studied in relations to various professions, within the social movements field, scholars have also been concerned with burnout among activists. Activist burnout has been discussed in relation to different social movements such as racial justice movements (Gorski and Erakat, 2019), animal rights activism (Gorski, Lopresti-Goodman, Rising, 2018), women's rights activism (Barry and Dordevic 2007; Bernal 2006), environmental activism (Kovan and Dirkx, 2006) among others. Scholars have distinguished between different categories of causes for activist burnout: (a) internal, associated with high levels of commitment, including emotional and a sense of responsibility; (b) external, concerning retaliation repercussions related to challenging power structures (including corporate, legislative) and structural injustices; (c) within-movement causes, referring to internal conflicts among activists, including social movement organizations' leaders (Gorski and Erakat, 2019; Gorski, Lopresti-Goodman, Rising, 2018).

In Belgium and in Romania, within movement causes, related to conflicts among activists due to power relations and hierarchies were mentioned to cause a stressful environment and led certain activists to temporary or more permanent demobilization⁵⁸³. High commitment and a sense of responsibility together with the incapacity sometimes to solve specific problems and cases related to injustices to women with whom feminist activists work, were also mentioned as factors that increase the levels of stress by feminist activists⁵⁸⁴. Here, I would like to focus on the external causes associated to financial dependence on donors, the state, international or corporate institutions that are in the same time the target of feminist criticism and fight. It seems however that the internal, external and within movement factors are interrelated. The high levels of commitment and devotion to the feminist cause are related to internal conflicts and power relations and the pressure stemming from financial dependency meaning scarce resources and funding fragmentation, job and organizational insecurity and heavy work load for bureaucratic activities. Precarization and self-

⁵⁸² L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels; Study day professionalization;

⁵⁸³ TM Vie feminine, Brussels; O.B. – Garance, Brussels; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; M.D. – Filia, Bucharest; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

⁵⁸⁴ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest; P.H. – LMSF, Brussels; R.T. – Filia, Bucharest; C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; S.H. – Isala, Brussels

precarization seem acceptable because of the high commitment to the cause and of the sense of responsibility.

What stems out from this research is that there is still a law of silence, a kind of ostrich policy within the feminist movement regarding burnouts, out of a fear of accusations of lack of solidarity or commitment. While in Romania this seems to be more the case, in Belgium however there were a few initiatives to talk more openly about this. This was the case during the study day on professionalization at which feminist professionals and activists participated. During one of the workshops, one of the participants talks about an increase in the frequency of burnout within the feminist movement:

I think of something particular that occurs in today's feminist movement. It shocks me all the more because it is the feminist movement. This specific thing is the frequency of burn-outs which is also linked to the fact that we are constantly looking for funding, so there is an enormous pressure on employees and maybe what we see as practice in the feminist movement is that no one takes care of each other.”

Continuing the discussion, other feminist activists intervened and added to the enormous time they spend to search for funds and the job insecurity for them and for colleagues in the organization, the versatility and polyvalence of the job they are doing. Contrary to some organizations that manage to offer stable employment and have no turnover such as Université des femmes, during the study many feminist professionals for example from La voix des femmes, mentioned high turnover rates related to diminution of financial resources and the fragmentation of subsidies and burnout of activists related to workload pressure, constant search for funds and job insecurity. In Romania, project-based work adds to an increase in turnover rates and a dynamic of pressure within the organizations, as it was the case for example at CPE. The organization expanded and had a period with many projects and hired many new people and when the projects ended, some of the employees were insecure about their job as they did not know if additional funds will be secured and if they will be able to continue to work in the organization⁵⁸⁵. Eventually, most of the people remained, but they had their salaries reduced⁵⁸⁶. This is similar to the situation in Belgium in some organizations that had their funds reduced, but wanted to keep most of staff which translated in a heavy workload for those employed, with fewer resources:

⁵⁸⁵ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

⁵⁸⁶ M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest

I do not know how I realized there is this epidemic of burnout in the feminist milieu. It happened from the moment our subsidies began to decrease more and more, everywhere, at Sophia in particular and suddenly we had to ask the employees to run more and more after subsidies. We have decreasing the resources in the feminist milieu but we do not want to reduce the staff because it is our responsibility as an employer to keep as many staff blah blah blah...

But suddenly we will ask staff exist to work three times more.⁵⁸⁷

Two things I want to clarify. On the one hand, in conditions of financial scarcity of a sector that professionalized there is a great workload pressure, increased amount of time devoted to bureaucratic demands and search for fund and the polyvalence of jobs. On the other hand, there is a dynamic of competition and martyrdom that seems to be affected by these insecurity, financial scarcity in which employees in feminist organizations are asked to or try to do a lot with few resources. Sometimes the employees seem to be indispensable to the organization, but in the same time they do not do enough⁵⁸⁸. The limits between private life and work become sometimes more and more blurred and people work late, they receive phone calls from work late at night or are asked to do work during the weekend⁵⁸⁹. During the fieldwork in Belgium, some feminists left their organizations because of burnout. Smaller organizations such as Garance seemed to be able to secure support for those who took some time off because of burnout⁵⁹⁰. Bigger organizations, such as Vie féminine also had several employees who left the organization due to burnout. However, while financial insecurity seems to add to the pressure some employees resent, the causes of burnout seem to be related also to dynamics of competition or power relations and hierarchical functioning. One of the former employees of Vie féminine, decided to talk about the issue through a slam conference entitled “La magie du burnout”⁵⁹¹. One interviewee, who assisted at the conference shares here reflections about the issue:

I listened to Lisette Lombé's poetry slam conference which made me think a lot because she read a lot of texts at the end of different employees of Vie féminine; I think that it marked her a lot. She thought that what she was experiencing at Vie féminine as burnout was a local issue, related to the people she

⁵⁸⁷ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

⁵⁸⁸ C.T. – Filia, Bucharest; M.D. – Filia, Bucharest; L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

⁵⁸⁹ L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest; M.M. 2 – CPE, Bucharest;

⁵⁹⁰ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁹¹ <https://www.librairiedialogues.fr/livre/13608023-la-magie-du-burn-out-un-recit-autobiographique--lisette-lombe-image-publique-editions> accessed July 14, 2019

was working directly with, and then realized that it was like that everywhere in Vie feminine and that there was burnouts everywhere.

But what shocks me more is the law of silence that is there.

We cannot really talk about it. As soon as we speak we are accused of lack of sorority and we are told...in fact the feminist movement said in the 70's the personal is political. We must break this law of silence that says that what happens behind the closed doors must stay there, this law what happens in family stays in family and suddenly we have no opportunity to talk about the violence that takes place in the institutionalized feminism. But I believe in more alternative environments there is also violence but there is a tradition to talk about it and sometimes it gets to impossible dynamics but this tradition is there and in the institutionalized environment we are not supposed to talk about it, we cannot say bad things about other organizations.

As the issue of insecurity and precarization affects to a great extent the dynamics within organizations and the well-being of those within, feminist activists try as well to provide care and support within the movement and to reflect about the ways provide support and care among activists. Breaking with a politics of silence about burnout, the precarious and violence within the movement would be possible only when naming these problems would be seen as a desperate cry of help and a call for sorority and solidarity out of a shared precariousness among everyone rather than on the contrary, a way of breaking the movement's, organizations or groups collective identity and sorority. In neoliberal context, this governmental precarization, self-government and self-precarization through self-responsabilization to create oneself play role not just in supporting or reproducing domination but also in empowering, liberating, emancipating at the same time. Recognizing this ambivalence of techniques of governing in neoliberalism, including governmental precarization, means not just to reveal the domination and subjugation mechanisms, that are important to recognize in their external dimension of governing by others but also the internal of self-governing, from within the movement, within organizations, thus breaking the ostrich policy, but also revealing the contradictions, the points of resistance, emancipation and liberation. In recognizing this shared existential precariousness that Butler (2009) and Lorey (2015) were talking about, care within the movement, among feminists and activists in all their differences could be the radical point of resistance and the common ground for liberation. Care co-exists with workload pressure and burnout and precarization, hierarchies and power relations. While hearing more and more about burnout within the feminist movement, in different organizations, one employee of Sophia explains that in her organization the limits of work were always respected and employees were encouraged to

count very well their working hours and there was a space to discuss when things were not working well:

There are always people for whom it does not work so well, but overall Sophia was extremely well surrounded, with the possibility to talk about it, with respect to all that.

It's not always easy, but suddenly I always felt very far from these problems (burnout).

Then we work part time. I have always heard at Sophia: count your hours well, recover your overtime, avoid overtime, be realistic about what you can do in order not to have everything to recover afterwards. You have been given a part time and suddenly if you cannot do an infinite work it's normal and it does not matter but you have to be able to say it, to evaluate your work well.

So here we are very well supervised.⁵⁹²

While buried with a lot of work, bureaucratic demands, with pressure from the versatility of their job, financial insecurity, organizations try find time to take care of each other. When the one of Garance's employees took a break because she was in burnout the team supported her, sent her home, shared her work among other employees of the organization⁵⁹³. While recognizing that it is very difficult to do this as it puts additional pressure on other employees as well, the organization is reflecting about ways of taking care of each other in a more sustainable manner⁵⁹⁴. LMSF created K-Fem as a space were they could meet, share and discuss among themselves, as a way to release pressure from work and to find ways to continue their struggle while caring about each other in a hostile environment:

What is important for us is to be attentive towards the outside and at the same time when we are a unhappy and miserable we created this space, the K-Fem to be able to speak, so this is it, to try to dream, to seek in the culture, to seek in the connection and contact with others. It an utopia, feminism is still the utopia.

Often it is true that we must calm young people who say it is not possible, we must get there. But you know it's more than twenty centuries of patriarchal system it is not in two generations, three generations that things change. It's hard to realize that anti-sexism, anti-racism are very long-term struggles.⁵⁹⁵

III. Conclusions

⁵⁹² L.S. - Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels

⁵⁹³ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁹⁴ M.M. – Garance, Brussels

⁵⁹⁵ P.H. – LMSF, Brussels

This chapter showed the interrelationship between two instruments of governing in today's neoliberal context: neoliberal bureaucratization and governmental precarization, deployed through the channel of financial dependence on donors of the feminist movement organizations. Building on Hibou (2015) theory about neoliberal bureaucratization and Lorey's (2015) theory about governmental precarization I showed how these instruments of governing are interrelated and deployed in the organized feminist sector. The fragmentation and diminution of subsidies within the institutionalized and professionalized part of the feminist movement creates insecurity for organizations and their employees. Financial insecurity becomes a central preoccupation among feminist organizations that constantly juggle between activism, searching for funds, complying with the bureaucratic norms and procedures from donors. Feminist organizations hope to alleviate jobs and organizational insecurity by acquiring funds. The relationship between donors and organizations becomes an exchange relationship: money for projects, programs and services. One of the costs of this transaction that organizations pay is the import of norms and practices stemming from the private management as their *modus operandi* that allow for the implementation of accountability mechanisms that allow for their activities, to be traced, monitored, evaluated. With the fragmentation of subsidies, accountability mechanisms multiply and so does the bureaucratic work related to accountancy. This leads to a process of channeling through time misappropriation but also to a loosening of the reactive capacity because organizations use many of their resources for predictable, well-planned actions and the bureaucratic activities related to the accountability towards donors, through projects and that leaves fewer resources available for non-predictable and reactive types of action.

But governing through insecurity goes beyond ensuring the domination of neoliberal bureaucratization resulting in channeling through time misappropriation through the fragmentation of subsidies and multiplication of accountability mechanisms. Financial dependence functions both as a channel through which governmental precarization is being deployed and as an instrument that helps to hierarchize, classify and distribute precariousness in relations of inequalities – on the one hand showing who is conforming and who is not, who can be protected and ensured security, away of precarity, and who is not, and on the other hand managing the residual precarious – the others, for whom the state delegates and ensures management through civil society organizations. Through discourses of precarity, feeding the fear and constant focus on insecurity, donors – the state, corporations, international governance institutions consolidate their power by promising feminist organizations who

comply with their subsidizing rules and procedures, to relieve them from fears of organizational and job insecurity for their members. This translates into a reordering of the distribution of precarity among women, among feminist NGOs professionals, militants in informal groups and women with whom feminist organizations work, as their beneficiaries. It intensifies and multiplies this differentiation in shared precariousness in the move of governmental precarization towards the middle of the society. This hierarchization is produced and reproduced through the implementation of externalities such as indicators that create categories in which women are boxed or accountability practices from donors, thus tightly related to neoliberal bureaucratization.

Moreover, in its move towards the middle of the society, as governmental precarization is normalized and individualized feminist professionals working in NGOs. In Belgium contracts are ensured through a mosaic of subsidies in a constant challenge for organizations to offer secure and decent employment conditions. In Romania, as professionalized feminist organizations work on a project basis, short term oriented or, at best, medium term focused, employees are usually contracted for a few months, a year, exceptionally two years. Feminist organizations often try to combine and enchain different contracts from different projects in order to be able to offer more continuous employment to women activists who have been employed primarily with a short-term contract. With financial insecurity over their jobs and scarce financial resources, feminist professionals face a heavy workload. High commitment to the cause favors also a process of self-precarization in which activists work more than the contract, trying to do a lot with few resources. Being engaged for the cause and earning money out of it is sometimes resented as a tension, as taking advantage of a social injustice by earning money while fighting against it and sometimes is resented as an opportunity in which political engagement becomes a place of work. In both senses, when feminist engagement as professional work in feminist organizations, serves as a self-regulation mechanism for governmental precarization in neoliberal context. This is based on the one hand to a long-term devaluation and non-recognition of women's work, historically, politically and economically and on the other hand on a romanticized vision of political engagement, outside any economic mechanism, a political work idealized as non-work, non-profit which under neoliberalism becomes contradictory, almost impossible in conditions of more and more precarious working conditions. Related to this last point, volunteer work in conditions of professionalization of parts of the feminist movement becomes a technique of

self-government, self-precarization, of creation of one self by devoting to one's ideal of contributing to social change.

The workload pressure in conditions of scarce financial resources and financial dependence, enhanced by the professional-militant tension, between job and commitment for social change, blurs the lines between work and private life of many activists contributing to burn-outs within the feminist movement. While a politics of silence predominates within the movement out of fears of backlash, activists start to break this law of silence and speak out more and more, especially in Belgium. A politics of care among activists and within feminist organizations becomes a response to precarization, a potential for liberation and of radical transformative politics starting from within.

Conclusions

NGO-ization represents a specific form of neoliberal governmentality stemming from the formalized encounter between state, the market and civil society. In the case of feminist activism, NGO-ization is built upon recent decades transformations of the feminist movement, namely its institutionalization and professionalization and is shaped by processes of neoliberal bureaucratization and governmental precarization as technologies of domination. The NGO-ization of the feminist movement as a specific mode of governance is co-produced through the interaction between feminist movement actors, professional organizations and informal groups, the state, public or private donors and institutions of

international governance. Within the NGO-ization literature, contemporary feminist movement became the target of normative evaluations and processes of labelling, in which today's feminist movement as NGO-ized translated into a movement that is demobilized, depoliticized, co-opted, tributary to donors. Following social movement's literature, scholars attributed co-optation and subsequent demobilization and depoliticization to the process of institutionalization of social movements. Within the NGO-ization literature, scholars attributed demobilization to professionalization as a process that transformed activism into a nine-to-five job. In the same body of literature, depoliticization was attributed to financial dependence on donors that accompanies professionalization and contributes to solving social issues through technical and rational instruments – a form of management of social problems considered objective and rational with the cost of losing a critical and political edge. Assessments regarding the autonomy versus dependence of the feminist movement and the diagnosis of feminism as capitalism's handmaiden occupied a central place in the NGO-ization debates. Starting from these critiques and scholarly debates and contributions, I tried to disentangle the processes associated with the NGO-ization of the feminist movement and to provide an account of the NGO-ization in today's neoliberal context, that goes beyond these labels and diagnosis. Why did I thought necessary to go beyond? While it seemed to me that the NGO form represents one of the main modes of organizing in today's contemporary feminist movement, in many countries around the world, it coexists with other forms of organization such as informal groups and collectives, that might be less visible in the public space, due to different tactics and strategies or to the social location of their members. Moreover, while certain protest actions seemed to have been normalized, routinized, coexisting with lobby and advocacy strategies, spontaneous mobilizations also took place and that seemed to challenge the lack of reactive capacity.

The institutionalization of the feminist movement in Belgium and in Romania took slightly different paths, according to various elements of the political and discursive opportunity structure in each country, but under the influence of the emerging global gender regime through the organization of international conferences for women and the adoption of various political and legal instruments for the protection of women's rights and for supporting advances with respects to gender equality. In both cases institutionalization translated into the creation of governmental bodies for gender equality and non-discrimination that opened the possibility for feminist organizations to collaborate and participate in official politics and the establishment of gender studies at the university, either in research centres or master degree

programs. This was understood as part of a process of inclusion and marginalization that accompanies the institutionalization of social movements and that translates into a selection of activists and organizations between those who adhere to collaboration with politicians and the ruling bodies through official channels and those who refuse and are excluded from the decision making process. The process of inclusion, in Belgium as well as in Romania, has been done in two ways: on the one hand, through the incorporation of certain activists into the new institutional structures for gender equality, either within government agencies or in the academic *milieu* and, on the other hand, through the collaboration between these new entities for gender equality and the different feminist organizations. Activists who were incorporated in the new structures sometimes acted as bridge-builders between their institutions and the feminist movement organizations. A process of formalization of feminist organizations was encouraged in order to bring legitimacy and ensure participation through official political channels. Regarding marginalization, that concern mostly autonomous collectives, the process is also one of self-marginalization in which informal groups search to organize outside the structures of domination as much as possible and adopt more strategies of avoidance or confrontation rather than cooperation with these structures, including the state.

Through the inclusion of activists in the new gender equality structures or of feminist organizations in participation in decision-making in official politics, scholars argued that there was a shift in focus from protest tactics to lobby and advocacy. While some insisted on the importance to participate in institutional politics and contribute to improve legislation and policies or in general to introduce feminist ideas and practices within the state, others raised concerns about a potential routinization of collective action conducive to demobilization. To elucidate some of these concerns I explored the consequences of the routinization of protests for the feminist movements in Romania and Belgium, especially to see if the routinization of protest implied giving up more disruptive, spontaneous and reactive mobilizations. The research showed that while some of the feminist protests became routinized over the years, such as the 8th of March mobilizations or the demonstrations to end violence against women in Romania and Belgium, reactive protests especially were organized in parallel, each time when negotiations through official channels seemed unfruitful, supporting only partially claims about the routinization of mobilizations. Interestingly, related to the process of inclusion and marginalization, compared to formal feminist organizations, informal feminist groups close to the anarchist scene were much more susceptible of police repression, with

more coercive strategies in Belgium and information strategies in Romania. Beyond concerns of demobilization, feminists actively organized themselves to counteract and respond to perceived threats at different times. Most importantly, the normalization of feminist manifestations opened the possibility and contributed to contamination, to bridging social capital, to creating bridges between different feminisms in terms of the discourses and tactical repertoires, fostering the creation of larger collective identities and internal diversity, towards a more intersectional feminist politics, beyond white, middle class and abled feminism. This process was not straightforward, but it involved challenges and negotiations.

Scholars argued that through institutionalization, when engaging in policy making through formal official channels, challengers alter their claims and tactics in order to fit without disruption in the normal practice of politics – undergoing co-optation, associated by others also with professionalization and bureaucratization. Exploring co-optation in relation to the feminist movement this research showed that engaging with state institutions is both generative of social change and constraining. Engaging with state institutions entails a risk of co-optation, mercantile collaboration and instrumentalization as negotiations take place, stemming in general from power imbalances between governmental actors and feminist movement organizations but also from financial dependence in Belgium, where the state finances these organizations. Aware of these risks, the debates around co-optation translated into discussions about autonomy and dependence within the feminist movements in Belgium and Romania. Feminist activists view alliances with the state as both dangerous and constructive, considering that mobilization alone does not suffice and other strategies that do not just target but also involve institutional state actors are needed. This does not automatically imply giving up a critical stance or renouncing to contentious actions. When institutionalized tactics failed, organizations adopted more disruptive repertoires. Nevertheless, as power relations between the state and the feminist movement actors are usually unbalanced, mostly in favour of the first, during negotiations, movement claims and proposals are altered and in most extreme cases feminist voices are censured or activists are silenced. It seems however that co-optation should be understood as instances of co-optation rather than a fixed, final diagnosis attached to a movement. The answer to the risk of co-optation was not to stop to politically engage with state institutions, thought to be unaffordable by many activists, but to critically engage with the political arena. Beyond the risks of co-optation, engaging with state institutions other than as antagonist proved to be a necessity with generative political potential. Feminist activists and organizations occupy a

space in the formal official politics that allows them to secure opposition to the current hegemonic order that normalizes neoliberalism and to provide an alternative to the right wing and radical-right movements and discourses that are gaining momentum during recent years. On the benefits side, engaging with state institutions contributed to foster norm diffusion or institutional discursive socialization.

While the process of institutionalization of the feminist movement opened some opportunities to participate in formal official politics, it also fostered the path towards professionalization to support collaboration between international actors, governmental bodies and feminist movement organizations. Some funds became available from governments or international organizations to encourage the production of knowledge and the consolidation of expertise in the area of gender issues and that could serve in policy-making to advance gender equality. Social movement and NGO-ization scholars argued that through professionalization, activists and social movement organizations become moderate in their goals and use institutionalized tactics, that a professionalized movement becomes depoliticized by hiring people from outside the movement or that it creates new categories of women, distinguishing between movement professionals and their beneficiaries. Starting from these claims and bringing with the sociology of professions literature I aimed to see what is the professionalization of the feminism movement, to disentangle it from other interrelated processes such as institutionalization or bureaucratization and how does the profession of gender translates into practice. The professionalization of feminist movement involves the transformations of the activities of the feminist movement organizations into a profession on the free market through

the consolidation of the profession of gender (expert) that reposes on the creation of a specialized body of knowledge, which attests for their contribution in the society, and whose organization stemmed from a web of interactions with various actors, within and outside the movement and mediated by power relations stemming from access to privileged knowledge and acquired professional status. To situate the consolidation of the profession of gender experts in the neoliberal context helps us understand the form and the organization of this profession: professionals are experts; they offer punctual and specialized, many times short-term expertise, mirroring the managerialist dynamics of neoliberal governance, including the flexibility of jobs.

As the process of professionalization and the construction of the profession are shaped by a web of interactions that take place in the NGO sector, between various actors both from within and outside the feminist movement, the question about the risk of depoliticization by hiring people or working with other experts from outside the movement, non-committed and non-socialized to feminist principle, was something that concerned activists both in Belgium and in Romania. However, the research showed that for many professionals and activists working in NGOs, due to various reasons such as managing the private life, family and work, the need to have a job, it would have not been possible to engage in feminist activism, at least not on a long term. Moreover, for some activists, feminist engagement started with their work in feminist organizations. This showed that professionalization can also foster a process of politicization and an enlargement of the movement's base by touching other categories of women. What seems to foster the politicization of professionals working in feminist NGOs rather than depoliticization seems to be a transfer of knowledge and knowledge exchange within the organization that helps maintain and reproduce a feminist politicized space. However, when there is much turnover of employees in feminist organizations, the risk of depoliticization increases. Turnover is symptomatic of conditions of employment in neoliberalism in which working contracts and their financing is more and more fragmented and more and more limited in time. In Belgium, there are still feminist organizations who manage to offer fixed term contracts and to avoid turnover but the contracts are financed through a mosaic of financial sources, covering different time spans creating insecurity and challenging the capacity to offer stable employment. In Romania, there is a higher turnover and feminist professionals work on a project base cumulating various contracts and various positions in the same time. These dynamics are to be understood in relations to neoliberal techniques of domination through insecurity and precarization and neoliberal bureaucratization and in relation to versatility that is at the core of the development of the profession of gender experts. Versatility is associated, on the one hand, with the multiplicity of skills and competencies that those working in feminist NGOs must constantly develop, and on the other hand, to interchangeable functions that one is susceptible to undertake within the organization. It emerged in relation to the kind of funding mechanisms available to organizations. While in Belgium versatility is related to the multiplicity of skills and competencies, including management or accountancy, in Romania, due to the generalization of project-based work in feminist NGOs, professionals sometimes cumulate different job positions and different working contracts to achieve a full-time job.

The build-up of a profession is materialized in the process of construction of a specialized body of knowledge and practice by an informal network of multiple actors and it is legitimized and rooted in the contributions of professionals to the society. In the build-up of gender expertise, within feminist NGOs and informal groups, two processes play a significant role: collective knowledge production and knowledge diffusion that can take the form of transfer or exchange. The discursive practices at the basis of knowledge production are imbued with power relations, that challenge the actors involved and who aimed towards an equitable process, drawing also attention to the limits of expert knowledge. In Romania there is an official recognition of the professions of gender expert and technician, while in Belgium, there is an informal recognition from decision-makers that gives feminists in NGOs legitimacy to participate in the policy-making process in the official arena.

The discourse about the contribution of gender professionals is shaped at the intersection between the idea of service stemming from the free market and the volunteer participation within civil society sector. This translates into feelings of guilt for professionals socialized in the feminist movement as they feel they earn money out of a social injustice. Changes on the labour market brought an increased demand for volunteering and internships from young people within feminist organizations and this can translate both into the politicization of a new generation of professionals sensitive to gender issues or into depoliticization if there is no transfer of knowledge and feminist principles of practice, if the know-how becomes purely technical, losing its political edge. The risk of depoliticization might increase with professional distance that some organizations want to ensure, through technical answers for political problems, creating new subjects and deepening the gap between feminist professionals and women beneficiaries. The creation of new subjects and categories of women and the deepening of the gap between professionals and beneficiaries is interrelated and enhanced by the neoliberal bureaucratization, in which beneficiaries are target groups, defined in terms of their vulnerability and their characteristics are a priori established and verified through indicators. Both new markets for professionals and new subjects are created through professionalization but closely interrelated with neoliberal bureaucratization.

At this stage neoliberal governance and techniques of domination come into play. Within feminist organizations, neoliberal bureaucratization translates into the proliferation of norms, rules and practices stemming from the private sphere, specifically the market and management domain into their mode of functioning. This is much ensured through financial

dependence on donors, no matter if governmental or private. Mediated by donors demands, the proliferation of these norms and procedures stemming from the market is ensured through a process of abstractization in which women, social facts and phenomena are transformed into categories, codes, indicators through rationalization procedures that renders them objective, impartial and which can be evaluated and assessed, and ultimately control and managed. Assessment is ensured through the establishment of accountability and control procedures, through audits and reports, stemming from financialization. Without reposing on vertical control mechanisms and procedures, the keys in the processes of implementation and control and evaluation are flexibility, self-responsibility and especially freedom in the sense of voluntary compliance and adoption of these norms. This is what allows the adaptation of norms stemming from the market to the NGO environment and other areas of the society as Hibou (2015) argued. Both in Romania and Belgium, feminist NGOs need to predict which activities, how many, when and what kind of activities do they foresee, how many participants, what target group and what results do they expect. They need to provide a solid justification both regarding the needs of the target group and subsequently for the actions they want to implement in order to solve the identified social problems. Predictability and calculability are requested from donors in order to ensure a transparent use of funds for activities and actions that aim to ensure a certain integration and functioning of those groups of women, becoming target groups, within the society. This translates ultimately into the management of certain populations that become the target groups of NGOs actions.

These norms and procedures contribute to the consolidation of new subjects and a new market both for professionals and for the target groups. Target groups are defined in terms of their vulnerability and their characteristics are a priori established and verified through indicators. Those who are part of the target group need to confirm their belonging, membership by filling in papers or bringing evidence as it is the case for proving their participation in NGO activities. Through normalization and standardization of these rules and procedures people become managed in a rational and technical way, based on scientific knowledge and know-how and contributes to establish and reinforce the professional distance between professionals and experts in NGOs and beneficiaries.

Stemming out of the seemingly paradox between freedom and domination, this is a process of co-construction and co-production as neoliberal governmentalities involve both a process of governing by others and self-governance. Feminist NGOs *voluntarily* adopt these norms and

procedures mediated by their relationship with donors and they adapt them in practice in order to make them fit in a sector which is not the market, out of which they stem. Here, informalities, in Hibou's (2015) terms, creativity and sometimes negotiation are central to ensure their translation in practice. Guidelines, guides, manuals, good practices indicate their role to orient, to ensure an horizontal and volunteer implementation and not something compulsory, constraining, top-down implemented. There is room for improvement and adaptation that show how co-production and co-management translates into practice. While in Belgium, there is more room for negotiation regarding accountability procedures and during the implementation phase, in Romania, especially post-EU adhesion the capacity for negotiation is lower and possibility to make changes or to adapt the foreseen actions is more limited and when possible, it requires an increased amount of paperwork and application of other norms and procedures. Both in Belgium and in Romania feminist in NGOs deplore at unison the enormous amount of time spent to comply with an ever increasing number of rules and procedures and most importantly that this happens at the expense of the work that they actually want to do such as research, campaigns, direct work with women in relation to specific issues, advocacy and so on. This translates into co-optation by time misappropriation.

Within feminist NGOs, in Belgium and in Romania, the managerial language proliferates and is co-produced through interactions with other fields and intermediary bodies, specifically subsidizing bodies, public or private, establishing a common *modus operandi* based on rationality, good governance and good practices, efficiency and impartiality evaluated through criteria and indicators, by auditing mechanisms, that ultimately monitor the institutional life of organizations. This raises tensions between a feminist logic based on specific values and principles stemming from the history of the feminist movement and the managerial logic stemming from the private sector and adopted across different areas within the society. Through specific language and a process of abstraction, information about women, their realities and problems are formalized as well as the technical ways to *manage* them, expressed in guides, guidelines, manuals. It is the adoption and formalization of this language stemming from the market that constitutes a source of domination of neoliberal bureaucratization.

It is out of the ambivalence between freedom and domination, governing by others and self-governing, between externalities and informalities that the potential of resistance and

development of subversive strategies stem both within formal organizations and outside them. The bridge-building between feminist in formal NGOs and informal groups is crucial. The need to step-out of this modus operani is reflected through the overlapping membership, through the fact that many feminist professionals in NGOs engage also in informal groups and autonomous collective projects. Moreover, feminist professionals in NGOs are aware of the penetration of neoliberal discourses and practices in their work and within society and struggle to deconstruct these discourses through their actions and campaigns and to resist to the extension of a management inspired modus operandi in their work, many times brought in by subsidizing bodies or state institutions with which they collaborate. NGOs reflect about ways to render more accessible their trainings and activities in terms of price, language and the women they manage to reach. They publicly condemn the laws and policies that marginalize certain categories of women and keep them in precarity. They try to negotiate with donors when they want to impose modes of functioning that are conflicting with their overall philosophy.

Feminist organizations financial dependence on donors represents the channel, mechanism that facilitates the deployment of externalities stemming from the market and ensures their implementation and this mechanism is specific to the NGO sector. But financial dependence also shows the intertwinement between different neoliberal modes and instruments of governing, between neoliberal bureaucratization and governmental precarization to use Lorey's (2015) term. The fragmentation and diminution of subsidies within the institutionalized and professionalized part of the feminist movement creates insecurity for organizations and their employees. Financial insecurity becomes a central preoccupation among feminist organizations that constantly juggle between activism, searching for funds, complying with the bureaucratic norms and procedures from donors. Feminist organizations hope to alleviate jobs and organizational insecurity by acquiring funds. Financial dependence creates at the same time security through allocating some funds and insecurity through their fragmentation and diminution. The relationship between donors and organizations becomes an exchange relationship: money for projects, programs and services, on the mode of service provision in other professions, on the free market. One of the costs of this transaction that organizations pay is the import of norms and practices stemming from the private management as their modus operandi that allow for the implementation of accountability mechanisms that allow for their activities, to be traced, monitored, evaluated. With the fragmentation of subsidies, accountability mechanisms multiply and so does the bureaucratic

work related to accountancy. This reinforces the process of channeling through time misappropriation contributes to a loosening of the reactive capacity because organizations use many of their resources for predictable, well-planned actions and the bureaucratic activities related to the accountability towards donors, that leaves fewer resources available for unforeseen or reactive type of activities.

Financial dependence functions both as a channel through which governmental precarization is being deployed and as an instrument that helps to hierarchize, classify and distribute precariousness in relations of inequalities. This happens first by showing who is conforming and can be protected ensured security – formal organizations that access grants or are recognized for structural funding, and who is not. Second, hierarchization is ensured by managing the residual precarious – the others, for whom the state delegates and ensures the rational *management* through civil society organizations and who are enclosed in categories, indicators through the processes of abstraction in neoliberal bureaucratization. In its move towards the middle of the society, governmental precarization intensifies and multiplies this differentiation in shared precariousness between NGO professionals, militants in informal groups, and different categories of women as the beneficiaries of NGO work. This hierarchization is produced and reproduced through the implementation of externalities such as indicators that create categories in which women are boxed or accountability practices from donors, thus tightly related to neoliberal bureaucratization.

Even though financial mechanisms are different in Belgium as structural allowing for more long-term strategies and In Romania project-based favouring short term strategies, the mechanism is the same and the fragmentation and diminution of fund ensure similar governing through insecurity and neoliberal bureaucratization. The mosaic of subsidies through which contracts are ensured both in Belgium and in Romania both increase insecurity and add up to the charge of constantly searching for complementary funds. This adds to increased bureaucratic activities related to accountability to donors and results in a heavy workload pressure. High commitment to the cause favors also a process of self-precarization in which activists work more than the contract, organization rely a lot on volunteer work and they try to do a lot with few resources. The workload pressure in conditions of scarce financial resources and high commitment to the cause blurs the lines between work and private life of many activists contributing to burn-outs within the feminist movement. While a politics of silence predominates within the movement out of fears of backlash, activists start

to break this law of silence and speak out more and more, especially in Belgium. A politics of care among activists and within feminist organizations becomes a response to precarization, a potential for liberation and of radical transformative politics starting from within.

For future research, a comparative analysis of NGO-ization of different social movements would help to better understand and to if and how NGO-ization institutes as a neoliberal mode of governance of civil society in general. How does the establishment of the NGO form as the a norm in neoliberalism, as the acceptable way of doing activism affects the functioning of an uncivil civil society? Is there a spillover effect? Both in Romania and Belgium, feminist activists close to the anarchist, less identifiable and visible to state institutions, who do not fit into the NGO form that seems to be the norm, are more subject to repression compared to activists in NGOs. What is the potential of Street feminism to counter neoliberal bureaucratization and governmental precarization? How does and what is the potential of a politics of care both NGO-ized and Street feminist groups to counter governmental precarization?

One of the limits of this research concerns the articulation of the comparison between Street feminism and NGO-ized feminism. While initially, this comparison seemed important to me and served to show that the NGO form is not the only form of organization within the feminist movement, that lobby and advocacy are not the main tactics within the movement, although they are widespread, that there is considerable overlapping with other movements, and bridgebuilding within the movement and outside, mainly related to the institutionalization thesis, these comparison becomes less well articulated in relation to other dimensions and processes of NGO-ization. As informal, Street feminist groups are more fluid, short-lived, new groups are created and recreated with old and new members and sometimes overlapping with other movements there is a need for an improved research design and methodology that can better capture these changes over a longer period of time. However, different from my initial expectations regarding informal groups functioning more horizontally and NGO-ized groups functioning more hierarchically, we could have seen that through neoliberal bureaucratization a more participatory and horizontal way of functioning is supported also through external mechanisms.

Appendix 1. List of interviews

Belgium

Ref.	Association/Place	Duration	Date
A.B.	Counselor popular education, Ministry of Culture, Childhood and Popular Education, Brussels	49:38	15.01.2017
A.B.	Vie feminine, Brussels	66:04	6.11.2016
A.G.M.	CFULB, Brussels	69:54	1.12.2016
I.S.	CFULB, Brussels	48:48	29.11.2016
B.E.	Université des femmes, Brussels	56:11	8.12.2016
C.P.	LMSF, Isala, Brussels	44:22	25.02.2017
D.P.	Vie féminine, Feminime Yeah! Brussels	67:24	17.02.2017
I.I.	Vie féminine, Maison Mosaique, Brussels	73:25	17.11.2016
L.S.	Sophia, Fat Positivity Belgium, Brussels	90:46	3.04.2017
M.S.	Garance, Brussels	82:15	27.03.2017
O.B.	Garance, Brussels	69:14	1.12.2016
M.M.	Garance, Brussels	53:43	22.03.2017
A.P.	Vie feminine, Brussels	71:01	22.02.2017
I.V.	Garance, Brussels	64:23	20.03.2017
S.B.	Garance, Brussels	72:02	30.11.2016
S.V.	CFULB, Brussels	39:10	25.01.2017
T.M.	CFULB, Brussels	38:47	18.11.2016
E.A.	Université des femmes, Brussels	45:24	21.02.2017
I.B.	CFULB, Brussels	45:24	19.01.2017
S.H.	Isala, Brussels	73:03	22.11.2016

C.R.	Isala, Brussels	51:05	5.12.2016
P.H.	LMSF, Brussels	71:47	26.05.2017
S.T.	Isala, Brussels	60:21	13.01.2017
V.P.	Ministry of Education, Social Promotion, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, Brussels	37:52	25.01.2017
O.V.	Vie feminine, Brussels	112:41	20.01.2017
B.B.	Axelle, Vie feminine, Brussels	53:01	26.01.2017
R.S.	Université des femmes, Brussels	58:29	20.01.2017
TM	Vie feminine, Brussels	54:00	11.01.2017
D.H.	Université des femmes, Brussels	48:57	29.11.2016
Y.S.	Femmes Prevoyantes Socialistes (FPS) Brussels	48:49	7.06.2017
R.X.	Femmes et santé, Brussels	50:16	25.05.2017
T.A.	CEFA, Louvain-la-Neuve	64:00	16.02.2017
D.D.	Abortion Right, Brussels	36:37	24.01.2017

Romania

Ref.	Association/Place	Duration	Date
A.M	A-Casa, Cluj	63:41	5.07.2016
A.F. 1	Filia, Bucharest	86:31	23.06.2015
A.F. 2	Filia, Bucharest	84:58	26.01.2016
M.C.	ANES, Bucharest	62:41	19.02.2016
B.M.	Filia, Bucharest	67:44	27.01.2016
C.B.	Filia, Bucharest	163:37	25.06.2015
C.T.	Filia, Skype	131:10	27.02.2016
M.T.	ANES, Bucharest	30:55	3.02.2016
M.T.	CPE, Bucharest	52:08	3.02.2016
A.S.	CPE, Bucharest	82:47	1.02.2016
B.R.	A-Casa, les sisterhood Cluj	36:22	5.07.2016
R.	Dysnomia, Bucharest	53:54	8.07.2016
C.P.	Front, Skype	62:47	22.06.2015

B.T.	Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest	68:26	26.06.2015
A.V. 1	ALEG, Sibiu	57:12	12.02.2016
A.V. 2	ALEG, Sibiu	57:08	21.06.2016
M.M. 2	CPE, Bucharest	107:23	4.02.2016
M.M.1	CPE, Bucharest	65:40	23.06.2015
S.P.	ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest	98:41	26.06.2015
F.M.	Front, Bucharest	66:25	29.06.2016
P.P.	ALEG, Sibiu	77:33	21.06.2016
I.A.	Dysnomia, Bucharest	34:38	1.07.2016
O	Dysnomia, Cluj	34:56	5.07.2016
I.T.	Front, Bucharest	141:39	28.06.2016
C.S. 2	Front, Bucharest	36:19	3.07.2016
M.P.	CPE, Bucharest	32:19	29.06.2016
C.S. 1	Front, Bucharest	31:52	21.06.2015
O.C.	Front, Bucharest	71:37	1.07.2016
M.R. 1	Front, Bucharest	82:28	21.06.2015
M.R. 2	Front, Bucharest	60:23	7.07.2016
V.	Aleg, Sibiu	43:02	21.06.2016
A.S.	Dysnomia, Bucharest	49:32	30.06.2016
A.T.	Filia, Bucharest	94:55	1.02.2016
D.M.	Transcena, VIF, Bucharest	37:49	8.07.2016
I.C.	Filia, Bucharest	60:04	25.06.2015
T.D.	Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest	43:54	22.06.2015
C.C.	CPE, Bucharest	57:39	29.06.2016
R.C.	A-Casa, Cluj	52:12	6.07.2016
M.D.	Filia, Bucharest	57:05	29.06.2016
R.T.	Filia, Bucharest	68:35	6.02.2016
V.A.2	Front, Bucharest	60:46	28.06.2016
V.A.1	Front, Bucharest	41:20	28.06.2016
C.L.2	Dysnomia, Bucharest	77:08	3.06.2016
C.L.1	Dysnomia, Claca, Biblioteca Alternativa, Bucharest	111:39	25.06.2015

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