WOMEN IN POLITICS – The case of Serbia

Žene u politici – slučaj Srbije

ABSTRACT: After a short introduction, this paper deals with women's activities and participation in social and especially political institutions nowadays, but in the country with deeply rooted idea about traditional role that women should play. Additionally, it takes into account their personal experiences and opinions, impressions about being members of parliament, their motivation, obstacles and their (women's) contribution to politics (through decision making).

The paper is based on the theoretical discussion about under what conditions women's participation in political institutions can be influential, about 'descriptive representation', 'substantive representation' and the possibility of their contribution to the democratization of society. The elaboration is based on the research of public opinion polls of the representative sample of Serbian population, sociological study of female members of the Serbian parliament, as well as on the results of women's university education and their scientific achievements.

KEY WORDS: women, equal rights with men, activities in public institutions, obstacles to participate in politics, motivation to be active in politics

APSTRAKT: Nakon kratkog uvoda, ovaj rad se bavi aktivnostima i učešćem žena u radu društvenih i posebno političkih institucija u današnje vreme, ali u zemlji sa duboko ukorenjenoj ideji o tradicionalnoj ulozi koju žena treba da igra. Osim toga, rad će razmotriti njihova lična iskustva i mišljenja, utiske o članstvu u Narodnoj skupštini, njihove motive, prepreke i doprinose politici (kroz proces donošenja odluka).

Rad je zasnovan na teorijskoj diskusiji o tome pod kojim uslovima učešće žena u radu političkih institucija može biti uticajno, o 'površnom predstavljanju', 'suštinskom predstavljanju' i mogućnosti njihovog doprinosa demokratizaciji

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Introduction

„When a woman enters politics, it is she who is changing. When a thousand women enter politics, politics changes”

Chilean woman-politician

The question of increased women’s participation in political life intensified during the 1970s and 1980s in the context of globalization, great technological changes, overall social and economic crisis, changes in the workforce demographic structure, as well as the need to include all the available resources into socio-economic development. These social processes in the world followed by numerous social movements such as student movements, syndical and feminist movements, movements for racial equality and others. In the context of these processes, we will point our attention to certain questions which refer to women’s participation in public life and politics.

Basic ideas of women’s movements in the given period are related to „the abolition of male dominance in institutions of representative democracy, in which men define rules of the political game and belief standards” (Čičkarić, 2013: 598).

Gender aspect was ignored and women were „invisible”. This movement advocated institutional and legal recognition of equal political rights for both men and women, as well as institutionalization of gender equality. The two most important platforms for institutionalization of these questions developed under the auspices of the UN need to be mentioned: 1. Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,1979 (CEDAW), whose application started in 1981, and 2. Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, which was accepted by 180 countries (Mršević, 2007: 59).

Equalization of political rights for both genders, which led to increased women’s participation in political institutions and their candidacy for leading positions, became a subject which is still being debated and studied. However, this development is very natural having in mind the fact that half of the population are women. On the base of comparative study of voting systems in 35 countries, Karp and Banducci raised this question by saying that „The representation of women and minorities may not only provide a powerful symbolic impact on politics becoming a woman’s game, as well as a man’s; it also has policy
consequences” (Karp, Banducci, 2008: 106). They arrive at the conclusion that “Citizens in countries with greater female representation are more likely to be satisfied with the way democracy works and more likely to believe that elections reflect the views of voters. The size of the effect is substantial” (Karp, Banducci, 2008: 112). Women’s participation in political parties, parliament and governments is not only formal, but it predominantly aims at changing the man’s way of leadership in politics. This raises the question of a number of women’s presence in political institutions. Insufficient presence of women in politics is the consequence of structural and cultural conditions. Traditional understanding of woman as a wife, mother and housewife, along with the stereotypes about her role, are resistant to change. The burden of professional and domestic tasks does not leave them with enough free time to engage in politics, which is not stimulating at all. In such an atmosphere it is not only true that women have no interest in politics. In addition, they lack support of men and their networks, and therefore rarely decide to affirm themselves in the political sphere. Prevailing male character of political parties and institutions, type of election system and political culture are additional factors for insufficient women’s participation in politics and management. In short, systemic measures for solving these problems are necessary. This claim is also supported by the findings of the above mentioned research: “...we do find that the number of women in parliament is associated with more positive evaluations of the quality of the democratic process” (Karp, Banducci, 2008: 113). The research “is also suggesting that the mechanism by which women’s representation influences evaluations and it is one of more favorable policy outcomes benefiting both men and women” (Karp, Banducci, 2008: 114).

Discussion about numerical representation of women, so called „descriptive representation”, with 20%–30% until equality, is based on the idea that this type of representation, with the increment of number of women in representative institutions would facilitate the possibility of achieving the „substantive representation.” It means that there is a chance that women-representatives, who have specific interests, needs and claims as well as knowledge, values and skills might be able, in accordance with it, to change men’s political culture and institutional surrounding in order to achieve concrete results in practice (Čičkarić, 2013: 605). Here, it is possible to pose such questions as why would the care about children and family, family-planning, and abortion, as well as about domestic violence, etc., be an exclusively ‘feminine question’? Besides, there is a doubt whether women rather vote for the ‘feminine question’ or for the positions of their political parties? Whom are they loyal to? With these and similar questions, experience shows that higher numerical representation of women is the precondition for qualitative changes and abolition of men’s domination in decision making. It is supposed that the achievement of ‘critical mass’ of women’s representation in political institutions enables more intensive discussion about different opinions and the opportunity for achieving agreement about ‘feminine’ questions. Men’s leadership model is described by the following words: authoritative, intelligent, competitive, masculine, analytical in solving problems, high level of control. On the other hand, feminine leadership model is based on:
cooperation, interactive communication, common decision making, team work, flexibility. Author also stresses that these qualities must be in accordance with the situation and social context (Mišić Andrić, Markov, 2012: 343/44). Where, how and when will our representatives meet? It seems that women should take the initiative.

Achieving equal political representation of men and women is also a justified criteria for the evaluation of the democratization of society (Beijing Platform for Action), and it is necessary to set strategic measures of affirmative action about quotas in voting system defined from 20%–30% to the equal of 50%. The affirmative action could be strategic measure of political parties or the result of legislative strategy as a result „of the demand for promotion of gender equality“ (Mršević, 2007: 59). Quota voting system appears as „a compensation for historically existing structural and cultural obstacle ...it offers chances to the most able women to prove themselves” (Mršević, 2007: 58). At the same time, this system also has a social message, it contributes to awakening of women's self-consciousness and shows that they are welcome and even necessary in politics. According to the Report of UNDP for 2007, which includes 177 countries, and shows women's representation in parliaments in different countries ('descriptive representation'), 9 countries have between 30,5% (Spain) to 47,3% (Sweden) of women in their parliaments. They are followed by the countries which have between 20,8% (Serbia occupies 17th. place) and 28,3% (Australia) and 13 countries that have between 10,4% (Hungary) to 19,3% (Slovakia). It is interesting that countries like Great Britain, USA, Italy and France are in this group despite their long democratic tradition. Other countries are below 10%. In short, the average presentation of women is 15,6%, it is highest in Scandinavian countries (39,7%) and lowest in Arab countries(6%), (Vuković, 2009: 23–24); The data for Serbia is added).

The data about the portion of women in world's government, in 2007, shows that Sweden was in the first place, with 52,4% of women in the government. It was followed by 4 countries with more than 40%, four countries with more than 30%, and 8 countries which have between 20% and 30% of women in their governments. Serbia is in almost the same position as it is in its parliament, with 19% of women in government (Vuković, 2009: 24–25).

Nowadays (2014), the number of women in Serbian parliament grew from 20,4% in 2007 to 33,6% in 2014, while in the government it has increased from 19% to 21%. 1) (For data about Serbian parliament and government, see: http://w.w.w.parliament.gov.rs/narodna-skupština-/sastav/poslane-grupe.84.901. html; htp.sr.wikipedia.org/viki)

These results about women's representation in parliaments and governments ('descriptive representation') do not necessarily testify about the level of democratization in the reviewed countries since there are some contradictions between our experience and belief. So, it would be necessary to do the profound research to check whether the lower representation of women in traditionally democratic countries is a contradiction, or if the higher women's representation actually stands for the achievement of 'substantive representation'? Such
study should be done on the basis of carefully chosen indicators of notion of democracy and it should be checked whether they are fulfilled. This should be done: a. through the important documents for decision making; b. through deep interviews with women-representatives of the mentioned institutions; c. through interviews with representative sample of the general public.

The case of Serbia

Political emancipation of women and their participation in public life (in Yugoslavia and Serbia) started immediately after the World War II and the establishment of socialism. Directly after the war women were granted the right to vote. Their active participation in the war and the country’s reconstruction, as well as, the opportunity to receive education in different professional fields, enabled them to take public jobs and to become part of political life. Already, in 1944 a woman became the president of national parliament and the female presidents of women's organizations started obtaining responsible positions. During the period of socialism and until 2000, despite the fact that 20%–30% of the parliament was composed of women, real political power rested with party committees (headed by the Central Party Committee) in which there was a small number of women. The value system and the way of functioning of all public institutions was a result of a party system regulating all the spheres of public life. Those women who were active in public and political work, although members of Communist Party, rarely took part in the leading positions. Living in the patriarchal surroundings, and in addition to having these new roles in professional and public life, they were still burdened by their family obligations. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, global international influences and crises, as well as infrastructural problems in this multinational country, all strongly influenced disintegration of the big country of Yugoslavia into several independent states. More complete emancipation of women and their faster escape from the patriarchal value system was made difficult by widespread belief which was also shared by women. The very fact that women were employed was conceived as an indicator of their emancipation in the sense of solving the ‘women’s question (Milić, 1994: 57). Traditional comprehension about the woman’s role in society could be illustrated by the results of the research of public opinion Gender Barometer in Serbia (Blagojević Hjuson, 2013: 258).

Next statements were used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% if ‘yes’ answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Every family should know who is in charge?</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Every woman should be a good housekeeper?</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Woman's life is harder?</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from these results that women themselves, together with men, participate in maintaining this widespread belief related to their position in the
house, although men are not aware of the burden placed upon women with family obligations.

If we look at women’s socio-political activities according to the following results, we’ll see the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>member of a political party?</td>
<td>20,2%</td>
<td>18,6%</td>
<td>78,9%</td>
<td>79,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active in NGO?</td>
<td>5,9%</td>
<td>7,8%</td>
<td>93,9%</td>
<td>91,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in strikes?</td>
<td>13,5%</td>
<td>8,9%</td>
<td>86,3%</td>
<td>90,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humanitarian work?</td>
<td>17,4%</td>
<td>15,7%</td>
<td>82,2%</td>
<td>83,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active in local community?</td>
<td>10,0%</td>
<td>8,2%</td>
<td>89,8%</td>
<td>90,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influence in local community?</td>
<td>12,5%</td>
<td>5,3%</td>
<td>87,3%</td>
<td>93,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influence on global level?</td>
<td>10,3%</td>
<td>3,3%</td>
<td>89,1%</td>
<td>95,3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Blagojević Hjuson, 2013: 120,121).

At the level of general population these results show that the level of women’s participation in out-door socio-political life is very low. Women are still less active and influential in the last three domains, although they are more active in NGOs than men. The same questions were raised in previous Gender Barometer in Serbia in 2006 and the results show even lower engagement in public affairs (TNS Media Gallup, 2006). However, there are some changes. In 2006, only 6,6% of women were members of political parties, in 2012 that number was close to 19%. This shows that women became more active in politics. In other social sectors too, women tend to be more engaged which proves that changes are happening, although very slowly. On the other hand, if we pay attention to the answers regarding the influence they have, we can see that it is minor. The answers to question „whether politics would be better if more women were involved in decision making“ show the differences between men and women: „47,6% of the men answered that they „don’t agree, while 17,2% of them said that they agree. Contrary to them, 48% of women answered that they „agree“ and 12,7% said that they „don’t agree“. These results show that conservative view concerning women’s role in politics in Serbia is still dominant (TNS Media Gallup, 2006). On the other hand, we shall see that the situation has changed drastically if the data of women’s representation today is taken into consideration. There is a great increase of women’s representation in high political institutions and even the high managing positions. In this respect, as is said, Serbia is among the first twenty countries in the world.

The research conducted in 2007 based on a representative sample of 39 male and 31 female members of the parliament (which is a third of all 250 members of the parliament), along with questions repeated in 2011/12, will provide you with the answers to some of the questions we discussed in the first part of the text (Vuković, 2009). This data is gathered through the use of qualitative approach via in depth interview, which enables for the original opinions to be referred to in their authentic expression.
Prior to that, brief introduction into basic socio-demographic characteristics of the sample needs to be outlined: women prevail in the 45–59 age category (61,3%: 36,8% of men), however, twice as many men in the age group between 30–44 (55,3%: 25,8%) which shows that women start practicing politics later; almost two thirds of women are married (compared to 79,5% of men), but there are more women than men in the category of widows, divorced, or living in extramarital relationships; there are considerably more women with high education (87,1%: 67,5%), but more men with master and PhD degrees (17,9%: 6,5%). Social background of the members also shows that they belong to the middle and high social class. When it comes to length of their membership in their current political party, there are more men than women with length of party service of 16 and more years (17,9%: 6,9%), but more women with length of party service up to 5 years (34,5%:28,2%). Nevertheless, their presence is growing and they make a slight majority in the group of 6–15 years of party service (58,6%: 53,8%), especially if we take into consideration that young women are also starting to show their interest in political activity (6,5% until the age of 29 and 25,8% during the age between 30–44 years). (Vuković, 2009: 35–44). An interesting fact is that some members of the families of the selected sample were themselves, or are still active in politics. In the case of women, these are usually their husbands (25%) and fathers (30,8%), but other relatives as well. Unquestionably, this data shows that family socialization shaped interests of its members to deal with public questions while, when it comes to women, the influence of their party colleagues is also present. In short, these data shows that age and education structure, as well as political socialization are the precondition to become a member of national parliament practicing politics and make-decisions about vital issues in the first place.

**Women in the Parliament – personal experience and impressions**

We will now turn our attention towards women and their motives to practice politics, the obstacles found on their way and possibilities to advance in politics, as well as the ways in which they are able to contribute.

In Serbia in 2004 the law was passed stating that one third of voting lists needs to comprised of women, and we witnessed how ‘descriptive representation’ of women in the Parliament and the Government of Serbia reached a remarkable level:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20,4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>33,6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data available at: http://www.parlament.gov.rs)

*a. Incentives and reasons to practice politics*

It is interesting that, in addition to family surroundings, additional influence on women and their active political practice comes from their spouses (22,6%) and party colleagues (19,4%), while the spousal influence on men is insignificant.
Ana Vukovic stresses that “this once again confirms that support of their marital partners to start practicing politics is very important to women, more often than men... this does not only ensure that they have their approval, but their assistance in coordinating their domestic obligations with political duties... (Vuković, 2009: 48). In addition to the above mentioned incentives for active practice of politics, female politicians also name motives ranging from overall situation in the country to professional and personal promotion. All these motives, in their essence, influence the improvement in their general standard of living, as well as their children’s and other people's lives. „I wouldn't have started practicing politics if situation in our society during the 90s did not become impossible to control... I have to say that bombing was the breaking point, when I realized that I was not advancing in my career, and that not only that there was no indications that the future of my children will be any better, but that our lives will be in danger if we don’t take things into our own hands” (Vuković, 2009: 50). „My reason is my wish to change life circumstances in which I am living without waiting for somebody else to do it for me” (ibid. p. 49), confirms other woman. Change in life conditions and value systems through political activism is also expressed in a quite concrete way „... you can by no means isolate yourself from the society and when you go out in the street and you see bumps on the road, when you are taking your child to the hospital and face the problems in health care, not to mention the state education is in, and so on” (ibid. 49). However, it is not only difficult situation in the country that directly triggered engagement in the public sphere and professional education for political participation: some of the women among interviewees were educated for such a job, while the one, member of parliament and architect, believes that „everybody should give his or her own contribution within his or her own area of expertise... As a member of parliament I was working on the Assembly Board for architecture and civil engineering, proposed laws, amendments to laws, gave suggestions for some improvements... As a member of a party in charge of that field, I was also able to influence these changes, but I was certainly aware of the fact that changes are happening very slowly” (ibid. p. 52). There was also an additional, very strong motive for practicing politics during turbulent and difficult times in the last decade of the last century which can still be felt today. Namely, politics were seen as an escape from material insecurity, a way to advance in status and become socially empowered. One of the questioned women explained her reasons for practicing politics in a following way: „There is no greater creativity than to be able to mould other people’s reality with your own decisions, whether they are right or wrong... to see, as a participant and witness how people are not able to resist temptations of power and, as an activist, be able to introduce new mechanisms to prevent misuse of power, because that is crucial” (ibid. p. 51).

b. Obstacles to practicing politics

Still, no matter which motives inspire women to become politically engaged, altruistic or completely personal, it is interesting to see whether they come across obstacles in this activity, and what is their nature. Approximately 53,3% of women (and as much as 69,2% of men) believe that their family obligations and a lack
of confidence (46.7%) limit them in being more active in politics, but that they are more successful than men in using informal influence, a standpoint shared by men as well, while, on the other hand, they are more inclined to compromise and respect the hierarchy of the party. Great majority of women (83.3%) does not accept the viewpoint that ‘women are too gentle’ to be active in politics, i.e. 56.7% of them believes that they are aggressive enough to engage in politics (ibid. p. 56). The two last viewpoints are also shared by men. In short, women’s activism in politics is still limited by insufficient support of the system for solving the issues of domestic obligations and rising confidence, in spite of women’s own estimation that they are ready to enter political arena along with men. When asked whether they come across specific obstacles in their political activity and what is their nature, different answers are being given. They range from gender discrimination to a complete lack of obstacles. One of the women interviewed who became active in a political party in her local community, and was then elected for parliament has an interesting experience. She said: „...you should only be well-versed on the general politics in the country, know your own party’s program and defend it. I was also insecure about whether I will be able to do it, but since I am a responsible person, I said that I will stick to what I have already accepted. So, I definitely didn’t have any obstacles within the party.” Continuing, she discloses one very unpleasant experience which occurred when she was elected for the Parliament: „That was a defeat for me, I had such unpleasant verbal exchanges to which I didn’t know how to react. From the first speech given from the pulpit in Parliament, negative and bad comments were directed towards me, and I was even threatened when I reacted to a certain false statement regarding the members of our party given by Tomislav Nikolić in a newspaper. His comment was: „Would you like to see a story about how you are having an affair with somebody published on the cover of Kurir magazine? After that, you would never be able to get rid of problems in your family and in public. So, it’s better that you keep quiet instead of making these comments.” (ibid. p. 69)

Second interviewed said that there is another way to underestimate them, although of the same nature: „When you address a colleague (from another party) with a serious subject, his answer is: „We could go for a coffee or a drink, and we’ll handle that...”. A bitter feeling remains that it is not easy to be a woman in politics... you constantly need to search for the right measure in order to finish everything that you need... and get answers to your questions, along with all the obstacles and problems, since they can blackmail and underestimate you... This is not easy, and I understand women who say: ‘I cannot do it, I don’t have a stomach for it’ (ibid. p. 69/70). One of the interviewed women says that she tolerated different pressures and offences over the phone, in letters and messages from one man – a colleague who had several functions in the party and who also wanted to be a member of parliament, position she was proposed for. In addition to gender intolerance, there are other types of obstacles such as rivalry and envy, again with a flavor of traditional prejudice that woman does not belong to politics. Prejudices like „why her, and not me” and „look how competent I am” are characteristic for people in general, irrespective of their gender, and they exist in every line of work. „No one who practices politics was able to avoid at least some obstacles, and I think this is true both for men and women.” One of
the interviewed women says that she did not come across any obstacles because of the fact that she is a woman, but it is interesting how she contemplates this subject: „What is problematic in political scene in Serbia is that men and women are treated differently – if you want to humiliate a man, you do it by saying that he is a thief, ignorant and rude. As a rule, you will offend women by saying that she is a whore and that she is neglecting her family, and women have to endure these things... to feel that her heart and soul ache and not ask herself why she is still doing this job. A man who has a lot of female partners is a charmer, women who has a lover is by no means seen in a positive way. A divorced woman is grass widow, while her male counterpart is a free man, desirable for many things. These are things which have to change, but which may be the most difficult to change and which, realistically speaking, prevent many women from doing a public job”. (Vuković, unpublished data of the research from 2011/12). Women are more emotional and it is harder for them to tolerate remarks related to their personal and family life, than those related to their profession and work. Women see their position as a constant struggle since „it is not enough to have good education in order to be elected for certain position. No, you have to prove yourself more than once, you have to be engaged, show all your qualities, contrary to men who are majority and can become mediocre.” (ibid). Among parliament’s members, there are women who did not come across any obstacles because they joined the party in its early days and worked along with men on its development. „There is a general conviction advocated by men that politics is a male job and that women should not be practicing it. However, considering the fact that they are equally and sometimes even more competent, women have an absolute right to practice politics and more of them should be doing it... I think women are more to blame for not being active, than men who advocate this position...” (Vuković, 2009: 60) says one interviewed. Another continues by saying: „I think that politics is equally important segment of life, both for men and women. Although it is the fact that women are less active in politics than men... I believe that problem is rooted in the tradition which is not exclusively followed by men. The problem lies in women as well. Throughout our upbringing we are taught that woman’s role in the family is clearly defined, and that men are responsible for all other doings. When I fight for gender equality, for a change in perception, I primarily focus on changing women’s perception. Therefore, it is when women decide to be more active in politics that male perception will change as well.” (Vuković, 2009: 61). Next opinion points out that in addition to traditional understanding of women’s role, there are many expectations directed towards them: „I definitely don’t think that politics is more adequate for men than for women...on the other hand, there’s a fact that practicing politics requires a lot of time and a distinctive features of character – let’s say confidence and persistence” (Vuković, 2009: 61/62).

c. Accomplishment

According to the ‘authentic’ opinions of female members of parliament, formed through their personal experience in practicing politics, further obstacles should be tackled via: educating women, increasing their self-confidence through reorganization of political parties, as well as through their more active
engagement in them. Major emphasis is also placed on introducing voting quota in the sense of ‘critical mass’. Nevertheless, women are also expected to be dedicated, very persistent, honest, responsible, and aware of their own abilities in order to succeed in the overall atmosphere of the still-present traditional mentality and culture which set the role for women in public sphere as well. Precisely in this atmosphere we also come across opinions by which women oppose positive discrimination, ‘quotas’: „I don't want to be elected because of the quota, I want to be elected because of my qualities…” (Vuković, 2009: 86). Following attitude expresses anger even more clearly: „I say: people, I don't want to be positively discriminated against, I don't need that. I want you to tell me that I am smart, competent, I don't need you to tell me that because I am woman I am in quota system” (Vuković, 2009: 85). Men's remarks that they have different experiences and opinions, the persistence of female in their parliamentary engagement shows the results they are themselves aware of. „General contribution of women” believes one the women who took part in the interview, „is that they brought the issue of position of women to light in politics. „ (Vuković, unpublished data of the research from 2011/12). The very fact that 'women's question' can be discussed about in Parliament, during government sessions while using great power of media in the result of the engagement of women. „Absolutely great contribution of women, qualitatively decisive. I believe that it was Chilean president who said that ‘when a woman enters politics, it is she who is changing, when a thousand women enter politics, politics changes' and I think that it is precisely so... the more of us there are, the more we change the world in the qualitative, better way” (Vuković, ibid.). „From the list of passed laws”, says one of the interviewed, „which changed the way this society thinks, it is sufficient to mention amendment to the Criminal law and new Family law which are direct contribution of women, women's NGOs and joint work of female politicians and non-governmental sector invested in these laws ... these two laws changed the awareness of the society” (Vuković, ibid). Although she does not deny the above mentioned contributions, one of the interviewed asks: „After all, what would female politics be? There is no female politics, it simply does not exist. Therefore, some women have been very successful in politics, but not because they are women, but because they have been good politicians... and they are good because that is what they do” (Vuković, ibid).

**Conclusion**

Despite some systemic measures undertaken by the state (quota election system and numerous laws being passed) to accelerate the overall improvement of women's position in society, old, long-preserved mentality is very slow to change. That mentality persists not only among men, but among women as well. Women being burdened by domestic obligations and child care do not seem to be ceasing. For example, in 162 research institutes in Serbia women are equal to men, not only according to the number of employees (49%:51%),
but also according to the number of achieved PhD degrees (39%: 38%). At the same time, being equal in the category of the highest scientific degree is not followed by equal presence on managing positions – directors of institute. Only 14% of women occupies position of a director (out of 162 institutes), i.e. from all women holding PhD degree, only 1,39% are directors. When it comes to universities, for example, the oldest university, University of Belgrade, employs 31,6% of women, 27,7% of which hold PhD degree (Bogdanović, 2006: 331/335). The fact that there are less women working at the University can be explained by the difficulty of university work which, in addition to research, incorporates teaching which starts after PhD degree is granted. In case of women, this is being delayed because of getting married and having children. To which extent women are disregarded when it comes to selection of highest positions in the University, can be best shown by the fact that only one woman was elected to be Rector (President of the University) during its long history (1838–2014). This happened in 2000 crucial for the society. Other universities with shorter history had two (University of Novi Sad) and four (University of Arts). It is somewhat easier for women to be appointed to the position of vice-rector. Other state-owned universities have never elected a woman to be a Rector. Therefore, we could say that the idea of women having equal roles is not fully accepted even in highest scientific and educational institutions in spite their achievements in education and science. Hence, it is not surprising that in addition to the prominent ‘descriptive representation’ of women in Parliament, we still have traditionally –colored pattern of behavior towards them and confused reactions of women to such men’s behavior. Still, it is a fact that the number of women active in politics is growing and this shows that their self-awareness and confidence is growing. This newly found confidence is grounded not only in their fight for improving their families’ social status, but also in their political activism and engagement in political parties and NGOs. Globally, they are influential to that extent to which their parties are influential. In general, the effect of their political activism is that they shifted from „invisible” to „visible”, and became an active factor in democratization of the society.

**Literatura**


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