Chapter 12

FAMILY STRUCTURES AND CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES IN PRESENT-DAY SERBIA

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In order to present the Serbian situation with regard to family life and (its mutual relation with) civil society development, it is necessary to bear in mind the historical conditions in the former Yugoslavia before the 1990s, as well as in contemporary Serbia during the last decade of twentieth century. Here the process of decomposition of Serbian society and its impact on changing family structures and the thwarting of any development of civil society are particularly relevant. It is equally necessary to outline the positive anti-patriarchal trends in Serbian (ex-Yugoslav) family life, gender relations and civil society development that had been emerging steadily from the 1960s onwards (though in a more or less suppressed form) and have become again somewhat strengthened after the democratic institutional reforms in 2000.

The theoretical and methodological background to this chapter is the dialectic between patriarchy and anti-patriarchy in contemporary world, as applied to the former Yugoslavia and to present-day Serbia. In addition, an underlying assumption of the chapter is the idea that democratic family structure, gender equality and civil society development are essentially connected to one another.

Family Structures and Gender Relations
in Contemporary Serbia

Family structures and gender relations in Serbia today have been negatively influenced by the social and political devastation which had hap-

pened during the authoritarian Milošević regime. It means that some emancipatory results which had been already achieved during the existing socialist Yugoslavia (Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, or SFRY) have now become suppressed and even eliminated. The elements of gender emancipation in the former Yugoslavia after the Second World War were related to the women's massive entrance into spheres of education and labour, the phenomenon which had also been common for all real-socialist countries of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.[1]

In contrast however to the real-socialist countries under the Soviet umbrella, and according to the fact that the Yugoslav (so-called self-managing) real-socialist regime had been more open and 'soft', and insofar much more influenced by Western capitalism, these developments were combined in Yugoslavia between the 1960s and the 1980s, with impacts of the Western welfare state in the areas of social policy, education, labour, cultural patterns, system of values, as well as with impacts of consciousness raising through feminist movements and women's studies. These emancipatory elements in public life were accompanied by sticking to the patriarchal, however attenuated, model of family relations in the private sphere (Papić 1989; Vujadinović 1995). Persistence of patriarchy in a private and family life had inherently contributed to reproducing the authoritarian (though softened) nature of the real-socialist regime.

The growing political crisis from the late 1980s until the early 2000s had been followed in virtually all former Yugoslav republics by a rising trend of populism based more and more on ethnicity, religiosity and ethno-nationalist ideology instead of on the prewvious dominant communist ideology. Democratic institutions and multi-party systems were implemented in 1990 in the federal units of the former Yugoslavia. However, political elite successfully blocked attempts to introduce democracy at the level of the Federation. The first multi-party elections in each of the federal units ended with victories for nationalist-separatist parties, which marked the beginning of a violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia.

In Serbia, the essentially unchanged communist elite continued to rule even after the first multi-party elections; the pseudo-democratic order was significantly coloured by elements of plebiscitary support for charismatic leadership and personalised state authority, ethno-nationalism and militarist polity. Serbia carried the negative political inheritance of the Milošević regime, which was extremely expansionist (the idea of a 'Greater Serbia') and most responsible for the wars which broke out in the Balkan region. The Serbian state under Milošević regime was punished by international economic sanctions and isolation soon after the 1990s, and later on also by the NATO bombing campaign, what necessarily led to a rising economic crisis, drastic impoverishment of the people, criminalisation of the state and society and, consequently, to the

destruction of society ('sociocide'; Lazić 1994), of the economy, and the then present system of social welfare (Vujadinović et al. 2003; 2005).

All this reflected on gender relations and family structures. The persistently strong patriarchal matrix was reinforced by the massive loss of jobs by women and their return to unpaid housework, by the reappearance of extended families and by the reaffirmation of traditional gender roles following economic collapse (re-patriarchalisation) and outburst of ethno-nationalist populism and religious fundamentalism (re-traditionalisation and clericalisation) (Bolčić 2002; Milić 2004; Mihajlović 2006; Vujadinović 2009).

These negative trends continued even after the democratic change of regime in 2000. However, the democratic transformation of political, legal and economic systems has also been strengthening the positive, emancipatory trends in family life, gender relations and civil society development (Blagojević 2006).

The most prominent Serbian sociologists had conducted three huge empirical surveys in a continuum – the first from 1991 to 1995, the second from 1996 to 2000 and the third from 2000 to 2004, with representative samples and a common methodology. The aim was to introspect and analyse turbulent social and political processes in Serbia and their impacts on everyday life. The results of these empirical surveys,[2] conducted in the approximately fifteen-year period of sociocide and of delayed/controversial transition, have offered relevant information about family and gender issues; they have continuously confirmed the negative trends of re-traditionalisation, re-patriarchalisation and clericalisation in everyday and family life and gender relations, though some dimensions of private and public life where gender equality progressed were also detected.

According to these surveys, in existing conditions of structural disturbance of social services and state institutions, as well as in a situation of an enormous impoverishment of a huge majority of the population, the family took over many disordered economic, social and cultural functions. In the overall social decomposition, the family – while being the basis of any sociability – was the last instance of defence, security and stability (Milić 2002). Thanks to its character of being a biosocial total phenomenon, with consistent functions and established inner relations, the family managed to secure itself, to survive and operate even in abnormal situations when other social groups and organisations failed to support its existence and functions. Fostering the links on a kinship-based networking of families, re-establishing extended families has attained a great importance for survival and for taking the place of social services and other disordered and weakened institutions. In a situation of extraordinary impoverishment, mass unemployment, insecurity and loss of manifold social networks, individuals have come to see family

as their irreplaceable, sole and chief support. The escape to privacy was linked with strategies of survival and avoiding the stressful public sphere. All the above contributed to keeping families and marriages during the whole process of sociocide more intact than would have been expected in normal conditions of a modern life. Consequently, the divorce rate, which had been rising since the 1970s and through the 1980s, began diminishing with the outbreak of the crises; the price of preserving the (extended) family and marriage in turbulent times and contaminated social and ethical circumstances has been very high, in the sense of losing the emancipatory potential of qualitative changes and improvements in gender relations (Milić 2004).

Family and kinship networks took over various social functions that had previously been institutionalised. Mere survival was followed by processes of re-privatisation (the return of various social functions into the family) and re-traditionalisation (the traditional extended family was revived thanks to the impacts of pauperisation – a lack of housing, a lack of money for renting flats and living on one's own, a lack of money for everyday life, etc.). The process of re-patriarchalisation also occurred through strengthening the 'other side of the coin' of the traditional female role – the female as prostitute – in the form of a massive rise in sex trafficking[3] and new forms of violence and sexual abuse. The militarisation at the public level and the rise of aggression at the private level – accompanied by a 'self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy' – represented the decomposition of the emancipatory anti-patriarchal elements in family and public life and the strengthening of both the old and new patriarchy at the macro as well as the micro level (Blagojević 2002: 255).

According to the aforementioned surveys, family changes have been regressive in structural and normative terms. A drastic increase in the number of extended families took place, now making up one-third of all households. Survival strategies have led towards the revival of family-kinship networks and their positing as the framework of individual existence, which hindered the promotion of individual needs, desires and identities. There has also been a drastic fall in the share of nuclear families with one or two children – from 65 per cent in 1971, to just 31.7 per cent of all households today. Additionally, elderly households have become more numerous (more than 50 per cent of them consist of retired people and 72 per cent of them are over the age of 60). Couples without children make up almost 25 per cent of households (again a rise), and most of them consist of retired people. One-parent families make up less than 10 per cent, and consist of a combination of a child/widowed parent or a child/divorced mother (Milić 2004).

The nuclear family (comprising 3.5 members on the average) was in the 1970s and the 1980s the motor of changes towards modern values and ways of life; it used to be the most vital family form from the

perspective of modern codes of fertility, childbearing, upbringing and socialisation. Instead of further modernising processes and changes of the nuclear family in the direction of deepening partnership relations and opting for alternative family and household forms that seem to offer more gender equality, a retrograde and paradoxical trend in the case of the nuclear family happened: towards, on one hand, smaller units of older people without reproductive capacity and, on the other, antimodern extended families.

In accordance with the strong presence of the patriarchal matrix, marriage is highly valued and most people wish to become married. Alternative forms of partnership are rare, and serve rather as a preparatory phase for marriage (Tomanović 2002; Milić 2002).

Somewhat divergent trends have been found in the most urban regions of Belgrade, indicating a decline in the universality of marriage, as well as an increase in extramarital childbearing, especially during the last decade of the twentieth century. There are also some changes in marital modes, in the sense of the increasingly frequent choice of alternative models of consensual unions, like the 'living apart together' (LAT) model, cohabitation and extramarital family model. However, these changes do not reflect the meaning of partnership as a relationship based on love, equal rights and mutual respect, but are more conceived as a short-lasting life goal, as a preparatory stage leading to marriage, which could easily become influenced by the ideology of patriarchy. Still, there was an evident change in attitudes towards consensual unions, indicating that a departure from the traditional value system has taken place (though a certain value confusion was also present), and has had impacts on the behaviour of individuals and the quality of relations within couples and among social groups (Milić 2004; see also Bobić 2003: 214).

Another important transformation of marriage is linked with the evident postponement of marriage and childbearing (the aging of nuptiality and fertility), and there is also a significant increase in the percentage of the single people (Bobić 2004: 375).[4] The drop in fertility has occurred simultaneously with a fall of divorce rates. The former trend has been documented by long-term indicators; the latter[5] was more related to a prolonged crisis and with a gradual improvement in the socio-economic situation after 2000, it started to change (Bolčić and Milić 2002; Milić 2004). The trend of postponing the moment of marriage has occurred not only due to existential problems, but also due to women's prolonged education and new cultural patterns.

The educational situation of women has been improving. One-third of women have finished high school (approximately 5 per cent with a university degree). The rise in number of highly educated women after the Second World War was extremely rapid (from 1962 to 1991, more than 40 per cent of highly professionalised specialisation – in the fields of

medicine, law, etc. – belonged to women, and in 1992 more than a half of specialisations were by women; in same period, 30 per cent of MA and 20 per cent of PhD degrees belonged to women, and in 1992 women received 40 per cent of all MA diplomas, and 34 per cent of PhD diplomas (see Statistical Yearbook: 1993).[6]

Indicators concerning women's active participation in work outside the home are controversial: around 40 per cent of women were active in the labour market in 1991, but over half of the female population consisted of economically dependent housewives. However, there had been a trend of diminishing economic dependence of women up to the 1990s, and a strong trend of their massive return into the household from then onwards (especially of older, less-educated women). An opposite trend has also been noted, that has a significant emancipatory potential, of a comparatively high rate of women entering the free-market economy (especially when younger and well-educated women are concerned). Namely, with the growth of private entrepreneurship since the late 1990s, women have emerged as proprietors of more than 30 per cent of newly established private firms (often as co-owners with husbands and family members). Highly educated women consider their career very important and experience a conflict between their career and maternity; most women give priority to the latter (Blagojević 2002: 205).

Parenthood is extremely important and families in Serbia have been declaratively child-centered. Most of the childcare falls on the shoulders of mothers, but the share is fairer when playing with kids and out-of-school activities are concerned. Women generally accept the model of self-sacrifice, which essentially means unequal spending of their basic human resources: energy, time, health and creativity (Blagojević 2002: 181–204).

Parenthood thus turns out to be the most important source of satisfaction for women; it gives meaning to life and meaning to self-sacrifice. Self-sacrificing, paradoxically, becomes the condition for the individualisation of women, for their escape from both the anonymity and chaos of the public sphere. '*Self-sacrificing micro matriarchy* implies not only that families are "mother-centred" but also that there is a structure of authority that is hidden (not to threaten or offend the patriarchy) but active, that women achieve a great amount of *private power*, especially over their offspring, that there is a large amount of *dependence* on women, that there is an inclination towards matrilineal kinship, and that women actually achieve their domination through self-sacrifice' (Blagojević 2002: 255–257).

All in all, the transformation of parenthood in Serbia has not been directed towards de-traditionalisation and individualisation; yet, among well-educated parents and gender-sensitive women and couples an awareness of the importance of a child's autonomous personality ex-

ists, and parenthood does lead towards de-traditionalisation (Tomanović 2004: 347–348).

The child's position in the Serbian family has been measured in the studies cited above via the categories of children's rights as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The personal rights of children to the freedom of thought, individuality and privacy are constrained by the dominance of the traditional patriarchal collectivist culture which still largely looks upon the child as a silent family member without individuality of its own and thereby also without the right to privacy (Tomanović 2002).

To sum up the results of three aforementioned empirical surveys: most gender equality has been achieved in education and high professionalism, but generally the process of emancipation has been stopped and the re-traditionalisation and renewed marginalisation of women have been progressing. Protracted crises, war, sanctions and pauperisation have made conditions considerably more difficult for education, employment, financial independence, getting married and divorced, for decisions on childbearing and upbringing. Chances for democratic changes in family structures have been significantly curtailed.

The first feminist empirical study, which was focused directly on comparing male and female social positions and quality of life, was conducted under the title: *The Gender Barometer in Serbia 2006: Social Position of Men and Women* (Blagojević 2006). According to the author, the focal points of the research were the social position and life quality of women and men in Serbia, which was put in a broader context of analysing the transformation of gender regime in Serbia, the country considered as a society in transition and also a semi-periphery of Europe. The sample was representative for Serbia (Vojvodina and Central Serbia) and consisted of 1,500 examinees, ages 20 to 50, which is a period of active life and employment.[7]

The results of this more specified empirical survey and feminist analysis have been, however, similar to the ones brought by the three aforementioned more-general sociological surveys. They indicate the kept-on dominance of the patriarchal gender regime, but also certain emancipatory trends and appearances in gender roles and relationships. However, this empirical survey offers more direct and clear indicators about the inter-relation of family structures, gender relations and civil society development. The core findings about a dominant gender regime in the Serbian society are characterised by the following:

Examined in regard to households, there are relatively small distinctions in the integral economic position of men and women, because they are dominantly interlocked with belonging to a family, which 'offsets' gender disparities. The biggest economic disparities arise in cases when there is an absence of the specific 'family mediation': single mothers,

unemployed young women, elderly women living in single households, women who are taking care of the sick and reliant family members and women who are not married, etc.

High acceptance of women's employment has been 'the standard', which is the consequence of high economic activity of women during the period of communism, and after communism, but also the necessity of the family's survival, having in mind that one income is not sufficient in most cases. However, this does not constitute high acceptance of a successful career for women. Women's income is most often perceived as 'additional' (Blagojević 2006: 5–6).

Examined from the individual point of view, economic disparities between men and women are great in comparison to employment/unemployment and ownership. There are sharp differences in favour of men concerning their position in the labour market, private property, registered private firms and family inheritance: 50 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women from the sample own a car, 18 per cent of men and 5 per cent of women own real estate, 27 per cent of men and 8 per cent of women own a house and 22 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women own a flat.

Gender disparities on a level of everyday life are very visible in the domain of reproductive labour (unpaid house labour, care and nurturing). Women, regardless of whether or not they are employed or of the level of their education still perform the majority of the household work. This is not only because of 'traditionalism', but also because of the eroded and undeveloped system of institutional support to the family.

Strong authority of women within the family ('self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy') has been based on the high investment of women's resources into the family, as well as the high dependency of the other family members on these resources; there are high expectations of both women and men that the woman needs to be the 'cornerstone' of the family, and also high expectations of both men and women that a woman should 'sacrifice herself for the sake of the children' and be 'a good housewife'.[8]

The high inclination of the general population towards the family and towards the children has been an agenda; however, this inclination does not necessarily include the high quality of family relations and family life as a whole.

The patriarchal matrix is shown in attitudes about the share of responsibility in the private sphere, in partnership relations and parenthood. Both men and women think that men have 'more important' jobs than women do; that men contribute more than women do to solving housing problems, securing the family budget, exerting authority over children or making important decisions. However, a profound change in the pattern of sharing responsibility is also visible, as there is a rather high percentage of responses among men and women stating that they decide 'together' about crucial things such as large investments.

Concerning violence in family life, both men and women in the sample say (both 40 per cent) that there had been no violence in their parents' families. When asked about their own family, 85 per cent of men and 78.8 per cent of women say there is less violence than there used to be in their families of orientation.

The high inclination of the general population towards the children does not necessarily include a high quality of parent–children relationships. According to this survey, physical punishment of children is still existent in Serbia: only 45.8 per cent of women and 47.5 percent of men in the sample say that they have never beaten their children. This data clearly shows a patriarchal matrix in treating kids as subordinate, where providing love and patience goes together with expecting obedience, while the failure to obey must be punished. These indicators are negative from the perspective of democratisation of the structure of the family and anti-authoritarian model of childrearing, as well as from the point of view of civil society development.

High inclination especially among men has existed towards the maintenance of social networks, close relationships and exchange with the relatively wide (although lessening in times of transition) scope of relatives, neighbours and friends in order to reduce the negative effects of the surrounding. According to this survey, social networks of men have become wider over the past five years (between 2000 and 2005), while the opposite has happened with the social networks of women (although women in the sample are proportionally younger). This speaks greatly about women's lack of free time, energy and capacity for public activities and social networking. Indicators of social networking and political activity show rather low capacities for participatory democracy, especially among women; these are quite unfavourable signs for the development of civil society.

There is also a higher inclination towards social and political activism among the men in the sample, and higher inclination towards self-isolation in a private sphere among women. Men are much more active than women in public life, especially when activities in political parties and the local community are considered.

However, where younger women in the sample are concerned, there is a very evident decline in reproductive work; there is the revision of priorities – especially in the younger educated female population – with career and economic autonomy becoming per se more important (and even more important than family and children) along with political activism and participation in civic activism.

An intensive change in gender relations in the younger generations has been at stake. The emphasis is put on the need to create a balance between family and professional life, and there is even an increase in men being more involved in the private sphere and privacy (as a response to

the 'crisis of masculinity'), as well as an increase in women being more involved in the public sphere and political life. Among young men and women especially, a high inclination of men and especially women has been expressed towards education and professional development.

Due to the sample in this empirical survey, the massive unemployment of the young, particularly women, together with all the indices related to labour and private property, sum up to a quite unfavourable picture of gender equality and the available possibility of building anti-patriarchal family structures. However, emancipatory trends have been visible especially among the young, employed and well-educated representatives of both genders, and especially among the female population.

To sum up, this empirical survey convincingly demonstrates the general dominance of the patriarchal matrix in private and public life, but it also points to certain moves towards more gender equality in private and public life, and towards more active participation of women in political life and civil society activism.

Civil Society and the Feminist Movement in Contemporary Serbia

Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the former Yugoslavia was relatively open towards the West and experienced rather strong modernising processes in its economy, culture, family and education. Such modernisation processes and influences resulted in the emergence of some initial elements of civil society (a suppressed civil society, so to speak), particularly in Slovenia (the most advanced republic), and partially in Croatia and Serbia as well (see Pavlović 1995). The discourse and practice of this (suppressed) civil society spread over the country, beyond and despite republic borders as a tool for fighting the authoritarian communist (Titoist and post-Titoist) regime. However, at the time of Yugoslavia's disintegration, a differentiation, realignment and contextual redefinition of the language of civil society and its protagonists began, either towards independence and ethno-nationalist movements, or towards anti-war and other civic movements and NGOs (Vujadinović 2005; Jakšić 2005; Pavlović 2005).

In Serbia, civil society – counterbalanced and endangered by ethno-nationalist populism – took longer to acquire more massive proportions. After a decade of constant struggle, however, it turned into a decisive force of social pressure on the Milošević regime (and the divided opposition) – especially after the student and civic protests in 1996–1997. Little by little, it became capable of contributing significantly to the final downfall of the regime in December 2000, combining democratic methods (elections) with non-violent, civic activities (Pavlović 2004a; 2004b; 2005).

Feminist groups and NGOs used to be among the most developed and active social movements in the former Yugoslavia. They preserved their mutual connections even after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, in spite of the wars and the bloody disintegration of the country as a whole, and they acted together against the wars and the ethno-nationalist policies in the region (see Women in Black 2006a; 2006b).[9]

Feminist initiatives and NGOs in Serbia have been strongly and massively present since the 1970s (Papić 1989; Spasić 2003).[10] They have been working not only on awakening female consciousness, but also on promoting anti-war and human rights culture. Today, they work in the area of women's human rights, women's political participation, the issue of family violence and child abuse, and they initiate multiple public campaigns for uncovering and publicly denouncing violence, for preventing it and also solving the problem through joint efforts of the police, social services, and legal and state representatives. Some feminist organisations are focused on gender-sensitive education and research. The strongly internationally networked organisation Women in Black has been active in Serbia and the region since the beginning of the wars in the 1990s against war, ethno-nationalism, militarism and in favour of realising transitional justice (see Women in Black 2007a; 2006b).

Feminist organisations, especially Women in Black, often act in cooperation with the most influential mixed-gender NGOs in an attempt to fight against public neglect of war crimes (such as Srebrenica), against Nazi and fascist extreme right activities. For example, the so-called G8 is a group of eight NGOs – the Belgrade Circle, Center for Cultural Decontamination, Civic Initiative, Humanitarian Law Center, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM) and Women in Black – that formed a coalition in 2005. It mostly has focused on the responsibility of the Serbian regime for war and war crimes,[11] as well as on transitional justice, the rule of law and democracy.

However, NGOs with anti-emancipatory ideas on gender issues are also springing up in Serbia. The falling fertility rate, among the lowest in Europe, provides a strong stimulus to extreme-right NGOs and clerical campaigns against women's reproductive rights and generally against gender equality and democratisation of family structures (see Women in Black 2006a).

For example, the NGO Survival – Struggling against 'White Plague' blames women for killing unborn babies. A curiosity is that this NGO is led by a retired Law School professor of Family Law, who is also a poet. In the period of the Yugoslav 'real-socialist' regime, he was an academic well known for his promoting modern family law and insisting on social policy measures in favour of protecting women. Today, he misuses 'poetry' and composes for his NGO slogans like the following:

Why you, dear Mother,
Killed so many glorious great Men;
Instead of them, from your Lap
A dried Branch has sprung.
(www.opstanak.org.yu)

These retrograde processes have been supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church (*Srpska pravoslavna crkva*, or the SPC). A drastic rise in religiosity[12] (replacing communist ideology) from the 1990s has been followed by an increasingly conspicuous presence of religious rituals in private and public life. Religious instruction was introduced in primary schools in 2002. The SPC has been obtaining ever more influence in state policies, education, cultural patterns and social life. The SPC has been using this great impact for affirming traditional gender roles and family structures; promoting collectivist, ethno-nationalist, militarist values and anti-modern ways of life; recommending educational models based on religion and uncritical obedience; opposing emancipatory tendencies in human rights protection – including the legal regulation of the right to abortion, provisions against sexual and family violence and against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

However, there has also been ever-stronger opposition to these extreme-rightist attacks on gender equality and the democratisation of family life. Feminist movements and women in general react strongly when their already achieved rights to birth control and abortion are endangered.[13]

Women in Black initiated a public campaign against the clericalisation of the Serbian state and society, and the so-called Coalition for a Secular State was established in 2006 as a form of cooperation between feminist and mixed-gender associations. This Coalition published a booklet with quotations from written or oral public announcements of the highest representatives of the SPC. Here are some quotations of Patriarch Pavle[14] and other high-level Church officials: 'The covering of the female head has been a symbol of women's obedience towards their husband and the Church; that is a sign of the men's power over women'; 'By commanding a woman to be obedient and compromising towards her husband – in spite of all his bad features – Christianity tends to bring peace into marital relations and re-establish marital happiness'; 'Great poets among women can be counted only on one hand'; 'The Church considers any sexual relation outside of marriage as debauchery'; 'Feminists opt for killing unborn kids. Fortunately, they are not in any way connected to the essence of the Serbian people'; 'Atheism bears the guilt for wars, impoverishment and moral collapse'; 'Many mothers who did not want to have more than one child, today pull out their hair and cry desperately over their sons lost in these conflicts of war; they often damn God and people for that, but forget to blame themselves for not bearing more kids

in order to have kept some alive for consolation' (Coalition for Secular State 2007).

Feminist groups, feminist intellectuals and civil society activists initiate different public campaigns and initiatives for promoting gender equality in public discourse, in school textbooks,[15] the media,[16] political parties,[17] state policies, political documents and in the legal system.

Concerning state policies and legal and political documents, some advances have been made between 2000 and 2007 in an attempt to cope with the EU legal and institutional standards. Here is the overview (Blagojević 2007) of most relevant state provisions for gender equality: In 2001, a new Labour Law was adopted regulating, in an improved manner, equal pay for equal work, protection of personal integrity and childcare leave (introduced as complementary to maternity leave); it also included articles against discrimination and sexual harassment; in 2002 the Vojvodina Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality was established as the first institutional gender equality mechanism in Serbia; Act on the Provincial Ombudsperson (one of the five deputy-ombudspersons is the deputy for gender equality) was passed by the Vojvodina Provincial Parliament; in 2003, the Criminal Code was amended to sanction domestic violence, as well as the failure to pay alimony to single mothers; marital rape became a crime in the new Code as well; it was also amended to include sexual harassment and trafficking in human beings as new criminal acts. In October 2003, the Serbian Government adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy, which was also sensitive to gender aspects of poverty, and an inter-ministerial body, the Council for Gender Equality, was established; in 2004, the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality was finally constituted in the Serbian Parliament. In 2005, the Council for Gender Equality was constituted under the new government, and created a National Action Plan for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality. The final draft for the Gender Equality Act had waited since 2007 to be sent by the Government to Parliament, and was finally adopted in December 2009. The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination entered into force in March 2009.

We can add to this overview the legal changes in the Family Law, announced in 2005, which introduced civic law protection from violence in the family; this change has been complementary with changes in the new Criminal Code, which introduced the crime called 'violence in the family' (Draškić 2007: 61).

When speaking about female and feminist activism in Serbia, it is important to keep in mind that women have been leading and taking an active part in the most prominent NGOs which fight against ethnonationalism and for the protection of human rights, the affirmation of democratic reforms and for democratic political culture. Women have

led some of the most influential NGOs, such as the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, the Centre for Cultural Decontamination, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM Serbia), and the Humanitarian Law Fund. These women have demonstrated genuine courage in their struggle for human rights and the rule of law, and especially for transitional justice. They and their NGOs are often personally attacked by the extreme right. Well-known women from some of these organisations are denounced by extreme-rightist political parties and their sympathisers as 'being witches' because of their being on the frontline of speaking publicly about war crimes and war criminals, signs of fascism or human rights violations.

This fact indicates a high level of women's political participation in the field of civil society, and also delineates favourable prospects for promoting gender sensitivity inside civil society.

Conclusion: Family Structures and Civil Society Perspectives in Serbia after 2000

Serbia has been an example of how regressive tendencies of re-patriarchialisation, re-traditionalisation and clericalisation can slow down the processes of emancipation in family and gender relations, and in the development of civil society as well. These negative trends have been working systematically against the development of autonomous personality in family life, against forming democratic family and non-authoritarian gender and family relations.

However, emancipatory potentials – though suppressed – have still been present. The self-awareness which women had gained between the 1960s and the 1990s – thanks to mass education, mass entrance into the labour market and their rather well-developed social security based on advanced social legislation (even more protective of women and children than in Western welfare states) – should not be treated as something completely lost during the long period of social and value devastation. Women have still been proportionally equally present in higher education and in highly important professions in such fields as medical care, engineering, higher education and the judiciary. Women were likewise proportionally equally active during civic and student protests in the 1990s, and assumed a prominent role in overturning Milošević's authoritarian regime in 2000 (Lazić 1999).

Women have been equally visible or even over-represented in the NGO sector, and power relations have become far more balanced in the field of civil society than in political, economic and other public domains. Gender inequality has been less prevalent in civic movements and NGOs than in other institutions and organisations of public life.[18]

Civil society actors, feminist groups and individual feminist intellectuals have been making great efforts and producing considerable impact on changing the patriarchal matrix in public discourse, in media, political life, state policies and legal regulation. They undoubtedly have contributed to the gradual spreading of anti-patriarchal values and practice in public and private life. In addition, the official state policy has been aiming towards EU integration (although with certain ambivalence), and has, insofar, contributed to articulating public discourse and official documents in a gender-sensitive way. Of course, all steps in favour of gender equality after the democratic change in 2000 – which have been proposed by the governments and also initiated and intensified by the civil society sector – have had a positive impact on family relations.

If the democratic political reforms and economic improvement will continue in the forthcoming period and if the process of EU accession will be accomplished in the near future, the emancipatory potential in family structures and the development of civil society, as well as their mutual relation, will gain a crucial stimulus and begin to prosper.

Notes

1. 'Actually existing socialism', 'developed socialism', 'state socialism' or 'real socialism' (the last formulation emerged as the favoured one), implied that the economic, political and social make-up of the Soviet bloc societies was in fact a distinct mode of production. Its defining features were the primacy of politics over economics and the intertwining of the two, the absence of a multi-party system, of the rule of law and civil society, as well as an absence of a free-market economy. State ownership of productive means in fact led to a property vacuum. Absent ownership rights fostered corruption, eroded motivation, distorted managerial priorities and diverted state energies into control rather than planning and directive functions. The primacy of the *nomenklatura* system undermined professional and expertise criteria of performance, dissipated the mechanisms of accountability and vested power in the hands of groups who ruled this monocentric society and whose aim was the maximisation of power over a non-controllable economy. Party, state bureaucracy, security apparatus and military formed a power élite, presiding over a bureaucratically centralised, segmented society. Extensive economic growth exhausted the natural and human resources of countries tied into patterns of dependence devoid of an economic logic but rooted within the over-riding needs of the military-industrial complex. Economic interests, rather than being based upon economic rationality, were distorted by the state-controlled re-distributional mechanism. Finely graded occupational and hierarchical privilege incorporated most of the population into an artificial set of dependencies (Marshall 1998).
2. The Institute for Social Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade (ISI FF) conducted three successive surveys – from 1991 to 1995, 1996 to 2000 and 2001 to 2004. The idea was to scan transition capacities and tendencies, including trends in changing family structures and gender relations. These studies have been collected in: Bolčić 2002 [1995]; Bolčić and Milić 2002; Milić 2004.

3. Serbia, because of its better economic situation at the beginning of 1990s, was for some time one of the main destination countries for sex trafficking within Eastern Europe. However, later on Serbia became mainly a transit country, both to neighbouring territories where the raging war brought a large military presence, and to Western Europe. A dramatic decrease in the standard of living from the 1990s and during the next fifteen or twenty years, accompanied by the impacts of wars in the Western Balkans region, criminalisation of the state and society, rise of corruption and grey economy, institutional disorganisation and underdeveloped rule of law and an increase in uncertainty, overall fluidity, instability and war victimisation have led to the rise in sex trafficking over the last decades. In addition, the international isolation during the regime of former president Milošević meant the severing of ties with Interpol, other international organisations and other countries' police forces, and this also contributed to human trafficking. And finally, the post-war militarisation and the large presence of international organisations further contributed to the growth of sex trafficking in the Balkans.

   In a contemporary period, Serbia has been a transit country for victims trafficked from Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia and destined for Italy and other countries in Western Europe. However, internal slow economic recovery and incomplete democratic transformation of Serbia have led also to the increase of internal sex trafficking of Serbian women and girls during the last few years (Nikolić-Ristanović 2002).

4. People who have never been married.

5. The long period of keeping family relations 'in peace' and 'in one piece'– just for the sake of mere survival (i.e. by suppressing inner conflicts, mostly achieved by female subordination and women's double burden) – has been coming, after the democratic changes in 2000, to a close. Anđelka Milić writes: 'This is a new moment in family transformation, giving rise to hopes that modernizing trends have not been completely annihilated in the destructive processes of the past decade.' (Milić 2004: 315).

6. However, there is still a high rate of illiteracy: almost one of every ten women is illiterate, and one in five is poorly educated; more than half of illiterate women are over age 65 (Statistical Yearbook 1993).

7. The aim of this survey, conducted by the feminist NGO sector, was to serve as the empirical basis for articulating gender politics within the framework of democratic reforms and key policy strategies and documents of the Serbian state, concerned with overcoming poverty and gender inequality in Serbia (National Action Plan 2007–2010; see Statistical Yearbook 1993).

8. Readiness to sacrifice for their children is very prominent in both men and women: 73 per cent and 80 per cent of the sample, respectively (see Blagojević 2006).

9. Between 1975 and 1979 the first public discussions and lectures on gender topics started in Belgrade; the first international feminist conference in the communist world was held in Belgrade in 1978; several gatherings of Yugoslav feminists happened in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade during the 1980s; in 1990, SOS lines for women and children victims of violence were launched; in 1992, different women's organisations took part in anti-war activism, building solidarity networks and bridges with women in other Yugoslav republics and the war zones; in 1993, with the war in Bosnia raging, the SOS line began working with women victims of rape in war; in 1994, the ZaMir (ForPeace) e-mail network was established in Zagreb, serving as the only means of communication among peace activists and organisations during wartime in the former Yugoslavia (see Blagojević 2007).

The International Network of Women in Black has also been very active as well as the Women's Peace Network (Coalition between Kosova Women's Network and Women in Black Network-Serbia). In July 2006, Women's Regional Lobby for Peace, Security, and Justice in Southeastern Europe was formed. It was comprised of women activists from civil society and democratic parties from the Balkan region (Albania, BiH, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia). *See* Women in Black 2007a.

10. In 1979–1980, the first feminist research group in Belgrade, Women and Society, was founded; in 1990, the Belgrade Women's Lobby was established; in 1990, a short-lived Women's Party appeared; in 1991, the founding assembly of a shadow Women's Parliament was organised; in 1992, the NGO Women and Society launched its Centre for Women Studies; in 1993, Women's Studies were officially introduced into the academic curriculum; in 1994, the feminist publishing house '94' was established, publishing several feminist journals: *The Feminist Notebook*, *Women's Studies*, and *ProFemina*; in the same year, the Incest Trauma Centre and Women's Network were founded; in 1996, the first shelter for women refugees was opened; in 1997, new centres for women's studies in Novi Sad and Niš were opened; in 1999, The Voice of Difference – a group for the promotion of women's political rights – was founded (see Blagojević 2007). During the last few years, many new SOS hotlines, shelters and safe houses have been opened. Large-scale media campaigns against family violence and sexual abuse have been supported and initiated by already existing feminist groups, NGOs and networks.

11. The Declaration on Srebrenica parliamentary proposition from June 2005 was the most noteworthy initiative of G8. However, the NGO draft Declaration to that effect, tabled on their behalf by two MPs in 2005, was never put on the Parliament's agenda. The Serbian parliament has narrowly passed the *Declaration* condemning the killing of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in *Srebrenica* only after five years. With 127 votes to 21 (out of the total of 250) the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia adopted on 31 March 2010 the Declaration on the Condemnation of the Crime in Srebrenica.

12. In the 1991 national census, there were just 8.5 per cent 'convinced believers', while according to the 2002 national census 99 per cent of the Serbian population said they were religious (see National Census in 1991 and 2002, Statistical Office of Serbia; see also Marković 2005).

13. In 1995, a draft law severely restricting women's right to abortion was on the legislative agenda. Feminist groups organised public signings of a petition against the adoption of this law, and it was signed by tens of thousands of women in Belgrade and other cities. The petition succeeded and the draft was withdrawn.

14. Patriarch Pavle was born on 11 September 1914 (as Gojko Stojčević) in the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, Austria-Hungary. He died on 15 November 2009. He was the spiritual leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church. His full title was His Holiness the Archbishop of Peć, Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci, Serbian Patriarch Pavle.

15. Feminist academics, historians and linguists have done critical research of the textbooks for primary and high schools; see, for example, Stojanović 2006.

16. For example, a few years ago the daily *Blic* started a public campaign for choosing the 100 most prestigious women, as well as for electing a 'Women's Government in Shadow' from the list. This Government has been operating through voicing, in *Blic*, opinions of the female 'ministers in shadow' about relevant political and economic topics.

17. All political parties have been considering 30 per cent quotas for female political representation; however, after the January 2007 parliamentary elections, only 20.4 per cent of women were elected to Parliament, and only one party (the G17 Plus) had over 30 per cent of women MPs. There were four women ministers in that Serbian government (out of twenty-three). After the early parliamentary elections, held in May 2008, 21.6 per cent of women were elected to Parliament, and there are five women ministers (out of twenty-two, plus four deputy ministers) in the new Serbian government.

18. There is an evidence of a lack of gender sensitivity and democratic political culture even among female activists in democratic political parties: the NGO Women in Black recently conducted a study titled: 'Women, Security, Reproductive Rights and Transitional Justice'. The aim was to examine statements and value orientations of politically active women (democratic female political elite) concerning their acquaintance with Security Council Resolution 1325 and the issue of female security, as well as about reproductive rights and transitional justice. The survey discovered poor knowledge among these politically active and above-average educated women relating to questions of transitional justice and Resolution 1325 (70 per cent have not even heard of it). The survey also showed an especially low level of democratic political culture among women active in democratic parties (an uncritical acceptance of their parties' official statements, a strong suspicion of the NGO sector, negative sentiments towards Women in Black and their feminist and anti-militarist views); and also, their low interest in the questions of female human rights, and extremely poor awareness of the sense and importance of transitional justice (Women in Black 2007b: 69–92).

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