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### **Civil Society and Its Gender Dimension**

Current social sciences differentiate the notion of “sex” as of the biological understanding versus “gender” that denotes the social and sociological phenomenon of the sex. Being one of the basic dimensions of the social structure of human society, in conjunction with several other cultural and socio-demographic data (race, age, ethnic belonging, social strata, etc.) it is essential foundation of any social system whatsoever. Always based upon certain cultural background, this dimension is imbedded in every essential social institution of the society and determines social relationships between the men and the women there. [1].

Currently gender studies is one of the basic tools for the research of any given society. Both social and political sciences pay tribute to “Gender” and consider it as almost equal and important as the “Class” is in terms of history – the main contributor to the stability of the society. For better understanding of social and political processes from gender standpoint there are special tools used for sociological modeling that can clarify the process of formation of social identity and its temporal modifications. Publications of Frances Woolley, Judith Lorber, Gisela Bock and other outstanding scholars give some insights on problematic issues emphasized in current gender studies. [2].

Crises in modern societies make the issue of women’s active participation in social and political processes extremely topical – meaning their broadest possible involvement and particular reflections and examples in terms of their axiology. Till the 60-ies of the last century the gender differences were seldom considered as politically important an issue. Feminist movements can be regarded as the precursor of the concept of gender in its modern understanding. Notwithstanding the fact that the term “Feminism” is newly coined, several alike viewpoints can be traced in almost all cultures however different they may seem, with the starting points in ancient Greek and Chinese civilizations.

As early as in 1405 , in Italy, Christine de Pizzan managed to publish the “Book of the City of Ladies” where she predicted many ideas common for the modern feminism. Telling the stories of many outstanding women of the past the author strongly advocated the right of education for females, especially in the field of political sciences. However, the first organized female movements appeared only in the XIX c. Mary Wollstonecraft’s book “The Vindication of the Rights of Women” written under the influence of the French Revolution is considered as the first text of the modern feminism.

The mid-XIX –c. defined the first topical issue for the female movements – achievement of suffrage rights for the women. This aim was dictated by the analogues progressive system invented for the male population. This time is referred as the first wave of the feminism with the requests of political and legal rights for women equal to men. However, suffrage rights were the most demanded among the females, since it was believed, that legal voting would abolish sexual discrimination and all kinds of superstitions related to the women would be gone as well. The countries with the most developed democratic systems had the strongest female movements, who demanded the same rights as their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers had already had.

The female movement in the USA begun in 1840-es being to some extent backed by the strong abolition campaign of those days. 1848 famous assembly of the American Women in Seneca Falls defined the birth of the female movement in the country. Elizabeth Stanton’s “Declaration of Sentiments” was adopted there, the document that was deliberately mirroring the style and the principles of the Declaration of Freedom and as one of the issues was demanding the suffrage rights for females.

It was in 1850 when the female movement gained strength in the UK. In 1867 The Camber of Commons declined George Stewart Mill’s motion – the Amendment to the Second Act of Reforms that

envisaged granting the suffrage rights to females – the very first legal motion on women suffrage. Following the foundation of the Women's Political and Social Union in the UK headed by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel the female movement was more and more resembling military organization with offensive undertakings.

Living in deep underground in Paris the Pankhursts led so called direct action campaign that involved offence against private property and many public demonstrations undertaken by the suffragist women. [3].

The first wave of feminist movement ended with granting the voting rights to the women. The very first time this happened in New Zealand, where the female got the right to vote as early as in 1893. The 9-th Amendment of the Constitution of the USA gave the same rights to the US women in 1920. As for the UK, similar legislation was enacted in 1918 but the British women wouldn't use this right for ten more years. Although victorious in their demands for suffrage rights the good outcome had somehow weakened female movement. Fighting against many odds women were consolidated around their clear aim and most of their activities were logical and consistent.

Many of the former suffragist activists naively believed that with the right to vote women became fully emancipated. It was in the 60-es of the last century when the women movement experienced revival. Publication of Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" much contributed to the second wave of feminist movement and feministic thinking. The author focused on the "problem that has no name" – that was the sense of frustration and disappointment, even the feeling of being mischievous suffered by lots of women in the US in their roles of housewives, mothers and good spouses. The second wave revealed that the legal and political rights granted to women had not solved "the Feminine Issue".

Feminist ideas and standpoints were gradually becoming more and more radical, sometimes even revolutionary. Publications such as Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics" and Germaine Greer's "Female-Eunuch" were the main contributors in removing all kinds of bonds in researching of so called political issues. The authors were focusing on private, psychological and sexual aspects of female abuse. Not simply political emancipation of females, but real freeing of the women- that was the aim of the second wave of feminism. This aim has had adequate reflection in the latest ideas of feminist movement. As some activists of the field have stated, solely political and legal reforms are hardly enough for the achievement of this aim – radical, even revolutionary social changes are more and more frequently demanded. [4].

Debate on the interconnection of the concepts of civic society and gender is relatively new among scholars. The theory and practice of Civic Society and the respective studies were developed in strictly structural, patriarchal society. From 1980-and 90-es the feminist historians are systematically debating that the civic society as we know it has never been of the inclusive nature, but, alas, has only been the social sphere and structure responsible for equalizing relations between the market, the state and the family, so that it always has been of strictly exclusive/ push-out nature. Civic society, together with the public sphere were monopolized and dominated by the male - the notion of citizenship itself was totally related to the masculine phenomenon. Only private sphere was reserved for the women. Restrictions for the women to enter the public/ official spheres / gain political authority were frequently disguised by the conscription law- every now and then being the perfect way for the male to join political establishment of the country.

The political theorist, prof. Birgit Sauer shares her view in this regard, stating that " the contemporary state is based upon the gender compromise within the civic society that has separated the family from all other social institutions, while at the same time has introduced the hierarchic and gender division of labor – formalizing and naturalizing this kind of social division through the double gender roles/responsibilities. However, throughout the XX century the notion of civil society had been gradually enlarging, including more and more social institutions, the concept has remained the inherent part of the representative regimen that is inseparably connected with the development of capitalist system, male - dominated liberal democracy and patriarchal state (of the universal prosperity /welfare)." [5].

From the 80-es of the last century feminist studies have heavily scrutinized all existing definitions and theories of the civic society. Almost all early attitudes towards the examination of civil society were inclined to ignore gender factors. Publication of some reviews on women's notes was the utmost they were doing- essentially women scholars. Study of the history of feminist movement reveals undeniable

correlation the development of civil society with that movement. Activities of feminist groups of the late XIX – early XX centuries represent the perfect examples of founding of successful a-social organizations-parts of the civil society, and through them reaching out to broader audience, plainly articulating their demands, defining and defending their interests.

As Czech president Vaclav Havel puts it “The civil society by be based upon the power of the powerless.[6]. This aspect has most notably been revealed in regards of the women. They started their struggle while powerless, deprived of political and economic rights, including suffrage rights, and when their proprietary rights were extremely restricted. However, through their tireless activities the women managed to achieve majority of their demands by forcing the state to enact the respective laws guaranteeing equality with the male. Currently in all of the developed countries legal equality is no longer questioned. However, this did not bring equality in day-to day life. Assemblies, gatherings, demonstrations, manifestations, establishing of the organizations, diverse forms of expression and involvement/participation- all aimed at state authority on the one hand and towards changing the public opinion on the other.

All the obstacles and odds that the women have to face in economic, political and cultural spheres, extremely low percentage of women representation in the decision-making bodies indicate that gender inequality has got much deeper roots. We do sincerely believe and think that the areas provided by the civil society are sufficient to fight against those odds, to uproot inequality and discrimination as the factors hindering further democratization of the society.

Critical level of backwardness in regards of gender equality clearly indicates ineffectiveness of the existing legal framework and the need of new strategies that must reach out the various spheres of civil society existing beyond the official and signal systems. Some of the scholars think that despite of several progressive steps taken, the term “Civil Society” still remains the notion that is “Gender Neutral. ”

As A. Philips has stated “Terminology used for the description of civil society frequently gives a picture of a place where females don’t exist at all... Scholars of early days dealing with the theory of social agreement (usually referred to as the synonym for the term of “political society”) were defining it as a means for transformation of humans from natural into the organized stage, when the regulations were introduced and enacted through the laws and obligations invented and imposed by the humans themselves. The difference between those two stages of existence was given as a background where women became less noticeable and more subordinated to the men”. [7]

The first researches on gender issues, civil societies and democratization were undertaken in Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe in 1980-es. The research results have proven that in both regions women were much more actively involved in opposition and dissident movements that were the main contributors in bringing down authoritative regimes and dictatorships. On the other hand, declaration of the period in between 1975-1985 by the UN as of the Decade of the Women boosted female activities. Various initiative groups of women were established in many countries, transforming them in more organized and mobilized groups focused around their particular aims and goals.

The first type of informal organizations was directed towards the destruction of the existing state of affairs and rules, while the second type was basically focused on gaining more rights and establishing institutions that would guarantee their practical exercise within the existing system. For instance women in Latin America were more occupied with fighting poverty, inflation and rising prices through increasing influence over the public spheres. “When in Brazil women get involved in organizing campaigns against the soaring living costs and supported the demands to respect humans rights, military were prone to give more freedom of action to the female associations than to student or labor organizations that were considered as threats to the national security. [8]

In Central and Eastern Europe women lacked separate female political organizations, however they took significant part in fighting against the oppressive regimes in their countries. That’s why in this region women were more focused on public spheres. They vigorously protested against their governments, were active members of opposition organizations, even the private sector has been used as a means to fight the regimes. However “the leading positions for women were still restricted”. [9].

For instance, in “Solidarity” opposition movement of Poland women made almost half of its members, however in higher hierarchy of the organization few women were admitted. As several

researchers have noted, despite their active involvement in the process of democratization no any significant enhancement and enlargement of women's rights have happened. "When political actors are not organized into the establishment and the institutionalized politics is inactive, women are active in public spheres. As soon as institutionalization is in place and formal democracy is back the males- these "natural" main actors of the representative democracy regain public stage". [10].

In the newly independent countries - members of the former Soviet Union, to which belongs Georgia, women organizations have become significant elements and integral parts of the civic societies. During the period of transition those organizations almost entirely depended on the donations and aid coming from the countries of developed democracy. However, increase in women's activities was also backed by rising awareness on gender issues, implementation of civic education programs throughout these countries, introduction of particular courses on gender studies in schools and higher education establishments and inaction of respective legal norms in their current legislations.

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**Гражданское общество и его гендерное измерение**

Современные социальные науки различают понятие «пол» в биологическом понимании и «гендер», обозначающий социальный и социологический феномен пола. Являясь одним из основных измерений социальной структуры человеческого общества, она в совокупности с рядом других культурных и социально-демографических данных (раса, возраст, этническая принадлежность, социальные слои и т. д.) составляет существенную основу любой социальной системы. Всегда основанное на определенном культурном фоне, это измерение заложено в каждом существенном социальном институте общества и определяет в нем социальные отношения между мужчинами и женщинами. В настоящее время гендерные исследования являются одним из основных инструментов исследования любого общества. Как социальные, так и политические науки отдают должное «гендеру» и считают его таким же почти равным и важным, как «класс» с точки зрения истории — главный фактор стабильности общества. Для лучшего понимания социально-политических процессов с гендерной точки зрения используются специальные инструменты социологического моделирования, позволяющие прояснить процесс формирования социальной идентичности и ее временные модификации. Публикации Фрэнсис Вулли, Джудит Лорбер, Гизелы Бок и других выдающихся ученых дают некоторое представление о проблемных вопросах, на которые обращают внимание современные гендерные исследования.

Кризисные явления в современных обществах делают чрезвычайно актуальным вопрос об активном участии женщин в общественно-политических процессах, имея в виду их максимально широкое вовлечение и частные размышления и примеры с точки зрения их аксиологии. До 60-х годов прошлого века гендерные различия редко рассматривались как политически важный вопрос. Феминистские движения можно считать предшественниками понятия гендера в его современном понимании. Несмотря на то, что термин «феминизм» появился недавно, несколько сходных точек зрения можно проследить почти во всех культурах, какими бы разными они ни казались, с отправными точками в древнегреческой и китайской цивилизациях.

Еще в 1405 году в Италии Кристине де Пицца удалось издать «Книгу города дам», где она предсказала многие идеи, характерные для современного феминизма. Рассказывая истории многих выдающихся женщин прошлого, автор решительно выступала за право женщин на образование, особенно в области политических наук. Однако первые организованные женские движения появились лишь в XIX в. Книга Мэри Уолстонкрафт «Защита прав женщин», написанная под влиянием Французской революции, считается первым текстом современного феминизма.