“You will get as much as you fight for” Demands and Strategies of Hungarian Trade Union Women

by Judith Langowski

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Erasmus Mundus Master’s in Women’s and Gender Studies

Supervisor: Viola Zentai (Central European University)
Co-Supervisor: Teresa Ortiz Gómez (Universidad de Granada)

Budapest, Hungary
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Abstract

The post-socialist transition brought many changes in the labor market structure of Hungary. Privatization and deregulation of the economy had a tremendous impact on the situation of trade unions, destabilizing their function and marginalizing them as policy actors. The development of the capitalist market economy was accompanied by neoliberal welfare policies, which especially impact women's opportunities to combine paid and domestic work. While unions' power declined after state-socialism, Hungarian union women continue to fight for women's equality and improved working conditions.

This thesis analyzes which demands Hungarian trade union women voice on gender equality policy and which strategies they use in their specific institutional contexts. I argue that at the intersection of state-socialist legacies and Europeanized gender equality norms, Hungarian trade union women construct a locally specific understanding of womanhood and women's equality, which influences their demands. In the current adverse context that Hungarian trade unions face, women activists also experience gendered organizational structures in trade unions which limits the influence their possibilities. The women use the separate women's section as a tool to combat gendered organization, according it a function that is adapted to the local institutional environment.

Scholarly literature has so far neglected the experiences of women in trade unions in Central Eastern Europe (CEE). However, specific knowledge on the functions of women's separate organizing can further fruitful cooperation of trade unions' women's movements across European borders and strengthen the implementation of effective gender equality policies. It also contributes to the research on feminisms and women's experiences in specific post-socialist contexts, moving away from universalizing tendencies of Western feminism.

Abstract (Español)

La transición después del socialismo trajo muchos cambios en el mercado laboral de Hungría. Privatización y deregulación de la economía tuvieron un impacto enorme en la situación de sindicatos, desestabilizando su función y marginalizando los sindicatos como actores políticos. El desarrollo del mercado capitalista fue acompañado de políticas sociales neoliberales, cuales especialmente afectan a las oportunidades de mujeres de combinar trabajo pagado y trabajo doméstico. Mientras el poder de los sindicatos disminuyó después del socialismo del estado, mujeres húngaras en sindicatos siguen luchando para la igualdad de la mujer y mejores condiciones de trabajo.

Este trabajo analiza cuales exigencias las mujeres húngaras en sindicatos expresan sobre políticas de igualdad de género y cuales estrategias usan en sus contextos institucionales específicos. Argumento que estas mujeres construyen un entendimiento específico de feminidad y igualdad de mujeres en la intersección de los legados del estado socialista y la europeización de normas de igualdad de género, que influye sus exigencias. En el contexto adverso actual que los sindicatos húngaros confrontan, mujeres activistas también experimentan estructuras de desigualdad en la organización de sindicatos que limitan sus posibilidades de influir. Las mujeres usan la sección de separada para mujeres (*women's section*) como una herramienta para combatir estas estructuras de desigualdad en la organización de sindicatos, dándole una función adaptada a un ambiente institucional local.

La literatura académica ha descuidado las experiencias de mujeres en sindicatos en Europa Este Central (CEE) hasta ahora. Sin embargo, conocimiento específico sobre las estructuras de organización separadas para mujeres puede mejorar la cooperación de mujeres en sindicatos a través de fronteras europeas y reforzar la implementación de políticas de igualdad de género efectivas. También contribuye a la investigación en feminismos y experiencias de mujeres en contextos específicos de possocialismo, alejándose de las tendencias de universalizar que parecen en el feminismo actual del oeste.

Acknowledgments

This thesis closes five years of study in four different countries. I have met many people in this period, many mentors and friends, who inspired me with stories and opened my eyes to many new ideas. After these months of working on the thesis, I can say that much of what I learned in the last five years found its way into the following pages. I am immensely grateful to the opportunities I had to study abroad, learn languages, discover. They opened doors to an exciting future. This thesis is dedicated to all those who were there with me - in Nancy, Santa Cruz, Granada, and Budapest.

All this work would have been impossible without my interview partners from the MASZSZ Women's Section, who generously dedicated their time, energy, and stories. I have learned much more from them than I could write down here.

I am especially thankful to my supervisors, Viola Zentai and Teresa Ortiz, for their interest in my topic, helpful comments and their time. Many thanks to the Academic Writing Center, especially to Sanjay Kumar for the helpful consultations.

I am grateful to Karen Barad for introducing me to the possibilities of Feminist Theory and to everyone at the Gender Studies department in Budapest and the Instituto de la Mujer in Granada for their valuable insights into the field.

I want to thank my parents for always motivating me, reading through the rough first drafts and their support all along the way. Thanks to my sister Eva for keeping me sane. Köszönöm und Danke!

Special thanks to Diego, for all his support, translations, suggestions, critical discussions and evenings on the balcony.

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List of Abbreviations

ASZSZ: Autónom Szakszervezetek Szövetsége - Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions

BDSZ: Bánya- és Energia-, és Ipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete - Trade Union of Mining, Energy, and Industry Workers

ÉDOSZ: Élelmezésipari Dolgozók Szakszervezeteinek Szövetsége - Confederation of Food Industry Workers' Trade Unions

EKSZ: Egységes Közlekedési Szakszervezet - United Transportation Trade Union

EMSZ: Egyesült Média Szakszervezet - United Media Trade Union

ÉSZT: Értelmiségi Szakszervezeti Tömörülés - Bloc of Intellectuals' Trade Unions

HODOSZ: Honvédségi Dolgozók Szakszervezete - Defense Workers' Trade Union

HVDSZ 2000: Helyiipari és Városgazdasági Dolgozók Szakszervezete - Trade Union of Local Industry and Communal Economy Workers

IASZ: Inotai Alumínium Ipari Szakszervezet - Trade Union of the Inota Aluminium Industry

KASZ: Kereskedelmi Alkamazottak Szakszervezete - Retail Employees' Trade Union

KDSZ: Konzervipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete - Trade Union of the Canning Industry Workers

LIGA: Független Szakszervezetek Demokratikus Ligája - Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions

MASZSZ: Magyar Szakszervezeti Szövetség - Hungarian Trade Union Confederation

MOL Bányász: Magyar Olaj- és Gázipari Bányász Szakszervezet - Miners' Union of the Hungarian Oil and Gas Industry

MOSZ: Munkástanácsok Országos Szövetsége - National Federation of Workers' Councils

MSZOSZ: Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége - National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions

PKDSZ: Petrolkémiában, Műanyagfeldolgozásban és Szolgáltatásban Dolgozók Szakszervezete - Trade Union of Petrol Chemistry Workers, Plastic Industry Workers, and Service Workers

PSZ: Pedagógusok Szakszervezete - Pedagogues' Trade Union

SZEF: Szakszervezetek Együttmüködési Fóruma - Cooperation Forum of Trade Unions

TávSzak: Távközlési Szakszervezet - Telecommunications' Trade Union

VDSZ: Magyar Vegyipari, Energiaipari és Rokon Szakmákban Dolgozók Szakszervezeti Szövetsége - Federation of Chemical Workers of Hungary

Introduction

The post-socialist transition has brought many changes to the labor market structure of Hungary. Privatization and deregulation of the economy had a tremendous influence on the workers' representation: the trade unions. The number of unions exploded and the hostility between them grew. Since 1989, trade unions in Hungary are struggling with declining membership, due to the changed economic environment, but also a decreased popularity within the population, who connect their presence to the woes of a socialist past. Their marginalization as political actors did not help them to find a strong, unified voice in the new context.

However, recent mobilizations for the revaluation of work in feminized sectors, such as health care and education show that trade unions are still present in Hungary - that there are women in unions fighting for better pay and working conditions.[1] Especially since 2010, neo-liberal social policy and reduced social services have made it more difficult for women to combine full-time work and family responsibilities, and to build up their career (Fodor 2013, Szikra 2014). This thesis explores the current demands and strategies of union women in Hungary towards gender equality policy.

The growing number of women in the global paid workforce has started to bring the topic of gender equality onto the agenda of unions. Unions can benefit from the integration of demands of their diverse membership, which is possible through a number of strategies for inclusion (Cobble 1993, Briskin 1983, Colgan and Ledwith 2000). Much has been written about the gender inequalities in unions in the Western European and Anglo-American context, and what strategies union women use to overcome this discrimination (Lawrence 1994, Briskin 1999, Colgan and Ledwith 2000). Researchers of gender and diversity in trade unions have also studied the role of separate minority constituencies in trade unions, looking at an Anglo-Saxon and Western European context (Briskin 2014, Colgan and Ledwith 2002) or in non-Western contexts (Fernandes 1997, Moghadam et al. 2011).

[1] The Democratic Pedagogues' Union (PDSZ) demonstrated for free education and better working and studying conditions on May 21st, 2015. Several health care workers' associations demonstrated together on May 12th, 2015, and supported the teachers' demonstration as well (HVG 2014a, 2014b).

To build an inclusive political agenda, Hungarian unions as well as scholars have to acknowledge the specific post-socialist experiences of their female constituency. After the regime change, the changing role of trade unions in the transition to a capitalist economy has been the subject of several studies (Kubicek 1999, Crowley 2004). The transition process's effect on women and gender relations has also been examined extensively (Funk 1993, Van der Lippe and Fodor 1998). However, the role of women in trade unions in post-socialist countries has been neglected by the scholarly community.

My research addresses this gap and adds to the research on trade union women in non-Western contexts. I focus on their demands and strategies to further gender equality policy, as well as on the role of the women's section. Understandings of gender equality and of feminism are not universal. Rather, they are embedded in the locally specific socio-cultural context of a post-socialist country, which needs to be acknowledged in the analysis (Koobak and Marling 2014). I analyze 13 in-depth, qualitative interviews with members of the Women's Section of the MASZSZ using a feminist methodology, which centers on the women's experiences and situates them in the surrounding institutional context. This amplifies the knowledge on local understandings of gender equality, through the experiences of women who are affected by the rollback of the welfare state in Hungary. Against this background, I ask: What are the gender equality demands of Hungarian trade union women and how do they further them, navigating both legal and economic constraints, as well as the gendered organizational structure of the trade unions themselves?

I argue that at the intersection of socialist legacies and Europeanized gender equality norms, Hungarian trade union women construct a locally specific understanding of gender equality. This influences their demands towards national policy and towards transforming the internal trade union structure. As they have experience working on the concerns of working women, the interviewed women represent the demands of working women to a certain extent, depending on their personal career trajectory and social background. The analysis of their demands can give us clues to the changes needed for better gender equality in the Hungarian labor market and ultimately, society.

For union women, not only the national political context is adverse, often their work is also hindered by intra-union processes that discriminate against women and their specific demands. I find that in this institutional environment, the union women use a separate women's section as a tool to network, strategize, and further their own demands. The function of separate organizing structures for women and other minority constituencies remains debated, as they have the advantage of building a pro-active constituency, but bear the risk of isolating equality issues. The analysis of the MASZSZ Women's Section's function is important to understand how Hungarian union women can further their aforementioned demands. This enables me broaden to the current knowledge on women in trade unions with locally specific experiences of a post-socialist and neo-liberal environment.

The thesis consists of four analytical chapters, preceded by a chapter on the methods and theoretical framework used. Each analytical chapter has a first part that situates its topic in the scholarly literature and a second one that introduces current empirical findings from the interviews. The first two chapters examine *what* Hungarian trade union women are fighting for today, while the latter two discuss the institutional context of their demands.

Chapter 1, *Europeanization of Gender Equality Policies*, situates the gender equality policy demands of the trade union women in the context of Europeanized gender equality norms. Their demands reflect liberal, Europeanized norms (Liebert 2003) that appeared in the context of Hungary's accession to the European Union (EU). But in the discourse of the union women as policy actors, these norms shift in meaning to intersecting with local influences to form specific demands.

Chapter 2, *Perceptions of Difference for a Politics of Equality*, shifts the focus to the legacy of state socialism and how it influences the understandings of womanhood that form the basis for their demands. The tension point between state-socialist and Europeanized norms becomes visible as they simultaneously emphasize differences between women and men and demand control over the consequences of these naturalized differences.

Chapter 3, *Finding a New Voice: Current Trade Union Strategies*, gives an overview of the institutional framework in which trade union women try to further their demands. In light of the economic and political constraints that unions face, national and international collaboration is important to find a new, viable voice for trade unions and the demands of union women.

Finally, Chapter 4, *Resisting Gendered Organization through Women's Sections*, discusses how "gendered organization" (Acker 1990) influences the activism of MASZSZ women. It presents their perceptions of gender inequality within the labor movement in Hungary today and analyzes the function of a separate women's structure, the MASZSZ Women's Section. I argue that this structure has a locally specific function, which depends on the surrounding institutional context. The interviewed women are higher functionaries in their own unions and touch upon many issues that affect all workers, not only women. The Women's Section's foremost goal for the interviewed activists is not debating issues of gender equality. It is rather a space, within the interconnected gendered organization of the unions, the confederation, and the workplaces, that allows the activists to exchange knowledge, create networks, and form new and more effective strategies to pursue their goals, whether for the advancement of women or for more general union goals.

Both their gender equality policy demands as well as the function that the union women accord to the women's section depend on their specific institutional environment and socio-cultural context. Acknowledging and understanding this can help develop more effective policies for gender equality on the European level and strengthen the cooperation of working women's movements across Europe.

Theoretical Framework and Methods

Theoretical Framework

My aim is to introduce a feminist perspective in the study of post-socialist industrial relations by researching women's demands for gender equality policy, their understandings on womanhood, and which strategies they employ to manage the current constraints of trade unions. The majority of existing research on trade unions has a tendency to neglect gendered and other hierarchies present in the organizational context of trade unions and industrial relations. This often generates universalizing Western and male-centered findings.

Research on women in trade unions has been conducted, however mostly on Anglo-Saxon or Western European cases.[2] Scholars have studied women in trade unions in non-Western locations (Fernandes 1997, Moghadam et al. (eds.) 2011), the research that has been conducted in post-socialist spaces was mostly done from a Western perspective (Ledwith 2006, Pochic and Guillaume 2010). The scholars employ a self-reflexive feminist methodology and are aware of their position vis-à-vis the research subject. However the lack of published Central Eastern European voices on this matter highlights the power imbalance between feminist knowledge production in the West and "non-West".

Despite the transnational turn in feminist scholarship and its attention to non-Western contexts, Redi Koobak and Raili Marling (2014) characterize post-socialist spaces as a "grey zone" within transnational feminist thought. They argue that the dominant Western framework of feminist scholarship has neglected the diverse interactions of locally specific feminism in this context. Thus, to decenter the universalizing tendencies of Western feminism (2014: 332), they suggest to combine postcolonial and post-socialist analyses. Through a "decolonial" frame, the realities of gender concepts and feminisms in the region can be acknowledged without portraying the East as "lagging" behind the West (Koobak and Marling 2014). They further a simultaneous analysis of specific CEE feminist thought and its situation within transnational feminism, as it is "facing the

[2] Some examples are: UK: Colgan and Ledwith 2000, Lawrence 1994, Cockburn 1991; Canada: Briskin 1983, 1999, 2014; USA: Cobble (ed.) 1993; France: Pochic and Guillaume 2012; Austria/Germany: Kirsch and Blaschke 2014.

same challenges from neoliberal ideologies" (339). Drawing on these ideas, my research emphasizes the importance of articulating Eastern European feminist knowledge in specific contexts without neglecting the global contact of feminist ideas, through the focus on women's experiences. This approach does not neglect the power imbalances between Western and Eastern European feminisms (Cerwonka 2008), thus avoiding a reproduction of the same hierarchies feminist research sets out to break down.

To achieve this aim, I draw my knowledge from women's experiences, analyzing in-depth interviews. Following feminist tradition, I situate these experiences at the core of my research project, generating the problematics of the thesis from their perspective (Harding 1987). However, I critically reflect on the interview process, keeping in mind the power lines that shape this exchange (DeVault and Gross 2007). Dorothy Smith's (2007) institutional ethnography allows me to account for the "ruling relations" (415) of the participants' everyday activism, like Europeanization processes and the trade unions' organizational and political framework. I analyze not only their policy demands for gender equality, but also situate their activity in the surrounding institutional conditions. These are shaped by history, the current legal framework and the structural inequalities that women face in the trade unions. Closely paying attention to the studied women's experiences helped me reframe and specify my own hypotheses (Delgado-Gaitan 1993). This led me to explore localized understandings of gender equality and womanhood and how these are constructed.

As a researcher with Hungarian and German background, I take on a hybrid position. Through my language knowledge and shared socio-cultural background, I want to use my research to diversify the understanding of feminism in a post-socialist location. As I had the opportunity of a multilingual education in Western Europe and am situated in a Western academic context, I can translate these experiences into it. However, being embedded in this hegemonic academic context, I am aware of power differences between the researched group and me. Acknowledging this hybridity helps me situate myself vis-à-vis the interviewed trade union women, in a relational way, as I am at once within and outside the context of Hungarian women (Haraway 1988, Wolf 2007). In

an attempt to localize the participants' perceptions in a Europeanized post-socialist context, the partially shared cultural background helps me to understand the women's meaning-making process. My situation does not allow me to fully relate to the experiences of the women, given the age difference and a differing educational and activist background. Yet I gathered the experiences of the women in their native language. The shared language and cultural background gave the participants an increased opportunity for sharing their experiences and situate them in their specific cultural framework. Through this I want to critically add to the discussion on feminisms and women's experiences in contemporary post-socialist spaces.

Methods

I interviewed 13 Hungarian trade union activist women who are organized in the MASZSZ trade union confederation. Twelve of them are delegates from the different member unions of the MASZSZ and meet monthly with the MASZSZ Women's Section, while one is an independent consultant for trade unions with a long activist history in the MSZOSZ Women's Section. I conducted in-depth interviews of 40-120 minutes, five of them via Skype and the others in person, at the women's workplaces or at public cafés. I conducted the interviews in Hungarian, a native language of mine, transcribed them and translated quotes. One respondent preferred to reply to the questions in written form, I also use translations of her statements. I use the women's last names in all cases, except for one interviewee, who preferred to stay anonymous. In Hungary, many women take on their husbands' last and sometimes also first name after marriage. The suffix *-né* signals their wifehood. If the women introduced themselves to me with this name, I used it in my writing as well.

The interviews were semi-structured, based on a list of questions about their professional situation, their role in the trade union and in the confederation, the organizational structure of the trade union, the confederation and the women's group, their demands towards gender equality and the strategies they employ to further these demands. For the purpose of analyzing the way in which

the women act within the gendered organization of the union, it was also important to ask about national and international collaboration and whether their actions received external support.

To find potential contacts, I first mapped the current situation of the Hungarian trade unions. Since the regime change until 2013, six trade union confederations existed in the very fragmented union landscape, that Rainer Girndt calls "land of thousand unions" (2013).[3] In 2013, three confederations (ASZSZ, SZEF, and MSZOSZ) merged to found the Hungarian Trade Union Confederation (MASZSZ). During my research period in February 2015, the SZEF decided not to merge, but remains an associated confederation within the MASZSZ.

The reason I chose the MASZSZ as my research focus, is the existence of an active women's section within it. It succeeds the MSZOSZ's Women's Board (*Nöi Választmány*), which was established shortly after the regime change. Through contacting the Vice-President of the MASZSZ Women's Section (*Nöi Tagozat*), I received contact information of all 30 members and of some long-term activists who are not part of the current Women's Section. I contacted all of them repeatedly and finally recorded interviews with 13 activists, between January and May 2015.

The MASZSZ is a confederation of a public service unions' confederation (SZEF), an autonomous unions' confederation (ASZSZ) and a general unions' confederation (MSZOSZ) and many different sectors are represented within it. Eight of the Women's Section's delegates come from the SZEF, five are from the ASZSZ, and nine from the MSZOSZ. Of the 12 interviewees that are part of the Women's Section, two represent the ASZSZ, two the SZEF, and the remaining nine the MSZOSZ.

The women represent different sectors and professions, which makes their experiences in the labor market difficult to compare. Three of them work in the public and nine in the private sector. Of the latter, three represent the service sector (retail, education, and public transportation), while six represent the industry. The independent consultant, my 13th interviewee, has worked in both the public and private service sector and has been a member of different unions within the MSZOSZ.

[3] LIGA, ASZSZ, MSZOSZ, SZEF, ÉSZT, and MOSZ. For detailed names, please check the List of Abbreviations, p. vi.

My analytical chapters address sectoral trends and differences as well. At the same time, my research allows to get a general overview of the situation of Hungarian trade union women in different segments of the labor market.

Table 1: Interview Participants[4]

Participant (last name)	Age (approx.)	Occupation/Sector	Member Union/Confederation	Function in Member Union, status	Women's Section in Member Union?	Ratio of Women in Union Leadership
Tóth	60	Technical employee/Private Sector (Industry)	PKDSZ/MSZOSZ	Vice-President, full-time, paid	No (only in industry confederation (VDSZ))	VDSZ: 1/3, leader male
Ladányi	60	Private Sector (Industry)	MOL Miners' Union/MSZOSZ	Consultant in the Steering Committee, retired	No	3/15, leader male
Pálinkás	57	Dietetician/Public Sector (Defense)	HODOSZ/MSZOSZ	Member of Steering Committee, unpaid	No	0/3, 4/7, leader male
Anonymous	59	Administrative Assistant/ Private Sector (Industry)	Mining union/MSZOSZ	Head of Women's Committee, retired	Yes	1/3, leader male
Siraky	64	HR employee / Private Sector (Communication)	TávSzak/MSZOSZ	Member of Steering Committee, retired	N/A	1/2, leadership shared
László	54	Supply Manager/Public Sector (Non-Profit)	HVDSZ/MSZOSZ	President of Works Council, Secretary of Sub-Committee, full-time, paid	No	1/3, 3/9, leader male
Nemes	43	HR employee/Private Sector (Transportation)	EKSZ/Autonómok	Head of Women's Committee, unpaid	Yes	0/7, leader male

[4] Ratio of women in leadership = ratio of women within all members of the (1) member union's Leadership (Elnökség*)* and/or (2) Steering Committee (*Választmány*), data retrieved from the respective union's homepage. See List of Abbreviations on p. vi.

Participant (last name)	Age (approx.)	Occupation/Sector	Member Union/Confederation	Function in Member Union, status	Women's Section in Member Union?	Ratio of Women in Union Leadership
Kiss-Rigó	36	Salesperson/Private Sector (Retail)	KASZ/MSZOSZ	Organizational Secretary, full-time, paid	No	1/2, 19/27, leader male
Steer	70	Winemaker/Private Sector (Food Production)	KDSZ/MSZOSZ	Organizational Secretary, former Head of Union, retired	No	4/11, leader male
Jenes	50	Teacher/ Public Sector (Education)	PSZ/SZEF	Regional Secretary, part-time, paid	No	2/2, leader female
Veres	59	Administrative Assistant/ Public Sector (TV)	EMSZ/SZEF	Vice-President, unpaid	No	2/5, leader male
Eper	50	Accountant/ Private Sector (Industry)	IASZ/Autonómok	Company-level Union Secretary, full-time, paid	No (only in sectoral confederation (VDSZ))	VDSZ: 1/3, leader male
Lupkovics	69	Lawyer (labor law)/ Public Sector (past work in private sector)	KASZ and HVDSZ/MSZOSZ	Independent Consultant	No	KASZ: 1/2, 19/27, leader male HVDSZ: 1/3, 3/9, leader male

Summary

My thesis uses in-depth interviews with women in the Hungarian Trade Union Confederation MASZSZ, focusing on their experiences to gather knowledge. My situation as a researcher is hybrid, being simultaneously within and without the socio-cultural context of the interviewed women. Collecting their demands towards gender equality policy, I analyze the understanding of gender equality and womanhood that these are based on. Further, I examine their perception of gender equality within the organizations they act in and how they use the MASZSZ Women's Section to resist the obstacles of gendered organization.

Although the interviews form the central part of the study, I situate them in the institutional constraints and opportunities that surround them and present the strategies that the women use to navigate this context. Through focusing on local understandings of gender equality and womanhood of Hungarian trade union women, I hope to contribute to a broadened scope of transnational feminist knowledge - allowing for the co-presence of diverse understandings of gender equality, that influence and build upon each other. My research is underlined by a quest for diversity within the post-socialist space itself, containing many different layers, knowledges and feminisms.

Chapter 1: Europeanization and the Shifting Meanings of Gender Equality Norms

This chapter examines whether an influence of European gender equality norms can be shown in the demands of trade union women. By analyzing the interviewees' perceptions of the gender equality policy process and their demands towards it, I want to find out how the "Europeanization" of gender equality norms, which travel to Hungary through soft law measures and European Union (EU) directives, influences women's trade union activism.

The first part of the chapter focuses on how gender equality norms travel through Europe, specifically to Hungary, during and post-EU accession. Processes of "Europeanization" have been studied to demonstrate how European norms influence domestic institutions (Börzel and Risse 2003). However, the focus on the compliance of member states to EU norms has been critiqued by scholars of gender equality policy, as this field is mostly furthered by soft policy measures, which act more diffusely on different policy actors. Scholars argue for acknowledging a plurality of policy actors and discourses to study the process of internalizing these new norms on the national level (Forest and Lombardo 2012). A constructionist approach can thus better account for discursive patterns that contribute to a shifted meanings of the norms (Liebert 2003). Drawing on these approaches will help me situate the demands and understandings of the Hungarian trade union women in the broader European context.

In the second part I analyze how the interviewees' discursive strategies contribute to Europeanization in the field of gender equality policy and how the "idea of a shared and desired Europeanness" (Krizsán and Popa 2012: 69) influences the demands of women in trade unions as policy actors. I focus on the interviewees' responses on *how* gender equality policy should be furthered and *what* their demands towards national gender equality policy are. An analysis of both topics shows a presence of "Europeanized" norms in the interviewees' discourse, which shift in their meaning, according to the specific context of the women's activism.

1.1. Europeanization of Gender Equality Policies

1.1.1. Aims and Meanings of European Gender Equality Policy

Scholars have characterized the EU gender policy as a "hybrid" model, where concepts of liberalism and social democracy coincide (Ferree 2008; Wahl 2008). The dominant frame of European gender equality policies focuses on women's equal access to employment policies and relies on a formally liberal conception of gender equality. This is not surprising, as the EU has competence in gender policy only regarding labor market policies, which can be expanded towards other fields through "soft law" measures (Krizsán 2009).[5] European gender equality policy lies at the intersection of welfare and equal employment policy, two regimes that differ in their function and competence. While welfare policy is the member states' competence, the EU has competence over labor market policies.

Feminist scholars critique that while the labor market orientation of EU gender equality policy can be explained through the distribution of competences, this does not explain why the root causes of gender inequalities are not addressed and substantial equality has not been achieved. They point out danger of feminist ideas being co-opted by supra-national or national entities for aims of economic policy rather than social or redistributive justice (Elson 2006; Stratigaki 2004). According to Emanuela Lombardo (2003), the EU's policy focus on the labor market has only achieved the superficial change of integrating more women in the labor market, disregarding structural gender inequalities. Thus, women they still have to adhere to a male norm and are disadvantaged in their career options (2003: 161). In the current Strategy for Gender Equality (2010-2015) the focus of EU policy lies on the symptoms of gender inequality, rather than addressing its structural roots. This aims for a strengthening of the economy through women's accession to the labor market, rather than promoting sustainable change in gender roles.[6]

[5] One example for "soft law" measures, is the National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Hungary of 2010-2021, which reflects the European Union's Roadmap for Gender Equality 2006-2010 (Fodor 2013).
[6] Findings from the author's earlier research for a term paper on the 2010-2015 EU Gender Equality Strategy.

Gender equality as a concept of feminist politics is not static, and scholars agree on its contested nature (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009; Walby 2009: 48). Just as gender is not fixed, so are meanings of gender equality divergent and dependent on the socio-historical specificity. Within the European Union, this poses a challenge in creating uniform norms on gender equality and its implementation. However, if locally specific meanings of gender equality are not accounted for, the effectivity of gender legislation for European women cannot be assured. These meanings are influenced by the diffusion of European ideas on gender equality policy, through soft measures like the European Strategy for Gender Equality 2010-2015, which can be characterized as reflecting liberal and social democratic ideals (Wahl 2008). But they also shift in their meaning, according to locally specific influences on women's everyday experiences.

1.1.2. Europeanization of Gender Equality Norms and Local Policy Actors

At its most basic, Europeanization defines "the responses to policies of the European Union" (Featherstone 2003). Europeanization studies explore the impact and policy outcomes of European norms in the domestic context. This concept has been mostly applied to the level of the state, which has been criticized as insufficient by feminist scholars (Liebert 2003, Forest and Lombardo 2012, Krizsán and Popa 2012). They argue that in the field of gender equality, many actors take part in this process interactively. Reactions of different policy actors to the EU policies lead to divergent meanings and contestations of the embedded norms, especially in the case of soft law measures (Forest and Lombardo 2012). The pluralistic approach suggested by Maxime Forest and Emanuela Lombardo is more receptive to the interaction of different policy actors in the construction of meanings around these norms. Thus the transmission of gender equality norms can be better analyzed, than by a simple focus on the Member States' response and compliance.

In the process of Hungary's EU accession in 2004, the dominant European gender equality norms also traveled to Hungary and were implemented more or less effectively. The impact of civil society plays an important part in the shifting and reframing of the dominant liberal EU policy

during this period (Wahl 2008: 25). While the input of women's civil society organizations in this process has been studied (Krizsan 2009), the labor movement's contribution to the reframing of gender equality norms remains quite unexplored. Sophie Pochic and Cécile Guillaume (2010) studied how trade union women used the European directive on equal opportunity to implement their own goals of gender equality within the trade union movement. However, this study was conducted before the conservative governmental turn of 2010, and therefore emphasized the good political cooperation between trade unionists and the socialist government. Today, the political environment for trade unions is much more adverse. Thus, I want to extend the debate to the current post-EU accession context, where demands of the trade union women face a neo-liberal/-conservative political environment and an unstable political mood regarding the implementation of EU norms.

1.1.3. Gender Equality in the Post-Accession CEE context

During the accession period (2003-2005) of eight new member states, the transposition of European gender equality norms in the Central Eastern European context, could be analyzed very clearly. Several studies examined the effects of this period in Hungary (e.g. Petö and Kakucs 2008, Popa and Krizsán 2012), while the post-accession period has been less analyzed. However, post-accession developments are particularly interesting in the case of Hungary. The governmental change of 2010 led to neo-conservative and neo-liberal changes in welfare and social policy, particularly restricting the work of trade unions (Szikra 2014). The 2010-2011 governmental action plan for gender equality was not evaluated and neither was a new strategy proposed (Fodor 2013). Instead of a continuum between adopting European gender equality policies to advance the accession process and developing them further in the same spirit, we can observe a continuum between lacking political will for sustainable and effective gender policies during the accession period and the following neo-liberal/-conservative dismantling of the welfare state since 2010.

Hungary was considered a model for its fast integration of EU equality norms in national legislation during the accession process (Krizsán 2009). However, the implementation of these norms, was and is still meeting only the "minimum demands of the EU" (Kakucs and Petö 2008: 188). Noémi Kakucs and Andrea Petö argue that the implementation of specific gender provisions was difficult, because women were already included as one subgroup of "special interest" among others in the Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunity of 2003[7]. Further, the "failed gender machinery" (Krizsán 2009), lacking political will, and the missing power of gender institutions only managed to implement superficial, employment-related measures. The cooperation with women's organizations was also missing (Petö and Kakucs 2008). Even under the socialist government, implementation of gender equality norms was therefore only partial.

The opinions on the popular support for these gender equality norms diverge. Some scholars argue that during the accession context the perceived need for gender equality measures was missing, due to the negative reception of state-imposed equality measures under socialism (Petö and Kakucs 2008, Wahl 2008). Another study however suggests that the population is aware of missing gender equality provisions and overall supportive of providing equality measures (Krizsán 2009).

In this context, civil society actors make "strategic use of 'Europeanness'" (Krizsán and Popa 2012) to further gender equality norms on the national policy agenda. The aspect of "social learning" (Krizsan 2009), by and through civil society actors, characterizes how EU gender norms are transferred into social consciousness and national policy. I find that the strategic discourse around Europeanized norms strategically is also used by trade union women as policy actors.

[7] Act CXXV. of 2003, http://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu/data/SZMM094B.pdf, retrieved on May 27th, 2015.

1.2. Gender Equality Policy: Local Perceptions and Demands

In the following, I will present the interviewees' perception of the gender equality policy process and a concrete analysis of their demands, focusing on the influence of Europeanization. This will broaden the scope of existing analyses by integrating labor activists as policy actors and introduce them in the analysis of the varied interactions that shape the Europeanization. I argue that at the intersection of different influences, they use these Europeanized gender equality norms strategically to construct new, locally specific meanings of gender equality.

1.2.1. Europe and Hungary: Perceptions of the Gender Equality Policy Process

European gender equality norms are present in the women's discourse, although not always through positive connections. Europe, as the ideal norm, characterizes the interviewed women's views on the policy process. For the delegate of the Hungarian Union of the Oil and Gas Mining Industry (MOL Bányász), the lacking formal gender equality structures in her mining company are "not complying with the European norm" of a quota for women in leading positions (Ladányi). But another respondent points out clearly, that in Hungary she does not see the structures that would allow the implementation of "European" norms: "We know these examples, but that's why I'm telling you that the local implementation of these still requires a lot of work here" (Steer). One interviewee points to the difference between her interpretation of gender equality and those of foreign NGOs, at an event on gender equality policies at the workplace organized by a foreign NGO. She found her own ideas much better represented in the local space of women's activism at the MASZSZ Women's Section, where she could easily exchange views with other female union activists. This shows their perception of European gender equality norms as ideal, which should apply to them, but are practically removed from their reality, due to institutional lacunae, which hinder their implementation, or different understandings of gender equality.

The current Hungarian equality legislation as based on the law of 2003, is seen as too broad, as one respondent laments, and difficult to apply in the specific defense of workers' interests. But

ministerial and budgetary changes also contribute to a weakened application of equality principles. Gender equality measures are focusing now on women's insertion in the labor market, neglecting gender inequalities on a broader societal level. This can be also linked to missing substantial equality measures in EU gender equality strategies (Lombardo 2003). Further, since the Fundamental Law of 2011 and the Labor Code of 2012, the requirement of equal pay and for companies to enact an equal opportunity plan disappeared from the legal texts (Fodor 2013, Berger and Dorsch 2010). In 2010 the Ministry and Directorate for Equal Opportunity have been dismantled and parts of it integrated into the Ministry of Human Resources, under the Department of Social and Family Affairs, while the Equal Treatment Authority's budget has been cut in 2012 (Fodor 2013).[8] One interviewee mentions this and criticizes that the gender equality policy process in Hungary is very "family-oriented" (Lupkovics).

The analysis of the respondents' perceptions on the policy process shows how they imagine a furthering of their gender equality policy demands. Women are mainly seen to be responsible for this issues. They are assumed to care about and stand up for each other and weaker members of society, in contrast to men, who do not care about these policy issues. Further, they assume that women inherently have a sensibility for equality and equal opportunities. For example, a representative of a public transport union views policy on domestic abuse as "one of those societal topics, again, that women should stand up for (...), because a man will never commit to it" (Nemes). Solidarity between women helps them overcome difficult situations at the workplace, such as covering each other's shifts if a woman has to go home and care for the kids, explains one respondent. However, some women experience this responsibility as a burden. "It is a fight against windmills", says one representative (Pálinkás). Gender equality policy is perceived as something else that women have to take care of, next to paid work, domestic work, and union work.

For other participants, men and their cooperation in the fight for equality are a crucial part of the struggle. An interviewee from the mining sector finds that "equality is not only about us

[9] However, these findings are not necessarily in line with opinion polls, that show a lacking support for women's political participation (Fodor 2013).

[women] working autonomously, but also in cooperation with the men" (Anonymous). The former head of the Food Industry Workers' Union points out that society also needs to change in this sense: "Both men and society as a whole needs to accept that men can take care of children and decide to stay at home with them" (Steer). The furthering of gender equality policies is assumed to be women's task, although some expect and acknowledge that men and society as a whole needs to change in order for practical change to happen. European norms are present in the women's discourse. They compare the situation in Hungary to the ideal of Western Europe, which is not always seen to be realizable in Hungary. However, the interviewees take on responsibility over these issues as women, and see it as an inherent sensibility of women to care about gender equality. Thus, they are also the ones who mainly further gender equality demands on the level of the union and interviews with them provide insights into the part that women in labor movements play in the Europeanization of gender equality norms and the construction of new meanings.

1.2.2. Specific Gender Equality Demands

The Europeanization of gender equality norms is reflected in the specific demands of the trade unionist women. I suggest that this becomes most visible in their discourse around *equal pay* and *equal opportunity plans*. On two other topics, *child care* services and the number of *women in leadership positions*, their demands however show a shifted meaning of these gender equality norms. I argue that these demands are justified by a locally specific understanding of womandhood, which merges with legacies from the state-socialist emancipatory policies. Due to their work experiences in very different sectors, their demands also vary along these sectoral lines.

Equal Pay and Equal Opportunities as "European" Influences?

The topics of equal pay and equal opportunities come up in the interviews, set in clear relation to a "European" origin. In contrast, women critique the lacking implementation of norms on both topics in Hungary and specifically, their companies. They demand a better protection of women's interests, while assuming responsibility as women for the furthering of equality norms.

Many interviewees also mention equal opportunity plans, if they helped create one in their company, or they wish to implement one. The representative of a bus company and leader of the local women's section is currently trying to implement an equal opportunity plan in her company. The goal is to set minimum standards for the company, in cooperation with other trade unions and the workers' protection agencies. She hopes that this helps to hold employers accountable, so that the individual is not alone with his or her problems. There is no specific mention of women among her goals, she rather presents us with a broader view of equal opportunity. However, she does see a clear connection between women and equal opportunity measures. According to her, women care about equality, therefore they are the ones who fight for the implementation of such plans. This is in line with the understanding that women fulfill certain characteristics of being more aware of social issues, and have a better capacity of furthering this kind of policy.

The goals that these women have concerning equal opportunity policies, nevertheless show a diversity among the women's perception of it and not necessarily shared views. Equal opportunity is not always mentioned in relation to gender equality, but often more generally as equal opportunity for all, independently of ethnicity, age, or disability, for example. However, one woman stresses that in her company an equal opportunity plan exists, however women are not mentioned, which she considers a big shame:

"The head of Human Resources is a woman, and maybe she could include that - the word "woman" does not come up in the plan! And this should be smuggled in somehow. But there is no woman in the higher supervisory committee anywhere" (Ladányi).

She demands that women and women's issues have should be integrated in the picture, whether in the work agenda of the union or the equal opportunity plan of the company. In light of this, she argues for a quota of women in leadership position, which "exists in Western European countries", but "that [we] do not even fulfill" (Ladányi). The quota as a "Western European" measure is strategically used by the respondent to further her demand of including women's

interests in the equal opportunity plan and additionally raise the number of women in leadership positions.

Pay equity is another issue that nearly all interviewees mention, when asked about their demands for gender equality policy. The variations of arguments around the gender pay gap reflects the lack of a common strategy of unions to reduce it. Most women simply demand more attention to the issue itself. One respondent explains that there is simply not enough data on the pay ratio to make a strong case against the gender pay gap. However, other interviewees mention that gender pay inequalities are not the main problem, but more inequalities on the regional level, or that certain professions are already feminized and therefore underpaid, for example in the retail sector. One public sector unionist explains that wage categories in the public sector professions make for an equality in men's and women's wages.

"At our [company], and at others too, what we always talk about, is how women's and men's wages relate to each other. Because although it is not allowed to make a difference in the wages of employees of the same occupation (munkakör), women's wage, women's salary is still always a little lower." (Siraky).

The regularity with which the words "gender pay gap" and "equal pay" come up shows an importance in the political discourse of most interviewees. Like an equal opportunity plan, equal pay is seen as one of those international gender equality standards that *should be* implemented in Hungary as well. The interviewed women are aware of the issue of pay inequality. Some of them mention that men are mostly seen as the breadwinners, and that the inequality in wages leads to a feminization of poverty. However, the current economic situation in Hungary makes it more difficult for trade union women to argue for women's higher pay, when almost everyone has to struggle to make ends meet.

The interviewees' responses show that in Hungary certain factors - lacking political will, time, or access to information - make equal pay an unattainable ideal for these women. The recurring demand for more women in leadership positions as a sign of "Europeanness" can be seen

as a strategic argument of union women to further their demand for pay equality. This suggests that internal structural inequalities hinder the furthering of equal pay as a trade union demand, especially if union leaders, who are mostly male, dismiss this demand as less important in the current constrained legal context. The interviewees cooperate with unions abroad, which have taken on the issue of equal pay already and might have an influence on the demands of Hungarian trade union women. This would strengthen the argument that Europeanization influences the demands of the unionist in topics of gender equality, through "social learning" in the cooperation with Western European unions.

Women's Higher Representation as an Exemplary Demand

The trade union women all call out the lack of women in positions of leadership, which is understandable in the context of Hungary where only 9% of parliamentarians are women (Várnagy 2013). Compared to Western Europe, one respondent regrets that "here, among the ministers there are no women, and only a few among the under-sectaries" (Ladányi 2015). Affirmative action measures, such as the quota, which are implemented in other parts of Europe, are seen as fundamental for the advancement of women by the respondents.[9] Analyzing the statements closely, one can find that demands for more women in leadership positions are linked to assumed shared "feminine" characteristics, which make them supposedly more apt than men for certain policy fields:

"A different, nicer, better life could start and dawn upon us [if there were more female leaders], because women think differently, act differently than men. Especially those that have children," says one interviewee who works in the aluminum industry (Eper).

Another one points out, that *"as a woman, they [men] don't leave us the space, to tell our opinion, you [men] think that you represent us, in women's questions. It is not even sure that I want*

[9] However, these findings are not necessarily in line with opinion polls, that show a lacking support for women's political participation (Fodor 2013).

something different, but I would solve it differently or approach it from a different side. Or they passed some issues, that we as women have more social sensibility for" (Nemes).

It is assumed that women share certain characteristics and affinities towards social issues, that will benefit women and that is why they should get more decision-making power.

However, the interviewees are aware of the structural discrimination that women experience when aiming for leadership positions. As one of them explains, women need to have better structures to have the opportunity to build a career and not only focus on children. She refers to the current social tone, which emphasizes more traditional expectations of women and their maternal role. Another interviewee points to the fact that women are not given the same possibilities as men to reach higher education level, due to their childcare commitments. She demands that this should be made possible by the government, in order to get more qualified women in leading positions. Change on this question is not only expected from the political leadership, but also from trade unions' steering committees, that are still largely masculinized, even in very feminized unions.

The lack of women in leadership positions is mentioned in almost all interviews. In the interviewees' opinion, change in gender equality concerns can only happen if more women can get into positions of leadership, in all spheres of society. Assumptions on women's shared experiences and "feminine" traits is the basis for the demand to get more women in leadership position. The justifications for these demands show a shifted meaning of gender equality, justifying liberal "Europeanized" norm with local ideas on specific "feminine" characteristics.

Shifted Conception of Care Services

This locally specific meaning-making emerges even more clearly in the solutions that the women propose towards child care and combining paid work and domestic work. The decline of social services has affected women disproportionately, who were used to the former state policy that viewed the woman as a "worker-mother" (Pollert 2003) and made it easier to combine child-care and employment. Since socialism and especially through new austerity politics (Szikra 2014),

child care facilities in Hungary have been drastically reduced and less than 10% of children under 3 years are in public day care (Fodor 2013). Additionally, the re-establishment of a long maternity leave weakens the reintegration of women in the workplace afterwards, as one interviewee criticizes. [10] While Hungarian women have been used to public care which enabled the combination of career and children (*gyermekvállalás*), their situation today is more reminiscent of some Western European countries such as Germany, where traditional one-breadwinner family models prevail, and women are struggling to find adequate child care facilities.

Three different solutions to to improve the workplace situation of women with children emerge from the interviews. The union women mention collective agreements between their union and the company on child care, the discussion of individual problems with women workers, and flexible work shifts as a possibility. Public care, in contrast, is not mentioned, while this was the solution of traditional state-socialist emancipatory policies.

At the Retail Employees' Union, collective agreements have led to the improved attention towards women with children by company officials. Through this agreement, the union representative explains, women with children are given more flexibility when it comes to choosing or being appointed to certain shifts (Kiss-Rigó). In the very competitive retail sector, these women can now better accommodate their child care obligations with the expectations of the employer.

The second solution arises from the women's function as workers' representatives, which shows a personal relation to the working women. One interviewee explains her personal commitment to get women through tough conditions. She has already helped female co-workers who went through a divorce to find a new apartment or to get a good loan for the transition period, or even to find a suitable child care option. Two representatives from the private sector explain that many women come to them with their issues. They strive to find individual solutions for the women to accommodate their family and work obligations.

[10] In 2011, the Orbán government reestablished the third year of the maternity leave, which was cut as a reform by the former government. Borbála Juhász comments on the 2011 Family Protection Law (Act CCXI of 2011, http://www.mkogy.hu/fotitkar/sarkalatos/benyujtott.htm) as having "strong catholic tendencies", and supporting mostly rich families, cutting support for child care institutions (Juhász 2012: 5).

Finally, flexible work shifts are another suggestion that the trade union women make to improve mothers' workplace situation. Although part-time work is not a very popular or available option in Hungary, due to the tight economic situation,[11] one representative explains that at the national television, workers have the option of taking 6-h-shifts. But the option that seems more realistic in the economic context of Hungary are "mother's shifts": work hours that adapt to the child care facilities, allowing workers with children to be at the workplace from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. In one respondent's opinion, it is a practical solution that enables women to work full time, while bringing the children to school in the morning and picking them up again in the afternoon. In contrast, the provision of public care, which enabled the combination of the "worker-mother's" two shifts under socialism, is not seen as the solution anymore. Instead, the interviewed women's demands reflects a shift towards a family care model.[12] The interviewed women wish to have better working conditions to fulfill their social roles of mothers and carers, taking on the responsibility of caring for their families themselves.

This assumption remains mostly unquestioned, with the exception of one or two respondents: "I am very happy that men can go on paternity leave (GYES, *gyermekgondozási segély*)[13] now too, that is a very good thing," says one interviewee, emphasizing the support that women need to achieve political success (Steer). The examples show the widespread agreement on women's role as mothers is central to their understanding of gender equality. The demands thus show a connection to an understanding of womanhood, which centers on motherhood and a woman's responsibility to care for her children.

The analysis of the demands for more women in leadership positions and the solutions proposed around child care services, shows the locally specific meaning-making around gender equality. The interviewed women's ideas show influences of both socialist emancipatory policies,

[11] In 2014, only 6% of all 15-64 year old employees in Hungary worked part-time, while the EU 28-average was at 19.6% (Eurostat 2015).
[12] "Family care" is seen here in opposition to public care services, subsidized by the state, or private care services, provided by the company or private market entities.
[13] "GYES" is the abbreviation for the benefit after the second year of the parental leave, which can last up to the child's 3rd year. The first two years (including maternity leave) are covered by the "GYED" benefit (Fodor 2013).

as well as the Europeanization of gender equality norms, which merge in the justification of their demands. But at the same time we can see a shift away from both, creating new conceptions of gender equality, which are contingent on the specific environment of the interviewed women.

The new Labor Code

Demands around the new Labor Code[14] further exemplify this locally specific conception of gender equality policy through two topics: legislation on maternity policy and women's early retirement age. Regarding the first topic, the unionists comment that working women are not well protected during and after their maternity, which hinders their attempts to combine work and family.

Although there is the possibility to work part-time during the paternal leave, one respondent says: "*[I]f she starts working [during her maternity leave], she loses the protection that she can't be kicked out during the maternity leave (GYES). So this also has backlashes. It's good that they can work, but even if they only work part-time, there's no more protection"* (Jenes).

The interviewees criticize that women are less protected since the new Labor Code and can more easily fall into economic dependence. This critique also shows that gender equality is primarily seen as relating to women, and more specifically to the assumed natural role of the woman as mother.

The second topic is women's early retirement age, as the possibility of women to retire after 40 years has been re-established by the FIDESZ government. One respondent criticizes this law as being populist. She acknowledges its benefits the deteriorating health of women workers, who are overworked and underpaid, especially in the feminized retail sector and care professions. But she sees it as a move of the government to lower the unemployment rate by taking women out of the workforce. The majority of the respondents, however, acclaim the new law. They see it as a burden if they have to work longer, as the years of education are not included in the 40 years. Up to 8 years

[14] The Labor Code is valid since 2012 and was met with harsh criticism by union activists, the civil sphere, and even international actors (HVG 2011). Nevertheless, it passed thanks to the ruling 2/3 conservative majority and an agreement with social partners, that the trade union confederations reluctantly accepted (Tóth 2012).

that women spend on maternity leave are included in the "work years", which is appreciated by the trade unionists. Their response, exemplified by the following quote, shows again the importance of women's motherly view in their understanding:

"This is a good achievement, that they let women go after 40 years. Well, in my opinion it is a huge thing, because it takes a very big load off of young mothers, so this is also a family friendly, a women-friendly measure," says one respondent (Pálinkás).

This explanation shows how tightly womanhood is connected to women's role as a mother and carer: the legislation is good because allows women to be at home in time for the grandchildren, and assume their caring role again. Early retirement is seen as a measure *for* women, mentioned in the context of women's equality. Another respondent suggests the possibility for women in the elder generation to work from home for a few years before they retire. This is possible in her job as an administrative worker for the national television. Again, her reasoning is that it would help women by enabling them to be there for the grandchildren, and especially help those with longer education tracks, for whom the 40 years-limit applies quite late to fulfill the societal role of mother and carer.

The understanding underlying these demands shows how the meaning of gender equality shifts in the given socio-cultural context. Instead of demanding care services as a public provision for everyone, as it was the case under socialism, the women shift the provision of care towards the mother and family, or in some cases they see it as the firm's responsibility. Their demands for the higher representation of women are justified by the existence of quotas in other EU member states, but they also assume certain shared characteristics of women, which does not fit in the liberal, social-democratic EU policy frame. Women's equality is mentioned through demands that emphasize women's role of the mother and carer, which is rarely questioned. Women's ability to fulfill these roles forms the basis of the interviewees' demands.

However, there are variations in the interviewees' demands which can be credited to the women's different sectoral occupations. In the next part, I will give a brief overview of policy demands that differ along sectoral lines.

1.2.3. Sectoral Differences in Policy Demands

Retail, food production, and education are the three most "feminized" sectors represented by the interviewed women. For the representatives of these sectors the prevalence of "women's issues" seems less apparent. The representative of the Retail Employees' Union is aware that hers is a "feminized" sector and therefore workers here are strongly underpaid. However, she does not connect this to gender pay gap as such, and emphasizes that in her sector, regional differences in wages are more important than wage inequalities between men and women.

The interviewee working for the Teachers' Union also stresses the problem of feminization - by pointing to the lack of male role models for boys in schools. Her demands show that she is well aware of the "double" or even "triple" burden that women workers face compared to their male colleagues. She mentions the problem of overwork in the feminized teaching profession, combining strenuous shifts, domestic obligations, and preparing for classes at home. However, because her sector employs mainly women, she does not categorize this as a "women's" issue, nor does she see the need for separate women's structures in the union.

As a representative of a feminized part of the manufacturing sector, the long-term leader of the United Food Workers' Union (ÉDOSZ), has experienced the regime change and the massive layoffs of many women workers in the light industries. She mentions specific problems that women have had in this industry and made many efforts to accommodate laid-off women workers after big restructurings. In contrast to the two previous examples, she very much favors separate structures that address "women's issues" and has also helped establish them in the MSZOSZ, which is now part of the MASZSZ. Her experience is unique in the way that it relates to a "feminized" field,

which endured the same drastic changes as other, mainly "masculinized" parts of the industry after socialism.

Interviews with representatives of the "masculinized" sectors are characterized by an attention to women's interests in the policy demands. In the mining industry, for example, health care prevention and awareness-raising among women is the most important demand. The women's section's leader of a bus company sees it as her responsibility to defend the special interests of women workers, demanding separate hygiene facilities, and the possibility to take a "health day" off, in case of strong menstrual pain.

The technical professions of the telecommunications sector are also male-dominated and strongly unionized. Their representative's view is shaped by this environment. She sees herself responsible for the women in her union, attending to their specific needs. But also in the television sector, the male-worker norm is present. Long work hours and sudden changes in shifts, make it difficult for women to combine work and family responsibilities. The representative of the United Media Union (EMSZ), therefore demands a better policy for women during the early years of their children, allowing them to keep working through shifts that accommodate their child care obligations. These demands show that it is often the objective of female union representatives to combat the ideal worker norm, which presents more obstacles for women in a masculinized sector, than in a feminized one.

The demands of the interviewed trade union women reflect how far-reaching the impact of these EU gender norms has been even after the accession period. On the one hand, Western European policies and EU directives are regarded with awe. But on the other, they are not considered as feasible or applicable to the Hungarian context, as the interviewees know the local context and how to navigate the political structures to implement their ideas. An analysis of the influence of gender equality norms on the level of European member states, has to incorporate a

local reading of gender equality and the socio-political knowledge of the female actors who will be affected by these policies.

The empirical data findings reflect the influence of different policy actors in framing and reframing gender equality in the national context (Forest and Lombardo 2012: 20, Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 30f.). Both in the way that the women perceive the process of gender equality policy and their demands towards gender equality policy, one can see the influence of Europeanized gender equality norms. However, these do not remain unaffected by the local context, but shift in their meaning accordingly. The effect of Europeanization can be clearly seen in their discourse around equal pay and demands for equal opportunity plans. But the demands towards care services and a higher representation of women in office-holding positions are shaped by locally specific understanding of gender equality. The union women construct their meaning of gender equality by shifting away from Europeanized equality norms, while strategically using them in their discourse.

Chapter 2: State-Socialist Legacies in the Meaning of Womanhood

The demands that the interviewees make towards gender equality policy derive from their workplace and union experiences and are based on certain understandings of womanhood. I argue that alongside the Europeanization of gender norms, the legacy of state-socialist emancipatory policies also influences their meaning-making of womanhood. The trade union women accord a specific social role to women, which is practically expressed in their demands for gender equality policy. Assumptions about "feminine" characteristics are derived from this role. Situating the interviewees' understanding of womanhood at the intersection of the two main influences - Europeanization and the legacy of state-socialism - contextualizes their policy demands of the previous chapter.

The first part of the chapter shows how socialist ideas on women's emancipation were put into practice in Central European state-socialist regimes. State-socialist policies encouraged women's full insertion in the labor market, but did not sufficiently address the gendered division of labor in the household. The legacy of this "almost-emancipation" is reflected in the interviewees' understandings of womanhood.

In a second part, I will present the empirical findings on the interviewees' specific understanding of what it means to be a woman. This understanding rests on assumptions about women's shared social and professional role, shared characteristics and interests, especially relating to motherhood. This is reminiscent of the socialist idea of women as "worker-mothers". While the interviewees' assumptions about women's social role are shared, there are sectoral differences in whether they acknowledge the existence of specific "women's issues".

2.1. Influence of State-Socialism and the Post-Socialist Transition

Feminist responses have always existed to the assumed natural hierarchy between men and women, fundamental to the history of Western civilization and science (Weedon 1999: 7), rejecting, embracing, or deconstructing it, trying to use difference in a liberating way (12). The struggle for gender equality politics is based on a certain idea of equality or difference between the sexes. Whereas liberal gender equality ideas dismiss ideas of gender difference and focus on equal treatment, other strands, such as socialist feminists, argue for women's special rights based on their different socialization from men.[15]

While interviewed women were not necessarily influenced by socialist feminist ideas, they also emphasize difference in their policy demands. This can be seen as an influence of the materialist ideology of socialism, which is intersecting with the Europeanized gender equality norms. I argue that due to their socialization in the workplace during state-socialism, the influence of socialist emancipatory theories and their practical implementation shapes the understandings and demands of the interviewed women. In the following, I will outline the bases of socialist emancipatory ideas, focusing on the feminist responses to these. Then I turn to the implementation of these ideas into socialist policies of equality and the effects of the post-socialist transformation on women in Hungary.

2.1.1. The "Woman Question": Socialist Theories and Emancipatory Policies

Although the "woman question" made it onto the agenda of socialist thinkers like August Bebel and Friedrich Engels, they did not address the issue of a sexual division of labor in the household or truly challenge assumptions about gender roles (Popa 2003: 37). Women's liberation was reduced to her emancipation from capital, through her equal participation in the workforce

[15] Marxist and socialist feminism emerged from and in reaction to the socialist workers' movement and tries to situate women within the double oppression of capitalism and patriarchy. Class still is the central category in their analysis, but it affects women and men with different material consequences (Weedon 1999: 151). At the intersection between the "exploitation of women's bodies and [the] patriarchal construction of sexuality" (145), Marxist and socialist feminists argue that gender relations are shaped by this material difference and are hierarchical.

(Popa 2003). In this sense, class equality and not gender equality is the focus of these emancipatory ideas. Women's emancipation is seen as one from capital and not from patriarchy.

The failed recognition of patriarchy as an oppressive force against women that Popa points out in socialist ideology (2003: 36), survived in the practice of Central Eastern European countries under state socialism. In the first phase of state socialism, the regimes of Hungary, Romania, and Poland emphasized women's equal role as worker, through her full employment. In the second phase, starting in the 1960s, the state turned towards women's reproductive roles and maternalist policies (Popa 2003). Women were pressured into their reproductive role and had to endure a "double patriarchy" from men and the state (Popa 2003). This was reflected in policies of long maternity leaves.

The focus of women's emancipation under socialism was on their integration in the paid labor market, while the sexual division of labor in the household remained unchallenged (Popa 2003, Nagy 2005). While some care duties were taken over by the state, through public child care facilities, the majority of household work remained feminized and seen as "women's work". Often, these tasks were relegated to the grandmothers, enabled by early retirement policies (Verdery 1996: 65). Women were also also more likely to end up in feminized jobs as secondary wage earners (Pollert 2003). Men were still seen as the responsible economic providers, while women were seen to be "natural" mothers and carers.

Disregarding the added burden for women through domestic work led to disappointment with so-called emancipatory politics for many Hungarian women (Adamik 1993). Starting in the 1980s, anti-feminist rhetoric emerged in opposition to the state, which equated socialism with women's emancipation. It grew in strength until past the regime change, discrediting any attempt to build a politicized women's movement (Goven 1993). The practice of state socialism regarding women's equality can be characterized as an "almost emancipation." Although public care services were duly provided, policies implemented for "women's equality" were based on an understanding of gender relations derived from mainstream socialist ideology, disregarding the sexual division of labor in

the household. This led to many women in state socialist countries experiencing paid labor as a burden that they had to fulfill next to their household duties (Adamik 1993). As gender roles were not theorized in mainstream socialist ideology, state policies reproduced the naturalized understanding that women were responsible for childcare and domestic work.

2.1.2. Post-Socialist Transition and Its Effect on Women

Women were unequally influenced by the economic consequences of the transition. The consequences of the labor market transition left women with them with less benefits than men, worse career opportunities and a disappearing social safety net (Fodor 2006). The employment of women declined faster than those of men, and their labor was seen as even more secondary than under socialism. The rapid decline of social services made it more difficult for women to combine family and career, leading to even less chances on the labor market. Additionally, the post-socialist era lacked a movement to address these issues of women's inequality.

The transition to capitalist economies led to growing unemployment in all post-socialist states, which affected women more strongly. Katalin Koncz (2008) finds that Hungary had the lowest employment rate of women among all former socialist countries. The added responsibility of care work led to a high number of women "voluntarily" leaving the active labor force (Fodor 2006, Nagy 2005). As mentioned before, paid work was not something all women strove for after having to combine full-time work and domestic responsibilities under state socialism. Many women left the labor market after state-socialism, due to their family responsibilities and the possibilities offered by an early retirement age. This trend persists: in 2012, Hungary's participation rate of women in the labor force was among the lowest in the EU (Fodor 2013).

Employment segregation between men and women in the new market capitalism remained similar to state-socialism, where women were also over-represented at the bottom of job hierarchies and concentrated in a limited range of sectors (Pollert 2003). With a gender segregation index of 28.4 in 2005, Hungary was above both the EU15 and EU25 average (Koncz 2008). Segregation on

the sectoral and occupational level persists until today and is increasing (Fodor 2013). In comparison to state-socialist times, the public sector remained highly feminized and beneficial to women, but even there women experienced lower pay and more discrimination due to their family responsibilities (Pollert 2003). In the private sector, many women "self-selected out of the remasculinized workplace" (Kispéter 2006: 52), as they could not coordinate longer work hours and the cutback in welfare provisions with their unequal share of domestic work. Formerly feminized professions, such as banking, became now private sector domains and as such more prestigious and more masculinized (Koncz 2008). Both the private and the public sector became thus more adverse areas for women's success.

With the expansion of the private sector and low-wage jobs, the distinction between "female" and "male" jobs grew, leading to a perception of "feminized careers" being occupations designed for women from the outset (Koncz 2008). The expansion of a capitalist economy and the low wage sector was a accompanied by the feminization of low-paying jobs. This reduced the chances for women to make an independent living.

As the difference between "male" and "female" jobs grew, the expectations towards women's social roles became more traditional (Koncz 2008). However, as the state shifted away from former "worker-mother" policies and provision of social services for mothers and families declined, the combination of child-care and employment became more difficult (Pollert 2003). The declining economic status of women is exemplified by the convergence of the Human Development Index and the Gender Development Index. While the former rose during the transition period, due to a growing market economy and foreign investment, the latter fell, reaching Western European levels, due to the declining social services (2003: 336). Further, part-time or family-friendly work time arrangements are rare among Hungarian employers (Fodor 2013). The double burden for women became heavier, as the unquestioned division of labor in the household remained present through state-socialism and the post-communist transition and no effective solutions are in place.

The weakness of women's organizations, lacking mobilization for feminist causes,[16] and low representation of women in political offices made and still makes it difficult to achieve more equal conditions for women on the labor market. The continuous lack of addressing the gendered division of labor, from socialism to capitalism, persists as a legacy in the Hungarian trade union women's interpretation of womanhood and "feminine" characteristics.

2.2. Understandings of Womanhood: Interviews with the Trade Union Women

"A woman should get the opportunity to decide what she wants, and one shouldn't judge her or dismiss her." (Jenes 2015)

This part will examine the interviewees' understandings of womanhood in more detail. The interviewees' understanding of women having different roles and characteristics from men sets a basis for their demands discussed in the previous chapter. Their demands for women's equality are justified based on these shared characteristics, rather than on a critique of traditional gender roles. The respondents accord women certain social and professional roles, emphasizing motherhood as the source of assumedly shared characteristics and knowledge. This view is also reflected in the main Hungarian equality policy document of 2003, which separately protects "women" and "mothers".[17] I argue that the women acknowledge women's material consequences of difference, which can be related to socialist feminist ideas of emancipation, and claim power over the consequences of these differences. But their policy demands show that they distance themselves from a socialist approach, and put the responsibility of care services in the hands of families or the market, instead of the state.

2.2.1. The Assumed Social and Professional Role of Women

While the role(s) of women, as the interviewees see it, are fixed and natural, they are multi-faceted at the same time and this understanding comes with many paradoxes. However, many, if not

[16] However, Joanna Goven (1993) mentions strong mobilizations for abortion rights in the post-transition years.
[17] Act CXXV. of 2003, http://www.egyenlobanasmod.hu/data/SZMM094B.pdf, retrieved on May 27th, 2015.

all respondents agree on a definition of womanhood in relation to her reproductive role and her responsibility for the family. The social and professional roles they accord to women are justified by assumptions on shared "feminine" characteristics. Additionally, most respondents agree that women experience more societal pressure to fulfill several roles at once than men, being a mother and a full-time worker.

"Of course, combining work and family is more difficult for a woman, because the Hungarian society is built on the fact that the household and the children... and then women's place is at home," says the head of the women's section in a bus company notes that in Hungary there are, "only very few cases where women are regarded as equal partners in marriage" (Nemes). She herself gave up some career goals to have more time for the family. This was her own choice, she say, but she also recognizes how society pressures women to put family before the career. The representative of a teachers' union points out that traditional role models for women are on the rise again, those that argue "that the woman should do everything for the family," that a woman "should not think about a career, or if she thinks about it, she shouldn't have huge dreams" (Jenes).

The union women recognize that women have many roles, and face many more societal expectations than men. According to one interviewee, women's role in the family is important, but she notes that they are often reduced to it and her role as a worker is ignored. One respondent explains that it is "expected that women have the ability to manage it all" (László). She regrets that women's assumed ability to coordinate different roles is not questioned, and not even praised. Only at a certain age, when the children have grown up, can women start being themselves, and stand up for themselves, according to her.

The women's discourse and the societal expectations that they refer to reflect both the socialist ideal of the "worker-mother" and a revival of the traditional idea that women's main role is to care for the family. While the women are critical vis-à-vis the expectations that Hungarian society has towards women, they do not fundamentally question these roles. These roles are part of their understanding of women, which make them different from men. This emphasis on difference

informs their demands towards gender equality policy. Their aim is to gain control over the material consequences of the roles that society expects them to fulfill.

2.2.2. Motherhood as Shared Characteristics and Common Sensitivities

"Women, now if we move away from the company, have an interest in child care facilities. They have to deal with the family, balancing life and work (munkamegosztás), and health", explains one of the founders of the MSZOSZ Women's Board, the predecessor to the the MASZSZ's Women's Sections, in response to her motivation to found it (Steer). While motherhood is presented as women's natural role, the statement shows that it is seen as something that women "have to deal" with, and that women are expected to take on these roles by society. But the presumed shared experience of motherhood also leads to an understanding of women having a responsibility to care for children or elderly relatives. "In reality, anything that relates to the whole family is an issue, because somewhere this relates to every woman," says the representative of the industry sector (Anonymous). Women's motherly role is not questioned, the assumption remains that women share characteristics based on their "natural" motherly experience. However, there is a certain acknowledgment that too much emphasis on women's natural motherly role can be dangerous, and exclude them from certain choices. In one respondent's opinion, this is wrong, as "a woman should get the opportunity to decide what she wants, and one shouldn't judge her or dismiss her" (Jenes).

An interest in and ability to approach family and social issues is another integral part of the interviewees' understanding of womanhood:

"*Women have a greater feeling that there is something to do, they undertake these tasks better, keeping in touch with people. Probably this is somewhat easier for women to do, they are more open to discussions [with people], keeping good relations. This is what I can think of."* (Tóth). In the union of this respondent from the industry sector, 60% of the members are men, but 75% of the stewards (*bizalmisok*), are women. She explains the high number of women in positions

of responsibility by their presumed affinity to social issues. Another respondent hopes that if more women were represented, they would find better solutions to these issues because they are assumed to be more directly affected them and they have a greater social responsibility towards them.

Lastly, women are assumed to share a certain type of knowledge, based on their experiences around (child) care, family, and nursing.

"We know, that we [women] see things from a completely different perspective. Us women, I believe, decide many things based on feelings, and this would be, if we look at the social sphere, I think, of advantage in a government, in the parliament," one respondent justifies her demand of having "many more women in the parliament" (Jenes). Social and family-related issues are understood to affect mostly women, who are assumed to have special knowledge on these issues.

This allocates a special role for women, both on the social level, as the family carers, as well as on the professional and political level, where women are assumed to have an eye for issues that seem less important to men. Men, in contrast, are not seen to have the same sensibility for or knowledge about social policy issues. Women's assumed characteristics and knowledge on certain issues thus derive from their specific role as a mother and carer.

2.2.3. Sectoral Professional Experiences

These roles and characteristics are assumed by the trade union women and remain often unquestioned, characterized as "natural". The legacy of state-socialism in its lacking questioning of the sexual division of labor is reflected in the characteristics that are seen to be universally shared and define "being a woman" for the interviewees. However, these assumptions vary on the sectoral level, based on the different professional experiences that influence the interviewees' perspectives.

The interviewed women represent many different professions and occupations, ranging from technical and medical occupations to HR, sales and teaching. Among the private sector employees, four represent more masculinized industry sectors and two the highly feminized service sector (sales and food services). The remaining three interviewees work in sectors that are less divided in

gender terms, due to their share of both typically female and male professions: telecommunications and media, and public transportation. Three women represent the public sector, in education, defense, and non-profit, while one woman works as an independent consultant for trade unions.

The different sectoral work experiences lead to diverging opinions on the necessity to address "women's issues" on the level of their member union. I suggest that the interviewees' assumptions about women's shared characteristics is based on their experiences related to their private life. While they share a certain image on womanhood, this is mostly based on social and family experiences that they share, such as having children or already grandchildren. Their professional experiences, however, diverge according to the sector they are working in. This is particularly visible in the debate on the importance of "women's issues" in union activism.

It seems that in the more feminized professions, where women workers outnumber men by far, such as retail, education, or food production, special "women's issues" are less visible to the union activists. In less feminized professions, on the other hand, "women's issues" are more pronounced, such as in the transportation sector. Here the trade unionist women see themselves as representing the constituency of women as a whole, for example by fighting for a day off for women's menstrual pain every month. For many unionists in feminized or gender-equal sectors it is not evident what "women's issues" are. The vice-president of the United Media Union (EMSZ), where both "masculinized" as well as "feminized" professions are represented, cannot recall "special women's topics" at first. After a while, still some cases come to her mind, which associate women with their role as carers. For example, she addresses women's flexible work schedules to manage caring for the elderly relative at the same time as full-time work.

The debate on acknowledging "women's issues" or not is more pronounced between the private and public sector in Hungary, the latter of which is highly feminized (Koncz 2008). The representative of the food industry and long-time union leader of the Food Industry Workers' Union (ÉDOSZ), emphasizes that women have very different struggles in the public and private sector. She acknowledges that the public sector is feminized and sees it as friendly towards women. In

contrast, she argues that in the private sector women's special interests are not represented and women face more adverse conditions due to high competition. A public-sector representative of the Teachers' Union concludes similarly:

"In the private [competitive] sector it is completely valid [to have separate women's structures], because there it is very much needed. Whether it has a validity in the public sector, I don't really know. I don't really feel [this validity] within the educational field, because we are women" (Jenes). In her view, women's issues are automatically represented merely by the fact that women make up the majority of workers in the public sector of education. Differences among women is not mentioned in neither of the two interviews

However, ideological preferences influence the women's argumentation for or against "women's interests" and blur the sectoral divide. One unionist understands feminists to fight for women's preferential treatment. In order to avoid being called a "feminist", she dismisses the idea of women's special rights, while in other instances she does mention women's "special roles.". Working in a masculinized private sector environment, she wants to make sure that as a workers' representative she is seen as applying the same rules for every worker. She thus emphasizes the notion of equality over difference for strategic and ideological reasons.

The interviewees common ground for meaning-making therefore lies in their experience of the *social role* of women, as they have experienced it themselves, at the intersection of motherhood and work life. Common to all of them is their experience as women in a fairly homogenous age group (mostly between 45 and 65) and a similar family situation of having (grand-)children.

Their *professional* experiences and the situations they encounter through their union activism are, in contrast, very different from each other. This is in line with Elizabeth Lawrence's (1994) findings on different work-related factors that influence women's trade union activism, creating different barriers for their activism and resulting demands. The interviewed MASZSZ women all occupy higher union positions and they feel a responsibility towards all the workers they represent, but their work and union experience is grounded in very different economic sectors. Therefore,

while some women understand their activism as fighting for the distinct needs of women, others dismiss this conception, priding themselves on treating working men and women in an equal manner. Reasons for this are among others different union structures, the rates of women among their union's members, and their personal workplace experiences.

This chapter analyzed how the interviewees' understandings of womanhood reflect the legacy of socialist emancipatory ideas. The practice in several Central Eastern European countries shows that socialist emancipation policies lacked an analysis of the sexual division of labor (Popa 2003). The legacies of these policies of "almost-emancipation", as well as the gendered effects of the post-socialist transition in Hungary merge with Europeanized gender equality norms in the interviewees complex understanding of womanhood.

Being a woman is understood to carry certain social roles with it, which are seen to be socially expected and remain mostly unquestioned. Understandings of these roles and "feminine" characteristics as different from men's roles, show the legacy of state-socialist emancipatory practices. While the respondents emphasize women's professional role, which reflects the socialist idea of women's emancipation through their full insertion in the labor market, women are also expect to take on the motherly role, reminiscent of a lacking analysis of the sexual division of labor and the current revival of traditional gender roles. The policy demands of the interviewees accord the care responsibility to women, based on their "natural" role as a mothers, which shows the legacy of the socialist "worker-mother" ideal. The unequal division of household and family responsibilities, as well as the multiple roles that women have to fulfill, are criticized, but not necessarily questioned. The assumption around women's shared characteristics derive from these roles and reflect an emphasis on the difference between women and men.

Difference is interpreted in its real, material consequences for women, and the interviewees demand power over the management of these consequences. While the materiality of difference can be connected to socialist ideas around women's emancipation, European gender equality norms

present themselves in the aspect of control over these differences, reflecting a liberal ideology of choice. The common point of these two influence is that neither of them address the root causes of gender inequalities, i.e. gendered division of labor and social roles. This can explain the persistence of the woman's role as mother and carer in the interviewees' understandings of womanhood.

However, the interviewees' understandings are not uniform, they differ according to the respondent's age, profession, sector and which member union she belongs to, among other factors. While women working in the highly feminized public sector do not differentiate between "men's" and "women's issues", those who come from the more masculinized private sector portray themselves as representatives of women's particular interests. But ideological and practical reasons keep some women from masculinized sectors from only focusing on gender difference; they opt for equal treatment as a basis of their activism.

Chapter 3: Finding a New Voice: Current Trade Union Strategies

The previous two chapters focused on the demands of Hungarian trade unionist women regarding gender equality policy, and how these rely on certain understandings of womanhood, influenced by state-socialist legacies and current Europeanized norms. After having presented the substance of Hungarian women's trade union activism, I now want to discuss the institutional environment that surrounds this activism and present the strategies they use to further their demands. These emerge and are transmitted in a certain institutional setting, furthered through different opportunities and hindered by other constraints.

The reality of Hungarian trade unions since state-socialism is characterized by declining membership and popularity in a growingly adverse legislative context. According to one data set, union density declined by 43.6% in Hungary between 1995 and 2001 (Visser 2006). Most recent numbers show that only 10.6% of Hungarian employees were unionized in 2012 (OECD 2014). In the context of a changing economic structure, unions have been unable to adopt a strong common position. Hostility between trade union confederations and their political marginalization have increased this instability.

The first part of the chapter describes the current situation of trade unions, which is characterized by the loss of function in the post-socialist transition and the negative legacies of the former regime. The fragmentation of the union landscape, the ongoing hostility between trade unions and their political marginalization, adds to unions' difficulty of positioning themselves clearly in the new environment.

The discussion of my empirical findings in the second part of the chapter brings in the question of women's perspectives on this changed environment. Their inclusion is important to add complexity to the situation of trade unions in the current Hungarian and Central Eastern European environment. The rollback of the welfare state under Orbán's current regimes affects women especially (Szikra 2014). Thus women activists, who experience these changes on a personal and

professional level, deserve a special focus. Including diverse perspectives in the study of post-socialist trade unions helps trade unions to find a new voice, by responding to issues of gender equality and thus representing diverse interests in a changed socio-economic context, characterized by pluralist democratic processes.

3.1. Opportunity Structures and Constraints for Hungarian Trade Unions

To understand the framework of the interviewees' activism, I present an overview of the post-socialist transitional process in Hungary, the changes from state-socialism and their effect on the situation of trade unions. The political context of the regime in power since 2010 further constrains trade unions. Unions' influence in the legislative process has been destabilized through a dismantled tripartite structure. Further, the Labor Code of 2012 has cut down the representative power of trade unions in workplaces. As will be shown, the lasting effects of state-socialist legacies and the disrupting effect of the transition period on unions continue to hinder them in trying to assert themselves in the new economic and political environment.

3.1.1. Legacies of State-Socialism in the Perception of Unions

The changing situation of trade unions from state-socialism to market capitalism has been extensively analyzed (Kubicek 1999, Crowley 2004, Neumann 2005, Croucher and Rizov 2012). The role of state-socialism is seen as important in labor's decline in the different post-socialist countries (Crowley 2004). However, the imprint that state-socialism left on trade unions, depends on the country-specific changes which they went through (Kubicek 1999).

Several key economic and institutional changes characterize the specific transition process of Hungary. The privatization of the Hungarian economy began already in the late 1980s, as a "spontaneous" process before the official regime change (Neumann 2005: 68). The regime change accelerated this process, as foreign investors rose to the opportunities presented by the economic transition. State-owned firms dissolved and public employment declined, but the private service sector expanded through the growing involvement of multinational firms (Kubicek 1999: 95). This

led to an overall membership decline in trade unions, as the private sector was characterized by low union involvement.

Additionally, the unemployment rate drastically rose in all post-socialist states. In Hungary, the unemployment situation was worst right after the regime change, and stabilized later (Neumann 2005: 70). A large inactive workforce, due to unemployment, early pensions, or maternity leave, in the case of women, and many people opting for non-unionized workplaces or informal labor (Kubicek 1999: 86), accelerated declining membership rates of unions.

The mass membership decline in the immediate post-socialist years can also be explained through unions' persistent connection to the unpopular communist regime (Kallaste and Woolfson 2009, Kubicek 1999, Neumann 2005: 63f.). A study of the Baltic countries shows that the negative perception of unions could stem from uncertainty regarding the benefits of unions membership in the changed environment (Kallaste and Woolfson 2009). Still today, unions have the lowest legitimacy among political institutions in Hungary (Neumann 2005: 99).

The function of unions under state-socialism is often characterized as a "transmission belt" between the government and companies, where no real collective bargaining took place (Neumann 2005: 65). In the new economic system, unions lost this function and had to establish themselves as "bargaining agents in the new economic system" (Kallaste and Woolfson 2009: 10). One generation after socialism, in the context of an economic crisis and austerity measures, the need for representing and protecting workers' interests has grown, but not necessarily through unions (Kallaste and Woolfson 2009: 94), which have been unsuccessful in popularizing their activities after socialism (105). In this rapidly changing economic context, unions could not maintain their old function, as they were so tightly associated with the crumbling socialist state. But neither could they quickly assert themselves in the environment of economic restructuring, where labor relations shifted towards "flexible labor regime", similar to the United States (Crowley 2004: 425). The contrast between the assumedly unified workers' movement under state-socialism and the disruptive transition years was extreme.

3.1.2. Effects of Transition: Fragmentation, Hostility, Marginalization

The transition period can be characterized as a "critical juncture" for trade unions, during which strategic choices were taken that influenced their future trajectories (Meszmann 2012). The economic and political changes of the transformation period led to a fragmentation of the union movement and hostility within it. In the context of rapid privatization since the late 1980s, independent unions started forming in Hungary, defending diverging interests (Neumann 2005: 68). In the emerging pluralistic landscape of trade unions, they were organized into six confederations: four new trade union confederations developed from the National Collective of Trade Unions (SZOT) and two new independent confederations emerged (76). In 2013, three of the trade union confederations have merged to form the MASZSZ.[18] The internal structure of the six confederations is very blurry, composed both of industry federations and company-level unions (Neumann 2005: 80). Political differences between the confederations lead to further hostility, intensified by a polarized political landscape (Neumann 2012: 373f.). Within one company many different unions can exist, belonging to different confederations. This further scatters and diminishes the power of the Hungarian labor movement.

In the years following the transition process, this fragmentation was accompanied by a marginalization of unions as political actors. Depending on the ruling government, different policies were used to cope with the declining social and working conditions. This affected the extent to which unions could influence the decision-making process. During the first Orbán government (1998-2002), Hungarian unions faced a "hostile environment" (Gennard 2007: 93), due to a liberalization of the labor market, privatization and the dismantling of social dialogue institutions. While tripartite institutions were formally present again under the next social-liberal government (2002-2006), unions' possibility to influence depended on the political will of the ruling government, making effective social partnership very difficult (Kubicek 1999: 87). Political

[18] First merging occurred in 2013, between ASZSZ, MSZOSZ, and SZEF. In February 2015, SZEF decided to stay an independent confederation and be associated to the MASZSZ.

marginalization and dependence persistently characterizes the current situation, with the recent re-dismantling of the national tripartite structure (Szikra 2014). This inevitably worsened the situation of the decentralized and fragmented union structure, faced with more difficulties to merge and form a uniform front in the demanding economic times.

3.1.3. Trying to Polish a Rusty Image: Current Legal Constraints and Perceptions of Unions.

Since 2010, the beginning Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's second governing mandate, and especially with the new Labor Code of 2012, Hungarian unions are facing high legal and political constraints. Curtailing of strike opportunities, the dismantling of the *OÉT*, replaced by the non-mandatory Economic and Social Forum (NGTT) in 2010 (Girndt 2013), and reduction of financial benefits for unions have made the working conditions of Hungarian unions much more difficult (Neumann 2012, Krén 2013). The dismantling of tripartite institutions hinders the cooperation among all unions and the government, as the NGTT only includes selected unions, which contributes to hostility within the movement (Tóth 2012). The Labor Code of 2012 fortified neo-liberal practices on the labor market, strengthening the elite and upper middle class and benefiting business through more flexibility and easier lay-off policies on the labor market (Tóth 2012). The inefficacy of labor's protest against the new Labor Code can be explained by the fragmentation and lasting hostility within the labor movement, increasing the difficulty to further their demands.[19]

The neoliberal, neo-conservative and étatist social policies of Orbán's regime marginalize the interests of workers and the labor movement, and especially of women, who are largely affected by welfare policies (Szikra 2014). As was discussed before, within Hungarian unions, gender equality demands and policies pertaining to women's working conditions are mostly furthered women unionists. It is thus important to analyze how women in the union movement perceive their situation and what strategies they use to further their demands despite the obstacles.

[19] Although 2011 saw strong labor mobilizations against the new Labor Code, it was finally enacted with only little compromise on the government's side.

As trade unions depend on the commitment of their female members, who make up the growing part of their membership in many cases,[20] it is also their interest to represent the concerns of women, improve their identification with the trade union, and thus strengthen their commitment through. Unions can play a much bigger role in furthering gender equality if they establish the support structures for women's collective agency, which fosters the political empowerment of women and their action against globalized economic practices (Briskin 2011). A clearly defined, united labor movement with an equal participation of women and representation of their interests could strengthen social-democratic conceptions of gender equality in Hungary against the current neo-liberal state of declining social provisions.

3.2. Navigating the Constraints: Experiences of Hungarian Trade Union Women

This part presents an analysis of empirical findings on the current union situation, as perceived by women. First, I will describe how the women perceive the opportunities and constraints for their activism in Hungary today. The women address lacking popularity and legislative constraints as factors that hinder their work. However, they see both opportunities and constraints in the consequences of entering a global economic market.

In a second part, I present their strategies to further their demands, on the membership, company, and policy level. My findings confirm previous studies, adding unionists' perspectives on the most recent legal developments. Further, I accentuate how cooperation is used as a strategy of unionists to gain influence in the constrained political environment.

[20] According to the European Trade Union Confederation's (ETUC) *8th of March Survey* of 2014, the growing female membership of trade unions slows down the persistent membership decline in many European trade union confederations (ETUC 2014: 2).

3.2.1. Perceptions of the Trade Union Landscape

Lacking Popularity

My interviews with the trade unionist women reflect findings on a negative perception of unions among the Hungarian public (Kallaste and Woolfson 2009, Neumann 2005). The interviewed women mention lacking communication with the public, bad cooperation among unions, and a lack of young people in the movement as aspects leading to the negative perception of unions in the Hungarian population today. As one respondent puts it, the 20 years of bad cooperation among unions has led to lacking trust in the population, which has to be rebuilt now with hard work. "The problem is, that employees don't know what unions are doing for them", a union representative points out, underlining the insufficient publicity of union work in Hungarian society (Veres).

The lack of young people in the movement is seen as a sign of indifference towards unions in Hungary. Most of the interviewed women, many of whom are close to retirement age or already retired, pity this fact. "It is important to train the next generation," says the media representative. "There have been different initiatives for this, but there are still not enough young members." (Veres). Further, workers are simply scared of being associated with a trade union, especially in state-owned companies, says another interviewee. Many interviewees fear the threat of a disappearing movement, if the perception of unions does not change in the population.

Legislative Constraints

Union mobilization is hindered by different legislative constraints according to the interview findings. The Labor Code of 2012 restricted unions' possibilities through reducing the time off allocated to workers' representatives and the number of representatives per workplace (Neumann 2012: 375). Works councils, which are composed of both employee and employer representation, exist in Hungary since the regime change and have gained influence since enactment of the new

Labor Code (Tóth 2012). While the works councils decides on the general pay structure, the union has the power of wage bargaining. This negatively affects the work of unionists if union and works council oppose each other, as one respondent explains: "As the leader of the works council is paid well, there is often jealousy between the trade union and the works council," (Lupkovics). To work out, she explains, both have to harmonize.

The dismantling of the OÉT as the tripartite bargaining structure, is also mentioned as an impediment to effective representation of workers' interests:

"[The government] cannot sit down with all unions - [while] that was exactly the aim of having confederations and this merger [of the MASZSZ]." She demands *"that we can represent our own expectations [of the merging confederations], (...) that we strengthen the workers' side with our ideas."* (Nemes).

The respondent claims that the representation of workers' rights merely works on the small-scale level, "because it is still in the interest of the employer to come to an agreement [with the employee]" (Nemes). In her opinion a round-table discussion with all social partners would be necessary to effectively represent workers' interests. The latter option is impossible since the dismantling of the OÉT.

Creating the right legislative environment is seen as crucial to regain trust and strengthen the position of unions in society. The interviewee adds: *"There is no representation of interests in Hungary, in my opinion"* (Nemes). The legislative changes of 2012 have further made strikes almost impossible, according to her. She explains that workers are scared of even demonstrating and that unions are not present in enough sectors anymore to form a potent force. The statements show a perceived connection between unions' reduced possibilities for action due to legislative constraints and the lacking popularity of unions.

Economic Context

The economic changes of the last 25 years influence the interviewed women's work, especially through the presence of multinational companies. In this context, the interviewees mention that it has become more and more difficult to secure good working conditions in case of outsourcing or fight against lay-offs. This is also connected to the shift towards neoliberal legal changes labor relations (Crowley 2004), and the weak, fragmented union landscape. Women are particularly threatened by liberalized lay-off policies during a maternity leave and in their reintegration afterwards. One respondent from a big telecommunication company says:

"Following lay-offs, unfortunately, even here it is very often impossible for us to guarantee a woman's employment after her maternity leave. Often the scope of activities that she worked in does not exist anymore when she wants to return" (Siraky).

Although the interviewee was long term HR employee at the company, she can only count few successes for unions, particularly when it comes to the defense of women's interests. The difficulty to bargain against lay-offs is confirmed by another representative of the media sector. Her union tries all it can to secure good working conditions for employees in case of outsourcing. She credits the difficulty to the additional burden of a fragmented union landscape within her company. This confirms Szikra's (2014) findings on the negative effect of the current government's neoliberal welfare policy on women.

The integration of Hungary in a global economic market brought many multinational firms as new employers. These changes lead to diverging opinions on the value of these employers for unions. The organization rates in the multinational firms depend on the employer, says one interviewee. Another respondent of the transportation sector finds:

"A lot of multinationals employ certain employees exactly because they are not part of a union. But this is unimaginable on the international scale. There you have the exact opposite, that they are happy to have organized labor. Because they don't have to communicate or negotiate

upward, but there is one designated person that I [the employer] can negotiate with, and the other workers are aligned with his/her opinion, and this is structured" (Nemes).

She does not dismiss multinationals completely, only the anti-union practices of some. Another representative even prefers multinationals to Hungarian employers, as they seem to value unions more. She states that she "got along better with multinational employers than national ones" (Steer). In her perspective, multinational companies bring a "Western tradition" with them, which includes a certain respect for unions. But she claims that Hungarian employers are "not at that stage yet.... or not anymore" (Steer). These statements reflect findings on unions' peculiar position of having to deal with new, capitalist actors and learn the game of "Western unionism" (Kubicek 1999).

The perceptions of the interviewees show a certain disillusionment with the current situation of trade unions. Lacking popularity and declining membership hinders the activism of the interviewed women, confirming the findings of earlier studies (Kallaste and Woolfson 2009, Gennard 2007, Crowley 2004). Regarding economic changes, the globalized market represents constraints through liberal labor market policies, but some multinational companies are seen as are interested in cooperating with unions. Legislative changes of the last five years greatly constrain the possibilities of unions in Hungary in general, but specifically in the defense of women's working conditions, which are under attack by the current neoliberal policies. These findings are in line with studies on the political marginalization of unions since the transition period (Neumann 2005, 2012). The question is thus, which strategies unionists use to overcome the most recently imposed constraints, especially when it comes to furthering demands towards gender equality policy?

3.2.2. Strategies for Activism: The Importance of Cooperation

Through strategies aimed at the membership, the company, and the policy level, the interviewed union women continue to find ways for effective interest-representation and furthering their demands, despite the adverse conditions. Their activism is not only constrained by insufficient funding and a tight legal framework, but often also by domestic responsibilities and a full-time job. Their strategies focus on the big question of membership and organizing, but also on how to better communicate on the company-level and how to successfully lobby national policy. Some promote specific "women's demands", others aim to strengthen the union as a whole. After presenting strategies that rely on the individual union, I turn towards their possibilities in national and international cooperation.

Strategies on the Level of Membership, the Company, and Policy

Strategies addressing declining membership rates are important for most interviewed women. Having often started their activism under socialism, the current shrinking numbers and disinterested workers are alarming to them. One respondent laments that in retail sector, the organization rate is only around 5-10%. This reflects the findings of previous studies on the rise of private sector employment and concurrent decline of overall union membership after the regime change. The activists thus aim to regain trust and enticing new members to join by organizing community events or through certain benefits provided by trade union membership, such as a car insurance deal.

Organization of community events is especially important to promote the union work locally. One respondent points out that common cultural activities and hikes are necessary for members to associate the union with fun. Common union events and a "good community" in the base organizations motivate workers to join Távszak, the Telecommunications' Union, according to their representative to the MASZSZ:

"The region of Eastern Hungary was always very strongly unionized. So here we have a unionization rate of about 80%, and we even have some basis organizations where it's 90%," she says, about the region that she leads. While in some regions and sectors, high unionization rates remain. other regions, such as Budapest are much less unionized. In her view, this is due to a prevalence of middle and upper management employees, or service units with a high fluctuation of workers. To organize new, young members, they made a deal with a car insurance company, which pays damages on company cars of union members. The gap between union strength in sectors, occupations, or regions with a tradition of strong unions and the expanding non-union service sector defines the new economic environment that the unions have to adapt to. This experience reflects how the biggest challenge for membership organization lies in the growing service sector of the market economy, characterized by high fluctuation of workers and an absence of collective workers' organization.

Further, different forms of awareness-raising are used to complement marches and demonstrations as the most current forms of activism among the union women. Two respondents mention the International Women's Day on March 8th as an event to raise awareness about women workers' rights by the Retail Employees' Union, or to discuss specific regulations of the local women's section at the United Transportation Union. Many women also stress the importance of good leadership, a direct contact with union leaders and the women's section and good knowledge of women's issues, for better relations with union members.

At the company level, the strategy for the interviewees is to maintain good relations with the works councils and company leadership. The recent changes in the Labor Code have intensified the importance of the works councils for unions' activism. But one interviewee remarks:

"The functioning of works councils is somehow better tolerated by the CEO, at least, that's how it seems. Although most managers have no idea what the difference between the two [unions and works councils] is" (Ladányi).

Unions delegate members to the works councils and can influence company policies through this. However, their success depends on the leaning of the works council, one respondent explains, which can be led by a union leader or represent the interests of the company leadership.

Several interviewees point out that good connections to the company leadership are very important to them. While the unions' legislative power has been reduced, and they have little influence on national policy decision-making, collective agreements with the company seem to be more fruitful. The representative of the Retail Workers' Union explains that this helped initiate a collective agreement around provisions for mothers working in several big box stores. Another respondent explains, that most workers identify with the workplace more than the union or confederation. This further strengthens the unions' focus on the company as the main level of influence. In a way, the findings show a distance of the unionists to a traditional "class struggle", as they take on a more cooperative stance vis-à-vis the employer.

Reflecting the political marginalization of trade unions in Hungary, direct contact with the policy level is only mentioned by two interviewees. One respondent is a member of the Steering Committee at the Army Employees' Union (HODOSZ). In her case, her employer is the Ministry of Defense, thus the HODOSZ Steering Committee debates with the policy level directly. Women are represented by 60% of the Steering Committee, however both the president, as well as the vice-president are male. Through recommendations and discussions with higher officials, often including negotiations in Budapest, she can exert influence on the negotiations with the Ministry of Defense. Connections to ministries and detailed knowledge on the changing legal framework are crucial for her to navigate the current environment.

Taking influence on the policy level, when one's employer is not the government, is however much more difficult. A long-term union activist and now freelance union consultant explains that under the Orbán government "no one" is asked about legislative projects, while in former governments consultations with unions were more common. Thus, in her opinion, unions can only influence the level of local collective agreements. She further points out that "there is no agreement

of interests" between employer and employee organizations, and neither had much possibility to voice their interests in the legislative process.[21] Neither of the other respondents mentions direct involvement in the policy process, showing that this is probably reserved to the highest level of trade union leadership, or happens through indirect measures such as petitions and protests.

The strategies above refer to activity within the individual union, on the membership level, in direct bargaining processes with the company or possibilities of union activists to influence the policy process. Cooperation between unions, nationally and internationally, as well as with civil society organizations is another important factor in the activists' strategies. To combat their political marginalization, cooperation is often the most effective option to exert influence in the current institutional environment, as the following empirical findings show.

Cooperation in the National and International Context

National cooperation with local NGOs or women's NGOs is common, often on socially salient topics. The level of cooperation varies, depending on the member union. The representative of the Teachers' Union explains that the collaboration with NGOs is very useful and works well on topics such as child poverty and schooling. Another respondent of the United Transportation Union mentions a flashmob organized with civil society organizations to raise awareness for the tight bus schedules. A retired union leader voices the need for more cooperation, with youth groups, women's NGOs, academia and female politicians to bring forward women's issues on the national agenda. Another interviewee advocates for more national forums to cooperate on societal issues on a broader scale. Demonstrations and marches are also named as sites of cooperation, showing solidarity towards other trade unions or civil society issues.

However, while cooperation is important in nearly all sectors, several interviewees state their strict opposition to political activism or any cooperation with party politics. They understand their

[21] The respondent is referring to the 2014 legislation of shop closures on Sundays. Act CII of 2014 (prohibition of work on Sundays in the retail sector), entry into force on May 15th, 2015 (http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1400102.TV, retrieved on May 25th, 2015).

union work as a form of interest representation and engagement for society, which they separate from political activism and try to avoid any connection with politics in a very polarized society.

On the international level, seven of the respondents have already participated in collaborations with other unions. Projects range from collaborations with neighboring regions on youth issues, European sectoral women's section's meetings, or a EU-wide labor protest in Brussels. The participants count new strategies and shared documents for lobbying as some of the benefits of these events. Some also mention the solidarity of foreign unions with Hungarian struggles as a beneficial side-effect of having good relations abroad.

The cooperation with foreign unions also allowed Hungarian unions to learn new leadership strategies and help them adapt to the new economic environment after the end of socialism, as some interviewees recall. The adaptation to new, often multinational, and capitalist employers after the regime change was aided by Western partners "They helped us so much, that I can't even explain it," says one long-time union activist of the food industry (Steer 2015). Not only did they receive practical information on how to set up a works council or how to negotiate, but also on applications for European trainings and funds. In turn, her union then used these skills to train Romanian and Bulgarian unions, where this process started later. *"We already had experience by then,"* she says. *"Because, as you know, in the Western context there was no example for making capitalism from socialism"* (Steer 2015). Thus they used the traveling knowledge from West to East to adapt to the transformation process.

In the current context, the amount of international cooperation depends on the member union. One respondent works for Telekom, whose mother company is based in Germany. Her union cooperates with the German telecommunications union and its European network, Uniglobal. The exchange between Uniglobal and Távszak works well, through committee leadership (*elnöksegi*) meetings.

"One hears how these thing work on an international level. Especially with the Germans this is very important, as the mother company is the German Telekom. It is very important for us to know how they "fight" and what demands they have," (Siraky).

She adds that they have to adapt to the demands of the German union, as they are in an unequal position, fighting against lay-offs in both places. Another respondent points out that in the Retail Workers' Union, cooperation on the international level is low, also due to language difficulties. The examples from the transition era and now show the ambiguity of cooperation between unions on a European level. While it is useful to exchange experiences on company leadership practices and negotiation cultures, this collaboration is troubled if competing interests between workers of mother and daughter companies are present. Cooperation on the level of the member union or confederations exist, but is dependent on the union leadership.

Collaboration also occurs on the level of women's constituencies. One of the interviewees represented Hungary at the Pan-European Regional Committee's (PERC) Women's Section of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) until 2012, and was a representative to several European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) meetings. While she acknowledges that language barriers made a full cooperation difficult, this work gave her insights into the growing number of women's issues present at the ETUC's meeting, especially since the EU enlargement process towards Central Eastern Europe started. Another respondent regrets that as there is no formal women's section in her union, they cannot participate in international women's meetings of sectoral trade union confederations. however they receive invitations to them.

Problems do arise in the international cooperation, due to language barriers, lacking financial resources or time to travel to international meetings, as some respondents mention. This reflects the findings of Bengt Larsson's study of the cooperation of 14 trade unions in Europe (2012). Next to structural differences in production, legislation, and policy, "soft" factors, such as language barriers and cultural differences are just as important hindrances to successful European cooperation of unions (153). However, the opinions presented in the interviews show an overall strong desire for

more international collaboration, although often the women are not in the position to participate and further their standpoints at the international level.

The specific communist legacy and following transition process has marginalized Hungarian unions as political actors. The new Labor Code of 2012 has further restricted their rights, making it even more difficult to swim against the tide of declining membership and popularity. The current situation of trade unions impacts the interviewed women through legal constraints, declining membership and popularity, as well as a changing economic environment.

Both the inclusion of diverse views, as well as European cooperation are useful attempts for the Hungarian union movement to "find its voice". Given the uncertainty of the situation of unions in the Hungarian institutional context, a better understanding of the women's strategies and demands can strengthen the Hungarian labor movement through including and representing the diverse views of its members. The interviewed women try to combat this adverse environment and strengthen their movement through different strategies. They try to regain trust on the level of the membership and keep good relations with the company leadership. However, unions' political marginalization mostly rules out the options of the trade union women to intervene directly on the policy level.

To overcome this marginalization, the unionists use cooperation on the wider level of civil society, which is often seen as societal and not political activism. While on the national level cooperation helps to lobby for policy demands, it is used on the international level to gain know-how and exchange best practices with other European unions. An emphasis of Hungarian unions on international cooperation can strengthen them by exchanging practices with countries where the union movement is more embedded in the national-decision making process.

The situation of women in the labor movement is doubly difficult, as they face both the general political marginalization of unions, as well as a marginalization as women within trade

unions. In the next chapter, I will present the constraints of gendered inequality that the interviewed women have to deal with, and discuss what strategies can be used to further women's interests in this context. A particular focus will be given to the function of the MASZSZ Women's Section in an attempt to overcome gendered organizational structures.

Chapter 4: Resisting Gendered Organization through Women's Sections

The aim of this chapter is to show how gendered organizational structures affect women in trade unions, specifically in the Hungarian context. To explain what leads to women's exclusion from positions with decision-making power in unions, I will provide an overview of the feminist analyses of organizations, focusing on Joan Acker's (1999) concept of a "gendered organization" and its implementation in the trade union and Hungarian context. Feminist scholars have examined different strategies that trade union women can use to overcome these structural inequalities. The debate around the use of separate women's structures will be the focus of both the theoretical and empirical parts of the chapter.

The empirical part of the chapter presents the perceptions that the interviewed women have of gender inequalities in the Hungarian context, pointing out how the social expectations towards women hinder their full integration in the trade unions' activities. I find that the Women's Section plays an important role in the process of overcoming these inequalities, but that this function is specific to the post-socialist Hungarian context. In comparison to my personal experience in the women's section of the German Trade Union Confederation,[22] the women I interviewed do not deal exclusively with women's politics in their routine union work and are influenced by different institutional constraints. This defines the specific meanings and functions they accord to a separate women's structure.

4.1. Gendered Organization of Trade Unions

If women want to effectively promote their interests within trade unions, they need to be represented where decision-making happens. In a 2014 study of 47 national confederations throughout Europe, however, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) finds a very low number of women in leadership positions. At the level of the ETUC Secretariat there is full gender

[22] This information was collected during an internship with the German Trade Union Confederation's Women's Section, which is led by social and political scientists as well as lawyers, coordinating campaigns and lobby strategies.

parity since 2011 (ETUC 2014: 26). But out of 54 positions of political leadership in the national confederations, only seven are held by women (21). In 2010, the ITUC passed a "Resolution on Gender Equality" (ITUC 2010), aiming to reinforce the participation of women at all levels, and pledged to reach a 30% quota of women in trade union leadership by 2018 through the campaign "Count us in!".[23] This shows that the leadership of trade unions is far from being gender equal. This part presents feminists analyses of the structures in organizations that lead to gender inequality, how gendered organization presents itself in the Hungarian context, and what strategies union women use to overcome these structural inequalities.

4.1.1. The Concept of "Gendered Organization"

Analyzing the structures of a "gendered organization" stems from a tradition of feminist studies on the nature of organization. With this concept, Acker (1990) identifies the structural level as the root of gendered inequalities in organizations. Organizational structures are built around an assumedly neutral and universal worker. However, she argues that these structures perpetuate the ideal norm of a male worker and reproduce gender inequalities.

The distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine, remains embedded in the organizational structure, in formal and informal ways, and leads to patterns of advantage and disadvantage. The bodies of women, and the social responsibilities that they have to comply to, are erased from formal requirements, such as job description, work hours, and from informal social gatherings. This influences the chances of women in the organization; in consequence their career expectations become much harder to reach than men's. Acker mentions income and status inequalities between men and women as one of the more obvious outcomes, but also the reproduction of cultural images of gender and the individual gender identity, which then further justify the gender inequalities (1990). Formal requirements carry over to organizational practices,

[23] http://www.ituc-csi.org/count-us-in

directly and indirectly through informal exclusion of women, legitimized by the dominant hegemonic masculinity.

In a study of Eastern and Western German trade union activists, Koch-Baumgarten (2002) finds that the socialization in different political regimes matters for the interests that the activists represent. This means that women's experiences of a gendered organization have to be viewed in their current socio-cultural context, keeping local institutional structures in mind. This gives a more complex view than the current Western-centric feminist analyses of organizations (Kanter 1977, Ressner 1987, Acker 1990, Cockburn 1991). A localized experience of gendered organization is part of this different socialization and needs to be considered in the interpretation of the activists' demands.

Gendered Organization in Hungary

The specific situation of gendered organization in Hungary is analyzed by Beáta Nagy (2005). In Hungary, the main segregation in terms of gender on the labor market happens at the sectoral level (vertical segregation), in contrast to the Anglo-american context, where it is more prevalent on the level of the firm (horizontal segregation). Her findings show, nevertheless that the Hungarian labor market is segregated both horizontally as well as vertically. Precisely, women are mostly found in the second line of management and additionally make up the majority of service sector workers (2005: 349). When they are present in management, this is more likely to be in feminized spheres, such as in the public sector or banking (350), showing that the socialist emancipatory policies did not reduce the effects of gendered organization (358). Nagy's study thus account for the exclusion of women through gendered organizational processes on the sectoral as well as firm level.

To explain the uneven representation of women in Hungarian management structures, Nagy uses a social-system centered approach, following Powell (1999). Focusing on structural rather than individual factors to explain career inequalities can account for the low effect of women's statistically higher educational achievement on their career progress, for example (Nagy 2005: 353). The main reason Nagy sees for these inequalities are the returning traditional values and role

expectations towards women. The study finds, that the interviewed HR managers see the "traditional female role" as "crucial for society but as an obstacle for the company" (355). The slowness of women's career progress is accounted to individual rather than structural factors. Even women, she finds, define themselves as "mothers" and "wives" first (353) and the impact of gender on career path and promotions is not recognized (354). But the extent to which both women and men emphasize the importance of social roles for their career shows its impact on women's career progress. As the crucial time for career-building coincides with the average time of starting a family, women remain disadvantaged in the race. As Nagy's study shows, the revival of unquestioned traditional gender roles plays a big role in explaining gender inequalities in Hungarian management structures.

Trade Unions as Gendered Organizations

Several feminist scholars have pointed out the persistent inequalities in trade unions (Briskin 1983, Cobble 1993, Lawrence 1994, Colgan and Ledwith 2002), linking them to a gendered organizational structure (Cockburn 1991). For trade union women activists, gendered organizational outcomes influence both their union as well as their professional life and expectations. Cynthia Cockburn analyzed specifically how men in organizations resist the advancement of women, as barriers to women also constitute career opportunities for men (1991). Drawing on Acker's theory, Cockburn argues, that women's sexuality is seen as a potential threat to the organizational discipline of unions, which hinders women's career within the union. Elizabeth Lawrence (1994) argues that the obstacles of women's participation in union work are not only related to their gender roles, but also to their occupational role and work situation. Women in unions face a "double resistance", according to Cockburn, both as workers, in the struggle between employer and employed, and as women, against the dominance of the male norm.

Effects and Causes of Gendered Organization in Trade Unions

What are the outcomes of gendered organization in unions? The barriers to women's participation in the particular case of trade unions are threefold: related to their work, the union specifically, or cultural-societal-personal barriers (Wertheimer and Nelson 1975). The gender pay gap, the underrepresentation of women in office-holding positions and of their concerns in the union's demands are some of the most prevalent outcomes of gendered organizational practices.

Arguing for equal pay is not a tradition of male-centered unions, especially if women are not equally represented in decision-making councils. According to Alice H. Cook, unions in the United States were created by men who viewed women's wage-earning as the "government's, rather than the unions' responsibility" or used it to protect their own work standards (1993).[24] In the Hungarian context, László Neumann finds that women are also underrepresented in trade unions, and equality issues are not generally discussed on a sectoral or company level (2005: 86f.). An adoption of equal pay values by trade union leadership helps, but women also need to have access to wage-bargaining committees to influence the bargaining process in their favor (Colgan and Ledwith 2002). Lawrence finds that it is not the necessarily the bargaining priorities that differ between men and women, but rather the styles of bargaining, which influence whether and how equality issues are integrated in the decision-making process of the union (1994: 149ff.). She explains these different bargaining styles by gender differences in union cultures, e.g. how women respond to different organizing strategies (153). Clearly, the presence of any woman will not automatically change the outcome of the bargaining process necessarily to reduce the wage gap. However, for unions to effectively take on the gender pay gap as their issue, the equal representation of men and women in decision-making structures is a crucial first step.

The second outcome of the gendered organization of unions is the underrepresentation of women in higher leadership positions. Evidence shows that female union office-holders are more

[24] While the idea of "equal pay for equal work" came up early on, this was used as a cover for men to protect their own work standards, and only later did the argument of comparable worth come up, which actually protected the situation of women (Cook 1993)

likely to be single and self-supporting, than their male counterparts (Lawrence 1994: 20). Being married or having children act as "personal-societal-cultural" (Wertheimer and Nelson 1975) factors that present a barrier to women's participation (Lawrence 1994: 22). Sue Ledwith argues that "inclusion too often remains conditional on men in positions of power since even those women who make it to the top as individual leaders find themselves continually challenged as usurpers" (2012: 195). Women are less likely to self-identify as leaders, and are less seen as such by other union members. In this context, the demands of women are more likely to be presented as marginal and ridiculed, as Ledwith finds (2012). Women, who are expected to fulfill their motherly role, do not fit the traditional male image of the union office-holder, who should not have any external responsibilities. This is due to the persistence of traditional male culture, which shapes relations of gender and power within the union.

Further, in the Anglo-Saxon and Western European context, which most studies of trade union women draw on, women are much more likely to find themselves in part-time jobs, as a result of unequal social expectations and career structures built around a male norm (Koch-Baumgarten 2002). Whereas in Hungary, the percentage of workers in part-time jobs is very low, the trend is towards more flexible and precarious jobs for women (Fodor 2005). Part-timers or temp workers are often not included in the scope of unions, and as many of them are women this reinforces their exclusion, making male concerns the dominant ones of the union (Briskin 1983, duRivage and Jackson 1993). Lawrence's findings show that part-time work often comes with a reduced access to resources, such as an office or telephone, necessary for the responsibilities of higher union offices (1994: 19) or present difficulties for union activism, due to the long work hours or reduced upwards mobility. These jobs are predominantly done by women (152). Combined with the burden of household responsibilities, it is difficult for women to find the time which would be necessary to commit to a position of more responsibility (Cook 1993). The connection between women in lower-ranking jobs and professions and their underrepresentation in trade union decision-making positions is important.

Recognizing gender as inherent to the organization structure is important in order to realize the more deep-rooted causes of income and status inequalities on the labor market. Understanding how these structures work in specific local contexts. could provide effective strategies to overcome them. In analyzing the gendered effect of a globalized economy, Valentine Moghadam argues that the demands of organized women could have a unifying effect on employers, governments and international financial institutions and interrogate and modify current gender relations to make them more equal (1999: 386). Thus, the implication of women in the higher positions of unions' decision-making structures would be useful to bring forward gender equality demands on a global level. Several strategies have been identified in the context of trade unions as beneficial for the advancement of women's equality within the organizational structure, and the furthering of women's concerns. I will compare different strategies in the following part, focusing on the role of women's-only caucuses for the cause of women's equality.

4.1.2. Women's Constituencies and Other Strategies of Trade Union Women

Different strategies to enable a higher participation of women in trade union structures have been examined by scholars of trade unions. These show that if the opportunities for women's leadership, mentoring, and training are well-developed, women's interests are more likely to emerge at levels of collective bargaining and policy-making. A strong, autonomous women's constituency can provide a fruitful basis for the development of women's leadership if firmly embedded in opportunity structures or formally linked to collective bargaining bodies (Briskin 2014).

Cynthia Cockburn (1996) summarizes the main aims of addressing women's under-representation. Depending on the aim, different strategies can be used to achieve it. First, skills training and an even distribution of women across all levels of the union organization is helpful to improve women's opportunities as individuals. Secondly, if the focus is on reducing the negative effects of a gender bias on women, change has to happen on the structural and cultural level. One

example for this is including the expectations of after-work responsibilities for both female and male union office-holders. Thirdly, quotas enforce an improved presence of women in decision-making bodies of the union. Lastly, funding separate women's structures, Cockburn argues, ensures the representation of women as a social group, thus giving them more strength to further collective demands. Focusing on approaches that emanate from women's activism within the union, the following part will show how strengthening women's leadership and the establishment of women-only committees can remedy women's underrepresentation and strengthen their demands.

Strategies for Women's Activism: Quotas, Representational Justice, Training, and Leadership

The interviewed trade union women often mention quotas as a measure to promote better representation of women in political, economic, and trade union structures. For them, introducing quotas would bring Hungary closer to European standards and to its Western neighbors, where these already have been implemented on a national or trade union level. In a study of Austrian and German trade union confederations, the implementation of a quota proved to have positive effects for women's representation and organizational outcomes. It ensures a long-lasting proportional representation of women among lay delegates and contributes to an increased representation of women's issues in collective bargaining and policy-making (Kirsch and Blaschke 2014).

But quotas have their limits in establishing more equal structures. It is also important for unions to implement measures that strengthen representational justice and the procedural inclusion of women. This can happen through formal links between collective bargaining and equality structures (Briskin 2014). A formal inclusion of women in collective bargaining structures as an autonomous constituency, enables to go past the notion of women's individual empowerment (Briskin 2011). Rather, their collective voice is heard where it matters: at the collective bargaining table, representing not the views of an individual woman, but the diverse views of the women's constituency in the union.

Women-only education provides the background for politicized empowerment views and a transformational leadership style. It can help to build self-organizational structures for marginalized constituencies through feminist conscientization (Pochic and Guillaume 2012). It enables women to value their differences, build confidence, network with other women, and finally construct their own agenda of equality in mutual exchange with the union (Greene and Kirton 2002: 56). Following from women-only education, women's successful leadership can promote a change in structures and enable the confident participation of more women in the trade union.

Women's competent leadership, through mentoring, women-only education, quotas and women's firm implementation in collective bargaining committees, has to be strengthened in order to achieve more inclusionary structures and the paritary presence of "women's interests" in decision-making processes. Additionally, the cooperation with other women's organizations can lead to a better representation of especially difficult issues within the trade union.

Separate Organizing: Between Consciousness-Building and Isolation

In Hungary, women are left to improve their situation through self-organization, as the highest level of union leadership itself is doing little to further gender issues (Neumann 2005, Pollert 2003). This has led to the establishment of the MSZOSZ Women's Board (*Nöi Választmány*), the predecessor of the MASZSZ Women's Section (*Nöi Tagozat*). The Women's Board however only received little support in addressing gender issues from the confederational leadership (Neumann 2005: 87). The presence of separate structure for women can be a useful tool or disabling mechanism. Much depends on their embedding in the decision-making structures of the trade union.

Scholars have pointed out several ways in which separate women's structures contribute to greater equality for women in trade unions. They further women's claims through collecting information and informing others, politicize these claims through their actions, and create a space where policies and strategies can be discussed, thus influencing the agenda of their union (Curtin 2011: 319). Women value separate organizing groups as a "safe place" for their concerns and a

place where issues relating to their status as a minority were better represented than in the mainstream structures (Colgan and Ledwith 2000: 249f.). They provide "visibility and voice" for women, and encourage new forms of collective action (Ledwith 2012).

Collective organizing also strengthens women's group identity of belonging within the trade union, transforming the present constituency of women into a self-conscious, "pro-active constituency" (Briskin 1999: 544). She argues that women's-only organizing within a trade union facilitates both the autonomous advancement of women's concerns and the creation of a feminist consciousness, as well as the integration of their concerns into the union structures. Analyzing Austrian and German trade unions, Sabine Blaschke (2011) notes the importance of the women's sections' organizing efforts for the participation and representation of women in the trade union as a whole. Ledwith also stresses the importance of a shared cultural understanding among women as a basis for encouraging their participation (2012: 194f.). Formal and informal women's networks have also shown to improve women's social integration and commitment to the union (Kirton 1999: 222). Women's sections thus fulfill both a need for women to express their own demands and act as a tool to transform these demands into common action, through common strategizing and a support network. Additionally, they help unions to strengthen the bonds between female union members and secure the loyalty of female members to the union.

Problems with separate women's structures occur when they lead to essentialist conclusions on the "nature" of "women's concerns". It is important to pay attention to the intersection of different categories in the formation of social identities in the establishment of separate women's structures. Diversity among women needs to be recognized: as one study shows, they are not a homogenous group and do not necessarily share an agenda for collective action (Colgan and Ledwith 2000). Leela Fernandes (1997: 6) stresses the importance of analyzing how different social identities interact in the formation of boundaries between union women, and how they (re)produce hierarchies and exclusion within local labor movements. While this diversity is often feared to undermine the tactical unity of trade union women, Briskin proposes to make the "socially

constructed nature of experience and structural imbalances" central to the analysis of women's sections (1999: 547). My findings show that among Hungarian trade union women there is attention to some categories, such as disability or class. Other categories however, such as race or religion, are neglected and the boundaries between categories are generally seen to be fixed, whether on the level of gender, disability, or age.

Another disadvantage of separate women's structure that trade union scholars note, is the lacking integration of women's issues in the decision-making structures of the trade unions and a lacking support by the dominant elite (Colgan and Ledwith 2000: 255). One major concern regarding the separate training of women is the sidelining of equality issues to "women's spaces", whereas they should be discussed on the general level of the union (Greene and Kirton 53ff.). To avoid isolation of women in separate structures, Briskin stresses the importance to establish formal links between these structures and collective bargaining, e.g. to elect women's committees which are mandated by union constitutions and by-laws (2014: 218f). These link add salience to the demands that stem from women's constituencies (223). Jennifer Curtin, however, argues against equating marginalization with powerlessness, but rather sees it as a source of "more local, partial, and emerging ways of empowerment" (2011: 319), especially if the women cooperate with other grass-roots women's movements.

In conclusion, I agree with Briskin's argument that there needs to be a "strategic balance" between the autonomous structures and an integration of women's demands (1999). If the separate structure is powerful in mentoring women and building consciousness among women members, this can lead to the positioning of women as a strong entity within the union, thus giving more power to their demands.

4.2. Gendered Organization and the Women's Section as a Tool of Resistance

It is important to keep in mind the local institutional context in the analysis of these separate structures. Hungarian trade union women borrow strategies from Western European trade union women to further their demands, but the use and outcome of their strategies depend on their local constraints and opportunities. In the next part, I will address the interviewees' perceptions of women's chances in trade unions, and present the meanings and functions of the MASZSZ Women's Section based on the experience of the interviewed women.

4.2.1. Gendered Organization in the Hungarian Trade Union Movement

The members of the MASZSZ women's section all have a high position within their member unions, as regional leaders, vice-presidents of the member union, or even as a long term leader of the member union. They have a particular standing and their capabilities of influencing the union's agenda are high compared to the majority of women activists. In response to my questions on their perceptions of women's equality in the trade union world, they mention different obstacles to the advancement of women, like their lacking representation in positions of leadership, the lack of women's participation due to family responsibilities and of information on the women's constituency generally, or the lack of male support of gender equality issues.

The interviewed women are all in a position of leadership themselves and integrate their own experiences in their demands for more female leadership in both political and trade union structures.

"In my opinion, there are too few women leaders. Not only on the highest level, although it obviously starts from there, but it continues further down. If this government does not deem it important to have female leaders in its midst, then obviously this [tendency] is valid further down as well" (Veres).

Similarly to other interviewees, she demands a rise in women's representation in the union structures as she does for politics. Many women agree that only by changing the top-level officials' opinions, both on the political as on the union level, can real change be achieved. "The fish stinks

from its head," is how one representative formulates this problem (László). This critique of the decision-making level is also connected to the lack of women in top-decision making structures, as all but one of the member unions in the sample are led by men.

Slowly, there are more and more women in the leadership of the union as well, who often got the position of a retired male office-holder. However, one representative explains that many other women in trade unions often end up at a glass ceiling. While many women take on positions of middle leadership, as workers' representatives on the company level (*bizalmisok*), only a few can advance further. She calls this the "typical Hungarian career story" (Lupkovics). In the member unions of the interviewees, women are represented in the Steering Committees of all but one, while currently only the Teachers' Union has a woman as as its President.[25]

The interviewees' arguments for more union women in leadership structures are similar to their general policy demands: women in these positions would ensure the representation of women's interests on the policy agenda:

"In the transportation sector…. as a woman, they don't leave us the space, to tell our opinion, you [men] think that you represent us, in women's questions," says the representative of the United Transportation Union (Nemes).

The founding member of the MSZOSZ Women's Board agrees that women's interests are pushed in the background, especially where there is no organ or person to represent these. Due to the lack of women in leadership positions, women's issues become marginalized.

According to the respondents, good leadership entails responsibility, credibility, and the ability to influence others. One woman who represents these values for the interviewees is Mária Hercegh, leader of the MASZSZ Women's Section. They see inspiration in her as a person, but also in her leadership style. "The current leader of the Women's Section [Mária Hercegh] is so strong of character (*karakáns*)," as one interviewee describes her (Nemes). Another interviewee also

[25] For detailed data on leadership ratios, see Table of Participants, p. 9f.

mentions that the work that Hercegh and the MASZSZ Women's Section do, is very important to inspire the creation of women's section in other member unions. Hercegh has worked as an Human Resources employee for the Hungarian Railway (MÁV), and due to this the members of the women's section accredit her a higher sensitivity for dealing with workers' concerns. Due to their own experience, the women know, however, that good leadership alone is not enough. They also mention good contacts to the higher levels of the trade union, as well as assured participation in decision-making processes to bring forward the women's demands.

A main constraint in their activism for women's equality is not having enough data on the percentage of women in each member union. The representative of a bus company solves this problem in her own way:

"It would be good if there was a statistic on the women members of the sub-unions (alszervezetek), to have their names and contact information, something. Well, this is what a Women's Day is good for. I usually bring a piece of paper, and then I ask them there to give me some type of contact information, preferably an email address" (Nemes).

Better data-collection would also ensure better information transfer, which is currently hindering effective work for women in certain member unions. "We get a lot of invitations from there [the European Broadcasting Union], about which we don't even know," says the representative of the United Media Trade Union (EMSZ), exploring possible cooperations of trade union women on a European level (Veres). But because there is no women's section in her member union, the information process is slow and scarce, and no cooperation between the European Broadcasting Union and the women of the EMSZ was built up so far. In all member unions, the right structures have to be set up first to diffuse informations on union activity by and for women members. These structures could also help connect with international structures for union women, through which could gain access to more decision-making power

Further, many interviewees agree that women's active participation in the trade union movement is too low to make a difference. The representative of the United Transportation Trade

Union explains that only seven women out of the 80 members of her union actively participate in the union's women's section, although all have been notified: "I struggle a lot with this myself, it is not as easy to find partners." (Nemes) Many women lack confidence to stand up for their demands, as she points out.

More importantly, as some respondents mention, women just don't have the time for intensive participation in the union activities, as the representative of the Teachers' Union explains:

"This [difficulty] is very present when we plan some action for example. And, practically, when we plan it for a weekend, it is very difficult to mobilize them [the women]. Because, you know, the weekend belongs to the family. On the weekends, I cook, wash, and clean. It is very difficult to move the women out of this (kimozdítani)" (Jenes). She describes how many "layers" especially the work of women in the feminized education sector has, and how difficult it is to coordinate union activism with all the other work, although both of the unions' leaders are women. Another respondent adds:

"Everyone is running everywhere, to the family, to pick up the children, now I have to meet my husband. So the woman always puts her family, her partner in front of herself" (Nemes).

The difficulty to mobilize female members often hinges on their reduced ability to devote time to union work, because of the expectations towards women to take on family responsibilities. Lacking mobilization, due to the women's multiple responsibilities, leads to a further marginalization of their issues.

The respondents use different strategies to remedy the low participation rates. A representative the female-dominated sales union points out that activists with children can rely on the support of other unionists in caring for their children during meetings. Another respondent, of the Teachers' Union, points to the role of support that the family has to play in this situation:

"We discuss this often, that there are not many mobilizations for ourselves, and that the family should stand behind the women [at least] in these" (Jenes). The support that is missing from

husbands and family members is also important in a long-term union leader's experience of women's activism within the MSZOSZ trade union confederation:

"We are progressing, that is important, bit by bit, but you need a support, then you can progress, not when you have all these other issues to deal with" (Steer). Another representative is simply waiting for her retirement to devote the time that she needs on union work. This view is shared by an interviewee who is also close to the retirement age. In her opinion, only in an advanced age can women be truly themselves and free of the societal expectations.

Support of family members and co-activists are seen as important factors in raising the participation rates of women in union mobilizations. Further, the interviewees' aim is not necessarily to fundamentally change societal expectations towards women, but rather to wait for the "good time", when the responsibilities at home and at the workplace are reduced, to get more involved in union work. However, they are all organized within the MASZSZ Women's Section, which presents them with opportunities to change the current gendered organizational structure. In the next part, which functions Hungarian trade union women accord to the presence of a separate organizing structure for women, in the context of their locally specific institutional framework.

4.2.2. The Function of the MASZSZ Women's Section

The MASZSZ Women's Section is not a place that strictly deals with women's issues only. As was shown in previous chapters, the interviewed women have diverse views on the prevalence of "women's issues" as such. Their daily union work covers a wide range of issues, of which women's equality is only one. However, in the sense that it provides a platform for women only to debate, discuss, and exchange their opinions on current labor issues in Hungary, it can be categorized as a tool for furthering women's equality. The activity of the women's section thus can produce a "pro-active constituency" of women within the MASZSZ (Briskin 1999: 544). The availability of a space for common action leads to the next aspect, which is the furthering of

women's demands, whether they are concretely related to equality concerns or to other subjects, on the political agenda of the union.

Meanings of "Women's Section": Solidarity, Strategies, Self-Confidence

The co-founder of the MSZOSZ Women's Board, explains that its creation "was the next step in a national process," adapting the former socialist women's organizations to the changing conditions. "Everything that we [women] simply received before, was now subject to agreements, fights, bargaining" (Steer). They could no longer depend on the state to make the decisions for the women. The regime changed, and union women had to realize that: "You will get as much as you fight for" (Steer). She explains that the function of the board was to generate professional competence in measures that concerned women workers, for example as the maternity leave, and cooperate in the social governance of the country.

The MASZSZ Women's Section is the direct follower of the board and thus functions in a similar spirit. The agenda of the monthly Women's Section meetings is defined by the concerns of the members. These can be suggestions for common petition, discussion of concerns in the own workplace or nationwide projects. To reach its goals, the section relies on lobbying, awareness-raising through conferences, and press statements, as one respondent explains. The Women's Section functions as a space of networking, exchange of ideas, as well as development of collective action.

Often, this is the place where members are informed about and can discuss legal developments that affect them:

"The colleagues come from employers that work in a completely different field, but their problems still are very often like ours. And we can talk very often and we can really exchange our ideas. And we can help each other. So this is very, very helpful," one respondent summarizes her experience of the Women's Section (Siraky). Another one emphasizes the solidarity and unity among the women. In this sense, the Women's Section is highly valued as a space to exchange best

practices. The members exchange knowledge and transfer it to their member union. The fact to have a higher, overarching organization is seen as beneficial by one respondent, who is thankful for the confidence it gave her in her own work. Solidarity, unity, and the ability to share opinions across different sectors come up in most of the interviews as reasons for collaborating within the Women's Section.

The co-founder of the MSZOSZ Women's Section mentions two further important functions of women's separate organizing: separate training and outreach to other women's organizations:

"Of course, one has to create relations in all directions. So every organization, where the representation of women is a topic, has to be mapped, and then the relations [to them] have to be established." (Steer). She adds that this is the plan of the current Women's Section, but it is uncertain how much can be achieved in the current adverse political climate. It is crucial in her opinion to train a new generation and to bring new women in to build lasting organizational structures: Another long-term union activist agrees that the women's section motivates activists to take on a leadership role, and bring in their own experience. Further, the nature of the organization also makes it easier to coordinate women's politics on the national level, and enables cross-constituency cooperation, with the youth organization for example. As a nexus of meeting for women of all economic sectors, the Women's Section is a good place to branch out from and to enable a better cooperation in women's politics.

Limited Possibilities of Transformation

Although all the women express their happiness with regard to the presence of this networking space, they also admit that it has its limitations. These can be broadly categorized into two parts: one relating to the lack of time that the women can invest in separate women's activities, the other pertaining to the insufficient embedding of the Women's Section in the MASZSZ structures.

The Women's Section can be seen as a place of resistance within the male-dominated organizational culture of the confederation. In one respondent's opinion, issues of equality are not discussed on the daily level in the trade unions. She perceives the intolerance that she feels as characteristic for Hungarian society also within trade unions. Especially threatening to women's equality, in her opinion, are the "anti-gender" tendencies which are starting to influence union culture, which she characterizes as "macho culture" (Lupkovics). She appreciates the presence of the Women's Section, as a space where issues of inequality and tolerance are being talked about.

But how much the Women's Section can effectively counteract these tendencies depends on its embedding in the decision-making structure of the MASZSZ. As Briskin (1999. 2013, 2014) showed, firm links between separate women's sections and mainstream union structures are indispensable for its full functioning. The interviewees attest, that while the Women's Section of the MASZSZ is useful in representing a broader base of women than the member unions ever could, its position within the MASZSZ is insecure. During my research period the MASZSZ went through a restructuring process, as the SZEF confederation left the MASZSZ. The interviewed SZEF-members explained that they wanted to further participate in the Women's Section, but could not, due to higher decisions. Thus, in this period, the future of the Women's Section was seen as particularly insecure, and depended on higher decision-making structures in the eyes of the interviewees.

On the level of the MASZSZ confederation, the women agree on the benefits of the Women's Section, but regret their limited influence in decision-making processes. But when asked about the lack of a formal women's committee in the member union, some women deem it not necessary to have one, or see it as an added burden. The leader of the HVDSZ Union explains that she could not burden "her" shop stewards with a women's section, as they already have very little free time. Still, she thinks highly of the MASZSZ Women's Section, meaning that she does not reject women's separate organizing as such. The perceived necessity of a separate structure is particularly low if the union is highly feminized. This is the case for the representatives of the Teachers' Union or the

Retail Workers' Union. Both claim that a space to represent men's interests would be more necessary in their case, than those of women, which are present in everyday union activities.

In the experience of another respondent the support of the member union is crucial to establish separate organizing structures. She is part of the SZEF confederation of the public sector workers and explains that the confederation does not deem it necessary to have women-only structures, because it represents 70% women workers. However, among the leaders of the SZEF less than half are women, thus the constituency of women is not fully represented. This shows that the perceived necessity for women's self-organizing by women activists as well as unions themselves, is bound to the degree of feminization of a union and the availabilities of its members, but also support of higher union structures.

In addition to the constrained political and legal environment of trade unions, gendered organization affects women in Hungarian trade unions on an internal union level. To combat the effects of these structures,[26] studies have analyzed different strategies to further women's leadership and demands. Quotas effectively further the individual involvement of women in unions but also have long-term effects on the implication of equality issues on the union's agenda (Kirsch and Blaschke 2014). Separate structures for women and training women specifically can increase the involvement of more women in union activism, and strengthen the leadership and political empowerment of union women (Greene and Kirton 2002, Pochic and Guillaume 2012). But to really achieve substantial structural change, separate women's structures have to be formally embedded in the decision-making structure of the union. Equality institutions have to be linked to the collective bargaining process in order for women to gain "representational justice" (Briskin 2014).

[26] Examples are the exclusion of women from higher office-holding structures and lacking equality issues from union policy agenda.

If these links are established, separate women's section can lead to a "pro-active women's constituency" (Briskin 1999). In the opposite case, "women's" and equality issues run the risk of being sidelined, and do not contribute to structural change on the level of the whole union and its political agenda.

In the case of the MASZSZ Women's Section the benefits for the interviewed women can be summarized as a space to exchange ideas and best practices among women of many different economic sectors. The aspect of solidarity is particularly important for successful strategies of collective actions, and through this, the furthering of the women's demands. The function of the section is defined by the higher positions of the interviewed women within their member unions. Problems arise in the case of member unions, where lacking support of the union's leadership often hinders the establishment of separate women's section. Sometimes, the need for a women's section is not perceived, especially in the case of highly feminized professions or sectors.

By having a higher collective organization representing them, the interviewees express that they feel more confident and stronger as a constituency. However, the presence of a women's section is only a first step to resist effects of gendered organization and introduce a more egalitarian, tolerant culture into the trade union. For the substantial integration of equality measures in the trade unions' policy, firm links to decision-making structures need to established and respected, and the presence of women at collective bargaining and policy debates needs to be secured as well.

Conclusions

The thesis introduces the experiences of women from Hungarian trade unions into the existing research on trade unions in the context of post-socialist states. Based on 13 in-depth interviews with members of the MASZSZ Women's Section, I analyzed what *demands for gender equality policy* they voice (1), which *understandings of womanhood* provide the basis for these demands (2), how they navigate the current *legal and economic constraints and opportunities* for trade unions in Hungary (3), but also what the *function of women's section* is within the Hungarian trade union landscape (4).

Building on literature from policy and gender equality studies, research on trade unions, and the gendered organization within in, I aim to broaden the scope of current research, which focused mostly on the Anglo-Saxon and Western European context. I argue that trade union women in Hungary base their demands for gender equality on a specific understanding of womanhood, which is influenced by the Europeanization of gender equality norms and the legacy of state-socialist emancipatory concepts. A locally specific institutional framework influences the women's strategies for activism and the functions they accord to the women's section.

Main Findings

1) The *gender equality demands* that the interviewees voice reflect Europeanized gender equality norms, which mostly travel to Hungary through EU soft law measures. Civil society actors have an influence on this Europeanization through "social learning" (Krizsan and Popa 2013). The interviewed women refer to "European" norms in their demands for equal opportunity and equal pay. Europeanized gender equality norms are strategically used in their discourse, but take on a shifted meaning, as the policy demands for child care and the more women in leadership positions show

2) Their *understanding* of womanhood emerges at the intersection of dominant European gender equality norms with legacies of a state-socialist past that the interviewed women share. State-socialist emancipatory policies focused on the full integration of women in the labor market, without addressing the added responsibilities of household and care for women. This lacking analysis of the gendered division of labor influences the interviewees' understandings of womanhood today. Their demands for gender equality policy rest on certain assumptions of women's social and professional roles, shaped by certain "feminine" characteristics that make women different from men and demand control over the material consequences of these differences. This is where the socialist conception of emancipation, based on material differences and women's full integration in the labor market, can be seen to merge with the dominant European belief in a liberal, choice-based politics of equality, neither of which question the substantial roots of gender inequalities. At the intersection of these influences they construct a new, locally specific meaning of womanhood and women's equality.

3) The *context for trade union*s that developed since the regime change is characterized by legal constraints for unions' activism (especially since the 2011 Labor Code), internal hostility and fragmentation of the labor movement, and their marginalization as political actors. The current political system is furthering neoliberal social policies that impact women in particular through the rollback of welfare services. Thus, it is important to analyze what trade unions as policy actors (can) do to further aims of gender equality and provide better social and working conditions for women workers. The findings show that the interviewed trade unionists prioritize strategies such as good relations with union members, securing trust with workers, and maintaining good contacts with the company leadership over strategies that influence the legislative process, as their options here have been reduced. Cooperation with other trade unions and civil society actors on the national and international level is important to navigate their constrained legal and political environment.

4) However, not only the outside institutional framework influences the trade unionists' activism. Female activists face a second difficulty from the internal *gendered organization* of unions. One effect of this is the difficulty to mobilize women, as they are struggling to combine work and family responsibilities and have to adapt to the ideal male worker norm. Further, unions lack the presence of women in higher structures, which leads to an under-representation of "women's issues" on the unions' political agenda. One strategy among many to overcome the obstacles posed by gendered organization, is the establishment of a *separate structure* for female activists. In the specific context of Hungarian trade union women, the women's section takes on a function of building an active women's constituency, without merely focusing on gender equality: it acts as a space for exchanging of knowledge on all aspects of trade union work, not only issues of equality. It gives women the opportunity to network and strategize, and supports their own actions. The presence of a higher organization gives them self-confidence and a feeling of solidarity with other union women. While the presence of the section is highly appreciated, the participants also mention its limits in establishing better equality structures in unions. The structure needs to be embedded better on the decision-making level of the union, to achieve an appreciation of diversity on more levels and a substantial integration of gender equality in the trade unions' culture and policy agenda.

Methods

My analysis centers on women's experiences in a feminist tradition. I move away from a dominant Western-centric feminist frame of analysis, and aim to produce knowledge on current feminisms in Central Eastern Europe through the research findings, using my knowledge of the Hungarian language and culture. My hybrid position as a German-Hungarian researcher allows me to connect with the women on the basis of shared language knowledge and cultural background, but I remain an outsider, due to differences in age, social and activist background. I am aware of the power differences that shape the research and writing process, as I am embedded in the hegemonic

academic sphere. While translating the researched material into an academic form, I take care to preserve the women's experiences as source of knowledge and critically reflect on the power lines in our encounters.

Contributions to Existing Scholarship

The experiences of women in Hungarian trade unions diversifies the scope of traditional industrial relations studies and broadens the knowledge on how gender equality concepts are constructed in a locally specific context. The research also aims to shed light to the "grey zone" (Koobak and Marling 2014) that characterizes the post-socialist space in terms of research on women's movements and experiences. I have argued that the trade union women in Hungary base their demands of gender equality on a unique understanding of womanhood, which emerges at the intersection of current Europeanized gender equality norms and state-socialist ideas of women's emancipation. Understanding how the diversity of gender equality meanings in Europe, as it is constructed and shifts in the process of "Europeanization", merging with local influence, helps create effective gender equality policies for these women.

In the current context for trade unions in Central and Eastern European countries, trade union women experience the double difficulty of legal constraints on unions, and the gendered organization of unions themselves. As a tool of resistance, separate structures for women's sections can establish "women as a pro-active constituency" (Briskin 1999: 544), with a strong voice and visibility. This not only helps to further gender equality and women's leadership within unions, but also, I argue, can assist trade unions in finding their function in the unstable post-socialist environment. By integrating diverse views in their policy agenda they can aim to represent all members and gain more trust in the new economic context.

Limitations

My research is however limited by the number of interviews that do not provide enough data for broader generalizations. Further, my findings reflect only the situation of the selected interviewees, who are all in a position of leadership within their regional constituency, workplace, or the member union. Their opinions thus do not necessarily reflect the experiences of the majority of female union members, who might not share their workplace and union responsibilities, and their social or professional experiences. As they are on a higher structural level of the organization than working women without the same leadership responsibilities, this taints what they perceive to be the issues of working women in Hungary today. However, most of them share the same pile of responsibilities of full-time employment and family, as most women in Hungary do.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of this research help to understand the functions of women's sections and other structures of gender equality for the labor movement in Hungary. On a broader level, understanding the differences between the function of women's sections in different locations, can foster transnational cooperation of women in trade unions. It will hopefully also stand as an inspiration for Hungarian trade union women's sections themselves to analyze their work and opportunities for strengthening their movement. The activist work within a separate constituency can be most effectively pursued when the different categories that intersect to form members' social identities and the hierarchies between them are addressed, to further substantial equality for all members.

Discussing intersectionality in the context of women's activism in trade unions, specifically in post-socialist spaces is just one point on the list of many further research projects that could follow this work. An analysis of the implications of good leadership for the strength of a women's section would deepen the knowledge on successful separate women's structures within unions.

A feminist frame of analysis could also be applied to study current mobilizations of trade unions in Hungary around feminized professions, such as the teachers' strike and the mobilization

of health care workers for better pay and valuation of their work. The in-depth analysis of gendered organizational structures would be useful to analyze these movements and also add to the broader mapping of gender organization in Hungarian trade unions, which was presented in this thesis.

The scholarly debate lacks an examination of the cooperation and exchange of women's sections on the European or international level. This transnational analysis is however very important to understand the interaction of union women's policy demands. It could also shed light to the different the strategies that women in different locations use to bring the issues that affect them on the agenda of trade unions. A better understanding of the differences and similarities of their national movements could foster more effective communication between women's sections, and build an international pro-active constituency of trade union women.

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