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Article

The Intellectual History of Romanian Feminism from Early Transition to Democratic Deconsolidation and Illiberalism

Abstract: *My analytical study aims at mapping feminist ideas in their temporal and political context, following a series of fundamental landmarks focusing on the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008–2010 when the anti-austerity mobilizations led to a general socio-economic critique. My assumption is that year 2015 and the refugee crisis marked a repositioning of feminism at the European level and, in the particular case of the Romanian one, an additional opening towards social inequalities, poverty/feminization of poverty, class, and ethnicity.*

Roxana DUMITRACHE

Faculty of Political Sciences, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, PhD Student, Bucharest, Romania;
ORCID: 0009-0003-3679-1078;
roxana.d.dumitrache@gmail.com

In this paper, in addition to clarifying the methodological perspective, I analyse what I call the second 'foundational' period of Romanian feminism – between 2018 and present. It is a redivivus – the second 'foundational' period of feminism in relation with the tendencies of democratic deconsolidation in Central and Eastern European as well as with the imperative of facing the political insurgency of illiberalism. In this new political context, which had as its decisive moment the constitutional referendum of 2018 regarding same-sex marriages,

Romanian feminism preserved its diversity built in the previous period but was forced to consolidate itself, becoming, thus, one of the most assertive oppositional paradigms to illiberalism and democratic backsliding. My assumption is that, departing from the traditional Stein Rokkan's taxonomy of political cleavages, we have entered a new phase: the cleavage between different democratization strategies (Buttorf and Dion, 2017: 102).

Keywords: *anti-austerity mobilization, civil society, deconsolidation, democratic backsliding, feminism, illiberalism.*

1. Introduction

This paper is part of a monographic study that maps the conceptualization and crystallization of Romanian feminist ideas in their temporal

and political context, following a series of fundamental landmarks focusing on the essential moments in the feminist knowledge production. I am, thus, distinguishing 4 temporal spans: 1. Foundational feminism, with an anticipatory character, contained in the interval 1994–2004, marked by the import of concepts and analysis tools as well as the connection to the agenda of democratic transition and consolidation; 2. The Mature phase of the Romanian feminism (2004–2012), of European integration, an interval that includes the most prolific years in the publishing field and the academic institutionalization of a field of knowledge – gender studies; 3. The Multi-paradigmatic feminism phase, from the period after the economic crisis of 2008 – 2010 when the anti-austerity mobilizations generated a general socio-economic critique, having a feminist dimension and which divided the field of research between liberal and socially inspired feminism. And, finally, 4. The second foundational phase – the year 2015 and the refugee crisis marked a repositioning of feminism at the European level and, in the particular case of the Romanian one, an additional opening towards social inequalities, poverty/feminization of poverty, class, and ethnicity. In this paper, I analyse in more detail the period between 2018 and the present, which represents another fundamental stage. It is again a ‘foundational’ period of feminism, this time in relation to the tendencies of democratic deconsolidation in the Central and Eastern European region as well as the imperative to build a response to the political insurgency of conservatism. In this new political context, which had as its decisive moment the constitutional referendum of 2018 regarding the banning of same-sex marriages, Romanian feminism preserved its diversity built in the previous period, but was forced to consolidate, becoming at the same time one of the most assertive oppositional paradigms to it.

2. Romanian feminism after 1989. History and (con)text(s)

Three decades since the regime change in 1989, Romanian feminism gained its temporality, consistent enough to record changing socio-political contexts. The critical study of feminist ideas crystallized in Romanian public and academic *milieu* can be analysed as part of the tradition of the discipline of intellectual history, using both the methodology and the type of positioning in relation to the analysed texts. As a guide of my analysis, I use and adapt the grid proposed by Quentin Skinner, whose options for doing intellectual history go beyond some obvious limits of the history of ideas and current political thought. From his perspective, texts need to be analysed as a response to a social reality, to what the historian calls *a very broad context* (see Skinner 1969; 1972; 2002).

In an attempt to synthesize Skinner’s methodological proposals as well as the critical perspectives on his work, James Tully defines the interpretive core of the texts, in the form of five complementary questions: 1. What is the author’s relationship with other texts from the same ideological context? 2. What is the relationship of the text to the political actions that define the political *status-quo*? 3. How are ideologies to be identified and how are their formation, critique and change analysed and explained? 4. What is the relationship between political ideology and political action that best explains the diffusion of certain ideologies and what effect does this have on political behaviour? 5. What forms of political thought and action are involved in the dissemination and acclimatization of ideological change? (Tully 1988: 7-8).

Regarding Thomas Hobbes as the most „architectural“ author in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon political thought, Skinner argues that his philosophy could be thought of as a political

intervention and that it can be placed in a recognizable framework of political debate. Referring to it, Skinner states: „In the case of Hobbes, one can discuss how he supports certain political causes, discredits others, seeks to recover others. I have tried to show that his philosophy is substantially connected with the politics of the English Revolution. The reason I chose Hobbes is to show that I can extrapolate him to any thinker in the Anglophone tradition. My interest in decentering canonical texts is to show that there is no distinction between text and so-called context” (Skinner in Lévy and Tricoire, 2007). Thus, the texts of political and moral philosophy cannot be separated from the ideological conflicts of the period in which they were written. Skinner’s assumptions are that, historically speaking, texts that propose or clarify concepts arise as a result of a social need for these concepts to be crystallized or clarified, going even further with a conjecture that is strongly relevant to the history of ideas—concepts and theories are ultimately produced by social reality. Taking this grid, I chose to treat the writings in the manner of Skinner – the feminist texts as political writings, not necessarily as academic writings and to refer to a series of „canonical“ texts that influenced Romanian political thought and that configured the major feminist themes¹.

I am analysing Romanian feminism in two stages, both foundational but in a different sense. Fundamental feminism is concerned with the disjunction from the communist regime, defining a set of democratic principles and institutions that include women, as well as an entire academic and public praxis sensitive to gender differences. It is a feminism structured by the traumas of the communist regime, by the almost complete international isolation and engaged in the recovery from marginality of some voices and experiences that could make the transition to political pluralism and assuming the feminist perspective. In this context, the first contributions appeared which, in my opinion, were structured around the concept of „autonomy“ and formed the main matrix of Romanian feminism, the liberal one. Then, I will analyse structured feminism in recent history under the pressure of authoritarianism, conservatism, and nationalism. If in the 90s, both authoritarianism and conservatism were inertial, as remnants of communist regimes, the recent ones are the result of the aggregation of internal forces that directly attack both liberal democracy and the modern basis of women’s freedom and equality. These attacks have a pronounced transnational character and this is decisive in choosing a regional comparative perspective. The feminism of this period in Romania is more diverse, more social, more political, in a direct sense, but also connected to European and international tensions. It is no longer a feminism of autonomy, but of full protection and maintenance in the social and political body, in response to the re-traditionalization forced by conservative mobilization.

2.1. Romanian Feminism of the Early Democratic Transition

The landmarks of post-89 Romanian feminism were established both in relation to the new social transformations and the communist experience *sui generis*. At the intersection of biography, memory and discourse, exploring essential works and arguments for the feminist field, there are to be identified some of its major themes. It was configured in contact both with specific transition processes such as industrial disintegration and ruralization, as well as with a public discourse still cascading in the memory of the trauma. In this context, feminism had to drain from the public space what Mihaela Miroiu defined as „preventive anti-feminism“. When it was not perceived as a „dubious occupation“, feminism was compared to Nazism and communism, embedded in totalitarian metaphors or categorized by conservative public intel-

lectuals as „ideological drift“, as Horia-Roman Patapievici did. Liliana Popescu has a complete perspective on the preconceptions on feminists and feminism that circulated in the public space, signalling several errors of reception and arguing, *ab contrario*, what feminism is not: It is not a rhetoric of victimization, it is not an ideology that despises work housewives, it is not a movement against men, it is not an ideology „exported from the advanced world to the third world because the third world itself creates structures of subordination of women as a gender“, it was not born as an ideology of lesbianism, and not it is primarily promoted by them (Popescu, 2004).

2.2. New Political Vocabulary and New Categories

Within the intellectual history of Romanian feminism, one essential moment was the construction of a *logos*, of a new vocabulary. At the level of common language, Mihaela Miroiu noted the difficulty of society to get rid of the model of the new man, lacking specific gender attributes, which is rather the alloy between a „mutilated femininity and masculinity“ and „a pseudo-androgynous creature“ (Miroiu 1995: 26). That is why the „genization“ of individuals, their understanding and conceptualization as women and men proved to be the main concern of Romanian feminism during the transition period (Iancu, Băluță, Dragolea and Florian, 2012). Vocabulary, however, is only a gateway to perceive and understand female or feminine experiences. Mihaela Miroiu explains the relevance for political theory that the subjects are women, not citizens or individuals per se. Starting from the classification of female experiences, the author distinguishes three types that differentiate subjects according to gender: i) feminine experiences – those experiences that are shared exclusively by women (pregnancy, abortion, birth, childbirth, breastfeeding, menstrual cycle, and menopause); ii) feminine experiences – those experiences that women experience (caregiving, single parenthood, widowhood, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, pornography, prostitution) and iii) experiences such as anonymity, subordination, discrimination, the image of helplessness that are shared with other classes of marginals (Miroiu, 2004: 45-48).

Similar difficulties were also found regarding the exit from the anonymity imposed by the communist regime and the recovery, including the personal pronoun in anodyne expressions. „Conceived as an „earthly paradise“ – communism – from which the individual had disappeared from any kind of program, a paradise inhabited by ghosts, a society without individuals. (...) Continuous indoctrination, including from the mass media, led to the elimination of the possessive pronoun, even the singular form of the personal pronoun from the vocabulary, but also from people’s consciousness (...) The consequences of such linguistic amputation are observable, from the author’s perspective, and in the post-totalitarian reactions to the new freedom gained: the resistance to political pluralism, the nostalgia for the unique truth, the surprise of hearing public speeches in which „it is done, it is requested, it is ascertained, etc. and the replacement with „I believe, I want etc.“ (Miroiu, 1995). The main effect of such a transition is also a shift from a diffuse, unassumed responsibility to a rather assumed, personalized one.

2.2.1. Communism and the Path to Liberal Democracy

In order to make the connection between the communist regime and the transition, and despite the revolutionary rupture of 1989, Mihaela Miroiu proposes left-wing conservatism as a bridge concept. By means of it one can explain how the communist regime, in antithesis to its ideology, created its own hierarchies within which gender hierarchization was a constant. It is

also through this that it is possible to explain how the fall of communism does not destroy conservatism but continues it. Continuation is a paternalistic conservatism oriented towards survival, which promotes the organic growth of the market economy and democracy from the centralized economy and authoritarianism, but which is automatically hostile to any ideology of emancipation, even more so to feminism (Miroiu 2004: 256). Thus, we can explain why the former communist states have their own type of conservatism and why although formal inequality was removed, communism reproduced a patriarchal regime under the hegemony of the paternalistic state (Verdery, 1994; Miroiu, 1999). In contrast to liberal democracies in which the cleavage is between feminism and right-wing conservatism, otherwise the only possible one, in the post-communist transition, at least in the initial period, left-wing conservatism is the main opponent. This does not mean that in the criticisms of feminism, the arguments inspired by right-wing conservatism are not maintained and that Romanian political thought does not remain fundamentally patriarchal (Bucur and Miroiu, 2002).

In Mihaela Miroiu's essentially liberal argument, overcoming left-wing conservatism presupposes an ideology of emancipation, from which feminism is also claimed, which must follow, as democracy does, a series of norms designed to ensure individual autonomy, not well-being or happiness. Well-being, the author explains, can also exist in totalitarian political regimes, for example, characterized by a lack of autonomy of citizens. (Miroiu, 2007). In other words, this autonomy means both formal rights and the responsibilities subsumed by these rights, and the equality between women and men becomes an equality in autonomy of the two genders. The articulation of a feminism of this type seems inspired by a first-wave feminism, liberal feminism centred on equal rights. In retrospect, it did not focus on the issue of poverty, work-life balance, or intersectionality. However, it must be understood in its historical context, in which distancing from communism in all its forms seemed an indispensable condition of democratization.

2.2.2. *Re-founding Intellectual Infrastructures*

The functioning and effects of communism are also relevant on another level. Romanian feminism, as well as the set of post-89 social sciences, were built by people who were educated before the fall of the regime. They directly experienced the policy of the regime that marginalized and perverted the social sciences, subordinated first of all to an ideological propaedeutics and then to the industrial-productivist direction of the planned economy.

A pivotal moment of this transformation, with significant implications on certain destinies and, implicitly, the production of knowledge, was the abolition, in June 1977, of specializations such as sociology, psychology, and pedagogy. As Mihaela Miroiu recalls: „Philosophy becomes an appendix to the faculties of history, it breaks away from the scientific knowledge of society achieved with the help of sociology or social psychology. Political sciences didn't exist anyway. (...) This was, very briefly speaking, the world from which we took the road to freedom, including the freedom of study and research“ (Miroiu, 2020).

Putting these subjects to the index through administrative-bureaucratic methods inevitably led to the massive abandonment of the subjects, especially by professors but also by students. Thus, one can understand why after 1989, there was such a programmatic approach by social science specialists to (re)found specializations, departments, and faculties. At the same time, it can be explained why the institution building was so difficult, in many ways the education and research infrastructure had to be built from scratch. Another result of this re-founding was that

social and political scientists, including gender specialists, emerged mainly from disciplinary hybridization and re-specialization.

The feminism of the early transition was one of conceptual innovation, of overcoming the continuities of communism, but also of re-founding not only some disciplines, but an entire infrastructure of knowledge and education. Today, the attacks on feminism are no longer from left-wing conservatism, weakened in the transition process, but from right-wing conservatism, insurgent and on the global offensive (Mărgărit 2019; 2020). Not by chance, however, part of the conservative political agenda is education, especially gender studies, which, in their perspective, should be abolished. How we got to this point, of questioning democratic foundations and rights, needs of course to be explained in a wider context.

3. Feminism, democratic deconsolidation and illiberalism

Although part of global trends, democratic deconsolidation and an important crystallization of it, illiberalism, have a specific configuration in Central and Eastern Europe. This actually coincided in the 2010-2020 decade, with the economic-financial crisis and the shaking of the neoliberal capitalist model, both through social protests in the street and through electoral and governmental changes. Although the economic and financial crisis has called into question the neoliberal order, with the exception of some southern European countries such as Greece and Spain, the result has not been a strengthening of the anti- and alter-capitalist left, which was historically and ideologically prepared to challenge it. Throughout this decade, we rather see a strengthening of authoritarian, nationalist, and conservative forces, with the main landmarks being the presidency of Donald Trump, the British vote to leave the European Union, the emergence of authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian leaders in Turkey, Israel, Hungary or Poland as well as the emergence / strengthening of political parties that were previously non-existent or irrelevant (for example AfD in Germany, VOX in Spain, FN in France). This apparently paradoxical dynamic provides the context for transformations in the feminist field. Although the economic and financial crisis could have altered or even ended the global hegemony of liberal feminism, giving way to a more or less anti-capitalist social feminism, by the end of the decade both are on the defensive and in a difficult alliance in the face of conservative insurgency.

4. Feminism and social criticism

The socio-economic critique caused by the crisis has not only gained momentum in Western and Southern Europe, but also in Central and Eastern Europe, where it has also re-signified many processes and experiences from the early transition, for example industrial restructuring, privatizations, and the dismantling of public services. The transition from the statist to the market economy generated in the region not only the bankruptcy of the socialist industry, but the complete destruction of the entire infrastructure built around state enterprises, the most strongly affected being women (Miroiu, 1999; Pasti, 2003; Păunescu, 2012). Although poorly documented, the effects of privatization on men appear to have been just as profound. Using the results of a medical journal article as a starting point, McKee, Stuckler and King showed how the death rate among middle-aged men increased between 1989 and 2002 in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Stuckler et al., 2009). By examining the effects of mass privatization and so-called „shock therapies,“ the authors found a statistically

significant link between privatization, male unemployment, alcoholism, and premature death, with Russia providing the most telling example, with male life expectancy falling with more than seven years between 1985 and 2002.

In retrospect, liberal feminism was theoretically and politically ill-equipped to assimilate all these socio-economic transformations. This sort of partial blindness has become a cause of serious challenge from the perspective of left feminism. In her article *Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History*, Nancy Fraser argues that liberal feminism in Eastern Europe found liberation from patriarchy as its sole target, but became the ally of capitalist exploitation (Fraser, 2009). The same argument can be found in Kristen Ghodsee, who makes a critical evaluation of the post-transition period, of co-optation and feminism-by-design, imposed by Western liberal feminists in Eastern European states (Ghodsee, 2004). Western feminism has been co-opted by the economic project of neoliberalism, which has led to the fetishization of free markets, the weakening of states, and the de-structuring of social safety nets. The main criticism is liberal feminism's abandonment of social justice issues and its one-sided focus on identity and political representation.

There are two ways in which the landmarks of post-communism were built in Eastern Europe: 1. At the research level – through the way in which Western feminist theorists related to Eastern Europe, in a reductionist way, with a strong bias and sacrificing cultural differences. 2. By the way in which the research agenda in Eastern Europe was, through the conditioning of funding, defined and imposed by the West. We can also add the tendency of NGOs in Eastern Europe to focus excessively on non-political subjects, even independent of politics, avoiding important subjects related to equity and social inequality at the national level, focusing on individual and community projects (see Quigley, 2000). In order to receive funds, women's organizations in Eastern Europe uncritically appropriated the language of Western liberal feminism and joined pro-free market programs, more and more evident after the integration into the European Union when, in Romania, for example, they proliferated projects that aimed to promote social entrepreneurship, stimulate women-owned businesses under the umbrella of neoliberal extraction of female leadership.

However, the limits of liberal feminist paradigm transfer are not only those related to ignoring the economy, poverty, and inequalities. The historical role of eastern feminism was unique, it had to mitigate the effects of communism but also try to build new political institutions, a challenge that western feminism, especially the liberal one, did not face.

5. Romanian Feminism and Conservative Mobilization

Recent conservative mobilization has in turn criticized liberal feminism and tapped into popular resentment born of economic decay. But it also integrated numerous identity elements that force feminisms of all types to reposition themselves. The conservative recipe is to identify a problem with socio-economic origins and attribute it to elites and liberal ideology, population decline being a good example. This is a central theme of the nationalist-conservative agenda, which is based on the following conjecture: liberal feminism has had as its stake the fight for reproductive rights, so it is to blame for the demographic decline. *Mutatis mutandis*, women, in nationalist-conservative rhetoric, are the main culprits for this dramatic population decline. Simultaneously with this culpability of women for the depopulation and weakening of the nation-state, there was another blame attached to women – the crisis of masculinity, perceived in Eastern Europe also as a crisis of the nation (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014; Hallama, 2020).

A paradigmatic case is provided by the analysis of the German elections, the results showing that the vote for the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is disproportionately given by East German men. The 2021 election speech emphasized traditional family values and even the division of labour in the family, in a conservative sense, combined with anti-immigration messages, with a predilection of an Islamophobic nature. Thus, the AfD party takes up the „downgrading experiences of the working class, appeals to their masculinity and promises them cultural valorisation and the family also plays a central role, albeit in the form of traditional gendered concepts of masculinity of protection and economic support (breadwinning masculinity)“ (Scholz 2021: 242).

The departure from the crisis of the nation and masculinity to the reaffirmation of traditional values is a very predictable one, the demographic decline – the discursive leitmotif of the nationalist-conservative agenda, making it necessary to return to gender roles and cultivate the traditional family. According to this line of thinking, gender is assimilated to a Western liberal construct, used to threaten sovereignty by imposing exogenous norms, transplanted as a foreign body in Eastern societies, norms that generated the demographic decline by preventing the recovery of families after the collapse of communism. The attack was not just on liberal feminism, but on the whole set of imported ideas and institutions. Related political projects in Hungary and Poland employ an equivalence between corruption and liberalism—not just political, but economic and cultural, a Western ideological import that must be fought because it dynamites the nation-state.

The alternative was formulated by the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, in the context of defining a new type of democracy, which does not have the individual and his rights at the centre, the mark of modern liberalism, but the collectivity defined by identity, an ethnic, religious, and national community whose logic is self-preservation and the exclusion of other groups. This political illiberalism has taken its forms in the most diverse directions, from supporting ethnic Hungarians abroad to blocking European migration and asylum policies and, respectively, limiting academic freedom by closing the Central European University. In this logic, it becomes imperative to regain national sovereignty by fortifying a strong, maximalist nationalist state that intervenes in identity redefinition and purification. Thus, even the state and politics become the favourite places of the manifestation of the traditional family, Viktor Orbán signalling the fact that women can only promote in the administration only if they have three children. By extrapolation, there was a supranational conservatism; the national conservatives do not have the right to protect the traditional values of their states exclusively, but enter into a new, missionary-type rhetoric, which aims to save the entire European project from the spectre of gender ideology as a product of liberalism.

The attack on liberal democracy is not only rhetoric and ideological, but also institutional. All entities promoting such ideas are considered legitimate targets. For Vladimir Putin, an exponent of the global conservative wave, foreign norms and rules lead to anomy and social dissolution. The Putin model, recently adopted in Poland and Hungary, is that of either destroying or institutionalising his vision of civil society, a recent phenomenon, totally absent in the 90s. This involves the infiltration and legitimization as voices of civil society of characters loyal to the regime to divert or confiscate homework. The nurses' protests and all those protests for reproductive rights in Poland thus managed to be assumed as emulations of the will of the people and not, as they were portrayed by the media loyal to the regime, the will of a feminist group, leftist, urban, and traitors to the country' (Ramme and Snochowska-Gonzalez 2021: 123).

6. Conclusions: Feminism and Conservative Mobilization in Romania

The conservative mobilization in Romania had other coordinates. Rather, it occurred from the bottom up, through the development of religious organizations and networks that, over time, became politically relevant. The path to relevance was of several kinds. Firstly, they began to support local and central political leaders or even impose them on the main parties. Secondly, they promoted a series of policies of a conservative nature, the most important being the campaign for the constitutional amendment of 2018. Thirdly, by concentrating electoral support for a conservative-nationalist party, AUR, which entered the Romanian Parliament in 2020.

Feminism, of all kinds, was a favourite target of this mobilization. The manifesto of the Coalition for Family drawn up in 2015 is revealing from this point of view:

„Our mission is to protect and support the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman. We have the constitutional right and the moral obligation to defend it from those trends of modern society which diminish its importance and accelerate its degradation. The moral and cultural values of our people are the basis of our mission, along with the desire for the entire Christian civil society in Romania to join us. Our general objective is: To have in Romania as many families as possible, as long-lived as possible, as numerous as possible, ensuring their members an economic, social, protective and psycho-affective environment conducive to the formation and development of the human personality, and to the Romanian nation the continuity and demographic, economic, social and cultural development“ (Coaliția pentru Familie, 2015)

In response to the conservative mobilization and the spectre of organizing a constitutional referendum with the purpose to ban same-sex marriages and narrow the definition of the family, Romanian civil society responded with its own mobilization and its own manifesto, which also contained a call to boycott the referendum. In his policy document, *Respect. The Platform for Rights and Freedoms* shows that it has fully assimilated the positions of civil society and feminist contributions from academia, a remarkable fact considering that it has been signed by more than 50 organizations. According to the initiators:

„Human rights and fundamental freedoms are not voted on! The biggest threats to the family are: poverty and corruption; destruction of the rule of law; inequalities; lack of unity, solidarity, mutual respect and trust; domestic violence; limited access to adequate housing and medical services; high maternal and infant mortality; the absence of equal access to quality education, including the insufficiency of nurseries and kindergartens; the lack of jobs. (...) We support the right of women to decide freely on their own bodies and to fulfill themselves through education, profession and through their own choices related to family life and women's and men's access to sexual and reproductive rights' (*Respect. The Platform for Rights and Freedoms*).

Although the umbrella concept of this platform can be considered liberal in a broad sense, we can see in the content of the manifesto an assumption of social and economic issues, the main concern of left-wing feminism. This diversity shows not only the centrality of feminist ideas in formulating a democratic and civic response to conservative mobilization, but also the capacity of Romanian civil society to absorb multiple nuances and positions. If at the political

level the impact of feminist organizations and university circles can be considered relatively limited, at the level of civil society it is consistent.

In addition to civic and political positions, the conservative mobilization also caused a change in the research agenda. Oana Băluță maps in 2020 the organizational and institutional set of anti-gender campaigns, emphasizing that ‘through legislative initiatives, press campaigns in traditional and digital media, actors with a conservative-religious agenda aim to regulate, modify, to block legislative, civic initiatives in different fields, from education to gender violence and sexual and reproductive rights’. The diversity and complexity of these mobilizations and the themes and objectives of anti-gender campaigns require systematic studies and research to be better understood (...) and interdisciplinary approaches (political science, communication science, gender studies, sociology) would bring clarity and depth’ (Băluță 2020: 93)

The spread of the illiberal model in the region concerns Alina Dragolea, who shows that illiberal discursive tropes (advocacy for the traditional family, rejection of reproductive rights, and the transformation of education into an ideological battlefield) become main characteristics of politics in Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania (Dragolea 2022: 90). In the case of Romania, Dragolea notes the role that the AUR has in spreading the illiberal discourse and that its anti-gender and anti-LGBTQ strategy does not seem to be opportunistic but substantial, ideologically coherent with the program of the Coalition for Family (Dragolea 2022: 90). As in the case of Oana Băluță’s contribution, in this new configuration of conservative mobilization, gender research needs to be diversified and should explore how illiberalism adapts to local conditions, how it formulates policies in key areas of interest as well as how it is possible to generate fundamental changes at the level of the European Union (Dragolea 2022: 90).

Note

1. This explains why I opted for methodological reasons for time points, related to the works and the moments that I consider to be milestones. Other important dates in the institutional chronology of Romanian feminism: 1994 – the first feminist philosophy course, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, 1995 – the first book on feminist philosophy, M. Miroiu – *Umbra gândului*, 1996 – the first book on feminist ethics and epistemology, M. Miroiu – *Convenio*, 1998 – the first Master programme of gender studies in Romania, SNSPA, the first feminist dictionary – M. Miroiu and Otilia Dragomir, *Lexicon feminist*, 2002 – the first contribution of feminist political theory – M. Miroiu, *Drumul către autonomie*, 2004.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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