Making an Appearance

The Formation of Women's Groups in Hungary

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Abstract

This essay presents a historical analysis of Hungarian women's movements from the late eighteenth century until recent years. As women's organising in Hungary responded to both internal and international economic and political forces, it also revealed four sets of connections across the diverse historical landscape. First, these groups have framed their political aims to achieve greater legitimacy by selectively emphasising their international connections. The second parallel is the particularly harsh treatment women's groups have received when the dominant ideology changed. Third, in response to this treatment and for sheer self-preservation, women activists re-framed contemporary events and re-interpreted history in general and women's history in particular to strengthen their sense of identity and self-justification. The fourth common feature is the often difficult relationship between women's groups and the state. These four features potentially counterbalanced the many disagreements among women's groups over what they perceive to be women's appropriate roles and the definition of feminism, and persistently led to women's mobilisation and actions. Controversies around feminism ignite and fundamentally influence how and why women's groups become implicated in politics. Looking at the case of Eastern Europe, and especially focusing on Hungary, this essay argues that feminism has helped to establish much common ground among activists.

Keywords: Women's Organisations, Hungary, Feminism, Politics

Introduction: The Effects of Changing Gender Roles on Women's Organising in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe

In the past fifteen years, as the near-monopoly of the communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe has shifted to a more democratic political environment, gender roles in the post-communist region have also dramatically transformed, thoroughly

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affecting the ways that women organise. The emergence of a variety of new women's groups in Central and Eastern Europe is mostly attributed to the newly won right of association and an increased freedom, which contributed to a greater diversity of gender roles. However, this perception of increased choice both in public and private life may appear to be an oversimplification when contrasted with the increasing polarisation of appropriate behaviour for the sexes, i.e., hypermasculinisation and ultrafeminisation.[1] Many of the previously supported roles for women, such as the female worker, have gone out of fashion in popular imagery, to the extent that female politicians and activists, for example, are sometimes openly condemned, and this has contributed to a dramatic decline in political representation.[2] At the same time, other images—the mother, the hostess, the model, etc.—are being promoted to highlight and entrench the notion that women should be caring, attractive, available (in many or all ways), and self-sacrificing.[3] The essentialised gender-specific images have precipitated the (re)emergence of hundreds of women's groups in the region that in turn react to the changing gender roles by embracing, rejecting, or blending various types of feminism. Through their actions, these women's groups are publicly expressing their interpretation of desirable gender roles and their opinion on the applicability of feminism in the region. The story of the emergence and corresponding activities of women's groups informs us about the changing gender roles in the post-communist context. In the case study of Hungary, this essay will describe how successive layers of women's activism have connected, disconnected, and developed.

This essay will follow the emergence of Hungarian women's groups from the late eighteenth century up until recent years. Across the diverse historical landscape of the past two hundred years of women's organising in Hungary, the groups have framed their political claims to achieve greater legitimacy by (1) selectively emphasising their international connections and (2) through their use and interpretation of history. Women activists re-framed contemporary events and re-interpreted history to enhance their appeal. The women's groups didn't agree over what they perceive to be women's appropriate role and the definition of feminism, and their often difficult relationship with the state and patriarchal power all seem to appear repeatedly, albeit in varying degrees and intensity.

Structure of the Essay

The essay opens with a review of the research process and the background sources, then moves on to examine the changes in Hungarian women's representation in less traditional political structures, such as voluntary associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in social movements.[4] In telling the story of the successive women's movements, I examine the different forms of Hungarian women's groups according to the degree they identify with feminist consciousness. Anti-feminism and hybrid (blended) feminisms emerge as distinctive elements in categorising women's organising, as feminism has made many women and their respective groups 'differently sensitive' to gender relations.

The first section will elaborate on the controversy over the meanings of feminism as applied in Central and Eastern Europe. After showing how anti-feminism and hy-

bridisation affected women's mobilisation in Hungary, I then describe the interlocking ebbs and flows of women's organising from the early nineteenth-century pro-woman advocacy to women's NGOs in contemporary times. The second section on precursors and the third section on contemporary women's groups reveal that the history of women's organising serves as a source of inspiration for contemporary activists. My analysis also shows how selectively presented history and ideological genesis are also used to justify, both symbolically and politically, the existence of women's groups and their long-standing roots in Hungary. This essay underscores that contemporary Hungarian women's groups have framed their political claims to achieve greater legitimacy in a new democracy by presenting a historical narrative of their emergence by selectively equating their aims with contemporary Western democratic, human rights, and modernisation practices.

The Research Process and Field Work

Many scholars of social movements and gender studies believe that Hungary lacks an established women's movement.[5] An empirically based study, which I conducted during three extensive research trips to Hungary, provides evidence contrary to this notion. Spending twelve months on field research in 1994–1995, I carried out an in-depth study of women's activism in Hungary, participating in meetings and protests, interviewing leading participants, and assembling a diverse set of oral records on the interconnections between pre-communist and communist-era women's organisations. In addition to interviews, I also collected a wide variety of written documents, including archival materials, contemporary newspaper reviews, and the groups' own information materials, describing the history and professed ideology of nascent women's groups.

In 2001, I interviewed the same Hungarian women activists and added members of new groups, as well as politicians with whom the groups were working closely, to my interview group. From the interviews, I noticed a distinctive focus developing in the emerging women's movement. The activities of women's groups centre on welfare-related issues, ranging from reproductive rights and family benefits, to the need to slow down the abrupt increase in women's retirement age and to raise awareness about domestic violence.

Three years later, I used interviews and textual analysis to trace the networks of financing and information exchange between Central and Eastern European women's groups and Western European and North American women's groups that worked together to criminalise domestic violence. In all three rounds of interviews and participant observations I compared the interviews for evidence of temporal change and analysed their texts for common themes such as relations to feminism, towards politics, and notions of gender equality. I mapped the exchange between and among women's groups, governments, and international actors, such as aid agencies, Western feminist organisations, and foreign activists. Throughout this research the interviewees reminded me of the difficult balance that women's studies scholars must maintain between independence and advocacy and the culturally and historically contested definitions of feminism.

Dilemmas of Feminist Research: Agency and Structure in Post-Communist Europe

Feminist social science has a foot in at least two traditions or ways of being/knowing. One tradition is the academic mode and its detached, scientific knowledge; the other tradition insists on the conjoining of dichotomies between theory and practice.[6] I understand feminism as affirming an inseparable connection between theory and practice, with gender as a complex ensemble of social relations calling for a number of critical methods of analysis. Feminism is not a universal discourse, exclusive to women, but rather a 'political interpretation and struggle' that emerges from the specific needs of different cultures.[7] From this, we may posit a variety of *feminisms*.[8]

In choosing Hungarian women's groups as a focus of research attention, I grappled with recognising both 'structure' and 'agency'. 'Structure' is the ever-changing social system that emerges as a result of past actions of individuals, their groups, and their institutions.[9] Women's groups act both as products of social structure and as agents of change in the social structure. Through the combination of agency and structure, I attempt to capture both general and individual factors and motives that influence the characteristics and relationships among and within women's groups.

I define agency as the capacity of individuals or groups to be autonomous and to create a culture, often of resistance.[10] Agency is an especially potent concept in the study of women because traditional understandings of politically significant action have been based on a masculine model of autonomy and agency. Thus, agency has not been equally accessible to women. When women reach out to establish their own voice, they face dire choices of either confronting, or out of necessity or of desire of advancement, conforming to the dominant male-centred roles and norms.[11]

The issue of agency and autonomy became a central source of tension both for me and for the women with whom I interacted during my research. I feel uncomfortable when I see women's own views espousing domination over themselves and interpreting it as beneficial to them. What happens when claims are at odds with one another? Which is right? Is experience the determiner? Is experience more valuable than theory or informed opinion?[12] These issues weighed heavily on me when deciding whether to evaluate some interviewees' controversial opinions as a lack of awareness or as an expression of agency. After a brief and unhappy flirtation with explaining away contradictory beliefs as a result of false consciousness, I began to take the contradictions seriously and to argue that the divisions between men and women operate within and through equally profound divisions among women.[13] Consequently, I set the focus of this study broadly on 'women's groups' to include all such self-defined groups.

I defined any formal or informal group as a women's group if it (1) declared itself as a group by and for women; (2) demonstrated activities in support of women; and (3) created some autonomy for itself by raising funds for their activities, establishing their own agenda, and engaging in activities with other groups, the public, and/or the political establishment. If independent groups, party-affiliated caucuses, or trade union women's sections satisfied the above criteria, I considered them a suitable subject of inquiry. By accounting for party-affiliated women's groups, I included more groups than a strict definition of civil society would encompass, because civil society theoretically excludes familial and state/government-related associations.[14] However, these

theoretical delineations are not useful as pure abstractions and need to be applied in practice and to reflect on the given social context. Civil society is rarely hermetically sealed off from political parties and governments. On the contrary, many segments of civil society actively strive to connect to politics, broadly defined. In post-communist Europe, in particular, the 1989 revolutions served to remind any governing party to maintain contact with an array of social movements, including women's movements. While the parent parties of women's groups could form part of government, the groups themselves performed many functions, often only vaguely related to the party's platform and many have struggled to carve out features of autonomous existence. When party-affiliated women's groups exerted a formidable presence, I added their insights and activities to the analysis of women's groups in Hungary.

Contemporary Hungarian Women's Groups and Their Relationship to the Meanings of Feminism

The activities of women's groups not only create political agency, albeit to a limited extent, but also assist in a slow social transformation towards higher awareness of gender roles and inequalities as women's movements across the world start to interact. These transformations are barely visible from the traditional political standpoint that focuses on governments and political parties, but they have changed many communities, families, and individuals. By establishing and strengthening a network of domestic groups and by connecting to international non-governmental organisations, Hungarian women's groups and their activities have begun chipping away at the exclusive state-centred focus of politics. The changes in women's political status are most evident in their enhanced political representation, broadly understood to include non-governmental entities as well, and, most importantly, in women and their allies finding each other, forming groups, and publicly expressing their views and interests. However, even in a relatively energetic engagement with a new democracy such as post-communist Hungary, there are many warning signs.

Women's activism often forms a ghetto, a gender-segregated public realm that institutionalises the feminine spheres of activity. Within this ghetto, women's groups in Hungary are divided according to how they relate to their gender-specific separation: some see that they can benefit by emphasising the dominant understanding of femininity, while others find the boundaries repressive and seek transcendence. As women's groups, both types of groups are included here, but I separate the latter, that is, the feminist approach, from the former that is either anti-feminist or hybridises some elements of feminism with traditional images and expectations of women. However, while the feminist approach is best symbolised as a 'family tree', to borrow Karen Offen's metaphor, because of its broad reach and diverse variety, it has a few common, critical elements, such as sensitivity to women's oppression and a desire to pursue change in their favour, most often by challenging patriarchal thought and institutions.[15] While generally eschewing the term 'feminist', because it often carries a stigma, both early twentieth-century and contemporary women's activism in Hungary have carried a few clearly identifiable elements of feminism.

I define feminist organisations as those that work with women and for women by embracing collective decision-making, empowerment of members, and a political agenda to end the oppression of women. Generally, feminist organisations question patriarchal authority and corresponding dominant social values. These groups and their movements can produce new elites, claim resources on behalf of women, and provide space for their claims and activities.[16] Within these constraints, only a handful of Hungarian women's groups have unwaveringly claimed to be and can be unambiguously viewed as feminist in their orientation. From the small number of feminist adherents, four groups in particular stand out because of their persistence and prominence: the *Feministák Egyesülete* (Feminist Alliance), active between 1904–1942; the *Feminista Hálózat* (Feminist Network), formed in 1990, which ceased operation around 2002; *NaNE*,[17] a domestic violence hotline established by Feminist Network members in 1994; and *Labrisz*,[18] a lesbian association, established officially in 1999 after many years of informal existence.

A global spread and diffusion of ideas assisted the activities of these four associations as the awareness of feminist perspectives increased in Hungary and changed some perceptions of the world in which Hungarian women live. For example, many of the Feminist Network's members essentially contributed to Hungary's first non-partisan platform that organised against the impending restrictions of abortion in 1991–1992. *NaNE* has been at the forefront of bringing information to the public about the widespread and gendered nature of domestic violence, consistently pressuring governments to pass legislation that specifically addresses this hidden pandemic. It is not entirely counter-intuitive that these activities should also produce a reaction to feminism, albeit not always an entirely hostile one, in the form of virulent anti-feminism. Women and their associations often responded to feminism by establishing their own version of a hybrid feminism.

Hybrid feminism, as the name suggests, combines various feminist and non-feminist schools of thought, and mixes them according to the specific historical, political, and cultural conditions of a country or a region. Political ideologies often adapt to regional specificities, and feminism is certainly no exception to this ubiquitous trend, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, whose opening towards the West both economically and politically occurred suddenly and on a broad scale.

While there are many varieties of feminism to mix with various local affinities, hybrid feminisms differ in significant respects from the foreign models of women's activism. Hybrid feminists blur various boundaries that Western, especially Anglo-Saxon, schools of thought may assume as well delineated.[19] From the perspective of post-communist Eastern Europe, the delineation of the boundaries of the private sphere is probably one of the most problematic issues.[20] First, the communist-era 'anti-politics' of resistance made the sphere of the family a welcome refuge, in contrast with Western feminist interpretations that see gender oppression as being rooted in the family.[21] Second, while the intended boundary between the state and civil society appears especially rigid in British and U.S. philosophical and social science literature, many of the NGOs springing up in Eastern Europe not only search for and accept state funding but also actively pursue its agenda.[22]

Hybrid feminism tends to focus on issues raised by foreign women's advocates but it adjusts these topics according to the local culture and politics. First, by addressing local audiences, it often re-frames Western feminist issues around defending or reviving, but not directly challenging or stamping out traditions that regard women's main public concern to be children's welfare. Hybrid feminists situationally embrace or reject local understandings of motherhood, marriage, religious devotion, and domesticity, or gender-specific discriminatory practices. Second, hybrid feminism differs from foreign models in the organisational forms it produces because of its close relationship with the state and/or with a foreign funding agency. The discursive and organisational strategies create GONGOs (government-sponsored NGOs). Examples of blatantly state-sponsored hybrid women's organisations may be less apparent in contemporary Hungary than critics have charged in the case of Bulgaria,[23] or the *Bílý kruh bezpečí*, BKB (White Circle of Safety) in the Czech Republic, and *Niebieska Linia* (Blue Light) in Poland,[24] but contemporary women's party caucuses, trade union women's sections, and the *Magyar Nők Szövetsége* (Association of Hungarian Women), all discussed below, fit within this frame. The hybrid organisations tend to blur boundaries between traditional women's activism, which exalts motherhood and activism based on contemporary Western feminist principles.[25]

Hybridisation in women's activism does not need to be seen as evil or essentially harmful, or as something to be eradicated. Critics of hybrid feminism raise uncomfortable questions about a potential coloniser-colonised dynamic between 'East' and 'West' when they point at unsuccessful local imitations and incomplete institutionalisation of foreign projects. With these concerns in mind, it is important to note that, while (neo-)colonialist tendencies may be present, Hungary and the eight other post-communist European countries, entered the European Union in 2004 on an almost equal footing with the other member states.[26] Hybridisation of feminism, with all its problematic and empowering aspects, can be seen as an intrinsic result of encounters between foreign projects and local actors. While the exchange between the Eastern and the Western regions of Europe has been common, its intensity and the degree of power-disparity waxed and waned throughout the centuries. Any understanding of the degree of inequality between East and West, and the intensity of exchange can be manipulated by a critical or favourable interpretation of this history. Depending on their position regarding feminism and the West, women's groups in Central and Eastern Europe do not only live history, they dramatise and perform it.

To create a broader appeal by claiming an organic, national heritage to the land, contemporary women's groups have traced their ideological lineage and reclaimed and popularised their effect in connection to past politics. The renewed claims to a historical heritage, which had been erased and mostly forgotten, incorporated various forward-looking political messages about the desirable role of women and, on occasion, attempted to re-conceptualise gender relations. Even when a straightforward intent to repossess historical heritage was less evident or less acute, the connections to the past still indirectly influenced the trajectory of women's movements in Hungary. Despite hugely disruptive twists and turns in the story of women's organising in Hungary, it is evident, at least in retrospect, how successive phases of women's organ-

ising build on each other and offer a perspective on the desirable direction of social change in gender relations.

Precursors and Predecessors: Women's Organising in Hungary Before 1989

Hungarian women's organising began in the 1800s as one of the voices calling for modernisation, education, and, occasionally, for national independence. The first written testimony of women's organising can be traced back to 1790, when a petition in the name of 'Hungarian mothers' entered the records of the nobles' assembly.[27] The early 1800s gave rise to a multitude of mostly aristocratic women's charity organisations, both secular and church-affiliated.

Charity associations, starting with the first registered women's organisation in 1817, the *Pesti Jótékony Nőegylet* (Women's Charity Association of Pest), and others, such as the *Szegedi* and the *Pécsi Szoroptimista Klub* (Soroptimist Club of Szeged and Soroptimist Club of Pécs), which were established in 1992 and 1996, respectively, unquestionably provide valuable welfare services, but rarely question the status of women in society or challenge gender inequality.[28] While they may, and often do, lead to courageous action on behalf of women, the poor, and social justice, they mostly offer only a vague potential of gender-conscious transformation that can act as a catalyst for more explicitly gender-specific claims.[29] Building on the affirmative experience of charity networks, women could potentially start to organise along other, more explicitly political lines.

The flow of ideas and activists between the different radical branches of women's organising can be noted even in the humble beginnings of women's associational life in nineteenth-century Hungary. Fighting for women's education, for instance, was a radical claim in the mid-1800s, and on the basis of its explicit gender-sensitivity, it could certainly be called a feminist claim in modern terminology. One notable precursor to feminist sensibilities, Mrs. Pál Veres, called for women's education and the abolition of prejudices against women in the 1870s.[30] However, despite her considerable lobbying and organising efforts, her crusade only became more broadly supported and partially implemented when capitalist tendencies in the economy began to emerge in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the late nineteenth century. By 1885, more women were receiving a basic education and had become legally entitled to occupy what we would call today pink-collar jobs.[31] By 1896, women could gather and potentially pursue their common interests based on their professional status in the *Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete* (National Association of Female Employees). It took only eight more years for some members of the National Association of Female Employees to establish the *Feministák Egyesülete* (Feminist Alliance). The connection between the National Association of Female Employees and the Feminist Alliance is an early example of how activism in one organisation can lead to a more politically inclined awakening of another. The founders of the Feminist Alliance were inspired by feminism in Western Europe and North America, which they could apply in fostering women's education, enhancing their employment possibilities, and pursuing women's right to vote.

Simultaneously pursuing women's education, employment, and suffrage simultaneously, they also enlisted the Feminist Alliance in the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA).[32]

Early in the twentieth century, other Hungarian women's organisations also connected with international intellectual currents and corresponding social movement activism. Most importantly, feminism and women's class-based organising emerged at the same time and have competed with one another by providing different explanations for women's hardship. In Hungary, the *Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület* (Association of Hungarian Women Workers) was established in the same year as the Feminist Alliance (1904), and it almost immediately affiliated itself with social democratic causes and with both the national and the international organisations of the working class.[33] In the first half of the twentieth century, in Hungary, feminism, as a social movement remained divided along ethnic and class lines. Today, ethnic and class-based affiliations continue to challenge and often undermine feminist claims of gender-based solidarity. The recurring interaction, confrontation, and hybridisation of feminism, class-based ideologies, and nationalist sentiments demonstrate that multiple aspects of identity cannot be easily disentangled. The debate over the appropriateness of feminist or class-based women's organisation in Central and Eastern Europe re-emerged with even more fervour again after 1989, with very similar arguments on both sides as women's groups had raised at the turn of the twentieth century.[34]

Approximately 800 women's groups existed at the end of the nineteenth century in Hungary and from this large collection the Feminist Alliance emerged as the spearhead group in the campaign for the right to vote.[35] The core members of the Alliance were mostly educated, urban women, but the association also had extensive rural contacts and probably a large number of sympathisers. Viewing the Feminist Alliance as an appealing and legitimating precursor, members of the Feminist Network in the late 1990s were partly discouraged but also invigorated to note that, ninety years earlier, the Feminist Alliance had received at least as many welcoming and supportive reviews as critical ones in the early twentieth-century national press.[36]

One enduring criticism against feminist organisations both then and post-1989 has been the charge of elitism. The social-democratic activist Mariska Gárdos repeatedly used this argument against the Feminist Alliance in the early 1900s[37] and the charge has resurfaced in contemporary historiography.[38] Feminist organisations tend to remain independent of political parties, a pattern repeated at the turn of both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries and which exposes the groups to additional criticism for 'elitist' and pretentious behaviour. While the inclination of feminist groups to be politically unaffiliated may be based on pragmatic reasons to allow the formation of broad alliances, the rather inhospitable environment that political parties tend to provide for feminist activists also contributes to their relative isolation. The Feminist Alliance chose to remain politically independent, despite knowing this would limit its reach, but still successfully created the country's first labour exchange for educated women.[39]

Partially due to Hungarian women's extensive organising and lobbying activities for voting rights reforms, Budapest hosted the 1913 conference of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. The Feminist Alliance posted over 8,000 flyers to promote

it on the city streets.[40] By 1914, a sizeable network of women's organisations existed in Hungary, alongside trade unions and professional and religious groups. Despite their opposing ideologies, both authoritarian regimes that came to power after each world war (i.e., the Horthy regime between 1919 and 1944 and communism between 1948 and 1989) believed it was beneficial to diminish and later eliminate the story of the Feminist Alliance, its extensive international contacts, and the engaging cultural and political effects of a rich network of various women's groups.

Women twice gained and also quickly lost the right to vote and to run as political candidates before they finally gained universal suffrage in 1945. First, they were granted suffrage in the social-democratic revolution of 1918, then saw it re-affirmed during the communist take-over of 1919, but their universal voting rights were short-lived. The successive authoritarian political regime under the leadership of Admiral Horthy persistently moved to eradicate signs of the immediate past and, consequently, passed laws that severely restricted women's right to stand as political candidates, vote, and have access to university education.[41] In addition, the Horthy regime placed the leading activists of the Feminist Alliance under surveillance and subjected them to such harassment that they left the country.[42]

A range of women's associations developed in the 1920s and 1930s and attracted more middle-class women than the earlier groups had.[43] However, the majority membership of these groups would not produce critical interpretations of gender relations because, if these groups wished to remain legal, it was best for them to avoid feminism. With the exception of illegal, 'submerged' activism that some feminists and communists were forced to accept,[44] the political aims of women's groups were limited to those that corresponded with the nationalist, Christian, and traditional gender imagery.[45]

Instead of engaging in battles over the right to vote, the inter-war women's organisations either acted as employment and insurance clearinghouses for the working class or provided social services, such as assistance in hospitals and child-care facilities. Religious and patriotic women's organisations, such as the *Magyar Asszonyok Nemzeti Szövetsége, MANSZ* (National Association of Hungarian Women), became influential and touted the values of a right-wing Catholic regime.[46] By the end of the 1930s, conservative, religious, and nationalist women's groups were brought together on the basis of their anti-Semitism and anti-communism. By 1940, all these organisations were moulded into the *Egyesült Női Tábor* (Women's United Front), a fascist hierarchical women's movement that supported the German war effort.[47] Just as the Horthy regime declared the Feminist Alliance illegal in 1942, the new, left-leaning government forced the National Association of Hungarian Women to disband after the Second World War.[48]

After 1945, the political and organisational space left by the banned National Association of Hungarian Women was filled by a plethora of small women's organisations. The resurfacing heterogeneity of these groups between 1945 and 1948 involved a lively scene of activities, but they did not aim to create a strong voice within the parties or to strike out as an independent movement.[49] The later dominant *Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége,* or *MNDSZ* (Democratic Association of Hungarian Women), emerged in 1945 from an agreement of left-leaning parties to gain the vote of women. Yet from the beginning, the leading role of the Communist party's cadre was evident.[50]

In the years immediately following the Second World War, the MNDSZ enjoyed widespread support among men and women, maintained open and democratic meetings, provided space for women's education and entertainment, and offered sorely needed social services.[51] Many 'phoenix' organisations invoked the MNDSZ's image after 1989 and aspired to create similar roles for themselves, but they succeeded only partially.

In 1948, the Communist Party manipulated the elections to secure victory and then abolished all other parties and most associations, with the exception of MNDSZ and a few others, such as *Hazafias Népfront* (Patriotic Popular Front), which they fashioned even more to their liking.[52] Admittedly, there is some overlap between the aims of feminism and the ideals of Marxism, but the marriage never functioned well in practice. The state-socialist system promoted and applied a 'limited' or controlled emancipation of women.[53] Both in 1954 and in 1970, the Communist Party attempted to abolish the one remaining women's association, claiming that women's emancipation had been accomplished.[54] The 1956 Hungarian revolution profoundly questioned such statements, but its lessons only slowly emerged after years of severe retribution and oppression. In a sort of superficial housecleaning on 4 November 1956, just as the Soviet tanks squashed the revolution, the Communist Party not only renamed itself the *Magyar Szocialista Munkaspárt*, or *MSZMP* (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party), but also issued an edict to name MNDSZ the *Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa*, or *MNOT* (Hungarian Women's National Council).[55] This newly named organisation became, by the Party's request in 1970, exclusively a national office and dissolved its local branches. It existed in this fashion until even its own cadre revolted in 1989 and established the first 'phoenix' organisation, the *Magyar Nők Szövetsége* (Association of Hungarian Women), in the hope that it could be a new umbrella organisation for the fledgling and politically diverse women's associations.[56]

During the communist era, only 'renegade' Yugoslavia produced a bona fide feminist movement. In the 1970s, feminist and women's groups proliferated there, greatly inspired by the second wave of feminist ideas coming from the West.[57] In Hungary, the only visible, explicitly autonomous and political women's organisation was founded in 1973, but even this was limited to Budapest and university circles. Júlia Veres, Zsuzsa Kőrösi, and Piroska Márkus began a collection of signatures against the restriction of abortion rights.[58] It took the expulsion of these three female activists in 1974 to attract more widespread attention. Similar to the forced departure from Hungary of Róza Bédy-Schwimmer and Mariska Gárdos in 1919, and possibly also Vilma Glücklich in the early 1920s, these three women were ejected from the country for feminist activism. Their story, along with that of the Feminist Alliance, would have probably passed unnoticed and unaccounted for, had not the members of the Feminist Network located their ideological and historical origins in Hungary.[59]

Contemporary Women's Groups in Hungary

The re-emergence of civic groups has been one of the most important developments in post-communist societies in the past ten years, and women's organising has been part of this growth.[60] The collapse of the communist regimes revealed, and initially

emphasised, the historical and cultural differences between women in Central and Eastern Europe and women in the West. A decade later, women's organisations in the region started to connect and to co-operate more intensely both regionally and globally.

Women's groups sprang up relatively quickly in Poland, in reaction to legislation to criminalise abortion, and in the German Democratic Republic, to protest the attempts to severely limit access to abortion. The wave of abortion debates across the region gave impetus to increased women's self-consciousness and realisation of their civic vulnerability. In the former Yugoslavia, war atrocities and crimes against humanity—notably the rape camps used as a means of genocide—prompted consciousness-raising efforts, and the formation and strengthening of women's support centres.[61] In Hungary, however, the development of women's groups was slower and less dramatic. In 1995, of the 30,000 NGOs in Hungary, approximately forty were specifically women's groups. Six years later, the number of NGOs had reached over 50,000.[62] From almost 100 women's groups active in 2005, approximately forty have stayed consistently active in women's issues.

The exact numbers of active NGOs and women's groups are uncertain and depend on how the data is collected. On the one hand, the actual number of NGOs and women's groups in Hungary may be higher than this statistical data claims. Some of the registered NGOs are umbrella organisations, sheltering many other groups (e.g., the Association of Hungarian Women and many women's party caucuses claim to be such organisations).[63] Conversely, when groups dissolve, they often take a long time to declare this to the Central Statistical Office. Until there is a legal or tax incentive to make the accounting process of NGOs more accurate, only participant observation and cross-checking of activists' accounts (interviews) can provide a more accurate picture of the trends in the lifecycle of women's groups.

The vagueness inherent in assessing the size of the women's movement has become increasingly apparent and particularly problematic in Hungary. On 23 April 1993, the first gathering of women's groups after the collapse of the communist regime was held under the provocative banner of 'Why Is There No Women's Movement in Hungary?' The organiser, the *Magyarországi Női Alapítvány* or *MONA* (Foundation of Women in Hungary), was soundly criticised for choosing this title because the twenty participating women's groups contradicted the provocative question. More contradictory evidence also emerged after a careful search of other sources. Government sources, for example, quoted sixty women's groups in Hungary in 1997[64] and MONA's website listed 144 groups in 2005.[65] However, these last two accounts of the growth of the women's NGOs are quite arbitrary. It was not in MONA's interest to de-register the defunct groups and, in fact, the various directories routinely classified as women's groups a variety of groups with even the slightest hint of a humanitarian aim: from the fight against cancer, such as *A Rák Ellen az Emberért Alapítvány* (Foundation Against Cancer for Humans), to health preservation, such as *Hosszútávú Egészségmegőrző Program Egyesület* (Association for Long-Term Health-Maintenance), and child protection, such as the *Család, Gyermek, Ifjúsági Egyesület* (Family, Child, and Youth Association).

The number of women's groups in Hungary has increased from one in 1988 (the officially sanctioned, quasi 'lame-duck' *Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa,* or *MNOT* (Hungarian Women's National Council), to approximately 140 in 2005. There are other in-

formal women's groups, but those that wish to be involved in public affairs usually register with the authorities because becoming an NGO carries some significant financial incentives and provides almost the only way to influence politics without becoming affiliated with a political party. A group can only give or get funds and apply for tax breaks through the official registration process. So, what other factors propelled women's groups to register as NGOs?[66]

Interviews and participant observations over the past fifteen years in Hungary indicate that there have been four distinct flows/eruptions of women's organising in Hungary since the regime transition. While most groups' participants assumed that the women's organisations 'just happened' as in the previous century, analysis of these interviews suggests that the foundations of civil society were built on deep historical roots. For instance, women activists re-framed contemporary events and interpreted history to the newly confirmed freedom to associate. One participant in the *Szegedi Női Talent Klub* (Talent Women Manager Club of Szeged) reflected on the multitude of factors prompting women to join the group: 'There were some who came only to establish business relations and there were others who were seeking company. Because the *Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség* or *KISZ* (Communist Youth Alliance) suddenly ceased to exist, there was a vacuum, and one did not belong anywhere.'[67] Activists in women's groups enticed others to join and thus generated renewed interest in such organisations. Women's groups gathered momentum in four discernible, albeit overlapping phases.

The Four Phases of Emergence in Women's Organising in Contemporary Hungary

Shifts in gender expectations and role performance echoed the changing structure of power in Central and Eastern Europe. On the one hand, the new gender relations incorporated a response to the experience of socialism that assumed a simultaneously de- or over-politicised (but still monopolised) attitude towards many issues, including gender.[68] On the other hand, changing gender relations in today's Central and Eastern European reflect an increasing influence of globalisation, with dominant capitalist, (neo-)liberal, and Western-oriented characteristics.[69] During the metamorphosis from communism, through its waning years in the 1980s and into the early post-communist period, the politics of women's representation reveal a visibly different kind of power, separating it from the direct and often heavy-handed, top-down implementation of the previous four decades. The newly emerging kind of power is rarely perceived to be centralised or monopolised by a small group of people or institutions, in contrast to communist times.[70] Women's newly emerging organisising in its ebbs and flows reflects this changing nature of power.

The first phase of women's independent organising started both alongside and because of the regime transformation and consisted of two dramatically different styles of activities: (1) grassroots, and (2) other 'phoenix' organisations, emerging from the ashes of previous, socialist-era associations. In 1989, the new grassroots women's organisations began to appear alongside the remnants of women's organisations from the previous regime, exposing vast differences between the two.

The new grassroots organisations, such as the Feminist Network and NaNE, were created without reference to the immediate institutional past or to personal or organisational experiences.[71] Although they did not actively seek a historical template for themselves, when some members of the Feminist Network unearthed the story of the Feminist Alliance, they saw that it could make feminist arguments sound potentially more legitimate. The Network therefore adopted the Alliance as its predecessor. Their publication, *Nőszemély* (Female Person), prominently featured a section dedicated to a Feminist Archive.[72] The Archive regularly included lectures that the activists of the Feminist Alliance gave and thematic collections of articles of the Feminist Alliance's newspaper from the turn of the nineteenth century, *A Nő és a Társadalom* (Woman and Society). Despite the minimal institutional structure and infrastructure of the grassroots organisations, they started to attract the attention of national politics in a Cinderella-like experience, as these domestic hermits quickly mastered the media game. The members of these grassroots groups did not carry cards or pay membership fees, and the groups themselves were mostly informal and focused on self-reflection (awareness-raising) and the creation of women's own, albeit small, spaces. Their actions did not reject involvement in national politics, but they did not particularly encourage it either. For example, many members of the Feminist Network were among the most committed activists in the campaign against criminalising abortion in 1991–1992, although they did so without the formal support of the organisation.[73]

The 'phoenix,' or surviving organisations from the previous regime, such as the *MSZOSZ Női Tagozata* (Women's Electorate of the National Alliance of the Hungarian Trade Unions) and the Association of Hungarian Women, also emerged at this time and mainly steered their organising towards more traditional political involvement, such as lobbying. These resurrected groups rose from the ashes of their socialist-era experiences and gave the appearance (and sometimes nothing more than the appearance) of carrying political clout. They also revived their previous, even if badly damaged and fractured, organisational framework and some political networking capabilities.

The second phase of contemporary women's organising took place in the early 1990s with new groups most often directly connected to parties. Political parties established their own women's groups in the form of party caucuses, usually by resuscitating seemingly long-forgotten pre-communist traditions of women's organising, which is what happened, for example, within the ranks of the *Független Kisgazdapárt* (Independent Smallholders' Party). The first party to address women's issues directly was the *Szociáldemokrata Párt* (Social Democratic Party), but it eventually split into factions. Eventually, almost all Hungarian political parties, such as the *Szabad Demokrata Párt* (Party of Free Democrats), created either an informal women's caucus or a separate intra-party division for female party members and sympathisers, such as the *Magyar Szocialista Párt* (Hungarian Socialist Party), the *Munkáspárt* (Workers' Party), and the *Magyar Demokrata Fórum* (Hungarian Democratic Forum). Foreign, especially German patterns, acted as a model from which conservative parties reached out to establish their women's sections.[74]

Later in the transition process, in 1994 and 1995, the third phase of organising began, with dozens of small groups deciding to go through the formalisation process of registering with the government. Another change at this time was that the majority

of new groups began to form outside the capital (e.g., in medium-sized cities like Kecskemét, Veszprém, and Balatonfüred), with a general broad focus on self-help, charity, and social engagement. Their activities, although not focused on politics per se, have the potential to help develop women's own voices and to become a springboard for increased, but not exclusively, political activities.

Phase four, which began in 1997, appears to have brought in two contradictory trends, echoing the first wave of post-1989 women's organising. On one side, the fourth phase marks a period of decline, because both branches of the first wave of post-1989 women's groups began to seriously struggle. Some of the grassroots groups, such as the Feminist Network, slowly phased out their operations due to burnout and lack of funds. At the same time, the 'phoenix' organisations began to deteriorate, as the Women's Alliance and the Women's Electorate of the National Alliance of the Hungarian Trade Unions lost much of their financial structure and political connections, seriously undercutting left-wing women's organisational capacity. Yet another break appeared in the conservative women's circles. Despite considerable ideological support and financial assistance from two centre-right governments between 1990 and 1994 and 1998 and 2002, the conservative women's groups could not develop a common platform. At the time of writing, in early 2006, hardly any of the women's groups of the political parties have managed to take root.

Alternatively, and in stark contrast to this decline, several female activists discovered the personal and financial potential of establishing women-focused NGOs. They began offering various services, especially in areas of welfare and education, to local governments and applied for funding to national and international organisations. Offering services through local or national governments makes NGOs particularly vulnerable to entering into a dependent relationship. The activists often perceive that they need to be apolitical in their domestic environments to be able to continue their work, whereas the international environment, to which many of them now connect and apply for support, requires, or at least appreciates, a clear gender-specific, often feminist, stance. Uneasy with this double-speak but driven to survive and prosper, many women NGOs have adapted to these contradictory expectations by becoming professional agencies to provide welfare-related services, such as training, employment referral, and abuse hotlines.[75] The pragmatism of these new service-provider NGOs is both an opportunity and a liability, as they offer a resonant sounding board about the viability of an independent civil society in a newly democratic country and inform about the increasing interchange between gender-specific domestic and international norms.

Conclusion: The Intersections of Women's Movements in Hungary

In this essay, I have described the emergence of women's groups in Hungary in the last two centuries. As women's organising in Hungary responded to both internal and international economic and political forces, it also revealed some unexpected connections and potential parallels across the centuries.

Four sets of intriguing parallels emerge from the various ebbs and flows of women's organising in Hungary. The first is the enduring international engagement of Hungar-

ian women's groups. In the international women's movement, activist women found the space to act more autonomously than in their respective, and often more restrictive, domestic environments. In the process of international engagement, however, the alliances of women's groups developed competing interpretations of their gender, its subjugation, and the desirable corresponding strategies that they intended to follow. In the first half of the twentieth century, the internationalisation and competing interpretations of women's role in society were exemplified by one of the main inter-war conservative and nationalist-leaning women's organisations, the *Magyar Asszonyok Nemzeti Szövetsége* (*MANSZ*) (National Association of Hungarian Women), which affiliated itself with the International Council of Women (ICW). While co-operating on many occasions and even considering merging during the inter-war period,[76] the ICW and the IWSA (from 1926 called the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, the Feminist Alliance's choice for an international contact) developed alternative interpretations in the international arena over how they saw national self-determination and, within it, women's relationship to their nation.[77] A similar polarisation of Hungarian women's groups occurred in the post-1989 era. Contemporary conservative-leaning groups aligned themselves with Western European, especially German Christian-Conservative, parties and their women's caucuses, while the Feminist Alliance, NaNE, and other service organisations specialising in women's job training and referral, such as ReginaNet, reached out to the Network of East-West Women (established by Western feminist scholars interested in Eastern Europe) and to WAVE, a feminist advocacy and provider network aiming to eliminate violence against women.[78]

The second, uncanny but insightful, parallel is the particularly harsh treatment women's groups have received from the state when the dominant ideology changed. Just as in the period around 1920, when the unrelenting harassment of the leadership of the Feminist Alliance eventually forced them to emigrate, in 1974, Júlia Veres, Zsuzsa Kőrösi, and Piroska Márkus were forced to leave Hungary.

The third parallel across various types and times of women's organising is the prominent feature of the groups interpretation of history in general, and women's history in particular, to strengthen their sense of identity and self-justification. For instance, party-affiliated women's groups from such different orientations as the conservative-nationalist *Független Kisgazdapárt* (Independent Smallholders' Party) and the orthodox Marxist *Munkáspárt* (Workers' Party) invoked historical images to emphasise their interpretation of International Women's Day, 8 March. The women activists of the *Független Kisgazdapárt* invoked the inter-war celebration of *Gyümölcsoltó* (Fruit-Producing) St. Mary to reinterpret 8 March. At the same time, the Marxist women's alliance made a point in meeting in *Szoborpark* (Statute Park), where many communist-era public memorials are located.[79] Similarly, NaNE has used in its advocacy effort of the International Women's Day neighbouring Austria's example of incorporating women's NGOs in formulating laws and creating shelters for domestic violence victims on both national and local government levels.[80] The framing of history becomes a political matter because, by invoking historical roots and/or linkages to current Western practices of integrating NGOs in governmental policy-making, contemporary Hungarian activists have gained, or at least claimed, legitimacy.

The fourth observation about Hungarian women's organising concerns the often difficult relationship between women's groups and the state. Freedom to associate has proven to be a necessary, yet insufficient, condition for women to express their interests. Liberal democracy allows women to organise, but if they fail to mobilise, liberal democratic regimes follow their embedded biases and recognise only the more vocal and articulate groups.[81]

Effective representation is crucial for the survival of the new democratic regimes. Democratisation takes place at several different levels of society: the structure of a group; the decision of engagement or disengagement in public life; and the relations to and financial dependence on other groups form part of a development process of values and structures that can promote democratic participation. Although individuals may not be active participants at all times because of personal choices and constraints, even their intermittent participation establishes a basis of participatory democracy. Activism in social movements, especially in the case of a long-silenced and diverse group such as women, can offer an escape from the shortcomings of traditional forms of politics and possibly rectify democratic deficits on both the global and domestic levels.

Historical and cultural precedents may work against the likelihood of a mass movement based on women's interests and, consequently, only very few women's groups may be able to participate in politics. In addition, these active women's groups are very diverse in their activities and political orientation as they carefully pick and choose one or more feminist tenets. Despite these odds, a number of Hungarian women have begun to think critically about their position. Some are starting to re-evaluate the socialist past and some of them feel ready, able, and even obliged to exert pressure on political decision-making bodies.

While there is reason to lament the lack of a unified and vibrantly energetic women's movement in post-communist Hungary, there is also much to appreciate in the commitment of many activist women. The shadow of the omnipotent communist state could have inhibited everyone's willingness to form organisations, but this has proven not to be the case. On the contrary, a plethora of political parties, trade unions, and civic organisations have appeared since the regime change. Increasing from one (1988) to forty (1995) women's organisations, and maintaining this core number until 2005 is certainly impressive. However, it is also clear that the number of groups in no way reflects either women's potential or what is required by the radically changing political and economic circumstances.

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Notes

1. Various contexts provide some evidence for the enhanced gender stereotypes increasingly shared by both sexes and note that it can still co-exist with an official theoretical stand of gender equality. For an excellent theoretical review of the puzzling complexity of gender essentialism meeting liberalism in Central and Eastern Europe, see Ulla Grapard, 'Theoretical Issues of Gender in the Transition from Socialist Regimes', *Journal of Economic Issues* vol. 31, no. 3 (1997): 665–697. For one well-substantiated qualitative account, see Susan Crate, 'The Gendered Nature of Viliui Sakha Post-Soviet Adaptation', in *Post-Soviet Women Encountering Transition: Nation Building, Economic Survival, and Civic Activism*, eds. Kathleen Kuehnast and Carol Nechemias, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004, 127–148. For a broad quantitative analysis, see Gillian Pascall and Nick Manning, 'Gender and Social Policy: Comparing Welfare States in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union', *Journal of European Social Policy* vol. 10, no. 3, (2000): 240–266, showing that 'women are—broadly—more familiarised, more dependent on family relationships if perhaps less dependent in them', 240.

2. Although slowly (and unevenly) rebounding in most Central European legislatures, the decline of women's representation has been astounding from the quota-mandated levels during the communist-era. See Richard E. Matland and Kathleen A. Montgomery, eds., *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe,* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003. The present ratio of women's representation hovers between the higher single digits and lower teens in Central and Eastern European political decision-making bodies of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches and are significantly lower than 30 percent—what scholars consider a benchmark for bringing more gender-specific awareness and action into national politics. See, for example, Jill Bystydzienski, *Women in Electoral Politics: Lessons from Norway,* Westport: Praeger, 1995; Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, *Gender and Party Politics*, London: Sage, 1993.

3. Elaine Fultz, Markus Ruck and Silke Steinhilber, eds., *The Gender Dimensions of Social Security Reform in Central and Eastern Europe: Case Studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland,* Budapest: International Labour Office, 2003. See also Vlasta Jalušić and Milica G. Antić, *Women—Politics—Equal Opportunities: Prospects for Gender Equality Politics in Central and Eastern Europe,* Ljubljana: Politike-Peace Institute, 2001.

4. The term 'non-governmental organisation' is derived by defining these groups by what they are not. While its usage became ubiquitous in past decades, 'voluntary associations' was the term most often applied for such organisations before the Second World War.

5. Evelina Panayotova and April Brayfield, 'National Context and Gender Ideology: Attitudes toward Women's Employment in Hungary and the United States', *Gender and Society* vol. 11, no. 4 (1997): 650; Mária Neményi, 'From Obligatory Heterosexuality To Obligatory Feminism?', *Café Babel* vols. 1–2 (1994): 163–170; Olga Tóth, 'No Envy, No Pity', *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union,* eds. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, New York: Routledge, 1993, 213–223, especially 220.

6. Liz Stanley, ed., *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology,* New York: Routledge, 1990, 11.

7. Teresa De Laurentis, ed., *Feminist Studies: Critical Studies,* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986, 5.

8. See, for example, Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser, eds., *Feminist Contentions,* New York: Routledge, 1995.

9. Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969.

10. Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, 'What Is Agency?', *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 103, no. 4 (1998): 962–1023.

11. Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics,* New York: Routledge, 1992.

12. Nanette Funk convincingly shows that these dilemmas emerge particularly strongly regarding the ideological conviction of the researcher as well as her 'insider' (from the region), 'outsider' (usually a Western scholar), or 'insider-outsider' status (for example, a Central and Eastern European student studying in the West and returning home). See Nanette Funk, 'Fifteen Years of the East-West Women's Dialogue', in *Living Gender After Communism*, eds. Janet Elise Johnson and Jean C. Robinson, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006, 242–269, and Nanette Funk, 'Women's NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: The Imperialist Criticism', *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe,* eds. Jasmina Lukić, Joanna Regulska, and Darja Zaviršek, Burlington: Ashgate Press, 2006, forthcoming. Jeffrey Goldfarb also addressed the intense ideological divisions regarding the re-emergence of feminism in 'Why Is There No Feminism After Communism?', *Social Research* vol. 64, no. 2 (1997): 235–245.

13. Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism,* New York: Routledge, 1997 and also Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,* eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991, 52–80.

14. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992, and also John Keane, 'Despotism and Democracy: The Origins and Development of the Distinction Between Civil Society and the State 1750–1850', in *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives,* ed. John Keane, New York: Verso, 1988, 35–72.

15. Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 14, no. 1 (1988): 199–157. In addition to Offen, many other scholars point out the differences in relational emphasis between European and American feminism, i.e., the more individualistic or relational focus, as well as myriad ideological variants ranging from liberal to post-modern and anarchist. Historically, feminism was often inchoate. According to Leila Rupp, international women activists at the turn of the twentieth century were united by 'a sense of themselves as a group with interests distinct from those of men; a perception that existing societal arrangements, differing as they did from country to country, disadvantaged women in relation to men; and a commitment to improving the situation of women.' See Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, 130. The organisations at that time most likely to identify themselves as feminists were those that sought equal legal rights for women and opposed sex-specific protective labour laws.

16. Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, eds., *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement,* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995, 5.

17. The names of organisations appear in English except for a few exceptions, such as NaNE. The translation of the latter would reduce its message and possibly its recognisability

for English readers. The name of this group is a play on words. 'Nane' means 'don't you/you cannot' in Hungarian slang; and it also represents an acronym of the organisation's name in Hungarian. The official name of NaNE is: *Nők a Nőkért Együtt az Erőszak Ellen*, that is 'women with women against violence'. See their website at: http://www.nane.hu (last accessed 15 January 2006).

18. In addition to providing a supportive environment for lesbians, *Labrisz* has pursued an ambitious agenda aimed at disseminating information and promoting active social tolerance. They offered sex education and tolerance-training in high schools, causing much controversy in conservative circles. They also published four books in the course of four years (2000–2004), where they offer literary and biographical portraits of an otherwise silenced existence. See their website at: www.labrisz.hu (last accessed 15 January 2006).

19. A provocative, if overstated, example of one hybrid women's NGO can be found in Kristen Ghodsee, 'Feminism-by-Design: Emerging Capitalisms, Cultural Feminism and Women's Nongovernmental Organizations in Postsocialist Eastern Europe', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 29, no. 3 (2004): 727–754. Other reviews further emphasise the hybrid nature of NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. See, for example, Alexandra Hrycak, 'Finding a Common Language: Foundation Feminism and the Politicization of Domestic Violence in Ukraine', paper presented at the 37th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2005. See also Magdi Vanya, 'The Hungarian Child, the European Bogeyman, and the Universal Citizen: The Making of Domestic Violence in Postcommunist Hungary', paper presented at the 37th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2005.

20. Nanette Funk demonstrates how varied the understanding of liberalism has been in Central and East Europe in 'Feminist Critiques of Liberalism: Can They Travel East? Their Relevance in Eastern and Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 29, no. 3 (2004): 698–726. This historical trajectory underlines Central and Eastern European philosophers', writers', and political activists' unwillingness to separate the private from the public realm. Karen Offen also describes a similar delineation in Western European feminism celebrating sexual difference, see her, 'Defining', 124.

21. György Konrád, an eminent Hungarian writer and later dissident intellectual, coined the term in *Antipolitics*, New York: Holt, 1984. Other writers and anti-communist intellectuals in Eastern Europe widely applied both the term and its concept to resist communist political practices. While highly regarded as a moral beacon under conditions of political oppression, anti-politics also produced less laudable results in its propagation of a hierarchical relationship between the sexes. For an excellent description of the gendered effect of anti-politics, see Joanna Goven, 'Gender Politics in Hungary: Autonomy and Antifeminism', in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, eds. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, New York: Routledge, 1993, 224–241. In contrast, a variety of early feminist theories linked single key elements to gender inequality, such as heterosexuality (for example, Catherine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), women's confinement to the domestic sphere (such as Michelle Rosaldo, ed., *Women, Culture and Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), and sexual violence (for instance, Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, London: Penguin, 1976).

22. The literature on the mounting problems between Western donors and Eastern European NGOs has grown substantially, especially since the publication of Janine Wedel's landmark analysis, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe, 1989–1998*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. See also Funk, 'Women's NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe', for an insightful categorisation of this critical literature.

23. See Ghodsee, 'Feminism-by-Design', for a stinging criticism of Bulgarian women's NGOs.

24. *Bílý kruh bezpečí,* BKB (White Circle of Safety) is a domestic violence organisation that competed very successfully with independent, and especially feminist, providers, such as *ROSA* (http://www.rosa-os.cz/wwwold/item09.htm, last accessed 20 January 2006) for state sponsorship and funds in the Czech Republic. See http://bkb.juristic.cz/www.bkb.cz (last accessed 20 January 2006). A similar process took place in Poland, where *PARPA* (State Agency for Prevention of Alcohol Problems) assumed the tasks and the financing of the organisation of *Niebieska Linia* (Blue Light) (http://www.niebieskalinia.pl/new_pages.php?w=1152, last accessed 15 January 2006). Interview by Katalin Fábián with Luis Avia, director of Blue Line, Warsaw, Poland, 10 July 2003.

25. For some excellent historical examples of women's activism in favour of maternalist principles, see Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States,* New York, NY: Routledge, 1993. Women in Central Europe have also opted to frame their claims as mothers, as Vanya shows regarding a major domestic violence campaign in Hungary during 2002–2003 (Vanya, 'The Hungarian', 2–20).

26. There are exemptions to full membership that caused quite an uproar in the new member countries. Most significant among these is the seven-year transition period of free migration of labour and diminished Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) financing for the Central and Eastern European agricultural sector.

27. Anna Fábri, ed., *A nő és hivatása: Szemelvények a magyarországi nőkérdés történetéből 1777–1865* (Woman and her profession: Selections from the history of the woman question in Hungary), Budapest: Kortárs Kiadó, 1999.

28. Interview by Katalin Fábián, 4 July 1995, Szeged, Hungary. Soroptimist International is interpreted as 'the best for women'. Since the founding of the first Soroptimist Club in Oakland, California, in 1921, over 3000 clubs emerged in the world (see http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/html/history.html, last accessed 26 February 2006). The Szoroptimist Club of Szeged was founded in 1992. In 1996, a sister organisation was established in Pécs, a similarly mid-sized university town. However, the latter organisation ceased to exist in 2002. Author's personal communication from Dr. Ella Álmos, international contact person of the Pécs Soroptimist International Club, 27 February 2006.

29. Women's charity activities are often dismissed as an illegitimate and trivial contribution to politics. However, charity work may foster powerful networks that can lead to the politicisation of not only the providers but also the recipients. For an excellent analysis of the political consequences of charity work, see Hanna Herzog, *Gendering Politics: Women in Israel,* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

30. Although Mrs. Pál Veres' (Veres Pálné) significant activities in women's high-school education are well known in Hungary, her maiden name (Beniczky Hermin) is entirely hidden by her husband's name and nobody ever mentions her first name. See Anna Loutfi, 'Beniczky, Hermin (Mrs. Pál Veres) (1815–1895)', in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries,* eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006, 54–57.

31. Ágnes Horváth, 'Nők és a politika a század első éveiben' (Women and politics in the early years of the twentieth centry), in *Hatalom és Társadalom a XX. Századi Magyar Történelemben,* ed. Valuch Tibor, Budapest: Osiris Kiadó and 1956-os Intézet, 1995, 370–387.

32. See Susan Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics', *Journal of Women's History* vol. 17, no. 2 (2005): 87–117, and Judit Acsády, 'Fem-

inizmus és szociológia: A nőkérdés konstukciója a századelőn' (Feminism and sociology: The construction of the woman question in the beginning of the twentieth century), unpublished M.A. thesis, ELTE Sociology Department, Budapest, 1994.

33. 'Mariska Gárdos' in *Feminista Almanach: 100 éves a Feministák Egyesülete 2004 decemberében* (Feminist almanac: The Feminist Alliance was established 100 years ago), eds. Ida Csapó and Mónika Török, Budapest: MINők Egyesülete, NőTárs Alapítvány, Ifjúsági, Családügyi, Szociális és Esélyegyenlőségi Minisztérium támogatásával. (MINők Association, NőTárs Foundation, with financial support from the Ministry of Youth, Welfare, and Social Equality), 2005, 99–100.

34. The 'imperialist critique' of Western influence in Central and Eastern Europe claims that feminism acts as a stooge for capitalism, driving women's attention away from class-based problems. See Funk, 'Women's NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe'.

35. Judit Acsády, 'Emancipáció és Identitás' (Emancipation and identity), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, ELTE Sociology Department, Budapest, 2004, 55–65.

36. While members of the Feminist Network were the first activists to publicise the achievements of the Feminist Alliance and exploit their rediscovered fame, other associations organised a commemorative conference of the first feminist group's centenary in Hungary in 2004. An edited volume also emerged as a result of the commemoration: Ida Csapó and Mónika Török, eds., *Feminista Almanach* (Feminist almanac), Budapest: MINők, a Magyar Internetező Nők Egyesülete és a NőTárs Közhasznú Alapítvány, 2005.

37. Mariska Gárdos, *Százarcú élet* (Hundred faces of life), Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1975, 94–97. The doyenne of working-class women's political activism was less critical of feminism in her memoirs than in contemporary speeches and writings, but still viewed their aims as limited and bourgeois.

38. Mária Kovács, 'A magyar feminizmus korszakfordulója' (The turning point of Hungarian feminism), *Café Babel* vols. 1–2, Summer (1994): 179–183.

39. The exchange gave information on vacant jobs and offered limited training.

40. Acsády, 'Feminizmus és szociológia', 65.

41. Katalin R. Szegvári, *Numerus clausus rendelkezések az ellenforradalmi Magyarországon a zsidó és nőhallgatók felvételéről* (Administrative control measures limiting the number of Jews and women in counterrevolutionary Hungary), Budapest: Akadémiai Press, 1988.

42. The two most prominent founders and activists of the Feminist Alliance were Róza Bédy-Schwimmer and Vilma Glücklich. Róza Bédy-Schwimmer was a leading figure of the Hungarian feminist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. She was an early member of *Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete* (National Association of Female Employees) and in 1899, she worked for a year as the organisation's vice-president, then as its president for nine years. Working in close association with social-democratic women activists, Bédy-Schwimmer was a founding member and served as the first president of the *Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület* (Association of Hungarian Women Workers) in 1904. In addition to being an especially active organiser of feminist groups in Hungary, Bédy-Schwimmer was fully engaged in international activism. In 1914, she was press secretary of the IWSA and one of the main organisers behind the success of the 1913 IWSA conference in Budapest. She resigned from her IWSA post to promote pacifism. Bédy-Schwimmer had a short-lived (November 1918–January 1919) appointment representing the first democratic Hungarian government to Switzerland. As the right-wing authoritarian Horthy government viewed her as politically unreliable, she escaped to Austria, and eventually left for the United States in 1921. After disputing charges that she was a German spy and/or a Bolshevik agent, she continued her feminist and pacifist activism in the U.S. See Csapó and Török, eds., *Feminista,* 185–187 and Susan Zimmermann and Borbála Major, 'Róza Bédy-Schwimmer', in *A Biographical Dictionary,* eds. De Haan et al, 484–490.

With the partial opening of university education to women, Vilma Glücklich was the first woman graduate from the Faculty of Philosophy at the Budapest State University in 1896 as a physics and mathematics teacher. She was elected to the presidential committee of the *Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete* (National Association of Female Employees) in 1902. In 1918, Glücklich accepted a position as one of only two female members of the Supervision Committee for the municipal administration of Budapest. Due to her involvement in this transitional representative political body, which was established before and lasted during the first democratic regime in Hungary, she left Hungary for Switzerland in 1921. There she first worked as the Headquarters Secretary, and then from 1924 to 1926 as Secretary General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). She returned briefly to Budapest in late 1925, while gravely ill and died in Vienna the following year. See Csapó and Török, eds. *Feminista,* 206 and Susan Zimmermann, 'Vilma Glücklich', in *A Biographical Dictionary,* eds. De Haan et al, 162–165.

43. Andrea Pető, *Napasszonyok és Holdkisasszonyok: A mai magyar konzervatív női politizálás alaktana* (Women of the sun and sisters of the moon: The politics of women's conservatism), Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2003, 67.

44. Andrea Pető, *Women in Hungarian Politics, 1945–1951,* trans. Miklós Bodóczky, New York: East European Monographs, Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2003 (also as *Nőhistóriák: A Politizáló magyar nők történetéből 1945–51.* Budapest: Seneca, 1998), 87.

45. Pető, *Napasszonyok és Holdkisasszonyok,* 66–71.

46. MANSZ had 3,152 members in Budapest and 490,000 members nationally according to Pető, *Napasszonyok és Holdkisasszonyok,* 68.

47. See Kovács, *A magyar feminizmus korszakfordulója,* 180–181, and Pető, *Napasszonyok és Holdkisasszonyok,* 71.

48. Pető, *Women in Hungarian Politics.*

49. Ibid., 16.

50. Mária Schadt, *Feltörekvő dolgozó nő: Nők az ötvenes években* (Women rising above: Women in the 1950s), Pécs: Pannónia Kiadó, 2002.

51. Although it became increasingly common after 1989 to claim that communism was entirely forced upon the Central and Eastern European countries, there is also evidence that communism was popular at least in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War because the communists were seen as liberators. See Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent,* New York: Random House, 1999, 254–259, and Jirina Smejkalová-Strickland, 'Do Czech Women Need Feminism? Perspectives of Feminist Theories and Practices in Czechoslovakia', *Women's Studies International Forum* vol. 17, no. 2–3 (1994): 277–282, especially 279.

52. 'Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége', *Új Magyar Lexikon* (New Hungarian Encyclopaedia), Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961, vol. 4, 446.

53. Éva Fodor, *Working Difference: Women's Working Lives in Hungary and Austria, 1945–1995,* Durham, NC: Duke University, 2003.

54. Acsády, 'Emancipáció és Identitás', 110–140.

55. 'Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt', *Új Magyar Lexikon* (New Hungarian encyclopedia), Berei Andor ed., Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961, vol. 4, 510–515

56. Interview with Judit Thorma Asbótné by Katalin Fábián, 15 July 1995 and 10 July 2003, Budapest, Hungary. See www.noszovetseg.hu (last accessed 10 March 2006).

57. Vlasta Jalušić, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo (How we attended feminist gymnasium?),* Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut (Peace Institute), 2002.

58. György Dalos interviewed the three activists in exile. However, the interviewees did not allow him to use the tapes for publication. Judit Acsády has a copy of these interviews and refers to them in her Ph.D. dissertation, 'Emancipáció és Identitás', 2004, 125–130.

59. The 1973 organising against abortion restrictions barely extended beyond the Budapest university circles. Its almost immediate demise at the hands of state authorities supports the claim that even the initial steps of women's independent organising were very effectively stamped out.

Róza Bédy-Schwimmer, founder and activist of the Feminist Alliance, was compelled to leave Hungary in 1919. On Gárdos, see Susan Zimmermann, 'Gárdos, Mária (Mariska Gárdos, Mrs György Pintér, likely born M. Grünfeld) (1885–1973)', in *A Biographical Dictionary,* eds. De Haan et al, 148–152. Vilma Glücklich, Schwimmer's co-founder of the Feminist Alliance and fellow leading activist in the *Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete* (National Association of Female Employees), attended the founding conference of the WILPF in Zurich in 1919 and was WILPF Headquarters Secretary in Geneva from 1922. The particularities of Glücklich leaving Hungary (exactly when and why) have not yet been established. See further note 42 above.

60. For an excellent review of the complex problems that civil society faces in Central Europe, see Marc Morjé Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

61. Rada Iveković and Julie Mostov, eds., *From Gender to Nation,* Ravenna: Longo, 2002; Beverly Allen, *Rape-Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

62. Central Statistical Office, *Nonprofit Szervezetek Magyarországon 2000* (Nonprofit associations in Hungary), Budapest: KSH, 2002, 50.

63. Interviews with the author, summer 2001 and fall 2005.

64. Katalin Lévai and Róbert Kiss, 'Nők a közéletben.' (Women in public life), in *Szerepváltozások* (Role changes), eds. Katalin Lévai and István György Tóth, Budapest: TARKI and Secretariat for Equal Opportunity, Ministry of Labour, 1997, 55.

65. http://www.mona-hungary.org/object.91f17d48-49d0-4f39-8342-6a0f3c6aa2a5.ivy (last accessed 15 December 2005).

66. Nadezhda Azhgikhina proposed a similar historical periodisation for the emergence of Russian women's groups. See Nadezhda Azhgikhina, 'Empowering Russia's Women', in *Russia's Fate Through Russian Eyes,* ed. Heyward Isham, Boulder: Westwiew Press, 2000, 10. Also, based on changes in the legal regulatory framework, Anna Mária Bartal found four distinct phases in the development of Hungarian NGOs. See Anna Mária Bartal, *Nonprofit elméletek, modellek, trendek* (Nonprofit theories, models, and trends), Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 2005, 217–230. The phases dictated by legal changes correspond to the chronology proposed here.

67. Volt aki csak az üzleti kapcsolatok miatt jött el, volt, aki a társaság miatt, mert addig volt a KISZ, aztan az hirtelen megszűnt, volt egy vákum, amikor nem tartozott az ember sehová. (Interview by the author, 1995.)

68. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, eds., *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. See also Michael Burowoy and Katherine Verdery, eds., *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Post-Socialist World,* Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, 1999.

69. Despite a plethora of documentation on the meanings and consequences of globalisation, its effects are only just beginning to emerge in relation to gender and Central and Eastern Europe. See, for example, Jacqui True, *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

70. This dispersion process takes place not only through external control but also through self-control (as described by Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité,* Paris: Gallimard, 1976). In the post-communist context, the way power permeates through society differs from both its

communist period and from the contemporary, continuously capitalist Western context. Consequently, the conceptualisation of the female gender incorporates much negotiation, with interactivity between past experiences and present expectations. These interactions are producing a new image of women's roles and, consequently, a different gender regime. On the conceptualisation of gender regime, see Sylvia Walby, 'The European Union and Gender Equality: Emergent Varieties of Gender Regime', *Social Politics* vol. 11, no. 1 (2004): 4–29, and R. W. Connell, *Gender,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.

71. Interviews by the author, 1994–1995.

72. The Feminist Network began to publish *Nőszemély* in 1991. Until 1994 the journal appeared annually. From 1994 until 1998, when the publication ceased due to lack of funds, the editorial collective produced it quarterly, judiciously using Swiss financial support. Author's personal communication with Irén Borbála Elekes, one of the editors of *Nőszemély,* 28 February 2006. A forthcoming volume by Vera Bozzi, another editor of *Nőszemély* and Gábor Czene, entitled *Elsikkasztott Feminizmus* (Embezzled feminism), also discusses these issues.

73. Interviews by the author, 1994–1995.

74. Interviews by the author, 1994–1995.

75. For example, the *Feminista Almanach* intends to provide a broad survey of Hungarian women's NGOs. From the thirty-six groups introduced there, a third can be characterised as service-provider organisations. Csapó and Török, eds., *Feminista,* 24–26, 40–42, 68–70, 89–91, 113–120, 139–140, 161–163, 177–178, 197–199, 227–229, 245–246, 273–274.

76. Three major organisations were technically open to all women in the beginning of the twentieth century: (1) the broadly based and cautious International Council of Women (ICW), founded in 1888; (2) the feminist International Alliance of Women, originally called the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, founded in 1904 as an offshoot of the Council and established to focus on suffrage; and (3) the vanguard Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which developed as some IWSA women insisted on meeting despite wartime hostilities in 1915. See Rupp, *Worlds of Women,* 3–49. A shorter version addressing lesbians' contribution to the early international women's movement and separatism within it can also be found in Leila J. Rupp, 'Sexuality and Politics in the Early Twentieth Century: The Case of the International Women's Movement', *Feminist Studies* vol. 23, no. 3 (1997): 577–606.

77. Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire', 90–93.

78. The observations related to contemporary affairs are based on the author's interviews and participant observation during WAVE's third international workshop in Vienna, Austria, 2–4 June 2004.

79. Interviews by the author, 1994–1995 and 2003.

80. Author's communication with Rosa Logar, Daphne project manager and advocate of WAVE, 10 February 2005 (Women Against Violence Europe), http://www.wave-network.org (last accessed 28 February 2006).

81. Martha A. Ackelsberg, 'Broadening the Study of Women's Participation', in *Women and American Politics: New Questions, New Directions,* ed. Susan J. Carroll, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 214–236.