



## TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY AND THE NEW ECONOMIC ROLES OF GENDER

Romanian Academy – Iasi Branch, Iasi, ROMANIA

**Abstract:** *The historical experience of communism becomes a heritage difficult to manage not only in the field of political culture, but especially in the sphere of economic relations. Romanian communism was characterized by a violent segregation of economic roles and by isolation of gender labor force inside some closed economic patterns. The dissolution of the totalitarian order did not solve the problem of economic inequalities, and gender discrimination remains an essential feature of transitional societies. Also, the persistence of economic dependence of women stimulated the aggravation of some previous social and economical cleavages such as: apparition of economic encapsulated enclaves, especially in the country side, stimulation of grey economy, due to the discrimination of women on accessing education, the conservation of a negative balance for gender participation in the field of private initiative. The entire phenomenon mentioned below affected the transition of the Romanian society towards a stabile and functional economical environment. This paper aims to explore the new roles of gender in the economy of transitional states, with a special focus on the Romanian post communist experience.*

**Keywords:** *economic relations, transitional states, gender participation, Romania*

### INTRODUCTION

*The unanticipated crisis of communist system in East Europe, in the early 90', generated some tremendous expectations in the subject of gender equality. The sudden collapse of communist archipelago bring to light a space marked my dramatic gender disparities and suffering from an obviously deficit of equality culture. Still, the initial prospects for an accelerating positive evolution were contradicted by a rapid degradation of women's economic, political and cultural status. The fall of communist did not solve the problem of gender inequalities, and in an apparently difficult to explain mode, it compound the gender gap to a worrisome level.*

*In the same time, despite the acute differences of historical, cultural and economical background of the former socialist states, the evolution of gender issues were trapped in a surprisingly homogenous pattern. The post-communist societies were experimenting dramatic changes, and the dissolution of communist order reactivated some influential social and economical cleavages. The transformation of state-controlled economy in a free-market structure was the trigger vector for creating supplementary economic burden. The gender issues in transitional economy raised general attention and there were identified a set of essential problems, that affected the economic and social status in former socialist countries<sup>1</sup>.*

*The key elements that contributed to deterioration of women situation in Eastern Europe, especially in the economic perspective were: the growing unemployment, the increasing economic insecurity, the uncontrolled work force migration and the lack of awareness of rights related to gender equality and work opportunities<sup>2</sup>.*

*The transformations supported by the transitional societies were characterized also by a resurrection of some previous structural problems. The post-communist economies were pressed to solve some internal breeches which were only masked by the communist policies of mass industrialization. Under the communist rule the gender status was protected, at least at a declarative level, trough proportional regulations. The "statist feminist" era was granting gender participant in the economy<sup>3</sup>, maintaining an apparent balance between otherwise very fragmentary spaces such as: urban and rural economy or central and secondary economic layers.*

*The pressure of the communist state against some of these traditional cleavages did not solve the issues of economical and gender gap, but still succeed in imposing an artificial unity of the system. The breakdown of controlled economy revealed these structural differences and pushed the economic status of the women into a dynamic of degradation. This researched is grounded on two major*

<sup>1</sup> Report of Committee of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, European Commission, The situation of women in the countries of post-communist transition, 9 June 2004,

<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=10366&Language=EN>.

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

work hypotheses: first one claims the presence of a structural legacy in the subject of gender economic roles, and the second one asserts the essential role of the gender economic gap in obstructing the evolution towards a stable economical environment. The study will use the tools of comparative analysis and conceptual reconstruction and locates its perspective at the conjunction of political philosophy with economic history.

#### **GENDER EQUATION AND TRANSITIONAL ECONOMIES**

In order to obtain a better understanding of gender economic involution of the inner transitional economies it is necessary to identify the main features of post-communist transformation. One of the first aspects that require attention is related to the problem of interdependency between political dimension of a system and economical structures and equilibriums. The transitional economies supported sever loses almost crushed due to the major transformation of production and trade<sup>4</sup>. The process of economic restructuring, including privatization and liquidation of state-own enterprises destroyed the artificial balance of communist economy<sup>5</sup>. The unemployment stroked the peripheries of the communist system and revealed, in a quite traumatic manner, the failure of planned economy. The differences between the various economic layers were increasing, promoting a slow disintegration of the deceitful unity of the communist societies. The economic disparity primarily affected the gender roles. With a highly raising level of unemployment, women economic status was depreciating.

The general phenomenon was at a first sight difficult to explain, mostly in an economic landscape that still conserved a lot of the former economic regulations. The sudden activation of the gender gap and the continuous "feminization of poverty"<sup>6</sup> was a hard process to diagnose the phenomena. In the communist stage, women's participation on labor market used to be extremely high, beyond the democratic countries level. The proportion of women engaged in the labor force decreased rapidly, from 80 percent employment ration to less the 50 percent in some the most affected post-communist economies.<sup>7</sup> The changing pattern of gender balance inside the labor market had some intermediary explanation, but the emerging point of this process still remains cast in shadow.

The migration from the free market to a grey dimension of labor force (informal, unpaid economy) and the resurrection of traditional roles for gender can be used as explanatory elements, but these aspects do not solve the main interrogation over the gender gap<sup>8</sup>. The deconstruction of communist economic system was producing serious

side effects, and the corrective reactions of the transitional societies were inefficient. Also, the lack of improvement in women's situation remains hard to explain, especially when gender segregation and design of occupational picture tend to survive the political regime<sup>9</sup>. The evolution of gender roles in transitional economy was negative, but the source of this democratization error remained uncertain.

Another influential feature experienced by transitional economies is connected with a contradictory cultural evolution. The industrialized society promoted by communism accepted the participation of women in the field of labor, motivated by two decisive arguments: the need for supplementary work force in countries with serious deficit of labor resources and the interest in destroying patriarchal cultural landmarks such as family or religion.

The industrialization movement increased gender participation in economy, but this apparent progressive step was affected in many situations by intrusive gender policies. The Romanian case is a concluding example of this lack of authenticity of communist emancipation of gender roles. The communist economy needed the supplementary force of gender, but was not interested to pay the whole price of this modernization of social and economic roles. The result of this incomplete evolution was a "double burden"<sup>10</sup> for the women's social and economic status. The intrusive practices in the sphere of reproductive policies created some paradoxical results. Women were pressed to assume and perform economical roles very similar with those of the men, and in the same time they remain trapped in traditional sphere, trough the mechanism of forced maternity. The crash of communist designed economy did not solved the way it was expected the problem of gender equity.

In this case, the hidden patriarchal approach of communism imposed some unexpected costs over the transitional era. The participation of women in economy was labeled as a genuine communist practice and it was reject by a very influent transitional culture. The violent shift generated by the collapse of the communist systems enforced the post-communist society to identity new values in the subject of gender. The solution was the reinforcing of the pre-modern gender roles<sup>11</sup>, with a strong focus on glorifying the patriarchal family model. Women were pushed again in the burden of unpaid home work, losing even the negative equality, previous guaranteed by communist economy. The modernization process experimented in most of the post communist societies, was also producing an erosion of gender status. The cultural evolution of women's identity after communism still remains a relevant argument in explaining the economic decline of gender roles. The participant of women in the filed of labor was

<sup>4</sup> Katalin FÀBIÀN, *Issues of Economic and Social Justice in Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 4, <http://www.indiana.edu/~reeiweb/newsEvents/pre2006/fabianpaper-all.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Idem.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> Idem.

<sup>8</sup> Idem.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Gal, Gail Kligman, *The Politics of gender after Socialism*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2000, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, *From Equality without democracy to democracy without equality? Women and transition in south-east Europe*, in *SEER South-East Europe Review for Labor and Social Affairs*, Issue: 03 / 2002, p. 151.

not limited only through the interventions of traditionalism, but the cultural pattern remains a vector of aggravation<sup>12</sup>.

Besides the general crises experimented by the post-communist economies and the contradictory cultural echoes generated by the modernization process, the evolution of transitional societies was also strongly influenced by the phenomenon of state hybridization. The process of hybridization is defined by the presence of a dual structure inside the former communist states. Some scholars considered the post-communist societies as forms of “flawed democracies”<sup>13</sup>. The term could still be considered as unsatisfactory for some of the cases, in the light of their transitional evolution. Inside the transitional societies, the internal structure of communist state did not disappear. It was only slightly modified and adapted to more suitable economical expression. If the political dimension was pressed to support more acute changes, the economic landscape remains a field engaged in a slow motion evolutionary process. The collapse of communism could not be defined as a historical cut, irreversibly separating the planned economy, fully controlled by the state, from a new free economic paradigm. The transition from the communist structure of economy towards a free market based society was a complicated process. Not fully understood, even in the late stages of post-communist transformations, the transitional phenomenon was strongly influenced by the communist legacy. The forms of development experimented by the transitional societies are connected with the paths that have been taken in the recent past.<sup>14</sup> The history of former socialist democracies in the Eastern Europe reveals a map with multiple contours and shades.

The evolution of transitional societies was engraved by the structural heritage left behind by communist era. The communist archipelago of the East contained a large variety of models and patterns. The clash of the system was produced simultaneous, but over very different landscapes. Some of the communist societies were already engaged on a decisive changing pattern. It is the case of Poland, Yugoslavia and the triggering case of Soviet Union. The state scaffolding was gradually adapted and the economic transition began in an ironic attempt to reform the system. Nevertheless, some of the communist societies did not embrace the Gorbachev doctrine, and remain trapped in a closed, encapsulated and isolated economic model. One of the most relevant examples is the Romanian case. The difference between the transitional formulas experienced by post-communist countries is besides all a difference of communist legacy. The hybridization of the state could be explained as an adaptive reaction. The secluded

economies of conservative communism could not find a way to survive in aftermath of the system. The function of the closed economies, such one of communist Romania, was assured through the artificial support of the state. Those types of communist economies were marked by violent imbalances and the crush of the system pressed in the direction of a forced adaptation.

The unreformed economies did not genuinely evolve after the fall of the system. In most of the cases they engaged themselves on the dysfunctional option of state hybridization. Some of the old structures of the communist economy were conserved, and other branches were simply dissolved. The transitional societies were operating a posthumous reform of the system. The still efficient economic levels remained untouched and the economic bargain of ineffectual industries was abandoned. The transitional societies had no resources to sustain the “edge economy” and chose the adaptive solution. Surface reforms were adopted, but the price of state hybridization was unequally shared. The most affected branches were the ones already marginalized inside the planned economy: the rural space and the light industry and the industry of common goods. Those economic fields had also a strong gender component. The final consequence of state hybridization and peripheries decoupage was the dissolution of the essential levels of gender economy. Gender economic roles were pulverized and the women’s economic status inside most of the transitional societies was rapidly depreciating. The clash of gender economy was a silent strike and the influence of this deficit of equality was very often diminished.<sup>15</sup> The three main phenomena mentioned below affected in an essential perspective the evolutions and features of transitional economies. All the three processes, the fragmentation of the economic environment, the resurrection of traditionalism and the hybridization of the state, triggered a negative dynamic in the subject of gender equity.

From the “double burden” of the communist paradigm, the transitional process pressed the women to accept a “triple burden”<sup>16</sup>. The ineffective help provided by the communist states vanished and the new hybrid democracies had a dominant patriarchal oriented values scale. The previous gender economic roles were destroyed and the women were forced to perform inside the grey dimension of unpaid work. The source of this complex phenomenon remains hard to isolate and as a consequence, difficult to solve. The following section aims to explore the roots of this crisis of gender economic roles and also to formulate some possible answers for the degradation of women’s economic status in the post-communist transitional phase. The Romanian communist experience could be considered as one of the most violent and virulent form of oppressive system from East Europe. Also, the degradations of women economic, social and political status were one of the most dramatic from the

<sup>12</sup> Ronald Inglehart & Pippa Norris, *Rising Tide. Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003, p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Jonas Linde, Joakim Ekman, *Patterns of stability and Performance in Post-communist hybrid regimes*, in *20 Years Since the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, ed., Elisabeth Bake, BWV Verlag, Berlin, 2011, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> John Pickels, Adrian Smith, *Theorizing Transition: The Political economy of Post-Communist Transformations*, Routledge: London, 2005, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, p. 292.

<sup>16</sup> Nanette Funk, *Gender politics and post-communism: reflections from Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union*, Routledge, London, p. 349.

whole socialist archipelago. The “politics of duplicity”<sup>17</sup> promoted by the Ceaușescu regime marked the gender identity in a profound manner and left a contradictory picture for the post-communist society. An analysis of the Romanian case could this way serve as a general explanatory model and also could provide some research hypothesis to overcome this complicated historical heritage.

#### **EXPLORING THE GENDER GAP. A STUDY OVER THE ROMANIAN CASE**

As already was mentioned below, the recent history of former communist states exerted a tremendous influence over the transitional mechanism. The important differences raised by the evolution of new born societies could be explained through a comparative exercise. The theory of state hybridization brought in discussion the necessity of adaptive measures, in order to assure the survival of the uncompetitive systems of planned economy. The existing variations between the hybrid societies are generated by the typology of their previous political background. The crisis of the Soviet block was already triggered in the middle of 80'. The several attempts of Gorbachev doctrine to reform the general political and economical disparities inside the socialist sisterhood were materialized in two key concepts: *glasnost* and *perestroika*<sup>18</sup>. This was the emerging point of slow disintegration process, which culminated with the general collapse at the begging of the 90'. The changing process inside the communist system was motivated mostly by the pressure of inefficient economy. The almost imperceptible liberation inside the planned economy pattern could not solve the general pathology of the communist system, but ease down the final resolution with almost a decade. In this dynamic landscape, Romania was making an inconsistent note. Ceaușescu's regime chose to maintain a “frozen” economical model that motivated the etiquette of “late Stalinism”. The lack of permeability of Romanian communism influenced in an essential manner the violent collapse and also its transitional evolutions.

In order to explain the dysfunctional evolutions of the gender issue along the transitional period, it is necessary to analyze some aspects of communist legacy concerning this subject. The integration of communism inside the Romanian society, at the end of 40', cast an influential changing mechanism. The key features of this process are the forced urbanization and the accelerated industrialization. The political, social and cultural status of the gender was profoundly

modified, under the influence of new ideological commandments. Under the communist rule Romanian women were pressed to accept an artificial form of emancipation. The process of industrialization required the extension of the labor force, situation that promoted an apparently economic equality between genders. Women began to manifest actively inside the economy and gain a deceitful independence. Nevertheless, this departure from the traditional economic roles was doubled by an inverted process. In the same time, the communist state began a gender offensive, through its reproductive policies. The gender bargains were increasing, women being forced to accept a dual identity. They were in the same time, reproductive resources and work force<sup>19</sup>, committed to a hybrid identity. The communist state triggered a fragmentary modernization process, and the main costs were paid by women. Through the prohibition of abortion and by imposing gender equal labor standard, communist states created a segmented terror.

The pro-natalist policies were promoting flagrant inequalities, transforming gender in an oppressed faction of the ruling class. The sustained offensive over the private sphere and the increasing economic pressure created a double burden, aggravated also by the common scarcity of goods and insufficient child care facilities<sup>20</sup>. The economic roles of gender were also the subject of multiple negotiations and adaptation. After a debut epoch, when were promoted the soviet cultural gender stereotypes, with a strong emphasis on imitating the “male traditional occupations”<sup>21</sup>, the economic status of women suffered a slow drift to the former traditional professions. The division of labor had a strong gender component, especially over the debut of Ceaușescu regime, at the middle of the 60. The small improvement acquired by gender relations was then destroyed and the gender economic roles remain connected mostly with branches as education, health care or light industry<sup>22</sup>. Another important sphere where gender labor force that was used intensively, was agriculture, process stimulated also by the migration of male force in the industrial layer. This presence of a gender-ized economical map will become an influential aspect in analyzing and explaining the Romanian transition.

The artificial modernization of women economical status quo was accompanied by an elusory improvement of their political relevance. The proportion of women politically active inside the official organisms of the communist state was regulated through quota, but the women tended to cluster to bottom of all hierarchies<sup>23</sup>. This non-authentic tradition of women participation became one of the

<sup>17</sup> Between the official proclaimed equality, Romanian women were the subject of a double oppression, in the labor field and in the private space. Through the prohibition of abortion and by assertion of extensive work obligations, the women were exploited in a double register. Gail Kligman, *The politics of duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu's Romania*, London: California University Press, 1998, p. 231.

<sup>18</sup> The two often paired term, could be translated as “openness” and “restructuration” and remains the central ideas of Gorbachev economical reforms, started in the 80'. Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella goes to market: citizenship, gender and women's movements in East Central Europe*, Verso, 1993, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, *From Equality without democracy to democracy without equality? Women and transition in south-east Europe*, in *SEER South-East Europe Review for Labor and Social Affairs*, Issue: 03 / 2002, p. 153.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, p. 155.

triggering vectors of gender cultural crisis in post-communism. The resurrection of gender traditional culture after the collapse of communism has as its major source, the communist legacy. The deficit of gender culture accumulated through the communist experience and lack of alternative term of reference produced an aggravation of the gender gap, even if the roots of the phenomenon remain too little understood. The first section of the paper identified three major features that engraved the gender subject inside transitional societies: general crisis of the economic system and growing gender unemployment, contradictory cultural trends, state hybridization and clash of “economic peripheries”. This triad of elements stimulated an acute erosion of the gender status. The short enquiry over the communist heritage realized at the begging of this second section could provide at this point some explanatory hypothesis.

First at all, it is important to mention the connection raised by two of the phenomena previously mentioned. The general clash of the post-communism economy and process of state hybridization are sharing some common constitutive condition. The lack of permeability of Romanian communist in the last years of the Ceaușescu regime postponed some of the key processes already activated in other communism states. The main aim of Gorbachev attempt of reformation was to change the gravitation point of communist economy, from the hard industry to the neglected layers of consumption goods and light industry. Perestroika was before all a public acceptance of the failure of classical communist perspective over the economy. The forced industrialization adopted by most of the socialist democracies in the 60 and in the 70 created tremendous economic misbalances. The Gorbachev doctrine tried to correct these structural errors, increasing the role of secondary economy. The typology of transition in the case of adaptive communism was extremely different from the one experienced by Romanian communism. Through the rejection of Gorbachev doctrine, Romanian economy remained trapped in the dysfunctional and anachronistic model of hard industry domination. The light industry, the industry of consumption goods, or other secondary economic layers such as education or healthcare were neglected. By definition, through the presence of a gender design economical map, those spaces used preponderant female work force. So, as a following consequence, the gender economical base was shirking, even before the official clash of the system.

The economy of transitional Romania was confronting simultaneous by the process of state hybridization. The abandon of economic peripheries represents another phenomenon with major implications in the field of gender economic. Roles the crisis of the “edge economy” was strongly influence by the communist approach of the rural problem. The domination of hard industry generated a closed pattern that isolated the Romanian economy. By comparison, the socialist states that engaged themselves on the road to liberalization, their economical structure became very similar with the one of the

states that never experienced the planned economy<sup>24</sup>. In the early 90, Romanian economy was secluded not only from its near abroad evolutions, but even from its internal layers. The rural economy was a neglected part of the communist economic strategy. The forced industrialization exerted in addition a major urbanization movement, leaving the rural space as a secondary economic level. Gender work force active in the country side had low incomes level and also was defined by a strong gender component. The gender economic roles were modified also the ideological pressure. The work migration of male work force to the industrial zone stimulated a “gender-ization” of agriculture, which will become the basis of the future grey economy.

After the clash of communist order, the rural dimension becomes an economical encapsulated enclave. One of the most influential and essential change produce in the transitional economy of post-communist Romania was the abolishing of the communist work cooperatives. Even this association forms were often dysfunctional, and the membership was forced, the general disintegration of this rural economical system produce one major economical break-down. Between 1989 and 2005 Romania was confronting with a declining cooperative sector and the number of members was dropping from more 1 million to the modest level of 30 000<sup>25</sup>. This rural decline triggered major effects on the gender economic roles. As already was mention before, agriculture was using an important reservoir of gender labor force and the dissolution of the former work cooperative erased the rural space from the official economic map. The sudden apparition of an important percent of hidden economic activity could be connected with the process of rural exclusion. In its first year of democratization, Romania was already confronted with a rising level of hidden economy<sup>26</sup>. From the full employment of the communist planned economy, the transitional society was pressed to manage a worrisome level of grey economy (26.2 percent between 1990 / 1991)<sup>27</sup>.

Thereby, one of the major hypotheses that could explain the serious decline of gender participation in the labor field is connected but the unsolved problem of rural economy. In conclusion, the growth of hidden economy in the first stages of transitional processes could be

<sup>24</sup> Grezgorz Ekiert, Jan Kubik, Milada Anna, *Democracy in the Post-communist World: an Unending Quest*, [http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/ekiert/files/ekiert\\_democracy\\_and\\_postcommunist.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/ekiert/files/ekiert_democracy_and_postcommunist.pdf), p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Ancuta Vamesu, Cristina Barna, *Romania Country Report*, European Commission, <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/socialinnovationeurope/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/romania%20country%20report%20for%20social%20innovation%20europe.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Mirjana, Marković-Radović, *Globalization and gender participation in the informal sector in developing and transitional countries*, *E+M, Ekonomija a Management*, no. 4. 2009, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*, p. 21.

accepted as the result of a "disorganization process"<sup>28</sup>. The apparition of a grey zone of informal economy had affected directly the gender economic status. Women are more often engaged in informal activities difficult to capture and measure, and also they remain the essential labor force in the rural area, especially when male work force is the subject of fragmentary migration to the urban professions<sup>29</sup>.

The structural problems of the communist legacy conducted to some posthumous adaptive reactions. The phenomenon of rural grey economy and the clash of secondary industry exert both a cultural pressure. The "domestication of women"<sup>30</sup> was not only a side effect of the cultural politics of Ceaușescu era, but simultaneous a consequence of the economic depreciation of gender. The isolation inside the closed pattern of grey economy and the growing unemployment generated by the generalized economic crisis, determined strong consequences in the field of entrepreneurial culture. The contradictory cultural echoes raised by the resurrection of traditionalism inside the Romanian transitional society marked in an essential manner the participation of women in the space of private initiative. This deficit of the democratization had a dual explanation, its sources being both structural and cultural. The strong gender disparity experienced by Romanian transitional society could be interpreted also as an effect of stagnating economies<sup>31</sup>. The lack of genuine evolutions of Romanian economy after the fall of communist rule determined an aggravation of the economies inequalities. The presence of a gender defined economic map and the clash the gender oriented industries created a disparity in women knowledge capital and interactional opportunities. The transitional neo-traditionalism graft on the dysfunctional evolutions of hybrid economy and delayed the improvement of gender status.

For the female entrepreneurship in the transitional context, formal institutions are essential in creating a positive environment, but the informal level still could affect the entrepreneurial culture<sup>32</sup>. A study over the evolutions of Romanian transitional entrepreneurial culture highlight important gender misbalances. In the first 5 years after the dissolution of communist order, only 29% of small business owners were women, a percent will only slightly increase in the following years.<sup>33</sup> The gender gap was active, but inside this cleavages it could be identified a secondary division line. As most of the transitional

societies, Romania was confronting multiple shades in its evolution. The gender entrepreneurial culture was developing almost in an exclusive urban dimension, and the rural space conserved a great part of the gender informal economy<sup>34</sup>. This inequality between gender urban entrepreneurial culture and the rural space is motivated by the presence of educational and formative limitations. In the great majority on the transitional countries, and Romania is not making exception, the gender entrepreneurship is defined by a restrictive profile. A high percentage of women entrepreneurs posses medium or high levels of education, and they set enterprises especially in sectors like trade or services.

In this manner, the economic exclusion could also be labeled as an unbalance in the educational potential. The lack of entrepreneurial culture in Romanian rural space is demonstrating a deficit of educational equity. Even if the general policies were in favor of gender equality, the post-communist economy remained strongly engraved by an influential gender gap. The general approach to the gender problems created only a surface reform, and the general effects remained insignificant. The evolution of gender issues in the transitional economies shows the necessity for bottom to top approaches in promoting new education policies. Also, one of the main challenges of the in gendering issues is to bridge the gap between official policies and pragmatic practices<sup>35</sup>. The deficit of gender equity in transitional societies is linked with multiple sources, but in the Romanian case, one of the triggering vectors remains the cleavages between rural area and the urban space.

The result of the educational policies is often limited by previous cultural ground<sup>36</sup>, but the rising of the economic potential could be obtained only trough this formative instruments. The motifs for depreciating the women status in the "edge economy" are related with the deficit of information and an acute disparity in the field of professional chances. The achievement of economic equity is limited by structural issues, such as the isolation of the rural sphere, but still there could be operated important steps, trough the tools of educational policies. The dissolution of the rural economy and the general crisis of previous gender oriented industries are pressing for adaptive solutions. One of them could be the rising of a gender entrepreneurial culture. The connection between the presence of women in the sphere of private initiative and the gender access to higher education was already proved, but bridging the educational gap is a difficult task. The polarization of gender economy is not an

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem*, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Ulf Brunnbauer, *From Equality without democracy to democracy without equality? Women and transition in south-east Europe*, in *SEER South-East Europe Review for Labor and Social Affairs*, Issue: 03 / 2002, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> Andreea Smith Hunter, *Women Entrepreneurs across Racial Lines*, London: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ruta Aidis, Friederike Welter Smallbone, David, Nina Isakova, *Female Entrepreneurship in Transition economies: The case of Lithuania and Ukraine*, in *Feminist economics*, no. 13, April 2007, p. 158.

<sup>33</sup> Irina Budrina, *Phenomenon of Women-Leaders in Romania and Russia: Equal Gender Opportunities in Emerging Markets Review of International Comparative Management Volume 13, Issue 5, December 2012*, p. 851.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, the percent of female entrepreneurs in the agriculture was under 1% in Ukraine, p. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Irina Budrina, *Phenomenon of Women-Leaders in Romania and Russia: Equal Gender Opportunities in Emerging Markets Review of International Comparative Management Volume 13, Issue 5, December 2012*, p. 851.

<sup>36</sup> Shannon Davis, Theodore Greenstein, *Gender Ideology: Components, Predictors, and Consequences*, *Annual Review Sociology*. 2009. 35:87–105, p. 87, [http://socant.chass.ncsu.edu/documents/Greenstein\\_2.pdf](http://socant.chass.ncsu.edu/documents/Greenstein_2.pdf)

overpass phenomenon and this deficit of economic chance tends to become a chronically problem. The evolution of Romanian transitional society to a stabile economic environment is strongly influence by the problem of gender disparities, and without balancing the gender problem, the transition will be difficult, almost impossible to complete.

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