A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE EFFECTS OF EXTERNAL FUNDING ON WOMEN AND GENDER BASED NGOS IN ROMANIA AND POLAND

Andrada NIMU[1]
Alumni Evaluación de Programas y Políticas en el Marco de los Fondos Europeos
Complutense University - Madrid, Spain
andrada.nimu@gmail.com

Abstract
After the collapse of Communism in Central and Easter-European countries, women, with less political and symbolic resources, organized themselves outside the political parties in various NGOs, so to persuade politicians to vote for laws against discrimination, domestic violence and for gender equality, and to influence equal opportunity policies and the democratization process. After more than two decades of economic, social and cultural transition, I analyse how women and gender based NGOs have been affected by external financial aid (European, Swiss and Norwegian) that generally supported their actions. The aim of this research is to understand to what extent and with what effects were these social funds implemented in Romania and Poland. In this regard, this article deals with the theoretical assumptions of sociological institutionalism, which suggest that the more NGOs are dependent on financial resources provided through targeted programs, the more they become isomorphic in their organizational structure. Distinctions are made in relation to NGOs and the civil society sector, so to provide an operational definition of non-governmental organizations and why these organizations are susceptible to change. The pressures that this sector encounters are further presented, in relation to the two countries under analysis so as to highlight both the similarities and the differences between these organizations and identify further directions of analysis.

Keywords
Civil society; External funds; Isomorphism; Poland; Romania; Women and gender based NGOs

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1. ISOMORPHISM AND POLYMORPHISM

Studying organizations from a comparative perspective can be akin to looking through a kaleidoscope, due of the numerous implications this entails: depending on the explanatory mechanism or processes (Hedstrom and Swedberg 1998; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Davis and Marquis 2005; Campbell 2005; Davis 2006), conducting analysis from a top-down cultural approach that deals with assimilation and adaptation inside and outside organizations (Lytle *et al.* 1995; Tsui *et al.* 2007); from an institutionalist perspective, with a focus on mimetic, regulatory, and normative forces (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 1987, 2001); looking at their variation, selection, retention, and competition mechanisms (Hannan and Freeman 1977, 1986; Buam and Singh 1994; Aldrich 1999; Rao 2002); or analyzing organizations from a bottom–up approach (Pfeffer 1983; Schneider 1987; Staw 1991; Tsui and Gutek 1999); from the perspective of the personal attributes of organizational elites (Hambrick and Mason 1984; O'Reilly *et al.* 1991); or studying their founders[1]. Despite the numerous approaches to organization, in this research, the empirical angle of study is the organizational field of NGOs that have women and gender-based[2] external funded projects in Romania and Poland from a sociological institutionalist perspective.

Researching how funding impacts an organization's structure, culture and members, I turned to the sociological institutionalist approach for several reasons. First, I considered that its insights will help me discover both the

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[1] Stinchcombe, A. L. (1965). "Social Structure and Organizations" in March, J. G. *Handbook of Organizations* 7. Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, pp. 142–193; Aldrich Howard E. (1999). *Organizations Evolving*, London: Sage *apud* Whetten 2009, p. 78.

[2] I refer to women's organizations as defined by Fuszara *et al*. (2008) in which the missions and goals of the organizations concern gender equality and the enhancement of women's status. Through „gender" NGOs, I understand organizations that incorporate in their mission actions for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) sexual minorities. I have chosen to incorporate the LGBT NGOs due to the fact that the women's movement has numerously intersected with the more comprehensive movement of organizations that deal with human rights and sexual minorities. These intersections were in terms of participating to the same events and actions, sometimes organizing them together, but also in the fluidity or organizational overlapping, which translates into staff and activists migration from one group to the other, or membership affiliation to several organizations in the field (Vlad 2015, p. 90).

deliberate and intentional effects that are settled through strategies or objectives of the main financial lines, and the unintentional ones that arise throughout a project life–span inside an organization; effects that can prove to be either positive for the organization, but unimportant for the financer, or dysfunctional (as counterproductive effects) for both the organization and the financer. Second, I considered this approach suitable especially when conducting a comparative analysis in two different settings.Therefore, both historical and cultural aspects of the NGOs that operate in Romania and Poland are to be taken into consideration in the theoretical and empirical phase of the study. By "unimportant" effects, I refer to results that were not written, agreed upon or stipulated and which were not directly connected to the activities, indicators and outputs in a project proposal and implementation.

In this regard, according to the neo-institutionalist approaches, organizations are both a product of institutions and institutional environments that both constrain actors and also provide opportunities for some to advance their interests (Batley and Rose 2011, p. 233). Even though the institutional environment plays a tremendous role, organizational actors can interpret, manipulate and even change the limits and opportunities that surround them. Nevertheless, being under coercive pressures from the financing agencies, organizations could become more homogenous or more similar in their "structure, culture and outputs"(DiMaggio and Powell 1991, p. 64). Leiter (2005, pp. 5-6) suggests that the resemblance of organizations with each other could translate in the non-governmental world due to the highly dependent nature of the relationships with the funding sources, as a result of coercive isomorphic pressures and also because of the unclear and continuously changing missions and goals of NGOs, as being susceptible to mimetic isomorphism (Leiter 2005, p. 6). Before presenting what isomorphism consists of and how it affects NGOs, I will briefly present the theoretical framework of sociological institutionalism and its assumptions. In this particular case, when it comes to the non-profit sector, due to the close control of their financial resources, NGOs suffer pressures both from donors and users that are positioned to influence the organization's mission and activities. Therefore, the relative strength of these two influence groups will depend on how an organization is funded and how its members response to these pressures. The narrower the founding sources are, the greater the funder's power over its independence is (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004, p. 290). Moreover, due to the shifting funding process of the external financing that is usually materialized in reimbursed projects that last no longer than three or four years, there is considerable variation in the possible forms that convergence or isomorphism can take. Some institutional forces might make organizations similar to their peers, as Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004, p. 292) suggest. Belonging to associations of similar organizations, or paying attention to the practices of other organizations when uncertain or seeking greater legitimacy, these factors could also make an NGO more like other NGO's (DiMaggio and Powell [1983] 1991). Nonetheless, the authors also suggest that exposure to institutional pressures might also make organizations more similar to a more abstract ideal type of a bureaucratic organization, the exposure leading NGOs to embrace a generic bureaucratic form[1]. DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 147) argue that the causes of bureaucratization and rationalization make organizations more similar, without necessarily making them more efficient[2]. Structuration (Giddens 1979) and organizational fields give birth to bureaucratization and other forms of homogenization and are affected by the state and the professions, the new structures of bureaucratization and the need of legitimization (see Drori, Meyer and Hwang 2006).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 150) suggest that in the process of organization building, actors use scripts that make a certain organization isomorphic with the rest of the institutions, meaning that the organizational forms are similar or compatible with the existing institutions (Moheney and Tehlen 2009, p. 5). In other words, individuals in organizations will use culturally validated practices in order to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of their peers, competitors or the state (Healy 1998, p. 18). This isomorphism is a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other

[1] The bureaucratic form is not the only form that could spread, from institutional processes, across actors in an organizational field. Any number of experiments, innovations, technologies, and management styles could be driven by exposure to institutional influences (see, e.g., Davis and Greve 1997; Galaskiewicz and Wasserman 1989; Haunschild and Beckman 1998; Haunschild and Miner 1997; Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004, 303).

[2] There are few studies who analyze the efficiency of non-governmental organizations (Nunnenkamp and Ohler 2010). One of the reasons is that evaluating NGOs in terms of efficiency is rather problematic due to both ideological and empirical reasons; yet this aspect will be treated in this research, as a question in the interview guide so to understand weather NGO representatives consider their work in such a manner.

units that face the same set of environmental conditions" and "there are two types of isomorphism: competitive and institutional (…). Organizations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 50). The authors identify three types of mechanisms that lead to institutional isomorphic change: the coercive (that takes its roots out of political influence and the issue of legitimacy), mimetic (that can be defined as a standard response to uncertainty) and normative (associated with professionalization). This type of process, regarding the new organizational and interpretative frames, explains the changes that occur in the process of institutional development[1]. Other authors consider that isomorphism can be categorized as an institutional pressure that homogenize organizations within different categories or the institutional pressures that lead all organizations to adopt a single organizational form (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004, p. 292).

On the other hand, polymorphism refers to a differentiation occurring within a context of comparability (Demortain 2008, p. 3). In this regard, "The same material conditions can produce a variety of perceived and enacted cultural <<realities>>"(Martin 2002, p. 34). What differentiates isomorphism from polymorphism is the fact that, in the case of polymorphism, what differentiates organizations besides the local context are the translation (interpretation and reformulation of regulations, norms and procedures) (Greenwood *et al.* 2008, p. 17) and different motivations for adoption, in which organizational identity and cultural uniqueness get a principal role. The limited amount of research in the non-governmental organizational sector regarding the types of change these organizations are affected by and how they respond to these pressures are a strong incentive to analyze which type of isomorphism, or how polymorphism takes place, as a response to implementing external funded projects. What are the motifs that make organizations comply with the rules and formalities imposed by foreign donors? What factors have the most important effects in the isomorphic process? What mechanisms create or reinforce the "contracting culture" of an

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[1] More about isomorphism in the Romanian context: of higher education Miroiu and Andreescu 2010; Vlăsceanu, Miroiu, Păunescu and Hâncean 2010; Florian and Hâncean 2012; Miroiu and Vlăsceanu 2012; Andreescu *et al*. 2012; Coșescu 2013; Hâncean 2014. The authors explain the behaviour used by Romanian universities in the context of quality assurance at a national level.

organization and why? Sociological institutionalists suggest that these questions can be answered if we understand the logic of isomorphic change, and then turn to different aspects of polymorphism.

Therefore, institutional isomorphic change occurs through three mechanisms: 1) coercive isomorphism that dwells from political influence and the problem of legitimacy; 2) mimetic isomorphism that results from standard responses to uncertainty and 3) normative isomorphism that is associated with professionalization (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 150). The types are not always distinct, tend to derive from different conditions and may lead to different outcomes. DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 150) suggest that in the process of organizational building actors use scripts that generate a certain organization isomorphic with the rest of the institutions, meaning that new organizational forms are similar or compatible to the existing institutions (Moheney and Tehlen 2009, p. 5). Of course, this process can further develop in time, through adaptation or mimicry. In other words, individuals in organizations will use culturally validated practices in order to increase their legitimacy in the eyes of their peers, competitors or state (Healy 1998, p. 18).

Coercive isomorphism appears from formal and informal pressures on organizations that are exercised by other organizations on whom they depend, or by cultural expectations in the society in which they exist. Regarding this research, such examples could embody the management authorities of the funds, be they state ministries or other non-governmental organizations. An NGO that has externally funded projects must adapt to the legal environment regarding the financial aspects, the implementation of activities and reporting phases in order to be eligible and receive reimbursement. The eligibility criteria represent not only a benchmark in identifying which organizations are best suited for certain projects, but also a line of conformity. A young organization that wants to implement future projects must therefore attain the criteria that funders view as eligible. The rationale is simple: if you have an NGO and want to implement externally funded projects, you must follow the eligibility criteria and, in time, you will be able to do so. If you are not an eligible organization, you must find a way to survive outside these projects. According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), when large rational organizations expand their dominance over more arenas of social life, then organizational structures come to reflect institutionalized rules and are legitimated by and within their sphere (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 150). The argument is that organizations become homogenous and are organized around rituals of conformity to larger institutions, yet they can also rely on group solidarity or mechanisms of resistance. Moreover, the existence of a common legal environment also affects many aspects of organization's behaviour and structure.For example the legal and technical requirements of the funders and governments – "the vicissitudes of the budget cycle, the ubiquity of certain fiscal years, annual reports, and financial reporting requirements that ensure eligibility for the receipt of federal contracts or funds – also shape organizations in similar ways" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 150). Other authors (Milofksy 1981) suggest that there are more subtle and less explicit ways of coercive isomorphism – "neighbourhood organizations in urban communities, many of which are committed to participatory democracy, are driven to developing organizational hierarchies in order to gain support from more hierarchically organized donor organizations" (DiMagggio and Powell 2012, p. 609).

Mimetic isomorphism occurs under uncertainty, in which case organizations model themselves on other organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 151). When an organization faces problems related to ambiguous causes or unclear solutions, then other organizations could yield a viable solution with little expense (Cyert and March 1963), by borrowing practices, indirectly (trough human resource transfer) or directly, through communications or strategies. Other examples concerning this type of isomorphism are related to enhancing legitimacy or the pressure to provide programs and services offered by other organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 151). A response to uncertainty is modelling (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 151): "the modelled organization may be unaware of the modelling or may have no desire to be copied; it merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organization may use". This can occur unintentionally, indirectly (employee transfer or turnover) or explicitly (through consulting firms), yet a skilled labour force or a broad customer base could also encourage mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 151).

Normative isomorphism has its origins in professionalization, which translates into "the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p.

152). For example, this category includes managers and specialized staff of large organizations; professions that are subject to the same mimetic or coercive pressures. According to Perrow (1974) individuals who have been formally trained in university or other training institutions tend to occupy similar positions in different organizations that could shape organizational behaviour. The criteria of hiring new personnel from certain areas of expertise, such as hiring experts that have a background in policy studies or sociology from social science universities could be such an example, where experts tend to draw on the same policies or procedures and approach decisions in the same manner. Therefore "such mechanisms create a pool of almost interchangeable individuals who occupy similar positions across a range or organizations and possess a similarity of orientations in tradition and control that might otherwise shape organizational behaviour" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 152). Common expectations about personal behaviour, appropriate style of dress, organizational vocabularies (Cicourel 1970; Williamson 1975), standard methods of speaking, joking or addressing others (Ouchi 1980) are a few examples of this type of isomorphism and the similarities that appear between organizations can make it easier for them to interact with one another, to be acknowledged as a legitimate actor, to hire trained personnel or to "fit into administrative categories that define eligibility for public and private grants and contracts" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 153).

Therefore, in this research I deal with the institutional design (rules, procedures, structures) formally imposed by the funders and the consequences that they produce on the structure of organizations, as well as practices and informal rules inside the organizations (routine actions that become taken for granted, without questioning, intentionally reproduced on the bases of shared concepts between employees). In this regard, funding imposes several legal and formal procedures that are similar in their application, yet the question is whether similar organizations that operate in an organizational field that is located in a different context become to look alike due to the isomorphic pressures that they are dealing with. Before proceeding to how external funded projects affect women and gender based NGOs, I describe and analyze the civil society sector, by offering an operational definition to the non-governmental organization.

2. WHEN THE INFORMAL GETS INSTITUTIONALIZED: CIVIL SOCIETY AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Written in 1997, Fisher's observation is as contemporary as it gets: "There is little agreement about what NGOs are and perhaps even less about what they should be called. The generalizations about the NGO sector obscure the tremendous diversity found within it" (Fisher 1997, p. 447). Perspectives have not been few with regards to NGOs, and many times contradictory. On the one hand, NGOs are seen as progressive and a real boost to liberal democracy, a new way of collective action, a "voice" of the marginalized groups, an alternative way to participation, politicizing issues that were not formal on the public agenda or that were "ironically" depoliticized; yet on the other hand, they have seen as agents of privatization, agents of resistance of imported Western values, technical solutions to social problems[1]. For example, from a liberal perspective, NGOs represent a balance between state and business interests and help and prevent citizens from the abuses of power that these sectors enhance; from a neoliberal perspective, NGOs are seen as a part of the private sector, with market roles and important mission towards privatization through not-for-profit actions; from a leftist and alter-globalization perspective, NGOs can be an alternative political way to social transformation without the difficulties of earlier radical strategies that relied on centralization and resulted in the capture of state power (Clarke 1998; Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 44). Nevertheless, even though there are numerous ideological perspectives on NGOs, one thing is obvious: the number of associations, the forms of civic organization and the diversity of ideas that exist inside the civil sector can be linked to a "processual" view of society that "repeatedly tears itself apart and endlessly remakes itself"[2]. I consider that the

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[1] Kothari, R. 1993. Masses, classes and the state. In Wignaraja, P., ed. *New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People*. Zed, London, pp. 59-75; Kothari, S. 1993. Social movements and the redefinition of democracy. In Oldenburg, P., ed. *India Briefing*. Boulder: Westview; Patkar, M. 1995. The struggle for participationand justice: a historical narrative. In Fisher, W.F., ed. *Toward SustainableDevelopment? Struggling Over India'sNarmada River*. Armonk, Sharpe, New York, pp. 157-78; Wignaraja P. 1993. *New Social Movementsin the South: Empowering the People*. Zed, London *apud* Fisher 1997, pp. 442, 445.

[2] Ferguson, A. 1995 (1767). *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Ed. F Ox-Salzberger. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge; Gordon, C. 1991. Governmental rationality: an introduction. In Burchell

transformation of the civil society, no matter the ideological stance, also implies the transformation of the state, because I think that these organizations have an important political substrate, especially women and gender based NGOs, the main focus of this research. Therefore, I opt for using the term non-governmental and not non-profit, due to the embodied political aspect that I consider more important than the non-profit trait that charities usually embody. This terminological distinction comes from an ideological perspective, which is further emphasized in the future chapters where I specifically deal with NGOs relation to funding.

Nevertheless, I consider NGOs as the institutionalized "voice" of the civil sector, as they embody the deliberative and participatory aspects of democracy also because of trade unions and political parties seem to have departed from this sphere (Chimiak 2006, p. 63). NGOs are a 20th century phenomenon, although they are thought to have predecessors in the 19th century voluntary associations as described by Tocqueville and are believed to be similar with charities that have emerged in Europe in the medieval times; for example Poland having such charities in the 14th century as well[1]. Nevertheless, according to Chimiak (2006, p. 70), NGOs have several features that make them closer to citizens, than to the market or the state: they are initiated by citizens and through their involvement, they can pursue their goals and needs, along with other "similar-minded fellow citizens"; the services they provide are an alternative to the market and the state (i.e. government or firms), sometimes they monitor the activities of these actors, advocate for their needs, intervene or speak up. Briefly said, the activities of NGOs can be called "institutionalized civic activities" (Chimiak 2006, p. 71). The author defines NGOs as "originating from grass-roots institutionalized entities – not propelled by or dependent upon other organizations or powerful individuals – where citizens come together at will and in order to exercise common interest, attend to some mutual concern, advocate neglected issues, or get engaged for the benefit of others" (Chimiak 2006, p. 71).

G., C. Gordon and P. Miller (eds.). *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago, pp.1-53 *apud* Fisher 1997, p. 456.

[1] Guć, M. 1996. Razem. O współpracy samorządu terytorialnego z organizacjami pozarządowymi, Gdynia. In Chimiak, Galia. 2006. *How Individuals Make Solidarity Work*. MinisterstwoPracy i PolitykiSpolecznej, Warszawa *apud* Chimiak 2006, p. 74.

The above definition is considered primary to this research, with the specification that the "grass roots" trait that civil society should entail, in terms of its origins, is seen as opposed to top-down initiatives. This means that the first emergence of a civic activity could be grass-roots and then further being embodied in the founding of an NGO; yet after its functioning on a regular basis it will probably deal with bureaucracy and other types of rules that will elevate its core grass-roots aspect (Chimiak 2006, p. 40). Nonetheless, the grass-roots aspect is an important element especially in the study of civil societies as a form of citizen involvement.

In this case, a structural-operational definition of a non-governmental organization has five attributes that will be used for this particular research. These attributes (Salamon and Anheier 1975; Salamon Sokolowski and Associates 2004; Anheiner and Salamon 2006, p. 89) of an organization consist of several implications that are considered essential in this research and will be incorporated into the research design and data collection: 1. It is organized (institutionalized to some extent), in the sense that an organization has some institutional reality to it, has an internal structure, relative persistence of goals, structures and activities, boundaries (recognition between members and non-members) and the fact that ad hoc and temporary gatherings of people with no real structure of organizational identity are excluded; 2. It is private and institutionally separated from the government and does not exercise governmental authority, though it may receive significant public-sector funding; 3. It is self-governing, equipped to control its own activities, has its own governance procedures and is able to cease operations on its own authority; 4.It does not return profits generated to its owners or directors. It may accumulate profits in a given year, but its profits must be ploughed back into the basic mission of the agency, not distributed to the organizations' owners, members, founders or governing board; 5.It is non-compulsory, involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation, based on free choice and not mandated by law. Membership is not legally required and the voluntary contribution entails time and/or money.

Anheier (2000, pp. 7-8) proposes that any non-governmental organizations is "a combination of different motivations, standards, challenges and practices" and has the following components: A professional core of managers, including personnel officers and accountants; A governing board of experts and community representatives; A client or user base and their representatives; A set of other stakeholders; A set of contractual relations including different levels of government; A set of business contracts; A volunteer and membership component; and The actual service providers (Anheier 2000, pp. 7-8).

Each of these components are theoretically presented as core, universal traits that exist in any institutionalized formal and registered NGO, sometimes being not necessarily distinct or self-sufficient and developing their own "culture," routines and procedures over time (Anheier 2000, p. 8). The legal framework that exists in each country stresses upon several aspects that NGOs should encounter, such as a board of members, a general assembly, an accountant and volunteers. In both Romania and Poland these aspects are present, and through external funded projects they become the core legal aspects that make organizations 'eligible' for funding. Having similar organizational components is not a strong argument for isomorphism, yet how these organizational components respond to external funded projects, how they translate, interpret and what mechanisms they develop could offer important insights to this issue. In the following section I offer several approaches to how isomorphic pressures affect NGOs, as studied by various scholars.

3. UNDER PRESSURE: ISOMORPHISM AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Following DiMaggio and Powell, the organizational field in the case of civil society organizations is not only delimited by civil society features and actions, but also occurs within a specific political-institutional context (Baglioni and Giugni 2014, p. 2). Regarding how isomorphism affects civil society, this phenomenon has to do with the less diverse and more convergent aspects of NGOs, both in their organizational forms and in their work, either by external pressures, design or accidents (David and Nazneen 2009, p. 160). These pressures (normative, coercive, and mimetic) affect NGOs in the way in which they adopt similar forms of organizational structures and activities that either resembles the market, the government or other hybrid models of these two. Some authors (Murphy 2000, p. 343) suggest that recently, one can talk about the "corporatization" of NGOs: "Increasingly the model for the 'successful'

NGO is the corporation – ideally a transnational corporation – and NGOs are ever more marketed and judged against corporate ideals. As part of this trend, a new development 'scientism' is strangling us with things like strategic framework analysis and results-based management, precisely the values and methods and techniques that have made the world what it is today" (David and Nazeen 2009, p. 160). This aspect is also portrayed and analyzed in Dauvergne and LeBaron's book *Protest Inc.: The Corporatization of Activism* (2014), in which market driven forces impact NGOs in America and how these organizations have responded to them.

Dependency, domination, uncertainty, and professionalization – all of these features increase the likelihood of isomorphism among NGOs, as well as the need for legitimization or the adoption of practices for the belief that they could improve efficiency or productivity, even though it could not necessarily mean that they do. Actually, as DiMaggio and Powell suggest, they could produce a reverse effect. Moreover, Leiter (2005, pp. 5-6) suggests that the resemblance of organizations with each other could translate in the non-governmental world due to several factors. Firstly, the highly dependent nature of the relationships with the funding sources, as a result of coercive isomorphic pressures: Riiskjaer and Nielsen (1987) have revealed that the Danish amateur sport started resembling a bureaucratic and oligarchic organization, because of the funding shift from the participants to the state; Morrill and McKee (1993) analysed a community mediation organization that was funded by the local government and its only mission turned out to be as an annex of the court's: certification and training according to its guidelines, while neglecting the voluntary cases and the innovative methods. Secondly, the non-profits' missions are sometimes unclear and continuously changing, being susceptible to mimetic isomorphism (Leiter 2005, p. 6).

> "In contrast to the relative clarity of for-profits' goals and technologies, these characteristic problems usually cripple non-profits' performance measurement efforts, often lead to the displacement of outcome measures by input and allocation measures, and clamp down on innovative efforts. Beyond, uncertainty as a reason for copying, networks through which information and other resources are exchanged increase mimetic opportunities, (…) all of these have the potential for increasing mimetic isomorphism"(Leiter 2005, p. 6).

At this point, we do not know the direction NGOs are headed after so many years of funded projects implementation, due to the lack of consistent data in this area. If we look at the theoretical background, according to Batley and Rose (2011, p. 233) in comparison with for-profit firms, NGOs are likely to have their own established practices and ideologies about the nature, purpose and processes of the public action in which they are involved (Lewis 2006). Due to their multi-directional funding dimension (from funders, members, subscribers and communities as well as public or private bodies) they may have difficulties in reconciling internal differences of priority and sustaining agreed positions (Edwards and Hulme 2003) and therefore be more flexible, as opposed to the hierarchical, standardized and routinized bureaucratic structure of state organizations. Moreover, this sector is associated with innovation, diversity, adaptability and the ability to address various minority needs for public goods that the government does not fulfil. Nonetheless, the bargaining power of NGOs is affected by their level of 'resource dependence' on other organizations, "that is, the extent to which they control key resources such as finance, technology and expertise or have to comply with those who do control them" (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003; Batley and Rose 2011, p. 234).

Regarding normative isomorphism, Hwang and Powell (2009, p. 268) develop key indicators of professionalism and measure organizational rationalization as expressed in the use of strategic planning, independent financial audits, quantitative program evaluation, and consultants. Their focus is primarily on the occupational category of professionals that has historically referred to individuals who derive legitimacy and authority from their formal education and claims to specialized expertise as "organizational professionals" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) or the "administrative class" (Freidson 1986), whose job it is to manage these organizations (Hwang and Powell2009, p. 268). The authors Hwang and Powell suggest that the growth of managerial professionals represents a profound institutional change because this group shares common administrative or management training and similar occupational norms. Their professional and social networks expand as they move from one organization to the other, which enhances the diffusion of common evaluative and normative standards. The authors argue that "the non-profit sector's professionalization may have significant implications for its core identity as an arena for volunteerism and participation, as well as for its future development and role in society at large, especially given the ubiquitous presence of non-profits in the daily lives of many citizens" (Boris and Steuerle 2006). In this regard, the change in the identity refers to an orientation towards doing for others rather than with them (Skocpol 2003) and through the educational backgrounds of organizational leaders, the interpretation and solutions formulated to issues can also change (Fligstein 1990; Hwang and Powell 2009, p. 270).

Another issue of standardization in the non-governmental sector, besides professionalization, is the evaluation process that some NGOs are pressured into make (coercive isomorphism). Arvidson and Lyon (2014) analyse how organizations respond to requests for evaluation, and how strategic decoupling is developed; they consider that organizations engage in evaluations with a dual purpose; on the one hand, to comply with social audit norms and thereby ascertain organizational legitimacy and survival; and on the other, organizations act in a way that allows them a level of independence as well as influence over how the performance of social purpose organizations is understood and measured (Arvidson and Lyon 2014, p. 871). Decoupling is a concept that describes how organizations 'make visible, public commitments to satisfy the demands of their external environment' while the organization's internal operations can follow different trajectories (Turco 2012, p. 386). Organizations use this strategy to resist external monitoring (Levay and Waks 2009) combined with the desire to gain legitimacy from the very same external context, in many cases organizations that are under contractual obligations to report achievements to grant or contract providers (Arvidson and Lyon 2014, p. 871). Resource holders and founders exert control through directives that are sometimes related to evaluation; other authors highlight that organizations may hide information, or control the flow and content of information (Burger and Owens 2010). Burger and Owens (2010) suggest that this is a 'deflection strategy' used by organizations to cope with control imposed by stakeholders that hold unrealistic expectations, and to cope with a competitive climate (Arvidson and Lyon 2014, p. 873). Based on a study of five social enterprises in the UK, Nicholls (2009, p. 756) argues that evaluations and audits are used as means to "enhance social mission rather than merely to respond to regulation' and suggests that 'emergent reporting practices constitute a spectrum of disclosure logics that social entrepreneurs exploit strategically to support their various mission objectives with key stakeholders". This type of approach is important to my research because it questions the view that organizations are passive responders to directives from resource holders (Verbruggen *et al.* 2010; Burger and Owens 2010) and in this sense questions the mechanisms of isomorphism.

Isomorphism may also arise out of the pursuit of legitimacy without regard for effectiveness and efficiency, but rather for the sake of survival, advantage, or approval, because legitimacy depends on meeting the expectations, often taken-for-granted, of the environment in which the organization functions (DiMaggio and Powell 1991 in Leiter 2008, 68). The theoretical and practical implications of isomorphism in the non-governmental sector are translated into the limitation of the capacity of the non-profit sector to respond to diverse needs and preferences, undermining one of the sector's primary rationales (Weisbrod 1986). If the non-governmental sector comes to resemble the bureaucratized for-profit or the public sector agencies, or rather to be homogenized, then it would create similar solutions to diverse problems in the society, and therefore "we can fear the same loss of creativity, innovation, and individuality Weber portrayed with the image of the 'iron cage'" (Gerth and Mills 1946; Leiter 2008, p. 69).

Yet, how can isomorphism be operationalized so to capture its effects on NGOs? In the article "Structural Isomorphism in Australian Non-governmental organizations" (2005) Leiter offers an operationalizing scheme in this regard. He first devises structural isomorphism in the three types of isomorphism presented by DiMaggio and Powell: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism, as shown above. Coercive isomorphism is operationalized by Leiter (2005, p. 13) with an accent on the state, headquarters and donor income in the following way:

- The state – representing an index of dependence on the state is formed from the number of government programs from which the organization receives help (at least 1 government program, where it is the most important source of revenue);
- The subordinate to headquarters (branches, subsidiaries, franchise) represents the requirement to follow centrally issued directives, thus finding out the measure of headquarter power;
- The income from donors, conceived of a minimal indication of the power of donors over the non-profit (so as to find out the revenue diversification).

On the other hand, mimetic isomorphism (Leiter 2005, p. 14) is devised into:

- Goal ambiguity is said to be a barrier to the rational structuring. Along with unstandardized technologies (the means for accomplishing goals) and unreliable components of the environment, goal ambiguity is a mechanism of copying other organization that is regarded as successful or legitimate (DiMaggio and Powell, p. 1983). It can be measured in two ways: by a small difference between the highest and lowest importance reported and by a large number of goals reported as having the same high importance;

- Decline, which can motivate a search for a better approach and therefore it could lead to copying (types and forms of decline);
- Change might also cause uncertainty and motivate the search for alternative models (Leiter 2005, p. 14). Change can occur in the mission, outsourcing and communications technology;
- Sharing creates the opportunity for copying, and sharing resources can be an important factor in this type of research (sharing with organizations, government, others).

Normative isomorphism is regarded as:

- Consulting, seen as an extended form of idea sharing that can affect the core of an organization;
- Manager's education is a factor that indicates professionalization in the field (for example post-graduate education marks professional preparation) (Leiter 2005, p. 14).

All of these factors impact the structure and culture of a non-governmental organization, to different degrees. As mentioned before, the different isomorphic mechanisms do not occur separately and clearly, as described in the theoretical framework. Therefore, operationalization can turn helpful in this regard. Moreover, I consider the structure of an NGO as embodying its organizational capacity – human resources, the experience in implementing projects, the capacity to attract new members and volunteers, formal rules and strategies); and the organizational culture, in which I refer to the informal rules, values, routines and habits inside the organizations; and the roles, such as the role of the organization as described in the mission and statute, as well as the members 'behaviours. Having described the theoretical framework, I further outline the possible pressures and mechanism that affected women and gender based NGOs in Romania and Poland, by highlighting the similarities and differences between these organizations. It is important to stress the fact that the contextual variables are regarded both as independent variables and also as mediating variables in this research. The goal is analytical and descriptive at first, offering a starting point for future analysis.

4. IN BETWEEN THE TWO "–ISMS": SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WOMEN AND GENDER BASED NGOS IN ROMANIA AND POLAND

In this section, I identify the contextual elements and pressures that lead organizations to look and act in similar ways, despite the different context in which they operate. Moreover, I argue that there is another side of the coin that should be encountered: the different responses, interpretations and conditions that make these organizations develop and act in a different manner. After these clarifications are made, conclusions are drawn for future analysis in this field.

First of all, similarities in organizational studies have been studied by institutionalists, who focused their researches on isomorphism, the pressures that lead organizations to look and act homogenously (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000; Scott 2008; Drori, Meyer and Hwang 2006; Child 2000). Generally, in both countries, women, with less political and symbolic resources, organized themselves outside the political parties, in various NGOs, so to persuade politicians to vote for laws against discrimination, domestic violence and gender equality, and also to influence the equal opportunities policies and the democratization process. Having as a starting point how gendered regimes in the communist period affected women (Siklova 1993; Ferge 1998; Grunberg 2000; Ghodsee 2004; Einhorn and Sever 2005; Pascall and Kwak 2005; Vincze 2006; Miroiu and Popa 2009), following the effects of democratization and economic change both upon women, the civil sector as a whole and women and gendered based organizations (Funk and Muller 1993; Miroiu 1998; Regulska 1998; Cermakova *et al.* 2000; Gal and Kligman 2000; Saxonberg 2000; Grunberg 2001; Pasti 2003; Fodor 2002; Braunbauer 2002; Graff 2003; Pollert 2003; Sloat 2004; Miroiu 2004; Roth 2007; Regulska and Grabowska 2008) and how the civil society sector that emerged and developed in both countries after 1989 as a result of actions undertaken by domestic actors and supported by Western founders (Regulska 1998; Carothers 1999;

Glimski 1999; Chimiak 2006; Fuszara 2008; Bunea 2007; Regulska and Grabowska 2011, 2012; Williams 2013; Korolczuk 2014), some highlights can be presented as impacting these organizations in a similar manner. Throughout this approach, the political factors, as well as the influence of transnational organizations and the impact of EU accession and gender equality institutionalization (Fuchs and Payer 2007; Penn and Massino 2009; Reguslka and Grabowska 2011, 2013) will be explained in relation to women and gender based NGOs. Moreover, the tensions between the cultural aspects of each country and the emergence of a feminist ideology are also taken into account, both in a contextual and organizational manner (Grunberg 2000; Miroiu 2004; Miroiu and Popescu 2004; Fuszara 2000, 2005; McMahon 2002; Roth 2007; Grabowska and Regulska 2011; Molocea 2013; Vlad 2013).

Out of these contextual elements, I consider the external funds to be the most important factor that leads organizations to become more similar, as well as the transnational and EU actors. The communist legacy and the cultural aspects of these countries, even though different in many aspects, had lead organizations to adopt a certain kind of ideology (liberal), which was further stressed by the Western donors' *modus operandi*. Moreover, the pressures of the neoliberal economic transition, as well as the communist legacy, have left women with poor political and symbolic resources, and in both countries, they organized inside women and gender based NGOs, despite the 'double burden' they were experiencing, due to the limitation of the public domain in the public sphere. The communist past eroded any women's movement and solidarity, although in Poland women vividly participated in the actions of the Solidarity union[1]. The women's organizations that dated

[1] As to the women's role inside Solidarity, they were very much active in the underground structures (Penn 1994). The 80's are considered the years in which women's movement in Poland started to emerge and materialize. For example in 1983 the first feminist sociology seminar at the Institute of Sociology at Warsaw University was opened and in 1984 several women who attended the seminars started to meet in Warsaw and Krakow and they organized the Women's Cinema Festival and the first March Feminist Session in Krakow, in 1987 (Grabowska 2013, p. 3). In this way, these actions created the path from informal to the formalization of some women's groups after the fall of communism, such as the Polish Feminist Association in Warsaw and EFKa foundation in Krakow (*idem*). Also, due to the martial law introduced in Poland in the 80s and the many arrests that occurred after its implementation, women took over the leadership positions in the Solidarity movement, which perhaps shaped the first glimpses of the future feminist

before 1989 were largely controlled by the state party and the newly established women's NGOs in Poland and Romania distanced themselves from such organizations that continued to exist after the fall of communism. Within the transition or transformation period, women's NGOs took different paths in Romania and in Poland, having developed from an academic standpoint in Romania and from grassroots movements in Poland, due to the abortion rights. Nevertheless, in both countries they developed in similar manners, as a response to the economic and political factors and the more traditional views on gender. In both countries there has been a 'baby-boom' (Chimiak 2006) of NGOs, due to the newly adopted legislative frameworks that helped these organizations to develop and the presence of Western donors. In the 1990'swomen NGOs experienced what I refer to as the 'contract culture', a project-based approach to the issues of women in politics, labour market and social spheres. The Beijing Conference was an important event in which women's organizations from different countries met and established strategies in their approaches to the local governments. International actors and donors have highly impacted these organizations by establishing new modes of working, through trainings, seminars and workshops and human resources. Women's organizations were active in the international and national level, but few of them managed to concentrate on the rural and regional level. In this regard, in both countries most of the women and gender NGOs became an urban phenomenon, being closer to the centres of power and finance. The period in which they become important actors in both countries, after almost a decade of being highly biased due to the conservative political parties and the general public, was in the time of the EU accession – in Poland in the 00's and in Romania after 2004. Yet, after the accession, numerous important donors

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movement in Poland. Women in Poland lead most of the underground press such as "Tygodnik Soldarnosc" and for almost three years, "no single man was a member of the editorial board. Recognized as passive Mother Poles by the police, women used gender stereotypes to their advantage in conspiring against the communist regime" (Kondratowicz, E. 2001. SzminkanaSztandarze, (Lipstick on a Banner), Sic!; Penn S. 1996. Women's Movements On-Line: The New post-Socialist Revolution, *SAIS Review*, Volume 16, Number 1, pp. 125-143; Penn S. 2003. *PodziemieKobiet*, (Women's Underground), Rosner i Wspólnicy, Warsaw *apud* Grabowska 2009, p. 56). Therefore, the active citizenship, the community bonds, the networking and the grassroots groups could translate into the cooperation of the newly established women NGOs in Poland and the possibility to be more critical in accessing some types of funding to others.

have shifted from these countries, profoundly impacting the organizations that were highly dependent on external funding. The gender institutionalization had different ways of development in each country, yet this period is regarded as the professionalization or NGO-ization phase, in which the organizations that had access to European funds became more institutionalized. Despite the different context in which they emerged, the similarities between organizations have been highlighted, due to external pressures from governments and international actors, but also as forms of development from within.

In regard to the differences between the women and gender based NGOs in Romania and Poland, they can be highlighted in a similar approach: firstly regarding how the communist legacies have been transported into the present institutions and practices (Glass and Fodor 2007; Johnson 2007; Saxonberg and Selewa 2007; Spehar 2007; Kriszan and Zentai 2012) and secondly how the similar paths of economic, political and social transition of the two countries have had different effects for women in Romania than those from Poland (Dabrowski 1995; Johnson and Young, 1997; Pasti 2003; Miroiu 2003, 2004, 2006; Bozena 2008). Moreover, the relation between the cultural aspects and the emergence and development of the civil society sector (Robinson 1995; Pasti, Miroiu and Codita 1996; Green 2002; Epure *et al.* 2001; Pralong 2004; Klown/Jawor 2004; Parau 2009; FDSC 2005, 2010; Chimiak 2006; Szelewa 2011; Ekiert and Kubic 2014), had a different impact on these organizations, stressing on the particularities between women and gendered based NGOs from these two countries (Grunberg 2000, 2008; Baldez 2003; Miroiu and Popescu 2004; Fuszara 2005; Dabrowska 2007; Regulska and Grabowska 2008, 2011; Fuszara 2010). The impact of transnational institutions – such as Western founders and EU bodies – on the institutionalization of gender equality and on the institutionalized feminist movement is also highlighted, due to the different trajectories that the two countries encountered (Siegel and Yancey 1992; Quigley 1997; Dakova *et al.* 2000; Coyle 2003; Juros *et al.* 2004; Vincze 2006; Fuchs and Payer 2007; Bunea 2007; Popa 2007; Pospieszna 2010; Kriszan and Zentai 2012; Hurubean 2013). In this regard, interpretation of legal frameworks and coercive pressures, the size, age and members can shape organizations and cause them to take various organizational forms. The most important factors that affected women and gender NGOs are presented in regard to institutional path dependencies, civil society mobilization, discursive opportunity structures and political opportunity structures and different trajectories of change. Therefore, even though in the Solidarity movement the gender issues were not encountered, the movement itself had an important role in the development of the civil society in Poland. Moreover, Poland experienced a grassroots feminist movement around the abortion law that was adopted in 1993, during which many women's NGOs were established. The women and gender NGOs in Romania have developed around the academia and did not develop in a grassroots manner, or a movement. These factors made the organizations in Poland and Romania differ in their approaches, even though they shared a liberal ideology. Moreover, the transition period had different paths in the two countries, further affecting women NGOs. The organizations in Poland had different economic opportunities than the ones in Romania, and many organizations developed their activities around the labour market and entrepreneurial sector. The quota system introduced in Poland has helped NGOs to collaborate with the local authorities, having made these organizations better able to access national and regional grants. Romania could not adopt the quota system, due to its fragmentation inside the women's NGOs and the lack of political support and therefore many organizations were highly dependent on foreign funds. The EU accession, having two different time spans, and the shift of funding also impacted these organizations differently, yet NGOs became important actors especially in the gender intersectionality of public policies, collaborating with the state and the international actors. The professionalization of the NGOs in Poland was not linked with the academia, as in the case of Romania. Furthermore, the different paths of gender institutionalization had different effects on these NGOs in their patterns of development. This process was also strengthening by the dynamic of the external funded projects: in Poland membership fees were preeminent, while in Romania NGOs continued to rely on externally funded projects. The mechanism of accession also differed, making this process easier for the organizations in Poland than for those in Romania.

Having briefly underlined both the similarities and the differences between women and gender NGOs in Romania and Poland, future directions can be highlighted so to understand whether these organizations are embracing similarities in their structure, culture and roles due to external funded projects. Therefore, some questions can be raised: how did the civil society sector respond to the external funded projects, having emerged from different bases? How do the grassroots origins of some NGOs impact the imposed regulations from funders? Is it easier to adapt to these regulations if the organizations have an academic origin? What makes NGOs apply to external funded projects, except the lack of national and local funding? Does cooperation between NGOs facilitate mimetic isomorphism at the local and international level? Are the external funding constraints felt in a greater or a lesser degree depending on the member's ideology? How do local and national economic opportunities influence the financial strategies of NGOs? What are the main elements of external funding that make organizations adopt similar patterns in regard to their beneficiaries? Is professionalization developing in NGOs that don't have access to external funding? These are some of the questions that have not been yet addressed in the literature concerning both sociological institutionalism and the civil society sector. Of course, each question regards different independent variables and could be treated separately from this study, yet it is important to understand how different European mechanisms and regulations affect the actors that deal with them on an everyday basis. In this regard, several conclusions are drawn.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Considering the few studies in the field have been done that addressed how external funded projects affect NGOs and the public policy implications that further emerge from this approach, this article represent an attempt to answer the question: are the women and gender based NGOs developing from counter-culture to a contract culture? In this regard, I have presented the theoretical approach in studying to what extent and with what effects were external funds (European, Swiss and Norwegian) implemented in Romania and Poland in the case of women and gender based NGOs. In the making of the explanatory model, I have outlined the sociological institutionalist framework so to analyse both the deliberate and intentional effects that are settled through strategies or objectives of the main financial lines, and the unintentional ones, that arise throughout a project life–span inside an organization. These effects can prove to be either positive for the organization, but unimportant for the financer, or dysfunctional (as counterproductive effects) for both the organization and the financer. Moreover, I considered this approach suitable especially when conducting a comparative analysis in two different settings; therefore both historical and cultural aspects of the NGOs that operate in Romania and Poland have been taken into consideration in the theoretical and empirical phase of the study.

In the first part, I have focused on the structural changes that affect organizations in terms of the three types of mechanisms that lead to institutional isomorphic change: the coercive (that takes its roots out of political influence and the issue of legitimacy), mimetic (that can be defined as a standard response to uncertainty) and normative (associated with professionalization) (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 150). In the second part, I have provided some clear definitions to the concepts of civil society and non-governmental organizations, so to operationalize these concepts and set some guidelines in regard to the changes that they encounter due to different pressures. In the third part, I have analysed some important approaches (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004; Leiter 2005, 2008; Pedersen and Dobbin 2006; Hwang and Powell 2009; Arvidson and Lyon 2014) to the non-governmental sector in relation to the coercive, mimetic and normative pressures identified by the authors. In the last part, I have outlined both similarities and differences in regard to the communist past, the social, economic and political transition, civil society development, national cultures and transnational actors in Romania and Poland. I have stressed that isomorphism and polymorphism can arise in organizations, due to several factors and mechanisms, considering the size, members and identities that is unique to each organization. Moreover, I have stressed some important questions that could form the basis of future studies in this field.

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