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**GENDER-BASED SOCIAL GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS
BY THE EXAMPLE OF ORMÁNSÁG**

PhD Thesis Abstract

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate the mutual connection between gender research and geography. It originates in the duality of the topic of this dissertation that it deals with gender-based geographical examination as well as the social-geographical analysis of a disadvantageous rural area.

Scientific antecedents

The word 'gender' is adopted from English terminology. The Hungarian equivalent is the notion 'social sex', which refers to the socially developed features of masculinity and femininity. It includes the behaviour and relationship of men and women that are considered 'proper', and the social expectations towards the two sexes. The word 'gender' refers to the culturally determined features of women and men, contrasting the word 'sex' which emphasize the anatomical, biological differences. The mutual connection between 'gender', the social relation between the two sexes and geography was revealed by the feminist geographical trend which evolved from feminist political movements. Mainly English and American researches indicate the beginning of a new era in the scientific development of feminist geography by the names of 'gender geography' and 'feminist geography'. Meanwhile the emphasis of researches has changed: the approach of researchers, that was formerly based on scientific analyses of processes and tendencies concerning men, has turned towards women and lay emphasis on the examination of the relation between the genders. Nowadays it is an interesting question – this is the aim of this dissertation – to reveal how much the feminist geographical models, notions and theories of developed market-economic countries can be used in the Eastern-Central-European region and under Hungarian circumstances, and what opportunity the changing social-economic circumstances can give to accept this new field of science.

The sample area of the research is Ormánság, a small Hungarian area close to the border.

Its disadvantageous position has been analysed by several researches of different fields of social sciences. Geographical researches have already revealed those long-term processes as well as the ones that have developed in the past few decades that give significantly worse living conditions and social mobility chances to its inhabitants as if they lived in another area.

Adjustments to the social-economic changes in the past centuries forced the people who lived there to make such decisions in which the male-female relation was determining. The result of these common decisions is family planning (earlier the deliberate decrease, nowadays the increase in the number of children), changing residence, moving in or moving out or moving to a settlement with a lower status. All these alternatives are decided by women and men.

II. THEORY

The objective of this dissertation is to examine how the relation between the genders form society and influence social space and to prove that the relation between the genders is an important factor in forming social space, therefore it has to be part of geographical research examining unequal regional development. Geographical researches deal with the relation between geographical space and different social classes, groups, ethnic groups on the basis of age and sex, but it also has to examine the socially determined relation between genders as well as the relation between social genders and space.

Present dissertation attempts to research geography on the basis of gender and to research gender on the basis of geography.

The question how geography and gender relate to each other seems to be strange, undefinable and incompatible for many people. A number of essays prove that this kind of researches – examination of inequality between the genders, general phenomena and regional features – can contribute to a deeper cognition of interaction between space and society.

The objective of this dissertation, from a certain point of view, is the way itself: to try out social-geographical research that was made with the help of gender-method under national circumstances. The other objective is to prove that the question of gender is not just a new topic in geographical researches, but it is a new dimension that is wider in scope, it has a broader geographical scale and it can help to understand social processes better. This dissertation can be informative for national social-geographical researches, because it examines the process of changing the economic structure and rural changes on the basis of the relation between the genders, using the experiences of feminist-approaching social researches.

At the same time the recognition of personal life-strategies that tried to reduce regionally different disadvantages can serve as lessons for organizing local politics as well as local economy.

The examination extends to a science-historical overview of the relation of gender research and geography, especially to international and national researches of feminist geography, geography of the genders.

Furthermore this research is important from the point of view of equal opportunity of the genders. By joining EU the question of equal opportunity of different social groups and the obligation of providing equal opportunity for them has been revalued. In the past fifteen years by EU-conform rural development, equal opportunity policy and rural development linked in Hungary also and women became a target group of co-ordinated development. The dissertation draws attention to the fact that for developments that aim to stop lagging behind of a disadvantageous regions and to explore local sources, social-economic relations of the genders have to be taken into consideration. Revealing the connection between regional inequalities and the inequality in the situation of the genders can help to elaborate a more effective strategy of regional development.

Present research draws attention to the fact that gender roles are not static but they are the results of the structure of power between women and men and that is determined by the area and are formed in many variations with regional differences.

The hypotheses of the research are the following:

Thesis point no.1:

Genders are in unequal social-economic situation in society. These inequalities are determined by the society and therefore they can be changed.

Thesis point no. 2:

Relations and social connections between the genders are the results of the structure of power between women and men.

Thesis point no.3:

Unequalities between the genders go together with regional inequalities. The fact how much the economic-social changes affected women and men and what life-strategies they developed to answer these changes is influenced by the geographic place of the residence. It is also important that economic-social changes, depending on the geographic place of the residence create different circumstances for women and men and therefore they are forced for different role-behaviour.

Thesis point no. 4:

Women living in lagging areas are in disadvantageous position on the basis of gender, ethnic group and residence.

III. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The target area of the research is Ormánság, which is firstly an ethnographic area and secondly a historical, geographical area. The research extends to the history of Ormánság, the demographic and employment features of 'Ormánság way' and its specialities according to the social genders.

The subchapter called 'Identifying the settlements that belong to Ormánság' overviews the social-historical process as the number of the settlements belonging to the name 'Ormánság' has increased and the basis of the inherence has been reinterpreted. Originally the settlements of Ormánság connected on religious basis, but in the past few decades other settlements joined that are geographically close, the inhabitants are originally not Reformed Hungarians but that are in the same difficult economic-social situation as settlements in Ormánság. The name 'Ormánság' – similar to a disadvantageous region of Northern Hungary called 'Cserehát' - became a collective term for disadvantageous settlements in South-Dunántúl.

Another subchapter of this essay follows the history of birth control ('only child')

in Ormánság, so we can get to know the regional features of adjustments to economic changes.

To understand the changes in the situation of Ormánság and also the social processes in the background of these changes, it is important to give a detailed analysis of the demographic situation, which is discussed in this essay in details.

Maybe the most characteristic field of the inequality of men and women, which can be supported with data, is employment. Regional characteristics of economic activity are similar to the national ones and in earlier centuries as well as in the 20th century show a state of splitting on the bases of gender. In the peasant society, later in socialism and in free-market economy employment and gender segregation is present in employment and income earning. This topic is discussed in a chapter of this essay. There are always decisions of families, men and women behind economic-social changes in the region. These decisions are partly determined by regional environment, partly are formed by local cultural factors and the relation between the genders. These relations are formed by adjustments to the geographic area in a complex way and it gives a specific meaning to being a woman or a man in different places.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The relation between genders is a multi-dimensional relation therefore its research raises different questions. To answer some questions we need quantitative data, while to answer other ones it is more expedient to collect and process qualitative data. Deep changes in the society of Hungary, especially in villages in the past few decades cannot be certified by statistical data because of their diversity and profoundness. For this reason this dissertation uses different methods of data collection, quantitative and qualitative methods as well.

Processing scientific literature

An important part of research is to process scientific literature. To get to know the topic of gender and the results of previous researches of Ormánság a wide range of literary source material is available. To research gender, numerous foreign and increasing national geographical scientific literature is accessible, while many essays, articles of periodicals, documents and regional analyses are available about Ormánság, which present the social and economic changes of the region on a comprehensive level or with the help of case studies.

Besides the science of geography, topic-related essays of several other areas of science (sociology, history, ethnography, linguistics) proved to be very useful.

Using statistical data

Statistical data, especially the gender-based analysis of employment and population statistics of the certain area help to reveal the relations between the

genders. Quantitative data were taken from the database of KSH, data series were made by using my own calculation. To analyse data I used charts, diagrams and maps. Maps helped to examine regional differences.

The factual data of this research is based on the statistics of KSH, especially census data and the analyses of periodical publications. For many fields of regional analysis there are no demographic and employment data according to the genders. It also meant a problem during the collection of facts that it was difficult to compare statistical figures from different times, because earlier some of these figures were important from a different point of view, later they were completed with other figures so they can be compared only in a short period. The most reliable data source was the census data series.

To recognize the regional characteristics of the target area, Ormánság, of this dissertation, it would have been important to have data by settlements and - to examine the situation and characteristics of women and men - data according to the genders. These data series help to reveal the condition of the regional society and the similarities and differences in the life style and behaviour of women and men. However during the collection of data only a limited number of data series was usable, those ones that could be collected by settlements and by gender at the same time. A long-term regional analysis is difficult because the number of data series separated by gender is low. Many important data referring to the genders was only partly available or not available.

It was a methodological problem that there were frequent changes in the administration, union and separation of small settlements. The intensive quantitative methods that were used – conversations, interviews with key informants, life stories, correspondence – helped to reveal the motivations, behaviours and decisions behind the statistical figures.

Conversations, deep interviews, life stories

Because the aim of the research is the genders, the conversational partners and informants were women and men living in different settlements and under different living conditions, who spoke about their experiences, attitudes and value judgements. The information collected this way is completed with ten deep interviews with local leaders or other dominating members of the settlements. It needed thoughtfulness to choose the key informants and it had to be taken into consideration what other people's opinion is about him/her.

Key interviewees were chosen by using the 'snowball' method: the first interviewee, who played an important role in the public life of the region recommended the second interviewee and he/she recommended the next one. This way all the interviewees knew each other. It was important because it increased confidence to the research. Reference to well-known local leaders of Ormánság, who already had been interviewed, created a good basis for the next interview. A list of the interviewees can be found in the appendix, their names are replaced by numbers and their personal opinions are in italics in the text.

Personal life stories for geographical scientific research were first used by feminist researchers. After this model the method appeared in the methods of feminist geographers and it became a significant data source in quantitative researches. Life stories and conversations helped to reveal the connection between the economic-social changes and genders, and the changes of gender roles and family relations.

The methodological principle of the dissertation was not to have a sharp edge between quantitative and qualitative methods. The extent of the integration of different methods always depended on the question to be researched.

IV. RESULTS

Conclusions related to new scientific results:

- **Thesis point no.1**

Regional migration caused disproportion in the composition of the society in Ormánság: in the age composition, educational level and productivity of the population and the same distortions happened in the population of each settlements. Migration or immigration because of marriage, a new workplace or lower living expenses changed the social structure of certain, especially small settlements.

The distribution of the population according to the genders and age became so distorted in certain settlements that it makes developments, which are based on human resources, impossible. The demographic situation of the settlements and the extreme gender and age composition can be important in the satisfaction of consuming needs, in the effective organization of different public-supply tasks on regional or local level. The ill-proportioned ratio of males and females in the older generation can burden local social maintenance with different problems of living (living expenses, independency). According to these facts development strategies of the settlements have to be formulated and realized with different emphasis. The ratio of males and females, especially in little villages with a small population, show extreme differences according to gender and ethnic groups. In settlements with a population under 200 people the ratio of men is typically higher while in settlements with a population under 100 people the ratio of women is higher. A more balanced ratio of males and females can be found in settlements with a larger population. In villages, where the majority of the population is Croatian, the ratio of elderly women is very high. In case of villages where a remarkable number of gipsy population live, the ratio of men is higher and the age structure is younger.

- **Thesis point no.2**

There are things that are part of our everyday attitude: work and other activities connected to it, activities belonging to women and men, the division of places that are used by women and men, schedule connected to work, life periods, having and bringing up children.

Division on the basis of genders is built in those productive activities that are connected to work and it assigns all official, public and representative functions to men. This 'social program' is rooted in the autocratic power of men over women.

Women were considered as objects, instruments of exchange and symbolic capital in the past which made it possible for men to raise social and symbolic capital. Marriage had this role: it was determining in keeping and increasing peasant properties in the 19th century history of people of Ormánság. The successful endowment of young girls and the influence of their fertility was a determining factor in the capital increment of families.

In the middle of the 20th century, when collectivization and the persecution of large farmers made it impossible for wealthy peasant families to continue farming, it seemed a good solution to leave the region. Migration as means of defence remained for families in later decades, too.

Regional migration caused disproportion in the composition of the society in Ormánság: in the age composition, educational level and productivity of the population and the same distortions happened in the population of each settlements. Migration or immigration because of marriage, a new workplace or lower living expenses changed the social structure of certain, especially small settlements.

The economic structure of Ormánság was underdeveloped even before the political transformation. Agriculture (with middle or poor quality of soil) had a disproportionately high importance while there were no processing plants that could have provided a higher employment. After the political transformation the crisis of agriculture and the termination of co-operative farms (the largest employers) led to the disintegration of the economy of the region. In larger settlements of the region where processing industry employed many people, redundancy affected mainly commuters from smaller settlements. In the last 15 years not even one undertaking of solid capital has settled in the region, which could have led to an increase in employment.

In small settlements, following the traditional female roles, women have three major tasks: bringing up children, provide for the needs of elderly people (or other family members who have special needs) and taking a job. An essential condition for women to be able to take a job is a system of child-care, which can take care of the children in daytime with proper flexibility and safety. There are no infants' nurseries in Ormánság, not even in the city of Sellye, and kindergarten and school provision – merged kindergartens and primary schools for small settlements – is inflexible. The centralization of different provisions and the conditions of using these services are not favourable for less mobile women who live according to the traditional female roles.

Women were ousted from labour market and it is the result of several different factors in case of Ormánság (and in similar small regions of Hungary that are in crisis). The most important factor is low educational level which makes it impossible for women to find a job in a decreasing labour-market. Local employers in small villages (self-governments) can employ only a few women and going to work to more distant places is difficult because of several reasons: high travel costs of commuting, low wages of semi-skilled labour, (hidden) discrimination against mothers with little children and the problem of daytime child-care (because there is no kindergarten or primary school with daytime provision) .

Mainly women with little children or several children cannot have a job and in many cases it means a temporary or permanent unemployment. In a case like this, it is typical for families in hopeless a situation that maternity means the only source of livelihood. In their case, bringing up children is an income earning activity. Bringing up children becomes an object of life, a kind of strategy for 'survival' instead of getting a qualification and finding a job.

- **Thesis point no.3**

Those phenomena between genders that are socially determined and affect men as well as women (demography, education, employment, commuting) show a varied picture in different regions. The situation of women in Ormánság became more and more differentiated

after their resignation from traditional peasant economy and appearance in labour-market, and they became more and more dependent on the economic productivity, transport infrastructure and administrative role of the given settlement.

The dissertation examined it with high priority how the relation between the genders were formed in time and space in different historical periods on the basis of education and employment.

Education

Education and qualification crucially determine people's position in labour-market, their life-style and position in society. The educational level of the population of Ormánság is much lower than the national average. Women in Ormánság are more educated than men, which means that more of them have secondary level education. However the ration of women is higher among those people who do not have primary level education: one quarter of them did not finish even the first eight school years. Among people who graduated from a college or university the ratio of women is lower, their presence in settlements is connected to the local kindergarten or primary school.

Employment

One kind of form of unequal labour market position between genders is sectoral and occupational gender segregation which has regional aspects, too. Gender segregation in the employment of the population of the active age-group is typical in the country, especially in villages.

Paid jobs and occupations are horizontally and vertically segregated jobs according to the genders. In certain spheres of activity women, while in other spheres men are in majority, and women have jobs of lower reputation and salary than men. It is a general tendency that those jobs are feminized that are socially devaluated. Differences according to the genders in the employment structure of Ormánság maps the division of local demand of labour according to male and female jobs. In public works, organized by self-governments, the ratio of men is higher (hard physical work, typical male work), while in local institutes of the self-government (educational institutions, catering, social care, day-care center for elderly people, health care) the

majority of employees are women (typically female care activities that women do at home, too).

The position of female and male workers in space is in connection with the scale of values of the local society and families about female employment and equality of genders. In more traditional, more closed local communities less women want to have jobs outside the settlement, while in more open, more modern families they can have jobs even in more distant settlements. The most important condition of going to work for women with young children is proper day-care system for children.

In lives of women in Ormánság agricultural work was determining both in traditional peasant farming and in farmers' cooperatives, but their work was second-rate as helping family members. With the modernization of agriculture women got jobs in the industry and service industry and they became paid employees. Their income contributed to the well-being of the family and reduced defencelessness of women. The state helped the position of women with the institutions of child-care system and other welfare measures. Meanwhile gender-based share of work within the family remained traditional. Besides going to work, women had to solve the problems of bringing up their children and keeping the house. Women who lived in the country, especially in small settlements, had to commute.

Changes in labour-market after the democratic transformation affected women and men in different times and to a different degree. The economic crisis of Baranya county, the recession of mining industry, construction industry and agriculture inflicted mainly men. Women were inflicted by the termination of administrative jobs, jobs in light industry (leather industry, garment trade) and food industry. Many of them could not go back to their previous work after having a child because of the termination of the job.

Because of the decreased possibility of employment and the limits of employees the number of people who stayed at home increased in case of both genders. In case of men it meant an increase in unemployment, while in case of women it partially meant an increase in unemployment, and partially an increase in the number of dependent women, bringing up children and keeping the house. Under these limited conditions staying at home and working for the family became a 'survival-strategy' for women. Traditional gender roles strengthened and so did the conditions of dependence between the genders. In case of Ormánság the situation was even worse: changes in employment affected men and women at the same time, so in the majority of the families nobody is employed and there is not active income. Financial support given by the self-government (income support, unemployment benefit) was revalued, and in many cases the main source of income was the state system of provision (maternity leave payment, child-care allowance, pension, maintenance of the disabled).

In the service industry of small settlements the role of female entrepreneurs is determining. But women's decision of starting a business in the settlement does not mean more freedom or the realization of a personal career, it rather comes from village conditions (the possibility of a business in the house of the family) and from local gender relations. In case of the enterprises of village wives it is an important factor that they can stay at home (in the settlement or even in the house of the family), where they can fulfil their traditional female roles as well. By staying at home, women see the

possibility of fulfilling the traditional female roles – apart from the fact whether they really think so or not.

- **Thesis point no. 4**

Social-economic circumstances, which altered after the democratic transformation, revived arguments on traditional and modern female roles. The extent of employment and unemployment, social mobility, regional differences in the division of labour inside families become determining factors in the life-strategy of individuals and families living in different regions and settlements. These factors strongly limited the alternatives in income earning, in the use of different services and in the organization of family life.

Part of the population of Ormánság is gypsy population. Gypsy women have to face several difficulties as women, as gypsies and as inhabitants of an underdeveloped region. In their case disadvantages come from their traditional gypsy culture, from their disadvantageous female position and from their bad social-economic circumstances. With their low level of education and more children than the average they have a minimal chance for being employed. Their position was even worsened by prejudices which became more intensive after the democratic transformation.

Traditional female roles play an important part in the lives of women in public life together with a more modern approach: they consider their public work as a serious challenge.

The different ways and motivations of public activity are all different, personal stories that are formed by several influencing factors. Women can strengthen their abilities to enforce interests by taking part in regional developing politics, but joining forces in civil organizations is weak and their public work is connected to only a few women. In their case it can be seen that their surrounding gives them a chance to exceed the traditional female roles and help them by harmonizing family and public duties and sharing household work.

The ratio of women who participate in the work of self-governments in Ormánság is higher in settlements with a lower population. The ratio of female mayors is also higher in Ormánség than the national average. However we cannot find an organization among civil organizations that would work for the lessening of local educational and employment disadvantages and would support women.

V. UTILISATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The results of the research can be utilized in the following fields:

- The validation of 'gender aspect' in geographical researches

The transformation of market economy put men and women in different positions, depending on their residence, and as a consequence it forced men and women for different 'role-behaviour'. The transformation changed the roles and connections of genders, wherefore the traditional patriarchal-based relations of

rural families and the socialist 'two wage-earners' family model disintegrated. The cumulative disadvantageous situation of Ormánság is worsened by ethnic disadvantages, when real social and economic drawbacks are supplemented with social prejudices.

Nowadays, when local resources are reevaluated in the development of the economy, the future of settlements depend on the decisions of families and the life-strategy of women and men. The attitude of women and men towards paid work essentially determines their position in the society. The fact, whether a person is employed, unemployed or works in the household, forms the person's life in different ways and creates unequal social chances for income earning, the use of different services and educational and cultural possibilities. The role of a certain settlement, a certain geographical place with its own specific society and economy, is determining in the shaping of the relation-system of employment, income-earning, services, public life and gender roles. But the disadvantages of settlements under the conditions of market economy intertwine with the macro-social and family forms of patriarchy and they amplify each other.

The research draws attention to the fact that the unequal geographical chances for education and health provision and the unsatisfactory traffic conditions for going to work create differences between women living in different settlements.

- Examination of the situation of genders from geographical aspect

The social-economic life of a region is remarkably influenced by the man-woman relations within families, saturated with the male-female roles of that given macro-society. The reasons of certain motivations and behaviours behind the statistical data are not only the disadvantages of the settlement but also the gender-relations that are in symbiosis with them. The development and the future of the settlements in Ormánság are influenced by those everyday decisions that are made in families and households under unequal gender relations.

The employment of women is vertically and horizontally characterized by gender segregation on the level of jobs as well as sectors, and this phenomenon is strengthened by the low level of employment opportunities of the settlements and the region.

- Efficient region development

Changes and inequalities in the position of genders have to be taken into consideration in connection with developments that try to stop disadvantageous regions from lagging and in connection with exploring new local resources. Economic policy and efficient region development can contribute to the reduction of the inequalities between genders. This is illustrated by the example of those region development projects that were started by the initiative of EU in Ormánság. Personal life strategies to reduce regionally different

disadvantages can serve as lessons for organizing local political and economic life. Unequal gender relations of families appear in everyday situations and decisions of life that influence the future and development of settlements. That is why it is important to analyze and understand the differences and inequalities of women and men, and to realize rural development and policy of equal opportunity on the basis of this analysis.

- Realization of equal opportunity

The gender-based research of the differences and inequalities of women and men is necessary for the effective realization of rural development and policy of equal opportunity, especially in regions where geographical-social disadvantages emerge in everyday life in different ways and to a different extent, according to the genders, worsened by ethnic disadvantages. The importance of the topic of the research is justified by the expectations of the EU: it is compulsory to take the equality of genders into consideration in region-developing programs from the planning phase to the evaluation of the projects. The ratio of female leaders in local politics, comparing to the national average, is higher in Ormánság – partially due to the fact that in small settlements people know each other well, but there are no civil organizations that would involve women, pay attention to them and offer them special, successful programs.

Economic recession in this disadvantageous region, which followed the political transformation, restored the traditional gender roles. The application of new employment and training forms in rural development and social fields can help to reduce the inequality between genders.

PUBLICATIONS

Published literature related to PhD topic

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2. JELENSZKYNÉ F. I. 2002: *A női munkavállalás mintái és lehetőségei Pécsen a 20. sz. első felében*. Elhangzott: Geográfus Doktoranduszok VII. országos Konferenciája, Pécs