

# **1 The Structuring of Slovenian Society and Gender as the Structured and the Structuring Structure**

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Readdressing the question of how (contemporary) societies are structured (producing and reproducing the existing relations) and how they change, we cannot but reflect on the almost eternal sociological questions and dilemmas, such as: Which is more important, structure or action, supra-individual complex units or agents? Who conditions whom? Do structures establish the conditions for individuals' actions or do individuals create structures through their actions? Those who have addressed these issues have tended to place themselves on one or the other side of these dilemmas. Amongst those who have attempted to overcome these "apparent dilemmas" is Anthony Giddens, who says: "structure is 'subject-less'. [...] structuration, as the reproduction of practices, refers abstractly to the dynamic process whereby structures come into being. By the duality of structure I mean that social structure is both constituted by human agency and yet is at the same time the very medium of this constitution" (1993, 128-129.).

We could, therefore, say that structures have been formed throughout history and are accordingly constructed and persistent, representing the framework of their agents; on the other hand, they are, as Marx would put it, created by individuals and groups acting in specific situations and circumstances that they have not themselves chosen. As such, structures are subjected to change and are changing; or, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu: "Through the economic and social necessity that they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous world of the domestic economy and family relations, or more precisely, through the specifically familial manifestations of this external necessity (forms of the division of labour between the sexes, household objects, modes of consumption, parent-child relations, etc.), the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the habitus, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences" (1990, 54). As structured structures, they are strong, resistant and rigid, while at the same time being vulnerable and prone to change. They are diverse in the different moments of history, and vary in their susceptibility to persistence and change. This applies not only to class structures coming into being and changing throughout history, but

also to other important structures, such as economic, racial, gender-related, national, political, etc.

Referring to social structures, Bourdieu states, amongst other things, “on the one hand, the objective structures that the sociologist constructs, in the objectivist moment, by setting aside the subjective representations of the agents, form the basis for these representations and constitute the structural constraints that bear upon interactions; but, on the other hand, these representations must also be taken into consideration, particularly if one wants to account for the daily struggles, individual and collective, which purport to transform or to preserve these structures. This means that the two moments, the objectivist and the subjectivist, stand in a dialectical relationship” (1989, 15).

For a proper understanding of the structuring of society, Bourdieu’s conception of the social world, which he defines as consisting of numerous microcosmoses or fields (religious, educational, sporting, political, academic, etc.), is also significant. Each field is positioned in relation to the other fields. In the present discussion, we focus on the following fields: education, work, the private sphere (family) and politics. We will attempt to answer the question as to how women (and men) position themselves in these fields and what happens in the process of passing between them. The fields are relatively delineated and autonomous, with the individuals and groups in them acting as agents who compete for positions in these fields (cf. Bourdieu, 2004b: 73-77; Bourdieu, 1984/2002: 226; Warde, 2004). This struggle and its results are affected by differences in the form and quantity of the capitals (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) that these agents possess.

Thus, if each person occupies a specific position in the social structure and/or in a given field, it could be useful to adopt the view that this position is historically generated. It is of utmost significance that we partake in enabling a diverse range of impulses to form various capitals as early as in the family. We are each born into a particular social setting, with precisely determined amounts of various capitals that either encourage or restrict our possibilities to obtain and transmit different types of capital. For the purposes of the present discussion, it is important that “to be born into the female gender” brings different possibilities to increase the amounts of the various capitals and greater restrictions in augmenting the most desired capitals compared to being born as a male (Skeggs, 2002, 9).

In fact, it is the positioning in the fields and the possibilities of obtaining and transmitting capitals from one field to another that will be the object of our investigation. The formations

and conversions, transformations and transmissions of various types of capital do not occur without remainders nor without blockages. Amongst other things, our focus of interest will be on where and why these losses (especially amongst women) take place and what affects them.

According to Bourdieu, fields require a relational mode of thinking (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96). In this sense, we can define them as a network, a flexible configuration of objective relations between positions. Positions, in turn, are defined by the existing or potential situations in the structure of the distribution of the various types of capital. Access to the special profits available in the field determines the possession of capitals as well as the relationship to other positions (dominant, subordinate, similar) in the field (ibid.: 97). The distribution of power between the agents of the field determines the structure of the field, while this is also determined by the structure of the distribution of capitals, i.e., the relations between the agents in the field (Bourdieu, 2004b, 75). The quantity and structure of capitals change in time, as a result of life trajectories and the dispositions (*habitus*) of the agents. There is a dominant agent in the field “that occupies a position in the structure such that the structure works to its advantage” (Bourdieu, 2004b, 75).

As previously indicated, a field is always a stage for the struggles taking place to preserve, reconfigure or even radically change the power within it. As a structure of objective relations between the positions of power, a field supports and directs the strategies adopted by those who hold positions and seek (individually or collectively) to protect or improve the principles of hierarchical organisation that suit them, and to impose these principles on others. The strategies adopted and performed by the agents depend on their position in the field, on the distribution of specific capitals and on perceptions of the specific field as well as its relation to other fields. The agents shape their own perspective with regard to their position in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, 101).

Discussing the social structure, the structuring of the social world and the power relations in given fields, we cannot, of course, ignore gender as an important structuring and structural element of the social world (Risman, 2004). Gender has turned out to be one of the strongest and most persistent and consistent structuring structures, and is consequently perceived and accepted as natural (Bourdieu, 2002,8). As a result, as Bourdieu put it: “The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification: the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it” (ibid., 9).

Gender as a structure of social practice is also thematised by Raewyn Connell, who conceptualises gender “as a way in which social practice is ordered” (2005, 71) that is creative and inventive, that responds to particular situations and that is generated within definite structures of social relations (ibid.,72). Gender relations, claims Connell, form one of the major structures in this process. The structure generated as individuals and groups grapple with their historical situations relates to a social practice that does not consist of isolated acts. Actions are configured in larger units, and when we speak of “masculinity” and “femininity” we are actually speaking of “configuration of gender practice”, whereby the process of configuring practice has to be seen as a dynamic process and masculinities and femininities as a gender project. “These are processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting-points in gender structures” (ibid.).

Connell also determines that this gender shaping of practice is found at every level of social reality, but is most clearly seen in the individual’s life course (see also Berger and Luckmann, 1988), the basis of common-sense notions of masculinity and femininity. The configuration of practice, however, is also implemented at the level of the state and its institutions (the spheres of work, family, school, etc.). The latter are, therefore, decisively gendered (Connell, 2005, 73). Reading Bourdieu in parallel, one can add that the family, the Church and the school are the key authorities that have been objectively harmonised and whose common denominator has been the exertion of influence on the subconscious structures that have assisted in the reproduction of gender inequality (2002, 85).

In order to understand gender as structure, there are, to summarise Connell (2005, 73-75), three important fields: a) power relations in which women’s subordination and men’s dominance over women persist in spite of numerous cases of inverse situations in individual localities and despite many forms of resistance, including the feminist one; b) production relations, which are important precisely due to the gendered division of labour and men’s “dividend” deriving from it; this, however, not only concerns unequal pay but also the gendered process of capital accumulation, and it is therefore necessary to understand that large corporations or banks are run by men not as a consequence of a “fault in the system” but of socially constructed masculinity; and c) emotional relations, which are an equally important aspect of gender order, containing important practices affecting the shaping of desire, with regard to which questions arise as to whether these relations are “consensual or coercive, whether pleasure is equally given and received” (ibid,74). In the feminist analyses

of sexuality, these questions are associated with the relation between heterosexuality and male domination, while, at the same time, we cannot overlook symbolism, culture and discourse. There is nothing outside discourse: society is a world of meanings, and that holds for gender as well. As it is, language is phallogentric (Lacan), which means that we are dealing with a symbolic order in which language is determined with a phallic emphasis, in a culture that has embodied “the law of the father” (Connell, 2009, 84). In order to surpass this, it is necessary to “escape known forms of language” (ibid.) and create new ones.

Connell is aware that gender is not the only structuring element, that “gender ‘intersects’ – better interacts – with race and class” and “it constantly interacts with nationality or position in the world order” (2005, 75). Gender order, as she understands it, is something continuously in the making and subject to change under the influence of various types of agency of individuals and groups; it is the result of their acceptance, on the one hand, and their resistance, negotiation and change, on the other.

Regardless of whether we understand social structure in the sense of fields (Bourdieu) or institutions (Connell), we have to conclude that fields/institutions comprise visible structures and a certain fixed (gender) order that is manifest in the sense that, as a rule, secretaries are women, most managers are men; most construction workers are men, most cleaning personnel are women; most primary school teaching staff are women, most scientists are men; most politicians are men, most social work staff are women, etc. Despite some changes within certain fields, these firmly rooted structures persist in other fields (institutions) and especially globally.

Important for the present discussion is Connell’s finding that “[R]esearch on a very wide range of organisations has mapped their gender regimes” (Connell, 2009, 72). Gender regimes are thus formed by the organisational patterns in organisations such as schools, offices, armies, churches, hospitals, factories and politics. The gender regimes of these institutions are, in turn, part of wider patterns, which she calls “the gender order of a society” (ibid., 72-73). In the following chapters of the present book, we will, therefore, investigate what happens in school, in the field of paid work and in the family, what the distribution of roles is within them, and who is understood as suitable to perform specific roles and duties in these fields (institutions). The specific gender regime of each of these institutions produces very real consequences for the distribution of roles in the others. If, in fact, it is assumed that women are supposed to do most of the unpaid, reproductive work in the family and engage in

child care, or if it is taken for granted that it is better for women (no matter how highly educated, competent and successful) to stay in the background and not occupy the highest positions, this most likely results in obstacles to women on their path to politics, as entering politics runs counter to the social construction of femininity and the place assigned to it in the social structure.

This is confirmed by Connell, who claims that the gender regimes of institutions usually correspond to the overall gender order of a society. Although changes in one institution can destabilise the gender regime of another, and that it is therefore about the relationships both within institutions (fields) and between them, these changes take place slowly and with “small steps” because they affect the ways in which people, groups and organisations are connected, apposed, juxtaposed and divided; gender relations are continuously formed and reformed in daily life (cf. *ibid.*, 74).

Each social structure determines the possibilities and consequences of the individual's actions. In this sense, social structure conditions the practices not only of individuals but also of entire systems, institutions and fields. Rules are manifest in advancement criteria, in the ways (male and female) bodies are controlled, in power relations over certain groups of men and women (such as gays and lesbians, single women, etc.), in who does more productive (and therefore paid) or reproductive (and therefore unpaid) work; which gender is oriented towards care professions and who is offered a wider range of choices; who is expected to be obedient and “good” and with regard to whom is daring behaviour, even aggression, tolerated; how conditions for entering and engaging in a field are determined (e.g., in science, sport, politics, etc.).

### **1.1 From where does gender draw the power to structure society?**

The question is inevitably raised as to whether gender is, in fact, such a strong structuring factor; from where does gender draw this power? Joan W. Scott claims that gender has become “... a way of denoting ‘cultural construction’ – the entirely social creation of ideas about appropriate roles of women and men. It is a way of referring to exclusively social origins of subjective identities of men and women. Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body” (Scott, 1986, 1056).

Barbara J. Risman goes even further in this regard, arguing that gender difference is primarily a means to justify social stratification and that it is first socially constructed and then universally adopted to justify stratification (Risman, 2004, 430). According to Risman, the creation of this difference is the very foundation of the inequality that can be found in many institutions, materialised in the corresponding social structure (ibid. 431.). This conception, she believes, separates structure from individual motives, making it exist outside these motives (ibid.). As a consequence, not only are men and women coerced into different social roles, but they often choose their gendered paths themselves. According to Risman, a social structural analysis can help us to answer the question as to how and why this happens (cf. ibid.).

Individuals' choices are not made in an empty space but in a determined social context in which people – men and women – are surrounded by structural barriers or structural opportunities. Individuals are active, but active in determined circumstances that differ from one situation to another and affect their choices and “choices”. In doing gender, we are influenced by both vast and remote social systems and institutions (macro level), groups and organisations (family, friends) that are close to us (mezzo level), as well as by completely individualised factors, such as the types of rationality (Weber, Foucault) that we embrace in making these choices (micro level). All of the levels are interlinked, interwoven and interdependent in problematic (conflicting) relationships, relationships of (non)cooperation and opposition. Changes in one level can initiate changes in another; this is not, however, necessary, simple or unambiguous.

In short, changes do occur. At times, it seems that they are minimal, but an insight into a somewhat longer time period reveals them as empirically measurable, as well as being analytically mapped and explicable (more on this in the following chapters). It is precisely this insight into stalled change and persistence that is the purpose of the present study: we seek to demonstrate the changes, shifts and alternations in the structuring of Slovenian society and the role and place of gender in these processes. In order to better understand the gendered structure of contemporary Slovenia, we will draw on empirical data and explorations carried out in education, employment and politics, and, beyond that, in the transformation of the value system(s) and the position(ing) of women and men in them, through them.

A typical example in the change of the institutional gender regime within an institution that we have all had an opportunity to experience for a prolonged period of time during our lives is

a primary school. It holds for primary school that teachers are predominantly women. Yet, this has not always been the case. Prior to 1869, there were no women teachers in Slovenian schools (insofar as public schools existed at all), which made school a strongly gendered, male-dominated institution. When the school doors opened for women, they gradually started filling teaching positions themselves. Just prior to the Second World War, 65% of all teachers were women, and by 1950 their presence had risen to 78.5%. Two decades later, in 1969, 77.9% of teachers were women, and in the 1990s their share fluctuated around 85%. Today, primary school is one of the most feminised sectors of the education system, with the proportion of women ranging between 95% and 98% in recent years.<sup>1</sup> These are the figures for Slovenia. If we consider school in some other places in the world, we see that these changes have not yet taken place and that education is not yet a basic human right whose implementation is guaranteed by the state. In some environments, we even observe that the majority of women are still illiterate, that there are almost no female teachers, and that the lives of women and girls who fight for their right to education are endangered, as has been demonstrated recently by the case of the Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the changes described above have failed to bring about significant shifts in the entire field of education (from kindergarten to university), which continues to be very clearly gendered. While preschool teachers and first-cycle primary school teachers are predominantly women, the highest positions at the university level are still occupied by men: in 2011, only 39.9% of all positions in higher education institutions were occupied by women. We can therefore conclude that, although the gender structure in the field is undergoing change, the gender regime of male domination is still at work. Women prevail at the lower levels of education, whereas higher, more prestigious and economically stronger decision-making positions are still predominantly reserved for men (this will be examined in more detail in the following chapters). Furthermore, the aforementioned shifts and alternations in this field have failed to bring about a major change in global gender order; they have, nonetheless, enabled certain shifts in other fields, such as the field of the labour market, including certain value shifts, which will be discussed in the continuation. While the gender regimes of some institutions and systems have been subject to more rapid change, others have undergone very slow change or have barely experienced change at all, which indicates that institutions and gender regimes are not equally subject to change.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistical Yearbook: <https://www.stat.si/letopis/LetopisVsebinska.aspx?poglavje=6&lang=si&leto=2012>

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malala\\_Yousafzai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malala_Yousafzai)



One of the institutions that is very slow in changing its gender regime, and that is at the foreground of our interest, is the field of (institutionalised) politics. In the following chapters, we will seek to investigate why the indicated shifts in the gender regimes of, for example, education and (paid) work have not brought about any major changes in the gender regimes of political institutions: Why does politics persevere as a still predominantly “male field”? Why have the accumulated cultural and social capitals of women in these fields not been transferred/transferrable to the field of politics? Where are they lost, or is their transmission blocked? Which (structural) barriers and “barriers” do these capitals encounter on their transmission from various fields to the field of politics? Who are the “agents” of these barriers?

## **1.2 Producing and reproducing gender and gender relations within institutions ...**

Producing and reproducing gender is possible because gender is not a given but is created, constructed. This presupposes our awareness that, as Judith Butler pointed out, gender is performative.

“Hence within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.” [...] “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its result” (Butler, 1999, 33).

In other words, we do not do (perform) what we do because we are of female or male sex; on the contrary, by doing certain things we repeat certain actions, we are engaged in a certain field, we act and look one way rather than another, we perform gender and produce a series of effects that strengthen the impression that we are either men or women. Thus femininity and masculinity are entities that produce and reproduce themselves through the practices of repetition and performative acts. By failing to perform one’s gender through one’s actions, by straying from the established workings of one’s gender, the individual risks submitting him/herself to the effects of formal institutions or forms of informal pressures, whose goal is to keep us in the right place (in the right gender).

Accordingly, we do (produce and reproduce) gender, perform it, although we do not do it in social isolation. On the contrary, we are located in various social realities, social and cultural

contexts, everyday material and discursive practices. We are surrounded both by other individuals and by groups and institutions, fields displaying a preformed attitude to gender and therefore viewing themselves and others in accordance with their (individual and collective) expectations and particular types of rationalities, which justify their personal expectations in doing gender as well as doing gender by others.

The shaping, the establishing, the doing of gender creates differences between girls and boys, between men and women, that are not biological, essential or natural. However, once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the “essentialness” of gender (West and Zimmermann, 1987, 137).

Thus gender – as the structured structure that further structures, produces and reproduces itself as the gender structure – persists over a longer period of time. In this way, the current arrangements for the domestic division of labour support two production processes: the goods and services needed in the everyday lives of men and women, children and the elderly, and, at the same time, gender. This is the mechanism by which both the material and symbolic products of the household are realised (Berk in West and Zimmermann, 144).

Through production, doing gender establishes both male dominance and female subordination. Both are established relationally: it is impossible to speak about the subordination of women without speaking about the dominant position of men. Moreover, both are reinforced in individual as well as in collective practices of submission and privilege, acceptance and justification of one or the other position; at the same time, they both change while actively resisting and abandoning either of the practices, again at the individual and collective levels.

Here, the aforementioned institutions studied in the context of the present project play a particularly important role. Gender structure is produced, reproduced, justified, legitimised, preserved and, in part but still too slowly, undergoes change. Institutions (educational, religious, political, etc.) are, by their nature, vast and inert systems; in order to change them, focused long-term efforts are required, and even these are not always sufficient to lead to more comprehensive shifts, at least when it comes to the gender structure of societies. Seen in this light, the above conclusions are not surprising.

### 1.3 ... and especially in politics

Politics has a special place amongst the listed institutions because it is traditionally understood as a male field, a field that is dominated by men. It is not particularly difficult to find evidence to support this claim. A brief survey of the statistical data on the gender ratio in politics around the globe shows that only 12.3% of members of parliament are women; the ratio is even more disproportionately in favour of men in the upper houses of parliaments (19.3%): in those of Arab countries 15.9% are women, in those of European countries (excluding Nordic countries) 23%, and in those of Nordic countries 42.3%.<sup>3</sup> In January 2014, there were only 19 women premiers and presidents of state in the world, and only 7 of these were in Europe.

At the same time, this is a field that for a long time was not even discussed or researched in connection with gender, as if gender and politics had no common ground. Until feminist theory entered the field, the prevailing conviction was that the perspective of political theory was gender neutral (cf. Squires, 1999). In fact, by raising the issue and taking the aspect of gender into account in politics it is not a case of marking previously gender-neutral terrain with gender; quite the opposite: it is a case of revealing the power of gender as a structuring factor in this field (as well). Just like other fields, politics is not, and cannot be, gender unmarked; it is (again quite the opposite) strongly gendered, but until recently it was a field that had remained unproblematised.

Women were excluded from politics (its institutionalised part, in particular) for long periods of time (in numerous cases with legislation that explicitly prohibited their participation). Only following the acknowledgement of their political rights and the implementation of gender-neutral legislative diction did their participation become possible; however, due to the differentiated positioning of men and women in other fields, and, consequently, their different starting points, women had to settle for much less favourable conditions upon their engagement in politics. The situation improved somewhat for women who aspired to enter (institutional) politics only when it became clear that legislated non-exclusion did not in itself bring inclusion and that additional mechanisms were required (special measures, quotas, etc.) enabling those who were previously excluded easier entry into the field.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

When gender and politics arrived on the public agenda, the issue of women and their exclusion from the field was problematised, their absence or under-representation in the field was thematised. The impression was created that it was only a question of women. As numerous authors have pointed out, for a long time feminist theory primarily addressed the issue of including women in politics, whether as equal to or completely different from men; only much later did they engage with the problem of deconstructing and reshaping this field (Squires, 1999).

Importantly, we must remember that the absence of a critique of gender positioning in politics made it possible, in the first place, for there to be no discussion about the gender-power relationship; that power and political power were only perceived in the negative sense as “power over” rather than “power to”; and that there was a lack of understanding that the power of men in public and in politics does not mean that men dominate the public sphere while women dominate the private sphere. In fact, by engaging in the public domains and being the sole holders of political power, men can pass legislation, make decisions regarding public finances, direct development, determine preferences, and assume the right to control the actions of all of those who operate (only) in the private domains (cf. Hearn, 1992, 103).

Speaking of politics, we need to be aware that it is about a specific internal structure, about the institutions in which politics takes place and the organisations that take part in it, about their organisation, their interconnectedness and their mutual exclusion, as well as about immaterial factors, such as ideas regarding for whom this domain is more appropriate (men or women), which entry conditions apply to either men or women, how the operation and achievements of the former and the latter are assessed and evaluated, and similar. As long as only one gender was involved, it was impossible to expect the norms of this world to be shaped on the basis of gender-neutral principles. On the contrary, the shaping of the political field must have been affected by the fact that women did not participate in its structuring. The structures and practices of this space were shaped according to the experience and needs of the representatives of one gender. Concealed all along was the fact that these practices consisted of the experience accumulated by men in male-dominated fields, whereas insights into the experience of those operating in other fields were missing. In pointing out the overlooked accumulated experience, we are aware that this was not the only missing perspective, and that, in addition to there being a failure to include all men in the process of political decision-making, the experience of the different groups of men was taken into account to a varying extent; we are also aware that it is a case of hegemonic masculinity that

could only thrive on the basis of the support to all of those men who did not themselves participate directly but only indirectly, drawing certain benefits from it (Connell, 2005). On the other hand, as Jeff Hearn points out, social, economic, symbolic and political structures lead to gender imbalance (Hearn, 1992). The difference in power between men and women means that men, collectively and individually, albeit differently, gain the most from the social organisation of genders that, as Hearn puts it, reflects the patriarchal social order (ibid.). Although most advantageous for white, upper-class, heterosexual men, and less favourable for those groups of men whose identity is determined in the intersection of non-white races, alternative forms of sexuality and minority nationality, it is men who, in this gender order and regardless of their position in the social structure, benefit more than women due to their male identity. From this, Hearn draws the conclusion that men are members of a powerful social category that brings them power purely through being associated with it (ibid.). Their power is further supported and enabled by the economic, political, institutional and discursive structures through which the material aspects of male power are reproduced.

Despite all of the above, political masculinity remains, for the most part, beyond the reach of critical reflection. It seems that the structure of the political field is – at least in Slovenia – not entirely the result of the power relations in other fields from which women were traditionally excluded but later given admission to (education, paid work and economics, language, etc.). It would seem that gender relations in certain other fields change faster than in the field of politics, and that politics remains a male stronghold defended and preserved partly by reinforcing the stereotyped images of women who are not interested in politics because it is too rough, too dirty and takes too much time. This is a way of keeping women in the background, where they are seen to support men in politics; if they move into the foreground, they are immediately targeted with the question of “who is behind them”.

Due to the current state of affairs, we will focus, amongst other things, on how institutions and institutional changes can participate in the endeavours to surpass this state, and how the dominant cultural patterns affect the change and persistence of the established patterns.

All of this is even more interesting and demanding for reflected examination due to the fact that the political field is itself changing, in Slovenia and elsewhere. The way the field is structured is changing, political institutions and organisations (parties and other agents) are changing, the rules of organisation and agency as well as the gender structure of the field are changing. While only two centuries ago the field was completely dominated by one gender,

the male gender, and women were explicitly prohibited to enter, with some women paying for their “interference” in the field of politics with their lives, and while more than a century ago the first women obtained the right to vote on a par with men, women today, seen globally, still constitute the minority; yet the shifts, so it seems, are prominent and irreversible. It is no longer possible to ban women from politics, to forbid them to be politically active.

If we view the changes in the temporal dimension, it can be confirmed, as many have assessed, that these changes occur very slowly and that special measures, legislation and policies need to be introduced to accelerate change: politics remains a gendered field of operation.

This conclusion is, of course, also valid for Slovenia. The fact is that Slovenia was recognised as the most advanced, economically developed country within the context of the previous state formation (Yugoslavia), and one where, comparatively, the greatest progress had been achieved in terms of gender relations. These conceptions of Slovenia persisted in the transition period, in the decade of the construction of the new state; the first decade, in particular, saw the emergence of institutions and the promotion of legislative acts whose goal was to gain gender equality in society at various levels and in various fields.

All of this calls for additional reflection, given that the aforementioned processes have failed to produce the desired results, with politics clearly remaining a gendered field. The questions we will address in the following chapters are: Why are shifts in certain fields not followed by shifts in the field of politics? Which factors have significantly influenced this process and caused it to stall? Where have shifts occurred in the structure of Slovenian society and where have they not? Which of the dominant values have contributed to this situation? All of these questions require answers if we are to take a significant step forward in understanding the causes for the conspicuous absence and the modest, disproportionate inclusion of women in politics. We will seek to provide answers to at least some of these questions, especially to the question of their structural conditionality.