7   Women, Politics and the Value Orientations of Contemporary Slovenian Society

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After more than two decades of dealing with the issue of the (still) low presence of women in Slovenian politics, during which time we have witnessed relatively favourable changes in some other fields (education, employment, pay), we cannot ignore the fact that, despite certain favourable shifts (mostly at the institutional level), the dynamics of change have stalled and we are recording stagnation or, at least, a rate of change that is (too) slow.

Slovenia belongs to a group of Central European countries that display many common features in their development to date (Fuchs and Klingemann, 2006), while, at the same time, it is a country with many special features originating in its previous history within the Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as in its specific situation in the once common state of Yugoslavia. This distinguishes Slovenia from many other countries of the former socialist-communist block (Miheljak, 2006).

Following its transition to a new political and economic system, and despite the many attempts to retraditionalise Slovenian society (especially with regard to the position of women) (Jogan, 2000; Antić Gaber, 2006), Slovenia was one of the first of the transition countries (Jalušič and Antić, 2001) to address the issue of gender equality at the institutional level (for example by setting up the Parliamentary Committee for Women's Policy and the Government Office for Women's Policy in the beginning of the 1990s). However, having introduced gender quotas at the beginning of the second decade of Slovenia's existence as a sovereign state, it seems that the position of women in the field of politics still leaves much to be desired, as it was only after the last general election in 2011 that the presence of women in parliament reached a critical mass.

This inevitably raises the question: How is it possible that in Slovenia – a country that was once considered the most economically developed and the most open and pro-Western part of the socialist block, a country that was the best prepared for the looming transition period changes, that was the first to join the EU and enter the euro area, that managed to keep its income inequities below an alarming level, that did not strip women of or severely limit abortion rights during the transition to the new political system, that allowed women to preserve their jobs to a higher degree than in many other post-socialist states, and that, for a long time, succeeded in maintaining a relatively favourable level of social benefits (paid

maternity leave, a public childcare system, etc.) – we are lagging so far behind when dealing with the question of the equal participation of women and men in politics, particularly in the highest positions of political decision-making?

Where, then, do the reasons lie for the low participation of women in Slovenian politics? Why is it that highly educated, economically independent women, who are working full time and are relatively successful in their professions and workplace, cannot find their way to positions of political decision-making? What type of obstacles hinder this step and where are they located? What is the role played in this regard by the broader cultural context? What is the role of the prevailing social norms, values, convictions, myths, stereotypes and everyday practices that are identifiable in Slovenian society and/or how have these changed in recent decades?

In considering the above questions, we will focus on the trends and changes of the past few decades. This approach is taken because we feel that the current course of events cannot be adequately comprehended without understanding the past: the continuities and discontinuities, the shifts and turns, the persistent features and the changes that have taken place over a longer period of time. In collecting data, undertaking analysis and interpreting historical events, we will go back several decades (to the late 1970s and early 1980s), to the time when Slovenia was part of Yugoslavia. It seems that the period of the old regime significantly marked the events that followed much later in the country's development.

Given that our focus is on understanding gender equality in the field of politics, we cannot avoid mentioning that Slovenia (Yugoslavia) was, in 1974, the first country in the world to give women reproductive rights including the right to abortion (Rožman, 2009). It was also a country that, as early as in 1975, expanded maternity leave from three to eight months and later to a year of paid childcare leave, and stipulated by law the division of parental leave between the mother and father. In addition, it set up a broad system of public childcare, it introduced the principle of equal pay for equal work, it decriminalised homosexuality in 1976, and it enabled civilian service as an alternative to compulsory military service, in so doing beginning the demystification of manhood associated with power, heroism and similar. We assume that all of these factors contributed significantly to creating conditions in which women can be active in the public sphere and politics. Indeed, these legislative and practical solutions set women free from the bonds of family life in which they are considered first and foremost – or only – as a mother and housekeeper. The stated measures provided women with

an initial exit from the exclusive framework of the family, thus facilitating their engagement with questions of the broader (political) community.

We are also interested in the dominant perceptions of gender equality amongst the population. How do people perceive the roles of men and women in society and in politics? Where do they predominantly position men and where women? Do they see women as capable of embarking on a political career, or do they still see them first and foremost in their traditional roles? Who, according to them, is more suitable for performing political posts? We will examine persistence as well as shifts and alternations in the perceptions of citizens over a longer period of time. This will help us to better understand the slow pace of change in establishing gender equality in the field of politics.

7.1 Theoretical re-examination

Our point of departure was the question as to where the reasons lie for the still relatively low proportion of women in Slovenian politics. On the basis of research carried out to date, we can conclude that the participation of women in decision-making processes is influenced by three types of factors: cultural, socioeconomic and political. Here we will focus mainly on the first of these, which, despite some exceptions (Antić, 2011a; Fink Hafner, Krašovec, Deželan and Topolinjak, 2011), has, in our view, not yet been adequately investigated in Slovenia with regard to the participation of women in politics.

Before tackling this issue, let us briefly address the other two sets of factors. Socioeconomic factors create conditions that enable women to engage in the field of politics in the first place. Amongst the more important of these factors are the Human Development Index, the country's GDP, the gender pay gap (imbalances in wages between men and women), the proportion of women in the labour market, the birth rate, the level of development of social welfare (Siaroff, 2000; Tremblay, 2007), and the influence of the welfare state (Inglehart and Welzl, 2005). Political factors are largely associated with the structure of the political system and the type of electoral system (proportional or majority) (Antić, 1998; Antić, 2003; Fink-Hafner, Deželan and Topolinjak, 2005; Murko Pleš, Nahtigal and Pleš, 2011), as well as with the political party structure and the organisational structures, type of leadership and ideological orientations of political parties (Krašovec and Deželan, 2011). Also of relevance are issues associated with the pool of eligibles (Norris, 1996, Matland and Montgomery, 2003) from which parties recruit their candidates, which, in turn, depend on recruitment procedures and selection rules associated with the role of party gatekeepers (Antić, 1998).

In the present text, cultural factors are defined as factors referring to the values, convictions and attitudes of social groups and individuals towards important institutions of the (political) system. Special importance is attributed to the role and significance of religions in society, and how these influence the prevailing conceptions of gender relations and gender equality. Research into the representation of women in politics addressed this question with great scientific rigour relatively early on (cf. Rule, 1987). Protestantism appears to be more in favour of women's education and gender equality, but a country's development rate is also an important factor (Inglehart and Welzl, 2005). Thus, it seems that Protestantism and post-industrial society are extremely important factors encouraging a high proportion of women in the processes of decision-making (Siaroff, 2000, 201).

In their research, Ingelhart and Norris (2000, 2001, 2003) concluded that the representation of women in politics is significantly influenced by the general attitude of society towards gender equality. Welzel (2002) even sought a connection between a high representation of women in politics and a low level of corruption in the country. In fact, this research confirms the finding that the dominant culture – with its beliefs and convictions regarding proper gender roles in the family and society, gender relations within the sphere of paid work and employment, but most of all with ideas regarding the roles of men and women in the field of politics – has a major impact on the behaviour of women and their daily lives. On the basis of all of the above, attitudes are constructed towards gender positioning in politics (Inglehart and Norris, 2003, 10).

Inglehart and Norris (2003, 11), probably the leading researchers of the interdependence between value orientations, the characteristics of individual national cultures and women's presence in politics, formulate their hypothesis on the basis of slightly modified modernisation theory, which, in a very simplified way, claims that modernisation should be followed by changes in cultural norms and values. Modernisation is thus bound to bring greater representation of women in politics. While the beginnings of modernisation theory can be found in the works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, we witnessed its revival in the 1950s and 1960s with the works of Lipset, Lerner, Rostow and Deutsch. In the 1970s, Daniel Bell claimed that after a period of industrialisation we can foresee the subsequent developmental phases of post-industrial society, while also pointing out that the development is nowhere near linear. Bell's studies refuted certain presuppositions of the earlier studies mentioned above, such as the unilinear path of development, the irreversibility of change, the succession of phases, etc. Despite presumably coinciding economic, cultural and political changes, the

subsequent development of a country is unforeseeable due to its specific cultural factors (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Indeed, the key new feature of the modified modernisation theory is a change of perspective according to which modernisation is no longer a unified linear process but one taking place in two stages: modernisation and postmodernisation (Inglehart and Welzl, 2005). As well as arguing that it is, therefore, not a case of an irreversible and culturally converging process, Inglehart provides a convincing explanation of the significance of socioeconomic development for political culture, which, in turn, affects the political structure (see also Kirbiš, 2011, 86). These processes apparently operate with a reciprocal effect (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

In his exposition, Inglehart claims that citizens who have grown up in a society providing economic security show a higher degree of post-materialist value orientations. The spreading of these values is based on the *hypothesis of deprivation*, which states that the orientations of the individual reflect the socioeconomic environment, with the individual apparently highly valuing that which does not abound, that which is lacking or is hard to obtain, and the *socialisation hypothesis*, according to which there is a certain time (generational) delay in accepting values, with key values taking shape in the course of an individual's maturation in a specific socioeconomic environment (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005, 97-98). Human development thus represents a crucial stimulus for an equal relationship between the sexes; however, the pace of this development is still very much dependent on religion, historical development and tradition, as well as on the institutional structures in a particular environment. Changes in the traditional understanding of the family enable women to take their place in the labour market, with the literacy rates and participation of women in education processes also improving. This phase of development changes the traditional distribution of family roles, resulting in shifts in decision-making processes, which start to include more women (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Inglehart and Norris compared the implementation of gender equality to a rising tide that is very difficult to halt, as this process is part of a larger process involving the social and cultural changes with which a society has become deeply imbued; individual events can, however, stop or even redirect the flow of change, as we shall see in the case of Slovenia. Such a broad conception of culture also affects the proportion of women in parliament and in politics in general, having a decisive impact on political institutions and the social structure (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

In addition to the framework offered by modernisation theory, we will also draw from a concept developed by Geert Hofstede. It forms a part of so-called cultural explanatory

hypotheses, which anticipate that, in traditional societies, women have less chance of standing for office and being elected. According to these hypotheses, traditional assumptions about women have a detrimental effect on the voters and party gatekeepers' decisions, as well as on the stipulation of institutional mechanisms for increasing the proportion of women in politics, including the introduction of gender quotas (Inglehart, Norris and Welzel, 2002). We therefore postulate the hypothesis that the attitude towards gender equality in society and the presence of women in politics are closely interwoven or, in other words, that a greater consensus on the importance of gender equality as a value orientation in society contributes significantly to a more significant presence of women in politics at all levels. In the continuation, we shall also seek to investigate other factors, such as power distance and the traditional division of gender roles, which are addressed by Hofstede, as well as certain hypotheses arising from an analysis of his findings.

In his culturological typology of societies, Hofstede thematised five value orientations: *individualism-collectivism* (the relationship between the individual and society); *uncertainty avoidance* (the reaction of the individual facing circumstances of instability); *power distance* (the desired level of equality in society); *masculinity/femininity* (whether typically masculine or typically feminine gender roles prevail in society; whether the ethos in society is ego-oriented or other-oriented); and *short-term/long-term orientation* (whether society is oriented towards sustainable development). Although Hofstede initially developed his theory within the framework of so-called organisational sociology and corporate culture, he later applied it to the level of national cultures; he did, however, understand that there is a significant difference between organisational and national cultures (organisations enable individuals to decide whether they want to join them) (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 47). In their recent studies, Hofstede and his colleagues have drawn data for the research of national cultures from the same databases as Inglehart (*World Value Survey*).[93] Apart from religious, ethnic and regional differences, Hofstede also emphasised that, in national societies, there are important gender differences in terms of value orientations, which according to him should, but usually do not, form part of the description of the culture of a nation (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 45).

Hofstede goes so far as to speak of two types of culture, identifying a male culture that is different from a female culture. It is precisely this difference that is supposed to clarify why it

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[93] This research has been conducted worldwide since the early 1980s.

is so difficult to change traditional gender roles. In male culture, women are not perceived as individuals who are capable of performing certain roles, not because of their incapacity to fulfil the tasks required by a particular job, but simply because they are symbolically not recognised as capable, they do not fit the widely accepted image of power holders, they do not participate in the rituals that accompany certain roles, or they do not share the values of the dominant male culture (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 45). This is why Hofstede speaks of typically masculine- and typically feminine-oriented societies, which are presumably distinguishable on the basis of whether they are self- or other-oriented. Hofstede believes that this not only has an impact on state policy formation, but also on the informal rules of the "political game" and on men's and women's chances of being elected, with power distance being an important factor indicating the level of importance a society places on the value of equality, that is, the level to which a specific culture tolerates an unequal division of power among the people (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 175).

We can therefore predict that the values of a society influence not only the formation of political structures but also the possibilities of balanced gender representation in politics. In the continuation, we will investigate the extent to which this holds true for Slovenian society, seeking to determine when the proportion of women in politics has increased and when it has decreased, and what, according to researchers, the reasons have been for the low presence of women in politics. Based on an analysis of data acquired in the Slovenian Public Opinion survey, which, since the late 1960s, has been carried out by Slovenia's Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre, we will test Inglehart's and Hofstede's hypotheses and their validity for Slovenia. In the concluding section, we will verify whether the shifts in the proportion of women in politics coincide with changing values associated with gender equality, with the acceptance of the values of equality (power distance), and with orientation towards family life.

7.2   Findings in Slovenia to date

Research on women and politics, and on women in politics, was carried out as early as in the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, when, in February 1963, the Commission for the Social Position of Women in Slovenia of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia (LCS) issued the report *The Social Status of Women in Slovenia*. The analysis covered education, employment and the socio-political activities of

women, and essentially postulated that the "socio-political activity" of women was gradually increasing, but that it was failing to keep up with other indicators of the improvement of the position of women, such as the growing level of education and employment of women. The authors of the research sought the reasons for this primarily in cultural factors, such as the conservative mindset, the patriarchal attitude towards women and their engagement in politics, and the "quality of the participation of women in the processes of political decision-making". They concluded that the participation of women in the life of local communities was unsatisfactory, with their participation in the activities of the LCS being equally low. On investigating women's engagement, it emerged that women were typically active in the fields of family policies and education. The authors of the study arrived at the conclusions that are still valid five decades later, such as the fact that female politicians are considerably better educated than their male colleagues, that women are more self-critical and prone to negative self-evaluation, and that women are simply less often invited to participate in politics. Perhaps the most interesting of the findings is that women were the most active in politics between 25 and 35 years of age (Rener, 1983a, 18-20), a situation that was to change drastically in the 1990s.

Many assertions from the aforementioned analysis were confirmed in subsequent analyses. At the end of the 1970s, Stanič conducted a study on the female members of the LCS, determining that the proportion of women in the LCS had remained unchanged since 1945, standing at 29%. Women of up to 25 or above 40 years of age represented the majority, with the generation of partisans and members of the League of Young Communists of Yugoslavia (known as SKOY) being particularly prominent (see Rener, 1983a, 25-26). Seven years later, a study by Barbič and Ule showed, amongst other things, that women in Slovenia were excluded from decision-making at the local level (Rener, 1983a, 27; Ule, 1979, 25).

In her first study *Socio-Political Activity of Women in the Republic of Slovenia*, undertaken in 1977, Ule scrutinised data from public opinion surveys from the period 1968–1973. She was interested in the viewpoints of both genders regarding political events, as well as their readiness to participate in politics and their actual involvement. Her conclusion was that men were more interested in and ready to participate in politics, as well as being significantly more active in political reality. The most active generation of women in politics was the age group 25–40 years. Based on an analysis of data from the Slovenian Public Opinion survey in the period 1968–1978, this surprising finding confirmed those of earlier studies (Ule, 1979, 29, 32). In interpreting this result, Ule rejected the double burden of women in the workplace and

home as a reason for the lower presence of women in politics, instead seeking the explanation in so-called cultural reasons.

In the aforementioned study, Ule stated that women's "double burden" could not be a valid excuse for their under-representation in politics, as the empirical data clearly showed that employed women were more socially engaged than unemployed or retired women, and much more than housewives. The attachment of the housewife to her home reinforces the traditional role of women, particularly as home is perceived as an apolitical space. It was, in fact, employed women who undermined the idea that women were apolitical, in so doing raising awareness amongst women of the need for political engagement. This point is further emphasised by Ule: "*[...] in my opinion, the key subjective cause for the lack of social engagement, at least for the time being, is the power of traditional conceptions of a specific male and female nature, and from the ensuing specific male and female roles in the family and in society. Today, stereotypical images remain a very significant obstacle to the greater engagement of women in social life [...]*" (Ule, 1979, 33).

Assumptions related to traditional stereotypes could therefore be significantly weakened with the modernisation of society. These issues were addressed by certain studies in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). In a study conducted in the SFRY in 1983, Mirčev found that an increase in the general level of development of society brings with it an increase in the proportion of women in delegate structures (see Rener, 1983a, 24). These findings were not, however, entirely confirmed in a study carried out in Slovenia by Barbič (comp. Rener, 1983a, 27).

The studies performed in this period differ to some extent in their conclusions. Počuča, for instance, concluded that the key obstacle to the adequate participation of women in politics in the SFRY was a lack of free time and overburdening with housekeeping. Similar conclusions were drawn by Leinart, who investigated the political representation of women in Croatia (see Rener, 1983a, 36). Kuzmanović and Radović added a third reason for the low representation of women: women's higher level of self-criticism and greater sense of personal responsibility, which acts as an obstacle to participation in politics (ibid., 33, 115). In her study conducted in Slovenia in 1983, Rener confirmed that these factors have a significant impact on the participation of women in decision-making processes. Women are more prone than men to locate reasons for their non-participation in politics in themselves, typically in the form of statements such as "I am not good at public speaking" or "I find it hard to position myself as

an individual in society" (Rener, 1983b, 77, 79). Furthermore, men are more likely to draw on personal experience in their political engagement, whereas women tend to rely on informal contacts in their living or working context (neighbours, colleagues) (ibid., 80). Rener also found that two thirds of the female respondents had never been asked for their opinion in the local community, thus supporting the hypothesis regarding "silent women" and the deeply rooted convictions about the ascribed roles of women (Rener, 1983b, 91). Consequently, women are less motivated to enter politics and less involved in politics.

After 1991, research into the participation of women in politics continued and, in line with the transition of the political system to parliamentary democracy, was driven by the systematic investigation of elections, political parties and special measures. Research and analyses of the representation of women in Slovenian politics have confirmed the results of research in other parts of Europe showing that in order to achieve a critical mass of women in politics certain special measures have to be introduced (Antić, 1998; Jalušič and Antić, 2001; Antić and Ilonszki, 2003; Antić, 2007). In the period since 1991, studies in Slovenia have been mainly focused on the operation and influence of institutional mechanisms on women's presence in politics, the influence of party policies (Antić, 1999; Fink-Hafner and Krašovec, 2004), the electoral system (Antić, 2003; Fink-Hafner, Deželan and Topolinjak, 2005; Murko Pleš, Nahtigal and Pleš, 2011), national mechanisms (Jalušič and Antić, 2001; Antić, 1999), quotas (Antić and Gortnar, 2004; Antić, 2008) and other factors of the political system (Fink-Hafner and Krašovec, 2004; Jalušič and Antić, 2001; Bahovec and Šetinc, 2006). Researchers have concluded that the electoral system and party policies, with their conceptions of gender equality and the operation of individual factors (such as quotas), have an important impact on women's eligibility. Poor results in parliamentary elections are understood as mainly being a consequence of women standing for office on the voting lists where they cannot be elected, i.e., constituencies where the party they represent has less chance of being elected (Antić, 2011a; Murko Pleš, Nahtigal and Pleš, 2011). The studies have also confirmed that women find their way into high politics in their middle age to late middle age, which means that politics is entered mostly by women whose children are grown up and who have a large part of their professional (or political) career behind them, having already proven themselves as successful. Women entering politics are, as a rule, better educated than men and have fewer children or children who are no longer dependent (Antić and Ilonszki, 2003). In principle, women enter politics to make improvement in the fields in which they work, and they refer to professional knowledge and professional solutions more often than their male colleagues.

Interviews with politicians at the highest level also show that public and private spheres are not two entirely different areas of life, and that an important obstacle to women entering politics is balancing professional and private life (Rožman and Mencin Čeplak, 2012; Kanjuo Mrčela, Šori and Podreka, 2012), along with the prevailing political culture, understanding of politics and the position of the genders in politics (Antić 2011a; Antić and Selišnik, 2012).

In addition to the aforementioned research on the entry of women to the highest positions in the processes of political decision-making, i.e., parliamentary and ministerial positions, certain other studies have been undertaken dealing with women's engagement in local politics. Having included a much larger population of women and displaying a more quantitative nature, these studies are more comparable with those carried out prior to 1991, even though their initial objective was simply to acquire data on the current state of affairs without seeking to explore the reasons for the low participation of women in local politics. In 1996, Guček and Oblak compiled an analysis entitled *The Slovenian Local Elections 1994: Comparison of the Candidates and Their Eligibility by Gender* (Guček and Oblak, 1996), commissioned by the then Parliamentary Committee for Women's Policy. In 1999, the former Government Office for Women's Policy conducted a survey amongst municipal and local councillors reiterating a number of questions from the survey of 1993, addressing the female members of all political parties, as well as adding several new questions (Antić et al., 2001, 4). In 2001, Milica Antić Gaber and colleagues carried out the study *Women in Local Politics*, which, in addition to establishing the state of affairs, sought to investigate the reasons for the low presence of women in politics. The qualitative part of this research consisted of interviews with female mayors, of whom some are today established politicians in top positions. These interviews provide relevant material for a longitudinal study. The qualitative part was accompanied by a questionnaire. Some of the findings of this research were confirmed a few decades later by the study *Balancing Private and Professional Life As an Obstacle to the Higher Participation of Women in Politics* (2008–2011), which surveyed male and female councillors (Antić et al., 2011).

Both studies confirmed the following findings: women in local politics, i.e., councillors, are better educated than their male colleagues and enter politics believing that they can make a positive difference, while men prefer to speak of an "election victory" and a "political game". The study also showed that two thirds of men and only one third of women decided to enter politics on their own initiative, which represents a significant difference and indicates that women need special encouragement to engage politically. An important role is played by "an

invitation" on the part of the president of a party or a prominent party member, or individuals in other prominent political positions.

The study also revealed that, in their own opinion, the greatest hindrance to women entering politics is care for their children and family, as well as fear of a lack of knowledge and experience in general and in the field of politics in particular. This again shows a high level of self-criticism in women. The findings of both sub-studies also disclose a disturbing shift in politics in relation to the age of women who are active in politics. While we can still speak of a "normal" demographic structure of the female councillor population in 2001 (10% below the age of 35, 6% above 66), by 2011 this ratio had changed to the advantage of older women (5% below the age of 30, 10% above 60). In the population surveyed, the share of women who were party members had decreased (from 82% in 2001 to 49% in 2011), as had the share of women satisfied with politics. All of this has been observed by certain other studies that have, at the local level, identified the rise of independent (male) candidates and candidate lists. This could have a negative impact on the development of the political careers of women, who, as independent candidates, will have more difficulty finding their way into political parties operating at the national level or accessing party recruitment officers and adequate social networks.

The trends in women's participation in politics, especially prior to 1991, are almost impossible to establish due to the frequent changes in the representative systems and the decision to pursue the so-called third way, i.e., self-management, which abandoned the bicameral parliament and replaced it with the (partly flexible) delegate system in the 1970s. Taking this fact into account, the collected data was analysed by Vrečko Ashtalkoski and Antić Gaber (2011), who found that women were represented in decision-making bodies to a level of approximately 20%. Their representation never exceeded the critical mass (around 30%), coming closest in 1978 and, despite contrary expectations, diminishing in subsequent years, as was evident at the very next election in 1982 (ibid., 100). Data on the local level also show that the proportion of women active in local community bodies initially increased gradually, but that it never exceeded 20% and, as at the level of the Republic, started to decrease in 1982.[94]

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[94] In 1962, the proportion of women in the local community people's committees (*občinski ljudski odbori*) was 5.9% (Marija Čemažar, 8 March, Naša smučina, 5.3. 1963, 1-2). In 1969, 5.6% of members of the Local Assembly were women (Statistical Yearbook 1970, 38). In 1977, women represented 18% of the membership in Local District organs (*krajevna skupnost*) (Statistical Yearbook 1974, 44). In 1977, the share of women amongst

In the time of independent Slovenia, the upward trend in the proportion of women in politics has mainly been a consequence of the enactment of legislation on quotas at all the three levels of political decision-making (European, national and local) (Antić, 2011a). At European elections, the legislated quotas had an immediate effect due to the fact that parties presented nationwide candidate lists with a minimum of 40% of each gender stipulated by law. A similar effect was produced by the legislation of quotas at the local level in municipalities applying a proportional electoral system, while in those with a majority electoral system quotas did not produce the desired effect. The case of parliamentary elections is slightly more complicated due to the existence of electoral districts within the constituencies.

The dramatic rise in the proportion of women (from 13% to 32%) entering parliament at the parliamentary elections in 2011 was most likely the result of a number of factors. In addition to the legislated quota of 35% for each gender, it was no doubt partly a result of the specific political situation, which manifested itself first and foremost in a climate very much opposed to the established political parties. All of this encouraged the formation of new political parties that favoured the inclusion of women and their standing for office. Furthermore, the new political parties on the Slovenian political map could not yet reliably identify those constituencies in which the possibility of their candidates being elected was either high or low. It is therefore possible to conclude that a period of political or economic crisis, a period of searching for new solutions or a transition period may well be a period of opportunities for representatives of new social groups or bearers of new ideas to enter the political scene. The answer to the question of how political changes can accelerate the upward trend in the proportion of women in politics has, in part, been outlined by the political events of 2011, just as the period 1978–1982 indicated how certain political events have a negative effect on women's eligibility and their decision to stand for office. The latter period was a time marked by the death of President Tito, whose authority had to be replaced by the transfer of at least part of decision-making powers to the Federal Assembly, the Government and the Presidency

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members of Local District organs was 15.3% (Vida Tomšič, *Ženske v razvoju socialistične samoupravne Jugoslavije* [Women in the Development of the Socialist Self-Managed Yugoslavia], Ljubljana, Delavska enotnost/Naša žena, 1980, p. 208), while in 1978 it was 17.2% (Statistical Yearbook of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia 1978, 59), in 1982 it was 19.6% (Statistical Yearbook of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, 1984, 59), and in 1986 it was 17.9% (Statistical Yearbook of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, 1987, 60). In 1990, 10% of members elected to the Local District Assembly were women. Between 1945 and 1952, the function of the local authority was carried out by the Local People's Committee (LPC). In the following period, between 1952 and 1955, LPCs were abolished and replaced by Municipal People's Committees. From 1963, the constitution of the SFRY abolished Municipal People's Committees as organs of local self-management and foresaw the establishment of local districts.

of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. These institutions, however, were not ready for the new role, having not yet formed the rules of political operation (cf. Repe, 2001, 7). In the context of the topic treated here, it is significant that the endeavours to reshape the political system in the wake of the political crisis were accompanied by a deep economic crisis and acute social criticism of the system: the authorities and politics had lost legitimacy (cf. ibid., 18). Accordingly, the economic and political crisis had the power to influence women's participation in politics. Rener also sought reasons for the political passivisation of women in this period in the interventions in the policy of women's employment, which were characterised by attempts to set limits to women's work by proposing part-time work and demanding the return of women to their mothering role (cf. Rener, 1983b, 12).

It is worth adding that the political crisis of the period was compounded by a crisis of the political culture that had been dominant up to that point, which resulted in reduced membership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) for the first time (see Statistical Yearbook 1987, 64) and in the public expression of doubts about the LCY safeguarding the interests and fulfilling the needs of the people. Slovenian Public Opinion data, for example, show that, in 1983, only 19% of the population believed that the policies of the LCY met the needs of the people while 47.8% thought these needs were partly met, whereas in 1980 the results were 49.3% and 22.7%, respectively (Toš, 1997, 292, 424).

The stated findings lead us to conclude that political culture and the attitude towards politics significantly affect the probability of women entering politics and, indirectly, their representation. These factors also have a strong impact on socialisation norms and values that determine women as primary carers for others and for the narrow community (family), also leading to a higher degree of self-criticism, modesty in ambition, lower self-confidence in personal engagement, and most likely shaping their individual readiness to enter the field of political action. At the same time, the participation of women in politics is highly influenced by political events or the political and socioeconomic circumstances, which either promote or limit women's opportunities to take leading positions, as was exemplified by the case of economic and political crises in Slovenia. In stable political conditions, on the other hand, certain institutional and structural changes can have a notable effect on women's participation in politics, without necessarily leading to changes in the value orientations of society. It also ensues from the research that certain values are persistent and that, in order for more radical changes to take place, a generation shift as well as long-term processes of modernisation are required.

7.3   Mapping the changing values associated with gender equality in Slovenia

Investigating cultural factors can contribute significantly to the explanation and elucidation of why women in Scandinavia participate in decision-making processes to a much higher extent and why women in the Muslim world are so much worse off in this regard (if we only consider the two extremes of the continuum). Comparative studies have mainly dealt with the role of religion, attitudes towards feminism and the issue of gender equality, and the distribution of leisure time between men and women (Rule, 1987/1996; Norris and Inglehart, 2001).

Norris and Inglehart carried out several international comparative studies that represent important points of reference for future research in the field. Amongst other things, several of their studies measured the correlation between the proportion of women in parliament and the level of concurrence with the statement "Men are better political leaders than women" (Norris and Inglehart, 2001; Inglehart, Norris and Welzel, 2002; Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Their findings confirm a close link between the proportion of women in parliament and concurrence with the value of gender equality as measured by the above statement. According to one of their studies, Slovenia is positioned somewhere between Catholic and Eastern European countries, representing the golden mean of the European scale (cf. Inglehart, Norris and Welzel, 2002, 35).

In another referential and frequently cited study, Hofstede determines that some societies are more inclined towards favouring gender equality and to minimising gender differences, whereas others prefer to accentuate these differences (Hofstede 1998, 6). This feature of society is characterised by Hofstede as *masculinity/femininity* and is related to the dimension of masculine and feminine value orientations in society. Accordingly, men are presumably more personal-goal driven (ego), engaging in activities that boost their ego, while women are socially oriented and more inclusive in their dealings with others. Given society can thus ascribe higher importance to either masculine values (self-confidence, determination, career, role distribution) or feminine values (relationship orientation, inclusion). Based on Hofstede's calculations, Slovenia scores 19 on the masculinity/femininity dimension (in the 1970s), which positions it in the lower part of the scale, amongst the more "feminine" societies, surprisingly close to Denmark, the Netherlands, Latvia, Norway and Sweden (Hofstede,

Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 143).[95] At the very top of the scale are the Czech Republic, Greece, Argentina and Hong Kong, scoring 57 on the index scale, thus indicating that they are masculine value oriented.

In addition to the dimension of masculinity/femininity, some other researchers have adopted alternative dimensions to determine factors influencing gender equality in society and women's presence in politics. De Mooij combined the dimensions *power distance* and *uncertainty avoidance*, which indicate the individual country's desire for security. In societies with low power distance and a weak desire to avoid uncertainty, women are thought to have more freedom, which is also tolerated and supported by men (De Mooij, 1998, 67). As well as a feminine society, Hofstede identified a low need for uncertainty avoidance as a further reason for more favourable conditions for the higher participation of women in politics (Hofstede, 1998, 91-92). According to this, Slovenia in this period is amongst the countries with a greater demand for avoiding uncertainty, as well as being ranked amongst feminine-oriented societies, while power distance in Slovenian society is growing, being quite high compared to other countries. Particularly according to De Mooij, Slovenian society is not very well disposed to women entering politics.

Similarly, Bullough, Kroeck, Newburry, Kundu and Lowe (2012) conclude in their study on women in leading positions that cultural factors play an important role in ensuring the rights of women and improving their position. They claim that national cultures elucidate the differences in the political participation of women better, i.e., have a greater weight, than the sum total of all other factors. According to this study, the orientations believed to stimulate political participation in society are the performance orientation, in-group collectivism, and power distance. An open environment assesses women and their ascent to positions of political leadership on the basis of their results, merits and individual achievements rather than on the basis of their gender, their study found. Performance-oriented societies place a high value on training and development, emphasise results, reward good performance and achievements, respect competitive behaviour and self-confidence, and are motivated by success. The results of the study showed that a society in which individuals are assessed and rewarded according to their achievement and not on the basis of their gender is important for women asserting themselves in positions of political power. Equally important is power

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[95] Hofstede carried out this study for Slovenian society, as for the others, in the 1970s. According to Kirbiš, he first merged the data and then represented them as national data for Yugoslavia, but following the disintegration of Yugoslavia he analysed them as three separate units: Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia (Kirbiš 2011, 100).

distance, which restricts the mobility of people, and consequently the mobility of women, whereas a society placing a high value on communitarianism – understood by the researchers within the context of the family, in the sense of being proud of and loyal to the family unit but also dependent on it – has a negative effect on the participation of women in politics. The family is thus very important, while, at the same time, its significance is contradictory. Women's strong attachment to the family can deprive them of the incentive to stand for office, but it can also be an important factor of encouragement.

The results of yet another study (Koopman, Hartog and Konrad) from 1999 (cf. Svetlik, 2004, 329) indicate that Slovenia is characterised in terms of values by a low score in achievement orientation (51) and a very high score in family collectivism (31). While both indicators place Slovenia at the very top of the European scale, the score on power distance (23)[96] places it amongst countries with a lower orientation towards power differences (i.e., arguing in favour of differences between people in terms of power and influence). In line with the results on value orientations, it is possible, on the basis of the hypothesis provided by Bullough, Kroeck, Newburry, Kundu and Lowe (2012), to identify reasons for the relatively persistent low representation of women in Slovenian politics. Svetlik (2004) claims that family networks are imbued with the idea of the family, unselfishness or solidarity; in addition to positive effects, however, this also has negative consequences, especially on the incentive of individuals to set themselves goals outside the family, which is further blocked by a low achievement orientation in Slovenia. The burden of "the silent majority of women" thus gains a new image, being much more than the double workload at work and in the family putting women under time pressure: it is about the power of socialisation and prescribed norms that hardly allow any deviations, as well as the results of the gender and class habitus at work. It is also evident that people in Slovenia do not aspire to outstanding achievements, nor do they value these aspirations in other people, viewing them rather as a curiosity. The economic and political crisis has, most likely, further strengthened this situation.

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of some values for Slovenia, let us examine the conceptions of gender equality that can be identified in the country. In the time of socialism, it was widely accepted that we are all equal, in the sense that we all belong to the working class. Men and women were equal both by law and according to the constitution, and the realisation

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[96] While Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) establish high power distance (71) in the 1970s, Svetlik (2004, 329) points out that, in the 1990s, the index of power distance for Slovenia was low (23), which represents a significant change.

of this equality was the responsibility of the leading political force, i.e., the Communist League. The problem of equality between men and women was therefore not particularly prominent and thematised, as is clear from the above studies. It also follows from these studies that the first critical analyses began to appear at the onset of the crisis of the political system at the end of the 1970s and at the beginning of the following decade. With the socialist period drawing to a close, certain segments of the previously uniform socialist working class (peasants, young people, women) began to voice their existence and highlight their unequal position more vigorously. Scrutinising the public discourse on gender equality of the transition period, we can identify several typical (mis)conceptions: gender equality as the forced emancipation of women in the time of socialism; gender equality as something unnatural, something not arising from Slovenia itself but emerging as a product of radical feminism imported from the West; gender equality as gender sameness; and, in one part, genuine equality as equal opportunity for women and men (see also Antić Gaber, 2006).

The attitude of the Slovenian population towards the place of women and men in society, gender equality and equal opportunity for each individual is also revealed by data from public opinion surveys conducted in Slovenia since the end of the 1960s. Although the questions related to equality and gender equality have undergone certain changes over time, it is possible to identify, on the basis of the answers given, some changes and/or trends indicating the general attitude of the population towards this issue. The opinion polls have been based mainly on the following type of statement: "A woman should be primarily a mother and a housewife, while socio-political work should be undertaken by men" (1975/1976); "Men are better political leaders than women" (1995); "On the whole, men are better political leaders than women" (2005, 2011); "To what extent is the person described below similar to you? For this person, it is important that everyone in the world is treated equally; s/he believes that everyone has to have the same opportunities in life" (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012), and "We will list several words and notions. Without too much deliberation, please assess your attitude towards them with either 'very positive', 'positive', 'negative' or 'very negative': *Gender Equality*" (1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011).

The data with which we operate below were taken from Slovenian Public Opinion (SPO) surveys and research conducted within the framework of the international comparative studies World Value Survey (WVS) and the European Social Survey (ESS).

7.3.1 Male and female roles

The shift away from the traditional, gender-specific roles that bind women to their home, family and domestic work, while men are seen as those who are active in the public sphere, certainly provides better opportunities for women to engage politically, as some of the aforementioned studies have shown (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010; Bullough, Kroeck, Newburry, Kundu and Lowe, 2012; Ule, 1979). Since 1991, there has been a recurrent statement in SPO studies: "The duty of the husband in marriage is to provide for the family and the duty of the wife is to keep house and care for the family (home and family)." An overview of the dynamics of agreement and disagreement with this statement indicates the changing opinion regarding gender roles.[97]

Table 24: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The duty of the husband in marriage is to provide for the family and the duty of the wife is to keep house and care for the family (home and family)".

	Strongly agree	Agree
1991	15.6	24.7
1993	10.8	29
1998	10.6	19.2
2003	8.5	20.3
2012	2.7	17.9

Source: Toš 1999; Toš 2004, Toš 2013b 293, 57.

Table 24 clearly shows that the number of those who agree with the statement is constantly falling. The most drastic decrease from one survey to the next can be observed between 1993 and 1998, which demonstrates a rather rapid change in attitude compared to only a slight decrease in the periods 1991/1993 and 1998/2003.

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[97] Jogan used SPO data in her articles to measure gender inequality and concluded that, in time, the ideology of a single breadwinner had been clearly rejected by both sexes, albeit somewhat more by women than by men (2004, 273).

Whereas, in 1991, 40.3% of the respondents agreed (strongly agreed and agreed combined) and 15.6% strongly agreed with this statement, in 2012, only 2.7% strongly agreed and the total share of those who agreed and strongly agreed was 20.6%. It is once again evident that the 1990s – the transition years of great economic and political turmoil, instability and uncertainty – were years in which reflections were revived regarding whether it might not be better for men and women to abide by the classic division of roles and work by gender. In the last decade, however, the viewpoint of the population has changed considerably, at least on the declarative level, and shifted away from traditional gender roles according to which women are expected to be engaged in the private sphere and men in the public sphere. This may have had a favourable effect on voters' choices in the 2011 election, when a record number of women were voted into parliament.

7.3.2 Equal opportunities and (gender) equality

How do people accept differences and what value do they place on equality and equal opportunities? At least in part, the answer to this question reveals the attitude towards women and their opportunities to engage in public affairs and politics. Until 1991, agreement with equality was best reflected in the following question: "Of the 24 concepts, choose 3 that express your long-term interests in the most concise manner". While 27.9% of those surveyed chose equality in 1978 (only freedom, peace and honesty were chosen by more people), as few as 14.3% of respondents chose equality in 1984 (freedom, peace and honesty were again more highly valued, also joined by work and family) (Toš, 1997, 247, 474).

According to the available data, therefore, a downward trend in favouring this value became established in the first half of the 1980s (Toš, 1997, 274). This was a time when, much more than in previous periods, differences between people were emphasised. Critical discussions of some of the dominant ideas of the time about all people being equal entered the public space, with various (also political) actors coming into existence that built on differences and the recognition of these differences (political, religious, generational, gender-related). This evoked intolerance towards and rejection of representatives of some of these groups amongst one part of the population. At the same time, this was a moment when new possibilities for the advancement of Slovenian society were being explored and debated, foregrounding alternative values, such as freedom of the individual and the freedom of choice, competitiveness between various options, a goods and services market, etc. (cf. also Repe

2001). Furthermore, Toš found that a turnaround in the hierarchy of values concerning the dilemma of equality and efficiency had taken place, emphasising that the respondents in the survey were, on the one hand, increasingly in favour of the market system and private ownership, but, on the other, still not highly disposed towards great social differences and a reduced role of the welfare state (Toš, 1997, xxiii). This was also a period when, as we have seen, a downward trend in the proportion of politically engaged women was observed.

Given that, in the 1990s, the aforementioned question was not asked in the SPO survey, we must verify the attitude towards equality with the question regarding whether it is important to the respondent that everyone in the world is treated equally and whether s/he believes that every person has to have the same opportunities in life.

Table 25: To what extent is the person described below similar to you? For this person, it is important that everyone in the world is treated equally; s/he believes that everyone has to have the same opportunities in life.

	Very similar	Similar	Slightly similar	Only very slightly similar	Not similar	Not at all similar	I do not know	No answer
SPO02/2	28.3	50.4	11.9	3.6	2.6	0.9		2.3
SPO04/2	27.1	50.9	12.2	4.6	2.5	0.7		1.9
SPO06/1	28.5	54.4	10.0	2.8	3.0	0.7		0.7
SPO08/2	29.9	51.4	11.1	2.6	2.8	0.3	0.9	0.9
SPO10/1	35.4	51.4	7.1	2.1	1.1	0.4	1.2	1.2
SPO12/1	48.0	42.3	5.3	1.8	1.2	0.5	0.6	0.4

Source: European Social Survey, ESS 2012, in the framework of the SPO 2012/2 Project. February 2013.

Table 25 shows that "equal treatment" and "equal opportunities" attract high support amongst the population of Slovenia. In the past decade, the proportion of those supporting this principle has grown consistently, with the highest rise recorded in 2012, when support exceeded 90% of all respondents. It would seem that, in a time of increasing social inequities

(especially economic), resulting in diminishing "equal opportunities", equal treatment in fields such as employment, promotion at work, healthcare, etc. has become a value with growing significance for the respondents. Furthermore, this means that the negative attitude towards pronounced social differences that was observed in the mid 1980s is still present amongst the population.

Given that we are particularly interested in the attitude towards gender equality in Slovenia, let us examine how the response to this question has changed in the past decade, the period in which it has formed part of SPO surveys. The respondents were asked whether they were positively or negatively inclined towards the issue of gender equality. Although the table below shows that the vast majority of respondents have a positive or very positive attitude, it is also significant that the proportion of those who were negatively inclined towards this value was 1.3% in 1994, reaching 7.9% in 2005, declining to 5.8% in 2009, and falling again to 3.2% in 2011. At the same time, the proportion of those who expressed a positive or very positive attitude towards gender equality reached an all time high (87.8%) in 2011, while the proportion of those who expressed a very positive attitude towards gender equality reached 50.8% in 1994, a result that has never been matched since. After falling to a low of 34% in 1998, it gradually began to rise, but still only reached 37% in 2011. Data also show that this is a value in relation to which people hold ever stronger opinions, as only 5.2% of the respondents were neutral on the subject in 2011, compared to 15% in 1998.

Table 26: We will list several words and concepts. Without too much deliberation, please assess your attitude towards them with either 'very positive', 'positive', 'negative' or 'very negative'. *Gender Equality.*

	Very negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very positive	I do not know	Positive and very positive – total
SPO94$_2$	0.4	0.9	9.6	33.2	50.8	5.2	84
SPO96$_1$	0.6	2.2	14.0	45.2	37.6	0.4	82.8
SPO98$_2$	0.7	1.8	15.3	47.5	34.7	-	82.2

SPO00$_1$	0.7	2.2	11.3	44.8	38.9	2.2	83.7
SPO02$_1$	0.7	3.4	12.6	45.3	34.6	3.4	79.9
SPO03$_{3+4}$	1.9	4.4	11.2	46.5	34.0	1.9	80.5
SPO05$_1$	3.0	4.9	12.8	45.8	29.9	3.6	75.7
SPO07$_2$	2.6	3.7	13.1	51.7	24.2	4.9	75.9
SPO09$_2$	1.6	4.2	12.8	46.4	31.3	3.7	77.7
SPO011$_2$	0.7	2.5	5.2	50.8	37.0	3.0	87.8

Source: SPO 2011/2, World Value Survey, The Mirror of Public Opinion, Overview and Comparison of the Results, Working Document of the Research Group, June 2011

From the data presented, one can conclude that the value of gender equality in Slovenian society has gained strength and, at least on the declarative level, has taken root in Slovenia. However, a tendency to reassess the value of equality is detectable, although it is not possible to affirm with any certainty that the attitude towards gender equality has a direct effect on people's judgment in their voting choices: seemingly, women are still not recognised as those who symbolically correspond to the idea of the bearer of political power.

7.3.3 Are men better political leaders than women?

Based on Hofstede's conclusions that women in a masculine culture are not understood as capable of assuming certain roles, simply because they are not, symbolically, recognised as such or because they fail to match the true image of the bearer of power (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 45), we can obtain the most direct answer to the question as to how people in Slovenia view the possibilities of women's engagement in politics from responses to the statement "Men are better political leaders than women".

Table 27: Men and women as political leaders

	Disagree

"A woman should primarily be a mother and a housewife, while socio-political work should be undertaken by men" (1975/1976)	58.4
"Men are better political leaders than women" (1995)	51.4
"On the whole, men are better political leaders than women" (2005)	65.8
"On the whole, men are better political leaders than women" (2011)	72.8

Source: Toš, 1997; Toš 2013a 76.

Table 27 clearly show that disagreement with the statement that men are better political leaders has risen consistently, except in 1995, when the proportion of those disagreeing was 8 percentage points higher than in 1975/76. The reasons for this are largely attributable to the transition period, which has been thoroughly treated in the context of gender inequality by Jogan, who linked the process of democratisation to attempts to reintroduce patriarchal values into Slovenian society (Jogan, 2001; Jogan, 2000; Jogan, 2011). As in the other countries of the former socialist block from Central and Eastern Europe, demands for women to return to the family and withdraw from public life became stronger in Slovenia. Here, aspirations to redomesticate women were also associated with the tendency to recatholicise women, and with demands for the moral renovation of society and the restoration of women's dignity. Initiatives related to this were manifested in proposals for a different understanding of the reproductive rights of women (the abolishment of abortion right), greater social benefits for women with more children, etc. At the same time, social inequality grew during the transition period, women with the lowest level of education were most affected by unemployment, less secure forms of employment emerged, and there was an increase in uncertainty and fear regarding the future (Jogan, 2011), all of which had a negative effect on women's opportunities to engage in the field of politics. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was precisely in the 1990s that the proportion of women in politics, both at the local and national level, remained exceptionally low, failing to exceed 13.3% in parliament, for example.

If we are to believe the findings of Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzl in the study *Modernisation, Cultural Change and Democracy* (2005), claiming that a larger proportion of women are voted into the national parliament in those countries where the public reject the belief that men are better leaders, and that cultural norms and values are more important

indicators of the share of women in parliament than democratic institutions (2005, 176), then the situation in Slovenia is either that expressing opinion on this issue merely involves giving expected answers or principled statements, or that it is only a matter of time until the change is reflected in statistics on women in parliament.

7.4 Between certain strong constants, slight shifts and expected changes in value orientations

Let us return to our original questions: Where should one seek the reasons for the low proportion of women in politics? What role does the wider cultural context – the prevailing norms, values, convictions, myths, stereotypes and established practices associated with gender relations that can be identified in Slovenia – play in this? Has this cultural context changed in the past few decades, and, if so, how? Who do people regard as more suitable for occupying political posts?

Whereas the 1980s were a time of political and general social pluralisation, when great hope was placed in the change of the political and economic system, the free market, individual freedom, greater plurality and the possibility of choice in all areas, the 1990s brought a need to reconcile high expectations and the limits of the real possibilities, while the first decade of the third millennium (or at least the first half of this decade) represented the greatest detachment from traditional values, with a turn to secular values. It is in this latter period that we also observe a shift from a predominantly materialist society (survival values) to one that values self-realisation (self-expression values). Although we could say that Slovenian society has been modernised, it again shifted back towards the traditional pole of the scale of traditional values in 2006.[98]

Examining, in this light, the possible influences of these constants and shifts on the opportunities and decisions of women to engage in the field of politics, it should come as no surprise that, in a time of increased uncertainty in all areas of life, the family and security have been consistently highly valued (Svetlik, 2004). Taking into account the low index for uncertainty avoidance, as well as the tendency to protect certain gains that have been won

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[98] See: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_54

with great difficulty, strong family ties – so-called family collectivism – can halt the positive effects on the progress of women in their endeavours to engage in politics, effects produced by the relatively constant (with a few oscillations in the past decade) high value placed (at least declaratively) on gender equality, the rejection of the ideology of a single breadwinner in the family and the placement of women exclusively in the realm of home and family, and the decrease in the number of those who agree that men are better political leaders.

The transition years of the 1990s – years of great changes, instability and uncertainty – were also the years of attempts to retraditionalise gender roles and domesticate women. It is therefore not surprising that, despite the simultaneous expansion of the political field (both institutional and civil society), the proportion of women in politics both at the local and national level has remained very low, failing to exceed 13.3% in parliament, for example.

Despite there being no shortage of educated, competent and publicly visible women (as elaborated on by other authors in the present book), as well as relatively high and ever stronger disagreement with the claim that men are better political leaders than women, this has not resulted in a greater demand for female candidates for political positions and for a larger body of female candidates for whom voters could vote. This leads us to believe that, despite agreeing, in principle, on gender equality and equal opportunities for everyone (women included), there is a prevalent conviction in society, when dealing with concrete decisions, that politics is primarily a field of male engagement. Although women are not prevented from entering this field, they are not particularly desired.

On the other hand, it is easy to understand the rationality of educated, competent and successful women who, experiencing all kinds of uncertainty, prefer to preserve their past achievements (in education and their profession, as well as in private, family life). It is simply a case of the logical and rational reflection of those who have achieved their status and success with a great deal of effort and personal sacrifice. The reserved – if not averse – attitude of successful women considering entry into politics is not surprising taking into account that the reputation of political parties, institutions and politicians is currently extremely low, that many women stay in politics for relatively short periods of time (with very few female MPs or ministers completing more than one mandate), that crossing from professional field to the field of politics and back can be risky and sometimes fraught with difficulty, and that, ultimately, the political engagement of a woman takes a toll on her family life, partnership and privacy.

Drawing on Inglehart and Welzl, who assert that wide support for gender equality is the most important explanatory factor in increasing the proportion of women in politics (Inglehart and Welzl, 2005, 177), in Slovenia – which is in the process of gradually upgrading and improving the institutions of the political system that are designed in part to provide women with better opportunities for the public expression of their interests and needs, focusing on the demand for change and the expansion of their rights, and which has a strong orientation towards the knowledge society and, particularly on the part of women, a large investment in education – we expect shifts towards the greater presence of women in politics. It is the new, younger generations of women, brought up in the circumstances described above, who can be expected to make more obvious inroads into the field of politics in Slovenia.