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WHO IS AFRAID OF GENDER ?

Analysis of the Key Narratives and
Strategies of the Anti-gender
Movement in the Republic of North
Macedonia



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Introduction

Towards the end of 2020, several groups advocating against gender sensitive education and the introduction of sexual education, integral to the analysis, became vocal in public discussions on the new Primary Education Concept. The arguments put forward involved, for the first time, terms like “gender ideology” and “gender indoctrination,” as a point of mobilization in the Macedonian context. Although the Concept remained unaltered, the groups continued advocating against the reforms voiced by women’s/feminists and LGBTIQ organizations regarding several laws and policies, (such as the Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching and Didactic Materials and the Law on Civil Registry) resulting with no amendments to date.

The mobilization of the groups occurred relatively swiftly. In almost no time, anti-gender social network channels published, on a daily basis, texts and messages targeting not only concepts and the struggle for gender equality and LGBTIQ rights but rather human rights activists as well, such as Irena Cvetkovic, a co-author of the analysis, and civil society organizations such as the Coalition Margins, the publisher of this publication. At that point we decided to pay close attention to these groups and research the strategies and narratives employed, bearing in mind that the subject of the analysis is an integral part of our lived and embodied experience. However, the goal is not to expose or mock these organizations but rather to better understand them and gain knowledge towards: human rights promotion for everyone and identifying how to oppose the hegemonic framing strategies, representation and discursive construction of women and sexual and gender minorities proposed by anti-gender movements. It is our hope that the analysis will strengthen the mobilization for gender equality promotion and human rights respect for all individuals in society.

For the research requirements we analysed 269 pieces from four different social network sources, i.e. anti-gender mobilization Facebook pages and Facebook groups (see subchapter 1.6. Sampling Strategy). With regards to the gender balance of the authors, 28.3% were written by men, 8.5% by women, while 63.2% were anonymous or reposted from other Facebook pages, making determining the author’s gender in those cases not applicable. In addition, 22.6% of the posts were initiated by the profiles and groups’ administrators, while 62.2% were posted from Facebook profiles posting in these groups as administrators. In only 15.2 % of the cases, the posts belonged to members and supporters of the initiatives, meaning the dynamics in the groups and pages was defined mostly by the frequency of anonymous posts.

1. Methodology

1.1. The research goal is: assisting human rights defenders to better understand anti-gender campaigns, identifying how to oppose and support human rights promotion for all. The research aims to provide relevant data, analysis and knowledge on hegemonic framing strategies, representation and discursive construction of women and of sexual and gender minorities in public discourses by anti-gender actors, and strengthen the mobilization among all progressive forces in our society by offering various transformations.

1.2. The main focus of the analysis is to:

- Conduct detailed research and issue a report on key anti-gender narratives and the emotional response they seek to instigate in the Republic of North Macedonia;
- Increase knowledge on human rights activists, decision makers, academia and media workers on the key strategies and narratives employed by anti-gender movements;
- Inform and offer specific recommendations to the parties concerned, decision makers and the civil society, in relation to the goals and methods applied by anti-gender movements in human rights prevention; and
- Strengthen the cooperation between relevant institutions, academia and civil society in order to support progressive voices and ideas in Macedonian society.

1.3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical concept determined the analytical and theoretical framework through which we examined the key narratives of anti-gender movements from the aspects of equality, non-discrimination and human rights promotion. In order to analyse the narratives, first we defined several theoretical concepts on which to base the conducted analysis.

Gender

The research encompasses gender in the meaning acquired in the early 1970s. In other words, gender is used as an analytical category to determine the demarcation between biological, sex differences and how these serve to create behaviours, values and abilities, assigned as the appropriate for masculinity and femininity. Affirming the difference between sex and gender aimed to problematize the, until then, dominant position dictating that physical and psychological effects stemming from the biological differences between men and women are to be considered as the “natural” foundation for the patriarchal systems of power, applied to create the belief that women are naturally predetermined to take up roles and behaviours related to the private sphere of the family and the home. Ann Oakley (1972) believes the development of feminism created a sort of a trap. Namely, the gender concept sided between being defined as a synonym for sex, and as a problematic political term. According to Oakley, certain authors opposing the construction of the term *gender*, conspire to bring gender closer to the biological and/or the “natural”, with the purpose of sustaining the patriarchal system as being the only “natural” and logical. For Oakley, the conceptualization of gender is the foundation of the second-wave feminism, successful as an analytical term. However, in colloquial use *sex* and *gender* are synonymous. In the present analysis, gender is defined as a construct and performance of the assigned sociological, political, cultural and economic attributes by society on individuals. In other words, gender refers to a series of socially constructed roles and relationships, personal characteristics, opinions, values and the relative power society ascribes to the male and female sex. Contrary to *gender*, *sex* is defined (in accordance with the definition of the World Health Organization) as a term indicating to the biological and physiological characteristics defining men and women.

Anti-gender movements

The analysis differentiates between the ideological grounds of the: (1) traditional-conservative part of society nurturing negative opinions on feminism and LGBTIQ rights and (2) anti-gender movements. Anti-gender movements are international or transnational movements opposing what they call “gender ideology” or “gender theory”. An eminent anti-gender movement researcher,

Andrea Petó (2021), excludes anti-gender movements' definition of gender as a classic anti-feminist initiative, defining them instead as "a fundamentally new phenomenon launched for the sake of establishing a new world order."

The discourse framing the anti-gender movement "gender ideology" was coined in the 1990s, on the basis of which their mobilization was launched. Still, in the past two decades it has shifted towards numerous contexts. Kuhar & Paternotte (2017) claim that while anti-gender actors were previously generally isolated and acted nationally, the spread of the transnational connection boosted their capacities for mobilization out on the streets, in national and multilateral institutions, thus increasing the number of states willing/ready to invest political capital in the promotion of the anti-gender point of view. Consequently, anti-gender movements here are defined as an organized form of acting, uniting different actors against what is defined as "gender ideology".

Gender Ideology

Initially, the introduction of "gender ideology" by anthropologists in the 1980s' served to mark the inequality resulting from the observed gender norms in various societies. However, the new meaning produced within anti-gender discourses, suggested something completely different. The Vatican appropriated the term as a response to the increasing focus on women's rights and gender at the 1994 International Conference on Development and Population in Cairo, and at the World Conference on Women, held in 1995. Demands to undermine the feminist theoreticians who defined *gender* as a social construct different from *sex*, insist on understanding the phrase as a harmful "ideology," unrelated to science and nature. Consequently, the phrase "gender ideology" in this analysis is used much like in anti-gender movements, i.e. an umbrella term sublimating the struggle for promotion of women's and LGBTIQ rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive rights.

Narratives

With the term narratives we imply one of the four traditional models of discourses (in addition to argument, description and exposition), generally defined as a means for one or several narrators to communicate with the public/readers/listeners. In the analysis, anti-gender narratives are not treated as a mirror reflecting reality but rather as active creators of our "reality". In other words, bearing in mind the fact that the narratives of anti-gender movements (similar to all narratives) are constructs, i.e. are produced, this analysis does not encompass only the repertory of words and images involved in this production process but also the ideological levels.

The research aims to reveal how the notion of certain social groups is created, such as: lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and other marginalized communities. This representation refers to the language and images used in textual, visual and public auditory manifestations, in order to shape the meaning of certain social groups and how they are perceived among the "general public."

Emotions

Emotions have prominent position in the analysis since assorted literature points to the link between various mechanisms for emotional manipulation and the success of anti-gender narratives. Sara Ahmed's theoretical perspective served as the basis for defining the various emotions. In the analysis, emotions are not considered as internal characteristics of an individual. On the contrary, we deal exclusively with the sociality of emotions. Ahmed names this the "the inside out" model of

emotions, commonly upheld by psychologists. Theory distinguishes criticism with regards to this model by placing a focus on the “outside in” model”, i.e., the stand of numerous sociologists and anthropologists insisting that emotions are social and cultural practices. Examining the phenomenon of the rise of emotion in crowds, Durkheim suggests that these “great movements” of feeling, do not originate specifically from inside or in a particular individual consciousness. We concur with the position, criticizing the argument that emotions originate in individual bodies, proposing instead the thesis that emotions maintain and connect the social body. Hence, in the analysis we attempt to study emotional responses to the key narratives of anti-gender movements in order to understand how these translate into mobilization and active support.

1.4. Method

The analysis applies the methodological framework of the critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis offers an interdisciplinary approach in the study of discourses (including those of anti-gender narratives) according to which language/text is perceived as a social practice. According to this concept, social practices (including power relations, gender inequality and discrimination) and linguistic practices (public narratives and interactions) are constitutive to one other. Hence, the methodological interest aims to discover how social power relations (such as discrimination and gender inequality) are created, applied and sustained through the use of language/discourses (in social media of anti-gender movements).

Opting for critical discourse analysis as a method instead of discourse analysis originated from the premise that language and power are fully interlocked. In other words, critical discourse analysis applies the methods of discourse analysis in order to research the relationship among discourses, power, domination, social inequality, as well as manners in which discourses reproduce social, cultural and political inequality, abuse of power or dominance. Critical discourse analysis is not limited to specific text or speech structures, but rather systematically links them to structures in a socio-political context. Norman Fairclough, one of the founders of critical discourse analysis, explains this complex method as an attempt to systematically research often opaque relationships of causality and determination between: (a) discourse practices, events and texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes, to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power.

1.5. Analysis Tools

The analysis was conducted on the basis of existing data collected through desk research. The data collection was done according to the following phases:

- I. Reviewing existing literature, introduction to literature involving analysis of anti-gender movements, and the strategies and narratives applied, but also works not necessarily published in North Macedonia or referring to anti-gender trends in the country;
- II. Reviewing data from anti-gender movements’ social media in North Macedonia; and
- III. Processing data collected pursuant to several criteria:
 - Key topics of interest for anti-gender movements;
 - Key groups whose activism is being problematized by anti-gender movements;
 - Key initiatives of anti-gender movements;
 - Anti-gender movements’ narratives;
 - Anti-gender movements’ strategies;

- Manners in which women and LGBTI people are represented;
- Manners in which topics related to women and LGBTI people are framed; and
- Misinformation and fake news; and

IV. Writing the analysis.

1.6. Sampling Strategy

Social Media Sample

- The Facebook pages of: [Take Responsibility](#)¹ and [United We Stand Tall](#)²; and
- The Facebook groups of: [Textbooks and School Presence](#)³ and [Save Marriage and Family](#)⁴.

Time Frame

The data collection time frame covered all relevant working materials written and published in a six month-period, beginning from October 1st, 2021 until March 31st, 2022.

2. Anti-gender Movements

As mentioned earlier, the discourse framing “gender ideology” as understood by anti-gender actors was coined in the 1990s, with mobilization soon following. However, a shift in several contexts occurred during the past two decades, most noteworthy of which was the transnational unison of anti-gender initiatives. The analysis differentiates among the ideological stands of: (1) traditional-conservative elements in a society, nurturing negative attitudes on feminism and LGBTIQ rights, and (2) anti-gender movements. Anti-gender movements are international or transnational movements opposing what they refer to as “gender ideology” or “gender theory”. In the last decade, the research interest of anti-gender movements has significantly increased. In that regard, the analysis relies on several key researchers studying the phenomenon, such as: Kuhar & Paternotte, Damjan Denkovski, Nina Bernarding and Kristina Lunz, Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk, as well as Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts and Andrea Pető. The definitions they offer differ slightly, the unifying element being defining anti-gender movements as mobilization against “gender ideology”. The analysis defines the movement as an organized form of acting, unifying different actors against the so-called “anti-gender ideology”.

3. Anti-gender Actors

Anti-gender movements consist of anti-gender actors with various characteristics, depending on the time and geographical context of their actions. Literature often distinguishes among three groups: old, new and allies (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). *Old* anti-gender actors are usually considered to be the Catholic Church and right-wing institutes usually located in the USA. *New* actors are members of the transnational anti-gender movement today as well as its national and local reflections. Most of the latter present themselves as “concerned parents” or “concerned citizens”, using common language and visual identity. *Allies*, on the other hand, are certain supporters from academic circles, politics, media etc. However, according to Kuhar & Paternotte, these actors do not

¹ For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/prezemiodgovornost>

² For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/odnaszanas>

³ For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/479418786591247/>

⁴ For more see: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/892878984118609>

derive from the same ideological matrix and do not share the “same ideological frame”. The unifying element for anti-gender actors is the ability to “cram various discourses into a single big threat” and construct “gender/gender ideology” as an “attack against at least one of the *three Ns*, they claim to defend: nature, nation and normality.

In the Macedonian context, there are currently several active anti-gender organizations and groups, as well as the coalition [Coalition for the Protection of Children](#)⁵, unifying [26 entities \(civil society organizations, informal initiatives, religious groups and political parties\)](#)⁶. In the selected research time frame, the coalition had still not been founded, and consequently was not a subject of research. The analysis includes texts from several Macedonian anti-gender initiatives: Take Responsibility, United We Stand Tall, Textbooks and School Presence and Save Marriage and Family. The research offers insight into their various focusses. United We Stand Tall aims to mobilize against gender sensitive education and the rights of transgender people, while simultaneously being one of the leading anti-vaccination organizations advocating against mandatory immunization of children and against the mandatory wearing of masks in schools, as a Covid-19 protection measure for the population. Take Responsibility predominantly aims towards mobilization against promotion of transgender rights and the LGBTIQ movement. The informal initiative Textbooks and School Presence is dedicated generally to mobilization against gender sensitive and comprehensive sexual education but also to various other key aspects of the education reform initiated in 2020. The informal initiative Save Marriage and Family concentrates mostly on promoting religious and patriarchal values of marriage and family and mobilization against initiatives for promotion of LGBTIQ rights. All these groups and organizations are members of the abovementioned Coalition for Protection of Children.

4. “Gender Ideology”

In the analysis anti-gender movements are defined as an organized form of acting against what they refer to as “gender ideology”, a form unifying various actors. However, the concept of “gender ideology” is such a fluid idea, conceived divergently and used variously depending on the specific group of anti-gender actors, making a single definition difficult. “Gender ideology” coined by anthropologists in the 1980s, was primarily used to signify the inequality resulting from gender norms throughout different societies. However, the term’s new meaning produced by anti-gender actors suggests something quite different and contrary to its principal meaning. The contemporary concept of “gender ideology” is used to understand the coalition among actors and groups with different positions on the ideology, who are yet allied under the same common umbrella term meant to denote the supposed threat “gender ideology” is. Consequently, in this chapter we offer a theoretical cross-section of the different definitions and concepts of “gender ideology” as framed by various global anti-gender initiatives, followed by definitions deduced from Macedonian anti-gender initiatives.

In the past years, the research interest of anti-gender movements has genuinely increased. Literature on anti-gender initiatives, strategies and narratives in the past five years has been vast and easily accessible. However, in academic circles this relatively new social and political phenomenon seems to capture the interest only of philosophy and sociology departments and gender studies, with other disciplines lacking knowledge and/or inclination to study the topic. It should be expected that

⁵ For more see: <https://www.zadecata.org/>

⁶ For more see: <https://www.zadecata.org/коалициони-партнери>

gender studies would obviously be interested in the topic due to the accusations of anti-gender movements of spreading “gender ideology”, as explained below.

From a general aspect, “gender ideology” is an assortment of terms referring to the idea of the existence of radical “gender feminists” and a “homosexual agenda,” or advocating for “agendas” aiming to disrupt the natural order of things (such as, for instance, “natural hierarchy” between men and women), and which, by respecting the individual identity as opposed to social expectations, undermine the anthropological foundation of the family and consequently of society (Denkovski, Bernarding & Lunz, 2021). In other words, the concept of “gender ideology”, on one hand, could provide a framework to better understand the history and progress of women’s and LGBTIQ rights, and, on the other, provide a joint platform of the different anti-gender actors for mobilization against gender as a threat against society.

As explained previously, anti-gender actors are generally distinguished as old, new and allies (see chapter 3), the most common ones nowadays being the new actors and their supporters. New anti-gender actors and groups often differ ideologically, however their mobilization against “gender ideology” is what makes their coalitions quite sustainable. Hence, the most applied definition for “gender ideology” explains the term as “an empty signifier”. Anti-gender actors manage to successfully construct the “empty signifier”, i.e. “gender ideology”, as a notion sublimating several issues into a single threat that is easily to emotionally mobilize against (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). The framework unifying these actors consists of constructing “gender ideology” as the biggest threat on the supposed: normality, nature and common sense.

Research on anti-gender movements in broader social and political systems and ideologies frequently links mobilization against “gender ideology” to right-wing populism and the crisis in neoliberalism and multiculturalism. Within such perceptions of “gender ideology,” gender is defined as a *symbolic glue* allowing *gender* to become an umbrella-term unifying the resistance against (neo) liberal order (Grzebalska, Kováts & Pető, 2017). “Gender ideology” marks the failure of liberal democracy, thus opposing this ideology has become means of rejecting the different aspects of the current socio-economic system, from the prioritization of identity politics over material issues and the weakening of social, cultural and political security to the separateness between social and political elites and the influence of transnational institutions and global economy on the national (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, the demonization of “gender ideology” has become a key rhetoric tool in the construction of a new concept of “commons sense” for the general public; a form of consensus on what is normal and legitimate (*Ibid.*). Finally, opposing “gender ideology” allowed the right-wing to create broad unions and merge different profiles of people who have, not necessarily, coalitioned in the past, such as: different Christian churches, Orthodox Jews, fundamental Muslims, mainstream conservatives, extreme right-wing parties, fundamental groups, and in some countries even football hooligan groups (*Ibid.*). A common element unifying the different definitions of “gender ideology” is framing gender as a (totalitarian) ideology. In this way, anti-gender movements manage to define gender or “gender ideology”, on the one hand, as opposing science (nature, biology, common sense), and on the other as opposing tradition and religion. In these two different narratives, “gender ideology” is presented as a system of values aiming to destroy the natural and traditional social order. Consequently, this analysis of “gender ideology” definitions offered by anti-gender movements in North Macedonia did not discover any substantial differences from the definitions examined earlier.

“The term gender derives from sexual psychology. It refers to the desire to express how agonizingly some people feel about being trapped in the wrong body. This led to the idea of an emotional or a metaphysical sex, i.e. a gender independent from the biological sex. This fundamental idea is borrowed by the homosexual movement, further developed by gender theory, generally by feminists, most of whom are lesbians... (...) The shift from gender theory to enforcing gender ideology was a covert conspiracy, happening over the course of many years. Now, when practice has revealed the real face of gender, these issues are increasingly being discussed in the public, with mass street demonstrations by citizens... (...) Deconstruction of sex is at work here, but more than that deconstruction of national identity and deconstruction of parliamentary democracy. Gender is enforced instead of sex, the nation is being demonized, multiculturalism is being praised, while parliamentary democracy replaced with participatory democracy, in which international non-governmental organizations and technocrats, i.e., questionable “experts” participate in the government as equal legal partners of the state and government...” (Take Responsibility, December 2nd, 2021)

“Gender ideology is a continuation of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the purpose of which was and continues to be the destruction of the family and decreasing the population so there would be less people on the planet. Without families we have no identities. The human identity is comprised of several components: 1) sex; 2) nation 3) religion; and 4) family. From a psychological viewpoint, if current constructions of the human identity are destroyed, people would be deprived of history and memories, and become nothing more than simple consumers.” (Take Responsibility, October 19th, 2021).

“We have noticed that sex is becoming less heard in public, and increasingly replaced by gender. A shift has occurred: a new expression is voiced and we are becoming used to it, perhaps even use it. Equality between the sexes is not mentioned any longer but rather gender equality. Does it have the same content? No, it is a language manipulation aimed at enforcing a new ideology seeking to create a society in which men and women do not exist but rather only people. Gender theory does not recognize two biological sexes but rather different genders and a multitude of sexes, i.e. gender identities: heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgender etc. ... Equality between sexes implies complementarity, they mutually complement each other with respect for dignity arising from differences, while gender equality implies erasing all differences until our mentality perceives everyone as simply people with different “sexual orientations”, and the female or male sex is no longer listed in administrative documents.” (Take Responsibility, December 1st, 2021)

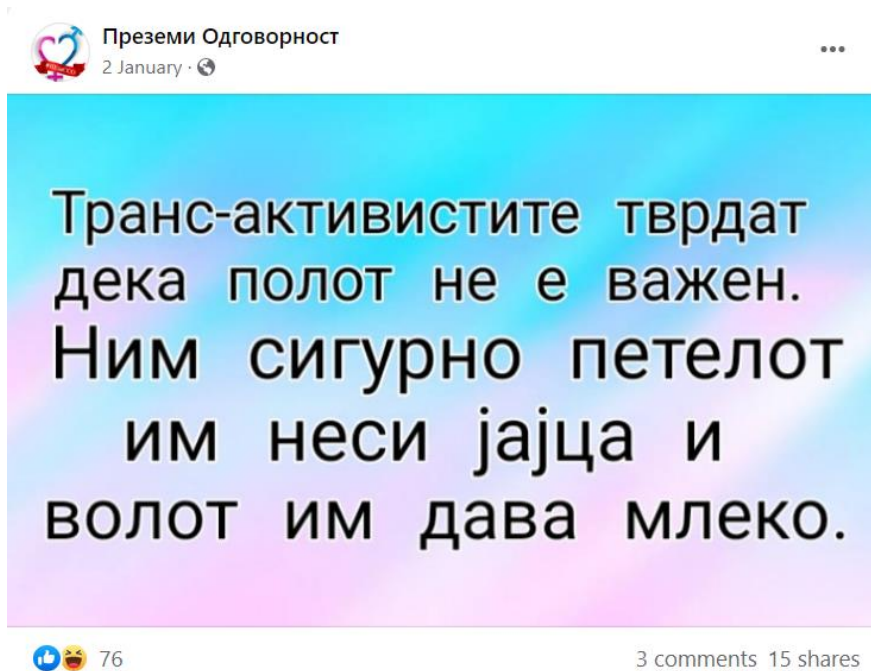
Definitions supported by Macedonian anti-gender organizations do not exclude the use of “religious” arguments, however, according to our research they are used more seldom than the so-called “scientific” arguments. Such strategies are common among global contemporary anti-gender movements. In addition to essentialist/naturalist narratives and narratives based on such views, the past years have shown a discursive movement towards something resembling a technical and scientific analysis as opposed to the previous religious or traditional appeals. The new discourse “invokes ‘science’ and aims to negate *gender* as a social construct and reinforce a biological and binary conception of sex” (Sanders & Jenkins, 2020). However, the ideological reevaluation of gender is not isolated solely to academic and theoretic discourses. Resistance against “gender ideology” occurs on an academic, political, cultural and social level. Consequently, such discussions are reflected in the

mobilization against: gender studies; gender equality promotion initiatives; advocacy for gender sensitive language; certain international documents, such as the Istanbul Convention etc.

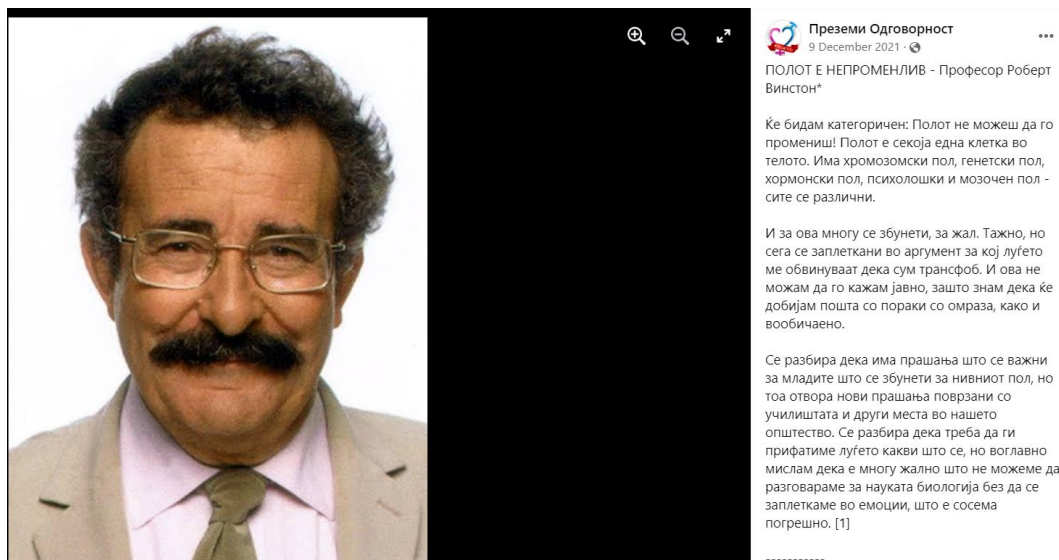
From the bulk of texts on “gender ideology,” we established four key characteristics of the definitions explaining it. The first refers to the binary opposition of natural-artificial, applied to the understanding of the dynamics between *sex* and *gender* by anti-gender groups to characterize *sex* as natural while *gender* as an artificial construct produced with a certain goal. The second characteristic refers to the creation of a binary opposition between the two concepts of *science* and *theory*, applied to biology (defined as a scientific discipline) and gender studies (defined as an ideological undertaking and non-scientific theory). The third characteristic is insisting on the “unstoppable force of biology/sex” represented through cases of detransition in transgender people. The fourth characteristic is the possibility that such discourses on gender could be further inscribed in specific laws, policies and practices meant to advance the rights and status of marginalized communities.

4.1. The Natural Vs. the Artificial

A key argument employed by advocates lobbying for the concept of *sex* over the concept of *gender* is that while *sex* is natural, *gender* is an artificial creation of “gender ideology”, i.e., *gender* exists only as a social manifestation of the natural *sex*. In other words, they negate the existence of *gender*, while on the other hand allowing its existence solely in its unbreakable bond with biological *sex*. Consequently, transgender people (whose *sex* does not match their *gender*) and transgender policies and ideas are a point of harsh criticism and attack by anti-gender movements. This issue is further elaborated at the end of the chapter. For now, let us consider the binary opposition natural-artificial in order to understand the key concepts of anti-gender movements. Such positions are rooted in religious discourses. In 2019, the Holy See claimed that the foundations of “gender ideology,” embodied in the denials of the difference and reciprocity in the nature of a man and a woman, and the promotion of personal identity and emotional intimacy, a radical split from the biological difference between men and women, shall ultimately turn human identity into a “personal choice,” thus undermining the anthropological basis of family. (Nuncio, 2019).



“Trans-activists claim that sex is not important. They must think that the rooster lays eggs and the bull gives milk.” (Take Responsibility, January 2nd, 2022)



“SEX CANNOT BE CHANGED – Professor Robert Winston / I will say this categorically that you cannot change sex! Sex is every single cell of your body. You have chromosomal sex, you have genetic sex, you have hormonal sex, psychological and brain sex – all different. / And we are very confused about this unfortunately. Regrettably, it’s gotten to this argument where people are now accusing me of being transphobic. And you cannot say this publically because I will receive a huge amount of hate mail as usual. There are issues which are important for young people who are confused about their sex, but it does affect a lot of issues at school and elsewhere in our society. Of course, we should accept people as they are, but, overall I think it’s very sad that we cannot discuss biology as science without getting

completely caught up emotionally, which is something which is completely wrong.” (Take Responsibility, December 9th, 2021)

The report of EuroMed and the Foundation Kvinna till Kvinna on anti-gender movements, points to their key narrative: “...men and women are, by nature different and therefore unequal. Men and women are to be regarded as complementary and gender and feminism are against the design of God and religion.” However, as mentioned earlier, the narratives in our country are identical, the difference being that God and religion are largely replaced by “nature”, “science” and “biology”. Replacing God with nature is of no essence. Namely, the argument upon which the ideological positions of anti-gender movements are built (natural-artificial) is in constant interaction with several other complementary binary positions: changeable-unchangeable, sense-emotion, healthy-unhealthy. Therefore, sex identity, or simply sex, is defined as real, natural and biological (essentialist), determined, while gender identity or gender is understood as an artificial creation, unnatural fabrication, a product of emotions and delusions. In this context, anti-gender ideology impacts negatively the lives of transgender people, identifying them as people with psychological disorders and mistaken worldviews. Consequently, “gender ideology”, implying LGBTIQ activism and feminism not denying gender for anti-gender movements, becomes illusory and absurd ideology of “psychologically deranged people”.

“Fact is, unless we discard normalcy itself as a term –that people who experience such discomfort with their sexual anatomy, this would lead them to imagine the identity of the opposite sex (or sexless) – must be assessed as psychiatrically abnormal. It is high time the psychiatric community put effort into finding proper treatment for those suffering from this condition, instead of supporting an agenda aiming to force all others into such behaviour, as if the disorder was normal. The lies, even those in the name of tolerance and diversity are embarrassing – to those claiming them as well as those believing in them. And when psychiatrists start confirming their patients’ delusions, people start thinking that both are equally ill.” (Take Responsibility, November 21st, 2021)



Od Nas Za Nas / United We Stand Tall

10 October 2021 · 🌐

...

ДВЕ НЕДЕЛИ ШТЕТНИ ЕЛЕМЕНТИ НА ССО

Штетен елемент бр.10: ЈА ПРОМОВИРА ТРАНСРОДОВАТА ИДЕОЛОГИЈА

Од анализата на Прирачникот на ХЕРА (членка на IPPF) спроведена на образец подготвен од FWI...

ССО: „Промовира афирмација и/или истражување на различните родови идентитети. Може да ги научи децата дека можат да го сменат полот или да се идентификуваат како повеќе родови, или може да презентираат други ненаучни и медицински неточни теории. Не успева да научи дека повеќето родово збунети деца ја решаваат својата конфузија до зрелоста и дека екстремната родово конфузија е нарушување на менталното здравје (родова дисфорија) на кое може да и се помогне со интервенција на менталното здравје“ – FWI

“TWO WEEKS OF HARMFUL ELEMENTS CAUSED BY CSE (Comprehensive Sexual Education) / Harmful element no. 10: PROMOTING TRANSGENDER IDEOLOGY / From the analysis of HERA’s Guidelines (a member of IPPF) conducted on a sample issued by FWI... CCO: ‘Promoting affirmation and/or research of different gender identities might teach children they can change their sex or identify as having

several genders, or might present other unscientific and medically incorrect theories. It fails to teach that most gender confused children solve this confusion which is a mental health disorder (gender dysphoria), treated with a mental health intervention' – FWI." (United We Stand, October 10th, 2021)



Преземи Одговорност

29 January · 🌐

...

РОДОВА ЕДНАКВОСТ НЕ ПОСТОИ

-Дора Попова Узуновски, психолог, гешталт психотерапевт, м-р на клиничка и советодавна психологија

Отсекогаш сум имала големи нејаснотии околу концептот родова еднаквост од едноставна причина што...веројатно...РОДОВА ЕДНАКВОСТ НЕ ПОСТОИ. Може да постои како некоја фикција на папир со не знам ти какви права за едните и за другите, ама во ПРИРОДНАТА реалност никогаш нема да постои бидејќи има некои работи кои се ПРИРОДНО, БИОЛОШКИ, ФЕРОМОНСКИ и не знам уште како ВКОРЕНЕТИ ВО ДЛАБОКОТО НЕСВЕСНО, АРХЕТИПИ КОИ СЕ ПОСИЛНИ од папирот и рационалниот обид за нивна софистицираност е просто невозможно, против сите космички закони.

Прво не може два рода кои се РАЗЛИЧНИ да бидат еднакви, бидејќи ако се еднакви значи дека се исти, а две нешта што се различни не може да бидат исти.

Еве пошто НАЈПРВО сакате да има родова еднаквост во однос на работните места и да нема дискриминација во огласите за работа, односно да не се наведува дали се преферира работник или работничка, тогаш еве да речеме дека ние на плацот кај татко ми имаме потреба од вработено лице кое: ќе крева цемента, ќе вози виљушкар, ќе сече со голи раце железни мрежи и ќе растовара камиони со дрва. Баш ме интересира на ваков оглас колку жени ќе се пријават, а јас одма ќе ви кажам дека во рок од 30 години постоење на фирмата не се пријавила ниту една.

"GENDER EQUALITY DOESN'T EXIST / Dora Popova Uzunovksi, a psychologist, Gestalt psychotherapist, with a Master's degree in Clinical and Counselling Psychology / I have always had difficulties about the gender equality concept plainly because... probably... GENDER EQUALITY DOESN'T EXIST. It might exist as fabricated on paper with who knows what kinds of rights for this or that person, but in NATURE it would never exist because some things are NATURAL, BIOLOGICAL, PHEROMONIC and I don't know in what way else ROOTED IN THE DEEP UNCONSCIOUSNESS, ARCHETYPES STRONGER than paper and any rational attempts to make them sophisticated is simply impossible, against all cosmic laws. Firstly, two genders which are DIFFERENT cannot be equal, because being equal means they are the same, but two things which are different cannot be the same. Well, since FIRST you want gender equality at the work place and no discrimination in employment, i.e. the employer should not state whether they prefer a female or male worker, then let us say that, for instance, at my father's site we need a worker who: can lift bags of cement, operate the forklift, cut iron nets with bare hands and unload trucks with timber. I would really want to know how many women would apply for such a position, but let me tell you right now that in 30 years of work, not one has applied so far". (Take Responsibility, January 29th, 2022)

Despite centuries-old scientific texts verifying the fact that socializing, culture and social factors have crucial role in the creation of identities, arguments worded as above portray the key concepts of gender studies as silly and opposite to common sense. Anti-gender actors avoid turning to complex responses to questions such as "What is gender?", "What is femininity/masculinity?" and "What is sexuality?". They employ simple, even banal explanations more acceptable to the general

public. Instead of accepting and attempting to understand the complex dynamics behind gender and gender identity, anti-gender movements focus solely on “biology (in a quite limited manner as understood by these movements) as the only absolute source of the absolute truth and consequently the only source of social stability and cohesion” (Denkovski, Bernarding & Lunz, 2021). In order for the argument to be successful, anti-gender movements negate the existence of gender studies and problematize their scientific basis, defining them as ideological and forceful intervention.

4.2. Attack on Gender Studies

The discontinuing of the Gender Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje in 2012, on behalf of the newly established Family Studies, was never interpreted in context of the transnational anti-gender initiatives. The move was believed to be isolated, a strike against the critical public by the right-wing, demo-Christian ruling party at the time. The latest research indicates that in the past decade, cases of problematizing gender studies have been visible in various environments. Denkovski, Bernarding and Lunz’s report on anti-gender movements provides an overview of similar actions around the world. In Austria, such debates followed the argument that “gender studies fail to uphold scientific standards, following predetermined political goals” (Denkovski, Bernarding & Lunz, 2021). “Since it has no empirical basis and follows political goals, the argument goes, Gender Studies cannot be considered as science – therefore it is an ideology” (*Ibid.*). In Germany, “prominent newspapers like the FAZ, die Welt, NZZ, TAZ have published articles arguing that ‘Gender Studies are not scientific, but a sort of ideological, or religious belief, since the very notion of gender would deny any scientific evidence (as in biology, medicine, chemistry or evolutionary theory)’” (*Ibid.*). In North Macedonia, five years after the Gender Studies were discontinued, after the fall of the right-wing government and the coming of the social-democrats to power, the Department was once again opened for students.

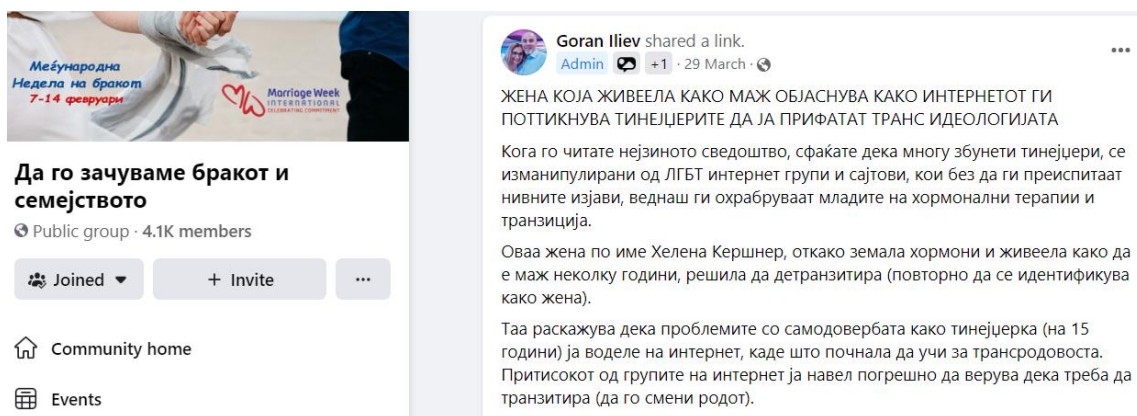
Currently, Macedonian anti-gender movements maintain the position that Gender Studies are not a scientific discipline, but rather the goal behind it is to displace academic interest on *gender*. By denying Gender Studies and the concept of *gender*, they manage to dislocate the political mobilization aiming to promote the rights and social status of transgender people.

“With regards to gender studies, on the other hand, it is completely different from sociology. Some parts are from psychology, however all lectures are conceptualized as to make everyone see themselves as an oppressor / victim and society (heteronormative / patriarchy) and men are to be blamed for the ‘stereotypes’. Gender Studies are founded on ultra-radical feminism, which has nothing to do with the first wave of feminism, when women truly fought for recognition of their rights. This could be easily checked by examining the Gender Study program which teaches – A Critical Approach Towards Masculinity (do men really need to be more feministic?), History of Gender and Sex in the Antiquity (a division between gender and sex without a scientific basis), Inclusive Education, Gender Equality Strategies (not sex equality) etc. Gender Studies first appeared in 1990s, but were not rooted in Women’s Studies. Why where Women’s Studies replaced by Gender Studies? What is so problematic with the word ‘woman’? What kind of feminism do Gender Studies propose when they erased the word ‘woman’ from its title?” (Take Responsibility, March 9th, 2022)

4.3. Return to the Biological Sex

Transgender people are targeted by a harsh and fierce mobilization conducted by anti-gender movements because this group is a living proof of how unfounded their arguments are. In other words, the existence of people whose sex determined at birth does not correspond with their gender identity negates the basis of anti-gender claims: that there are only two sexes, there are only men and women. Consequently, this fact could only be overlooked with claims that transgender identity is a deviation from the normal, a psychological disorder and delusion, or an exception, an exception to be considered as the rule. Where then is the simplest evidence to support this claim? In cases of detransition, i.e. in cases of people who have started transitioning at a point in their life and then wished or began to reverse the process.

Such experiences are familiar to transgender people. A certain percentage of the people who have transitioned in order to make their physical appearance correspond with their gender identity begin the reversed process later in life. These experiences are worth the scientific, political and social interest, and these people deserve empathy and support in the detransition process. However, anti-gender movements' strategy is manipulative since such cases are abused in order to prove the validity of their own claims. In other words, anti-gender actors show no interest in helping and supporting people who detransition but rather use them in the mobilization against transgender people and the concept of gender/"gender theory". Consequently, Macedonian anti-gender initiatives have never contacted such a person, offered support, or mobilized towards providing medical, legal and social services for them, but simply chose to relay the experiences of these people coming from other countries around the world, for the sake of fighting against "gender ideology".



Меѓународна Недела на бракот 7-14 февруари

Marriage Week FEBRUARY 7-14

Да го зачуваме бракот и семејството

Public group · 4.1K members

Joined + Invite ...

Community home

Events

Goran Iliev shared a link. Admin +1 · 29 March ·

ЖЕНА КОЈА ЖИВЕЕЛА КАКО МАЖ ОБЈАСНУВА КАКО ИНТЕРНЕТОТ ГИ ПОТТИКНУВА ТИНЕЈЏЕРИТЕ ДА ЈА ПРИФАТАТ ТРАНС ИДЕОЛОГИЈАТА

Кога го читате нејзиното сведоштво, сфаќате дека многу збунети тинејџери, се изманипулирани од ЛГБТ интернет групи и сајтови, кои без да ги преиспитаат нивните изјави, веднаш ги охрабруваат младите на хормонални терапии и транзиција.

Оваа жена по име Хелена Кершнер, откако земала хормони и живеела како да е маж неколку години, решила да детранзитира (повторно да се идентификува како жена).

Таа раскажува дека проблемите со самовербата како тинејџерка (на 15 години) ја воделе на интернет, каде што почнала да учи за трансродовоста. Притисокот од групите на интернет ја навел погрешно да верува дека треба да транзитира (да го смени родот).

"A WOMAN WHO USED TO LIVE AS A MAN EXPLAINS HOW THE INTERNET ENCOURAGES TEENAGERS TO ACCEPT TRANS IDEOLOGY / After reading her testimony, one realizes that many teenagers are manipulated by LGBT internet groups and sites, who, without questioning their posts are instantly encouraged to start hormone treatments and transition. The woman's name is Helena Kerschner, who after having taken hormones and living as a man for several years, decided to detransition (identify again as a woman). She says that her self-confidence issues began as a teenager (15 years old), which led her to use the internet and learn about transgender people. The pressure from internet groups led her to the wrong conclusion that she should transition (change her gender)". (Save Marriage and Family), March 29th, 2022)



ТРАНСРОДОВАТА АГЕНДА: ДРЖЕТЕ ЈА ПОДАЛЕКУ ОД ДЕЦАТА

Кратко видео во кое трансродови лица кои детранзитирале, лице со родова дисфорија, психолог и психијатар зборуваат за трансродовата идеологија и неповратната штета и загуба која истата ја нанесува на децата доколку се изложени на идеите кои истата ги пропагира.

Согласно препораките на Советот за избор во Здравствена заштита во Финска, родовата дисфорија, исто така е психо-социјална и психијатриска состојба.

<https://www.facebook.com/odnaszanas/posts/579259696783786>.

Оваа идеологија завиткана во „родово-сензитивни содржини“ веќе и формално е дел од нашиот задолжителен образовен систем и причина за сериозната загриженост и отпор на родителите за кои институциите немаат слух.

“KEEP THE TRANSGENDER AGENDA AWAY FROM CHILDREN / A short video of transgender people who have detransitioned, a person with gender dysphoria, a psychologist and a psychiatrist talk about transgender ideology and the irreversible harm and loss inflicted on children when exposed to the ideas it propagates. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Selection Committee at the Health Care in Finland, gender dysphoria is also a psycho-social and psychiatric condition.

www.facebook.com/odnaszanas/posts/579259696783786.

The ideology, veiled in ‘gender-sensitive content’, is already a formal part of our educational system as well and the reason for serious concerns and opposition among parents who remain unheard by institutions.” (United We Stand, October 5th, 2021)

The examples above clearly demonstrate that detransitioners are used by anti-gender movements in order to prove the “unstoppable” force of “biology”, “nature”, “common sense”. Such rhetoric is manipulative due to the fact that anti-gender movements’ posts on this tend to present detransitioning as more common than it actually is, succeeding in spreading disillusion about the gender transition process. Finally, the key goal of anti-gender movements is portraying trans people as temporarily confused, suffering from a misdiagnosed psychological disorder. Additionally, such anti-gender narratives allow them to “prove” that being trans-gender **can be enforced** (on innocent, small children), which is precisely the goal of LGBTIQ+ activists.

“We demand accountability for each child seduced by this global cult, now present in our country as well, from individuals doing it for small-town fame and petty cash! We firmly stand in support with young people and children detransitioning and offer our help! We are thankful for their courage to admit their mistake and find a way to come out in the public to uncover this veil. We shall never forget how LGBTI+ organizations (HERA, Margins, Star-Star, Helsinki Committee, Subversive Front and the others) abused our children, led by the former Minister for Education and Science – Mila Carovska - through the comprehensive sexual and gender-sensitive education!” (Take Responsibility”, March 14th, 2022)

Such manipulative rhetoric has serious consequences in the real world, from policy proposals harmful for transgender people to social stigma. On the one hand, the image of civil society is being ruined (particularly certain feminist organizations and the LGBTIQ movement), portrayed instead as

criminals and monsters, while on the other, there is active advocacy for degradation of the rights of the most marginalized groups in our society – transgender people.

4.4. Mobilization against Legal Gender recognition (LGR)

Anti-gender initiatives in North Macedonia, during its relatively brief existence as an organized movement, have already won two important legal battles – one in education and the other in legal recognition of transgender people’s gender. In this chapter we examine the latter in order to demonstrate the **effects and consequences** the mobilization to support the so-called “gender ideology” have on the life of marginalized people and groups.

Let us begin with an attempt to offer a brief context. Namely, transgender people in North Macedonia face difficulties in their daily lives due to the failure to match the sex markers in their personal identification documents with their gender and gender expression. Consequently, trans people face obstacles, barriers and discrimination in their access to goods and services whenever a personal identification document is requested from them (banking services, traveling abroad, health services etc.). Legal Gender Recognition⁷ is a procedure initiated to change the sex marker in transgender people’s personal documentation (people who do not identify with the sex assigned at birth).

The lack of clear administrative legal gender recognition procedures creates a legal vacuum triggering arbitrary decisions made by authorities that refuse to recognize the gender identity of transgender people. In certain cases, the Office for Management of the Civil Registry (the institution competent on this issue) enforced sterilization and surgical procedures as criteria for recognition of gender identity. Such a practice is contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, which guarantees the bodily integrity of all citizens. In other cases, this institution has claimed not to be competent in this matter, and in third refused to allow a change in the sex markers. The lack of legal regulation and the arbitrary decision-making, resulted in an application of a case (X. v. FYROM) in 2016 in front of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) submitted by the Coalition Margins. In January 2019, ECHR reached a decision that North Macedonia violated the right to a private life of the applicant X. The complete implementation of ECHR’s ruling forced the state to adopt a legal framework to guarantee a quick, transparent and accessible legal gender recognition procedure based on self-determination. The Ministry of Justice formed a working group on developing amendments to the Law on Civil Registry, regulating administrative legal gender recognition procedures in a separate chapter.⁸

The entire process was fiercely opposed by the anti-gender movements. Mobilization against the Law led to the forming of the Coalition for Protection of Children with 26 members, most of which are civil society organizations and informal groups, but also political parties and religious groups.

⁷ For more on legal gender recognition visit:


http://coalition.org.mk/archives/portfolio_page/правно-прознавање-на-родот-проблеми-с

⁸ For more on the case “X. v. Macedonia” visit:

<http://coalition.org.mk/archives/10387>

<http://coalition.org.mk/archives/10270>

Despite the fact that legal gender recognition is an administrative procedure, the movements forced the false narrative that the Law would allow *change of sex*. In their lobbying for the Law to be withdrawn from parliamentary procedure, anti-gender actors showed no restraint in the use of fake news, manipulation and spreading moral panic, to cause paranoia and fear not only among the population but also among decision-makers. Consequently, with the use of standard manipulative strategies, the issue of legal gender recognition suddenly became an issue of protecting women and children (further discussed in Chapter 6), warning against “hidden agendas” of the LGBTIQ activists aiming to destroy the fabric of society and the state (further discussed in Chapter 5), and welcoming conspiracy theories.

 Преземи Одговорност
18 November 2021 · 🌐

🔥🔥🔥 УДАРНА ВЕСТ: ВО МАКЕДОНИЈА, ПРАВНО СЕ ПРИЗНАВААТ СТОТИЦИ РОДОВИ

Преземен коментар (со мали измени и додатоци), кој вреди да се сподели, бидејќи суштински објаснува што значи тоа "правно признавање на родот":

ЛГБТИ+ активистите на тркалезна маса во Собрание за да дискутираат за ПРАВНО ПРИЗНАВАЊЕ НА РОДОТ. Тоа го пишува во првата реченица, а во сите останати се спомнува „советот на Европа“ како главен уценувач на владата и нашите пратеници.

Што значи правно признавање на родот?

Не станува збор тука за оние граматички родови или биолошкиот пол (машко и женско), туку станува збор за повеќе од 100 родови идентитети, кои се дел од родовата идеологија (Gender Ideology), а кои транс-активистите сакаат да ја наметнат на СИТЕ жители на Македонија, сакале или не.

Дел од тие родови идентитети што ќе бидат правно признати се:

- Bigender - човек кој се умислил дека има два рода во себе
- Aerogender - човек чијшто родов идентитет наводно зависи од времето. Ако е сончево - сум женско, ако е облачно - сум машко итн. Ако е изгрејсонце сум Bigender, ако е зајдисонце сум Pangender
- Multigender - човек кој се умислил дека има повеќе родови идентитети
- Pangender - човек кој се умислил дека ги има сите родови идентитети во себе
- Gender Fluid - човек кој се умислил дека има флуиден род
- Null Gender - човек кој се умислил дека нема род

Итн.

“BREAKING NEWS: HUNDREDS OF GENDERS LEGALLY RECOGNIZED IN MACEDONIA / A comment everyone should share (with small alterations and additions) because it essentially explains what ‘legal gender recognition’ is. LGBTIQ+ activists discuss in the Parliament LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION. This is the first sentence, while all others mention the ‘Council of Europe’ as the main blackmailer of our government and MPs. What is legal gender recognition? It does certainly not imply grammar gender or biological sex (male and female), but rather more than 100 gender identities, part of Gender Ideology, enforced by transactivists on ALL Macedonian citizens, whether they like it or not. Some of these gender identities to be legally recognized are:

- Bigender- a man who believes to have two genders;
- Aerogender – a man whose gender identity supposedly depends on the weather. If it’s sunny – he is a woman, if it’s cloudy – he is a man, etc. At sunrise he is Bigender, at dawn he is Pangender;
- Gender Fluid – a man who believes to have a fluid gender;
- Null Gender – a man who believes to have zero gender, etc.” (Take Responsibility, November 18th, 2021)

МОБИЛИЗАЦИЈА Народе!

Итен повик до сите, без разлика на етникум и било каква определба
(политичка/социјална/верска)
Заеднички и сплотено **ДА ГИ ЗАШТИТИМЕ ДЕЦАТА**, жените, мажите, семејните
вредности и идните генерации од погубниот предлог закон за правно менување на
родот, односно маж да се завери како жена во личната карта со една нотарска
изјава, и обратно.

Со ова се воведуваат сериозни ризици за безбедноста и сигурноста на децата и
жените!

Формираме голема коалиција (мрежа) на организации и здруженија за одбрана на
правата на жените, мажите и заштита на децата, особено во образованието, каде
многу лукаво им се наметнува оваа морално погубна идеологија.

Овој закон е силно осудуван во многу европски држави. А пак како би се чувствувале
вие, кога во женска соблекувана на вашата ќерка во средно би влегло да се соблекува
момче што се идентификува себеси како девојче?

Овој закон директно ги загрозува сигурноста на децата и правата на жените и мажите
во многу сфери на општествениот живот.

Повик за пратениците во Собранието да застанат на страната на здраворазумноста.

Масовно споделувајте го овој повик за предлагачите од Власта да го чујат ставот на
мнозинскиот народ во Македонија.
Контакт: koalicijazadecata@gmail.com



“MOBILIZATION People! An urgent call to everyone, regardless of their ethnicity or other affiliation (political/social/religious). Let us jointly PROTECT OUR CHILDREN, women, men, family values and future generations from the malign draft-Law on legal gender change, i.e. a man can be registered as a woman in his ID with just a statement certified by a notary public and vice versa. / This introduces serious risks on the safety and security of children and women! / We are forming a large coalition (network) of organizations and associations to defend the rights of women, men and protect the children, particularly in education, where this morally devious ideology is cunningly enforced. / The Law is facing serious opposition in many European states. How would you feel, if your high school daughter undresses in the girls’ locker-room together with a boy identifying as a girl? / The Law directly endangers the safety of the children and the rights of women and men in many spheres of social life. / We call upon MPs to stand for common sense. / Share this call in order for those who proposed the Law to hear the voices of the Macedonian people in Macedonia. / Contact: koalicijazadecata@gmail.com

This mobilization resulted in the withdrawal of the Law on the Management of the Civil Registry from the Parliament only a day before it was due to be discussed by the Parliamentary Commission on Political Systems and Relations among the Communities. Such a political manoeuvre inflicted serious harm on trans-people, who continue to live in an environment with limited access to goods and services, which consequently prevents them from exercising their rights.

The last subtopic in the Chapter discloses how mobilization against “gender ideology” resulted with specific political effects harmful mostly for the most marginalized groups in certain societies.

The new generation of anti-gender actors succeeded in reinforcing and normalizing the “gender ideology” discourse in the public discourse, outside the explicit anti-gender circles (Grzebalska, Kováts & Pető, 2017). Its effect is serious and indisputably huge. The language used by anti-gender movements is greatly accepted globally by some politicians and decision-makers, making the mobilization of these groups not so decisive. In other words, the seed of discontent and discord has been planted and continues to grow organically. What will be the movements’ effect in North Macedonia, it remains to be seen. Undoubtedly, their influence on certain power structures, political parties, part of the political establishment and state institutions is growing.

5. Anti-gender Movement and Right-wing Populism

“Common People” Policies

Right-wing populism, or populism in general, occupies a central position in the literature of anti-gender movements (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022; Kováts & Põim, 2015; Denkovski, Bernarding & Lunz, 2021). Research on anti-gender movements reveals that contemporary anti-gender discourses are structured as populist discourses, particularly in one essential point: understanding the world as dynamics between the majority of “gender-normal, natural” people featured by the anti-gender movement and the corrupted, morally devious elites propagating “gender ideology”. Anti-gender actors globally exhibit similar strategies of self-representing and common enemies. Typically, they portray themselves as “defenders of the common people,” fighting the greedy and “degenerated” elites. Their enemies include “not only transnational institutions such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, but also icons of global capitalism such as George Soros and Bill Gates, pharmaceutical companies selling contraceptive products and the medical establishment offering abortion and in-vitro fertilization services”. (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022)

In order to understand the link between anti-gender movements and right-wing populism, the analysis considered definitions and right-wing populism features offered by several key authors: Ernesto Laclau, Cas Mudde and Chantal Mouffe, as well Jan-Werner Mueller. The common element of the various definitions of populism is its main feature: polarization of society into two fractions: “the people” and “the elites”.

According to Laclau, through the notion of “the people,” populism manages to accomplish a union not by associating with or observing a certain coherent ideology, but rather by opposing a joint enemy, and the production of what Laclau calls an “empty signifier” (a collection of ideals and concepts ingrained in language). Gender or “gender ideology” are the “empty signifier” functioning as a mobilization trigger for certain people and groups who later construe themselves as “the people, common people, silent majority”. Within this logic, anti-gender movements portray themselves as representing the “common people” who should mobilize against the immoral “elites” in order to stop the spreading of “anti-gender ideology”, supposedly aiming to destroy the “natural, the normal, nation/people.” Laclau’s theory is particularly useful in understanding strategies of creating or “forging” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022) political identities, since he maintains that “the people” do not represent a pre-existing constituent, but rather a construct which occurs in the political process. In other words, anti-gender movements, in addition to successfully construing “gender ideology” as a dangerous elitist ideology, also manage to construe “the people/common people” as a silent majority suffering or threatened by this ideology. Frequently, in our research, we found that texts written by anti-gender groups use constructs like “we, the parents”, “we, the people”, “the common people”, “the majority”, “99% of the people” etc. Such narratives intend to confirm the framework

represented by right-wing populist discourses: the people are suffering and this implies mobilizing against the elites. However, the class narrative is almost absent among anti-gender movements. Consequently, the accumulation of capital, violations of workers' rights, the deepening class divide and similar problems are replaced by alleged sexualisation of children, the annihilation of marriage and family and lower birth rate seeking to destroy humanity.

Mudde offers a slightly different conceptualization of populism, defining it as “thin-centred ideology” dividing society into two antagonistic fractions – “the pure people” and “the corrupted elite” – while simultaneously relying on other ideologies, such as nationalism, for instance. This “thin-centred ideology,” maintains the characteristics of an ideological discourse, i.e. world view, but rather thin/tight, meaning it refers only to a part of the political agenda, for instance, without any interest in major questions, such as what the best economic or political systems would be.⁹ This definition highlights what populism consists of, which, depending on the context, is usually founded on specific concepts of belonging with regards to various identities – racial, sexual, gender, etc. Right-wing populism relies on demonizing its enemies by instigating moral panic or social fear. According to the anti-gender worldview, opposing “gender” is a “thin-centred ideology” polarizing society into “two antagonistic groups”: “the pure people”, whose lives and future are allegedly threatened/ endangered by the “corrupted elite”, comprised of “morally degenerated” LGBTIQ activists, and feminists represented by the “homosexual lobby” and “women-hating feminists. This framework becomes reinforced with the presence of transnational and national groups and individuals positioned on both opposing poles of the polarization: morally proper groups, i.e. the true civil society (such as transnational and national anti-gender organizations) supported by apt world leaders protecting “the pure people” (such as Vladimir Putin, Victor Orban etc.), against the morally improper groups, or the corrupted civil society (such as transnational or national civil society organizations dealing with women’s and LGBTIQ rights people, such as IPPF, ILGA, Coalition Margins, HERA, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Subversive Front, etc.) and unsuitable world leaders and powerful individuals` (such as Biden, George Soros, Bill Gates and similar).

However, even the most fervent opponents of anti-gender initiatives refrain from characterizing the mobilization of “the people” towards re-examining the power positions of “the elites” as absolutely negative. Consequently, in the analysis we considered how Jan-Werner Muller conceptualizes populism, conspiring a redefinition of the term. Briefly, the key characteristic of populism, in Muller’s opinion, should not be sought in anti-elitist rhetoric, but rather in the argument that populist leaders represent the neglected majority of the people. Several other key researchers dealing with anti-gender movements share the same opinion, mainly that anti-gender and ultraconservative groups “together with right-wing populists, strive for a huge change in the elite in politics, culture, education and transnational institutions, putting an end to the decades-long ideological and political dominance of the West progressive liberalism.” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022) In other words, the final goal of anti-gender movements is not to destroy “the elite” but rather replace the existing elite (secured in neoliberal systems, above all) with new elites.

In our research of Macedonian anti-gender movements, we realized that the populist discourse is dominant in almost every topic of interest. And so, the mobilization to ban the Skopje Pride occurred along the narrative – the potential risk of spreading monkey pox and protecting the health of “the Macedonian people”, while the mobilization against gender-sensitive education adopted the narrative – protect our children from sexualisation and promotion of the transgender

⁹ For more see: Поповски, Љ., *Дали популизмот е антиелитизам*, DW.com/mk: October 16th, 2021. available at: <https://www.dw.com/mk/дали-популизмот-е-антиелитизам/a-59524456>

identity. The mobilization against legal gender recognition, on the other hand, transpired along the narrative – protection of real women and girls from violence and rape committed by trans women. Throughout the research we found an abundance of texts referring to the other major characteristics of right-wing populism, examined previously in its definition. Four subtopics were distinguished. The first deals with an analysis of anti-gender narratives aiming to portray “gender ideology” as a product imported from the “rotten West”, i.e., capitalizing on the existing anti-EU or EU-sceptical positions, permeating Macedonian territory as well. The second subtopic analyses the narratives related to the demonization of the current civil society in North Macedonia, i.e., strategies used to create an image on specific people or organizations such as “the corrupted elite”. The third subtopic examines the strategies on portraying anti-gender initiatives as those of “the common people”, i.e., strategies to construct “the common people” suffering as a result of “the corrupted elite”. Finally, the fourth subtopic deals with the strategies used to create “the new elite” as opposed to “the corrupted elite”, as the true protector of “the people, the common people”.

5.1. On Imminent Dangers

The arrival of the rotten West, decadence, dereliction and immorality in Macedonia

In the second chapter we saw that global anti-gender movements, despite the common denominator, are contextually (historically and geographically) framed, i.e. certain differences can be distinguished based on the local/regional context. Consequently, the relation with the West and “Western civilization” is different among anti-gender movements in Western democracies and those in post-socialist countries. Research shows that anti-gender **ideology in former socialist countries** has gained a more prominent nationalistic form, represented through the resistance of Western ideologies on gender equality, argued with narratives on “national sovereignty and the chance to return to its justified position in the moral geography of Europe” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). In right-wing populism this position acquires the following form: antagonism between “the corrupted global elite” (West, EU, liberal West) and “the pure and innocent local population” (Macedonians, natural men and women from Macedonia, the Balkan). In other words, “the people” construed through the narratives of Macedonian anti-gender movements is a community of traditional, religious, simple and morally correct people, threatened by Western secularism and liberalism. Anti-gender movements in North Macedonia are not explicitly nationalistic but easily adapt to local nationalistic frames and feelings. Consequently, public reactions to messages posted by these groups are to be expected, as they are based on perceiving the West (or EU) in a monstrous context, and Macedonia as the last remnant of the pure world, or “the holy land” populated by “normal people.”



*"X: Crazy wh*re European wh*re Europe*

Y: And erethics.

Z: Someone is paid for such bullshit on account of the people. Never an EU member. They'll destroy our children and make us pay for it."

(Save Marriage and Family, December 2nd, 2021)

Ljubica Bube Pucarevic

Stooio imalo vakov predlog na zakon vo Sobranie ???!!!
Aloo dali ste normalni???!!! Nosete se so se EU .Odete
tamu site do eden .Koj ste bre vie da predlagate a i vie vo
Sobranie da voopsto razgleduvate takov zakon i ne daj
boze usvoite !!! Koj vi go dal toa pravo ???!!! Nie ve
glasame i nie se prasuvame ???!!! Tamu sedite site so nasi
glasovi ,a ne od tatkovi !!!! Nie sme pred se tradicionalna
sredina kade vakvi gluposti od bolna EU ne se
primenlivi.Za razlika od bolesnicite od EU nie sme
normalen narod!! Koj saka da bide kako niv neka odi kaj
niv i nema pravi so sebe i svojot zivot sto saka!!!

Like Reply Share 4 w



"What!!! There was such a proposal in the Assembly????!!! Are you people normal????!!! Go to hell, you and EU. All of you. Who do you think you are to propose, and you, in the Assembly, to even discuss such a law and, God forbid, adopt it!!! Who gave you the right????!!! We voted you there, we should be the ones asked????!!! Our votes brought you there, not your father!!! This is a traditional environment, where such bullshit from the EU cannot apply. Unlike the sick minds of EU, we are a healthy people!! If someone wants to be like them, go there and do whatever you wish with your life!!!" (Save Marriage and Family, March 22nd, 2022)



Ljubomir Nikoloski

Чудно е што овие нездрави идеологии доаѓаат од западот. Таму доминира католицизмот и протестантмот. За првоспомнатиот нема што да се дискутира, но за вториов би можело да се цитира од Откровението: "Имаш име дека си жив, но ти си мртов!". Тоа е судот на Господ Исус Христос. "Има останато само мал број имиња кои ги држат своите облекувања чисти". Брзо расиплива роба.

Like Reply Share 25 w Edited



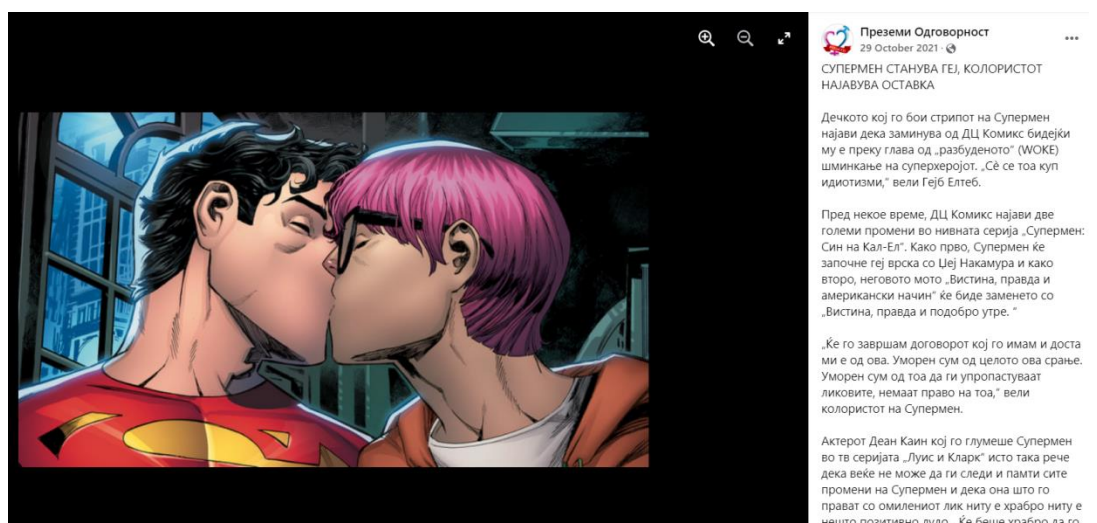
"It's strange that such sickening ideologies originate in the West. It's dominated by the Catholic and Protestant Church. The former needs no discussion, but a quote from The Book of Revelations seems suitable for the latter: "You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead!" It is the judgement of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'You have a few people that have not soiled their clothes'. Goods with short shelf-life." (Save Marriage and Family, October 22nd, 2021)

These types of narratives rest on the logic that elites are always global (EU, UN, as well as multinational corporations such as Disney, Coca-Cola, Google, Microsoft) while the people are always local. Although this alleged anti-elitist rebellion seems well founded, it employs rather manipulative strategies. Consequently, global dominance of power and resources concentrated on certain institutions and corporations are not problematic, but rather their alleged hidden agenda –

depopulating the world or cultural imposition in order to deviate from the “normal”. Such agenda, according to anti-gender actors, is achieved through a cultural/ideological war, or in practice – involving any form of representation of non-heteronormative subjects or policies. The key element of these anti-Western rhetorics in the texts studies is the fairly exploited sentiment about “the good old times,” diminishing, or being erased by Western liberalism.

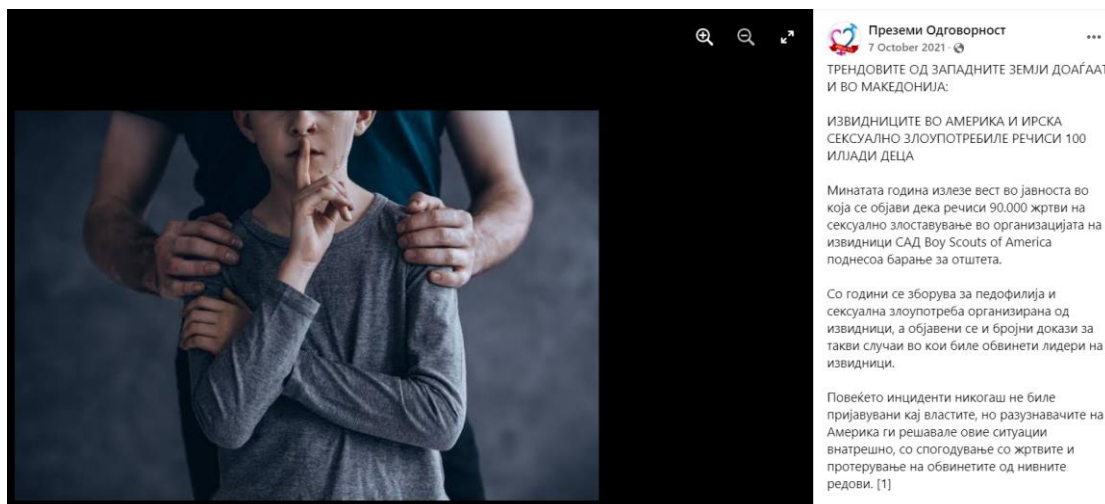


“DISNEY CONTINUES WITH ITS LGBTIQ INDOCTRINATION OF CHILDREN: ‘Please don’t dress Minnie Mouse in pants’ – Disney angered Twitter users with just a single move / Minnie is no longer wearing her white-spotted red dress and yellow shoes, as she had been for the past 100 years – now she is wearing a blue suit with black shoes, as a symbol of the progress the new generation has made. ‘What’s next, transiting into Mike or Mickey to be able to fully express herself?’ commented an infuriated user. / Disney became a target of fierce criticism after promoting Minnie Mouse’s new look, the beloved female character, distinguished by her white spotted dress. / Minnie’s dress has been changed for a ‘progressive’ styling, i.e. Minnie is wearing a suit designed by Stella McCartney. The spokesperson of Disneyland Paris announced that the new styling is in honour of the Park’s 30th anniversary.” (Take Responsibility, January 31st, 2022)



“SUPERMAN IS BECOMING GAY, THE COLORIST ANNOUNCES HIS RESIGNATION / A Superman colourist announced he is quitting DC Comics because he has had it with the ‘woke’ make-up of the superhero. ‘It’s all a bunch of idiotic crap’, said Gabe Eltaeb. / DC Comics announced two big changes in ‘Superman: Son of Kal-El.’ First of all, Superman is going to start a gay relationship with Jay Nakamura, and second, the motto ‘Truth, Justice and the American Way’ will be replaced with ‘Truth, Justice and a Better Tomorrow’. ‘I am finishing my contract and that’s it. I am tired of this bullshit. I am tired of them ruining these characters, they don’t have a right to do this,’ said the Superman’s colourist. / Actor Dean Cain who used to play Superman also said he wasn’t able to follow all the changes in Superman and that what they were doing with the beloved character is neither bold nor positive.” (Take Responsibility, October 29th, 2021)

Research conducted in Poland revealed a “fictional moral geography of anti-gender movements, based on enjoying a privileged position in Central and Eastern Europe with regards to the West” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Consequently, the West is often portrayed as the source of moral deterioration and contamination, the East being relatively untouched by and largely resistant to the corruption triggered by the sexual revolution. The West is not the colonizer as such, but rather a West the purity of which (Christianity) was destroyed by neo-Marxism and feminism as early as the 1960s. (Ibid.) These findings respond to the results from our research on Macedonian anti-gender movements. In other words, texts posted by anti-gender groups analysed in the research reveal that anti-Western rhetoric is construed through the argument that Western civilization itself has been recently changed by liberalism and progressive forces and that even in Western democracies “the common people” are suffering because “the good old times”, when knowledge about the world and people was simple and stable, are now gone. The threat is not only ideological (although highly rating in the “concerns” of anti-gender actors) but also corporeal, i.e. has implications on the life, wellbeing and security of “the common people”.



“WESTERN TRENDS ARRIVE IN MACEDONIA / BOYSCOUTS IN USA AND IRELAND SEXUALLY ABUSED ALMOST 100,000 CHILDREN / Last year the public received the news that almost 90,000 victims of sexual abuse in the Boy Scouts of America filled sex abuse claims. / Paedophilia and sexual abuse organized by the Boy Scouts has been known for years, with numerous evidence on cases where the Boy Scouts leaders have been charged. / Most incidents were never reported to the authorities because cases were mediated and solved internally, by making deals with the victims and expelling the abusers from the organization.” (Take Responsibility, October 7th, 2021)

The West is portrayed as morally impure and rotten mostly through narratives on Western institutions (particularly EU) being represented as decadent. Such narratives have found fertile ground in the Macedonian context, particularly considering the rise of anti-EU positions and Russia's increased support. Research indicates that the perceived influence of EU on North Macedonia has the lowest ranking in the past years (from 44.8% in 2019 to 9.5% in 2021). Additionally, only few Macedonians see EU as a subject with the biggest influence (7.8 %). The stagnation impacted negatively how citizens value the EU in their personal preferences, particularly among ethnic Macedonians. A total of 45% Macedonians would support a Euro-Asian Union led by Russia (Velinovska, Nikolovski, Kirchner, 2022). Anti-gender narratives arguing against the morally corrupted EU build upon these dominant perceptions and position without difficulty.



“EU LGBTI+ GOODWILL AMBASSADOR PHOTOGRAPHED AS BEARDED VIRGIN MARY / LGBTI+ activists seeking acceptance and tolerance from others, mock Christians and their religion. / The December issue of the German LGBTI+ SIEGESSAULE Magazine, has Riccardo Simonetti, the LGBTI special ambassador of the EU, posing as a bearded ‘Virgin Mary’ with the ‘baby Christ’ for the Christmas holidays. / Many reacted negatively to the provocation, believing it to be a heresy. Trans activists, who constantly complain of discrimination and being mocked, now openly mock Christians and their religion. / Simonetti posted on his Instagram account: ‘If we ignore the fact that Jesus wasn’t white, we could believe the Virgin Mary had a beard, why not?’ Simonetti dared to mock Christians, because he knows Christians will only protest...” (Take Responsibility, December 11th, 2021)

Following the logic of anti-Western arguments, anti-gender movements create criticism and resistance to existing civil society structures. The trend is particularly visible in post-socialistic societies and the so-called developing countries, where most of the NGO's were founded with the support of Western donors in the 1990s (Jacobsson & Korolczuk 2017). Consequently, the texts analysed often include the argument that gender equality policies (or “gender ideology”) are forced (not authentic) by transnational elite organizations, with questionable financing schemes. Often, civil society organizations are presented as Western puppets, with one of the most mentioned financier of this so-called “ideological occupation” being George Soros, already established as the main perpetrator in ultra-conservative discourses.

5.2. On the Corrupted elites NGOs, Soros and “well-paid puppets”

Similar to the previous subtopic, narratives on corrupted elites pertain to this context as well. Portraying the civil society as a corrupted elite is old news in Macedonian society. Such representations have been occurring (with a varying degree of dominance) since the 1990s, noting a particular growth in the last decade, especially with the calls for “de-sorosization” of Macedonia and the rise of the SOS movement (*Stop Operation Soros*). Within anti-gender narratives, the demonization of “gender”, or the so-called “gender ideology”, serves to encourage social polarization and delegitimize political opposition, liberal or progressive spokespersons and certain individuals or organizations from the civil society. A key narrative in North Macedonian anti-gender movements is the alleged opposition to Western “monstrous agendas”, via certain local individuals or civil society organizations “well-paid,” “receiving the big bucks” to engage in such activities. An analysis of the selected texts indicates that the main focus in the demonization of “gender”, i.e. the construction of “the corrupted elites”, is placed on the LGBTIQ community and movement. Despite the LGBTIQ community being one of the most vulnerable to discrimination and the most marginalized groups in Macedonian society (Kimov & Kimova, 2019), anti-gender actors manage to portray it with quite contrary characteristics. Consequently, the LGBTIQ community and activists are portrayed as a small but powerful and privileged group, “imposing” its own agenda on the “normal” population, i.e. “the decent Macedonian people”.

“How did we guess? How did we foresee all their next actions? No, we are not prophets. It’s quite easy to hack them. You just need to find the organizations financing them (this is how Carovska gets rich in just a single mandate), then you simply follow the phases undertaken by the same organizations in “liberally more developed countries” and you see literally the identical scheme here, the same phases. All this is undertaken under European flags (while Europe is also divided regarding these issues!), hiding their intentions, manipulating the public, fabricating surveys (in reality they distribute the questionnaires among themselves), demanding some sort of inclusive rights, etc...” (Save Marriage and Family, March 26th, 2022)

“The question remains: Is Cvetkovic that stupid to play such obvious political games, when her lies could be so easily detected? Of course not. There’s something else going on here – money makes the word(view) go round, and awareness doesn’t really matter any longer. Let us not forget that Margins are heavily funded by the World Bank, while the salary of the humanitarian, Cvetkovic, was made public in 2016: ‘Irena Cvetkovic, among the most active regular protestors at events organized by Soros, charges very well for her activism. From the Coalition “Sexual and Health rights of Marginalized Communities” she earns over 1,208,720 MKD a year. She is paid for her activities by other SOROS organizations as well.’ As you’ve already seen, on two occasions Cvetkovic attempted to discredit two lovely ladies, women and mothers, who, without any finances from abroad (contrary to her), are prepared to fight for the psychophysical health and safe childhood of their own and our children, and even against the well-paid puppets of the largest creators of global politics. Should Cvetkovic be considered as moral, fair and dignified person? Determine that for yourselves!” (Take Responsibility, March 6th, 2022)



Преземи Одговорност

15 October 2021 · 🌐



СТИВЕН НОЛАН, ПОЗНАТИОТ ВОДИТЕЛ НА БИ-БИ-СИ, ОБЕЛОДЕНУВА ДЕКА НАЈГОЛЕМАТА ЛГБТИ+ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА ВО ЕВРОПА STONEWALL ИМА ОГРОМНО ВЛИЈАНИЕ ВРЗ ВЛАСТА

Додека Македонија влегува во сè подлабоко покорство на ЛГБТИ+ организациите, кои во соработка со власта и други организации се борат за цензура на слободниот говор [1], светот полека почнува да се ослободува од стегите на ЛГБТИ лобито и послободно да говори.

“STEPHEN NOLAN, THE FAMOUS BBC PRESENTER REVEALS THAT THE BIGGEST LGBTI+ ORGANIZATION IN EUROPE IS HEAVILY INFLUENCING THE GOVERNMENT / While Macedonia is becoming more and more subservient to LGBTI+ organizations, which in collaboration with the government and other organizations are fighting to censor free speech, the world is slowly freeing itself from the chains of LGBTI lobbies and speaking up more freely.” (Take Responsibility), October 15th, 2021)

In narratives of transnational and Macedonian anti-gender movements, global and also local attempts and activities for promotion of reproductive health, family planning, gender equality and sexual rights are presented as a “curtain” for conducting hidden and monstrous agendas: securing cultural hegemony of the morally impure, destruction of the family, depopulation of the planet etc. Certain texts, particularly comments offering support, often contain more radical conspiracy theories (portraying elites as reptiles feeding on the blood from babies, conducting eugenic practices, as paedophiles, rapist and abusers). However, this analysis shall not be dealing with such narratives due to two crucial reasons: a) despite their existence, they do not represent the key arguments of anti-gender movements in North Macedonia and b) the possibility that these texts, due to their “scandalous content”, might overshadow other arguments deemed as more dangerous precisely because of their alleged “rational justification”. We selected one example of anti-gender movements attempting to “uncover” the relationship between LGBTIQ organizations and the World Bank as a monstrous collaboration in order to convert children into trans-gender and consequently cash in from the sex change in private clinics.



Преземи Одговорност

28 February · 🌐



ЛГБТИ+ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИТЕ ВО ПОЛНА ОФАНЗИВА

Изминативе неколку недели многумина од вас можеа да ја забележат рекламата што голем број ЛГБТИ+ организации од Македонија ја имаа објавено на Фејсбук. Се разбира, станува збор за добро платен маркетинг од странство. Главниот организатор/спонзор на оваа анкета е Светската банка, во соработка со ЕРА - Асоцијацијата за еднакви права на ЛГБТИ+ лицата за Западен Балкан и Турција. [1]

Ќе се запрашате, зошто воопшто Светската банка се грижи за нешто што не е во нејзиниот домен? Она што таа како институција го прави е давање кредити, позајмици и грантови на сиромашните земји, со изговор дека се залага за намалување на сиромаштијата во светот. Но, доколку сака да ја намали сиромаштијата, тогаш зошто не дава исклучиво донации, туку позајмува финансии со очекување сиромашните земји да ги вратат, а во процесот на враќање, тие стануваат сосема зависни од банката? [2]

Сепак, добра промоција на ЛГБТИ+ агендата меѓу младите, особено на родовата идеологија која доаѓа во пакет, носи најдобри финансии: збунети деца, кои сакаат да сменат пол, носат повеќе родови клиники каде терапиите и операциите се најмалку неколку десетици илјади евра.

“LGBTI+ ORGANIZATIONS ON THE OFFENSIVE / Many of you may have noticed these past few weeks the advertisement posted by numerous Macedonian LGBTI+ organizations on Facebook. Of course, it is a well-paid foreign campaign. The main organization/sponsor is the World Bank, in cooperation with ERA – Equal Rights Association of LGBTI+ people on the Western Balkans and Turkey. / You might wonder, why does the World Bank care about something outside its domain? This institution gives loans and grants to poor countries, under the excuse of decreasing global poverty. However, if the purpose is to decrease poverty, than why not donate exclusively rather than give loans, expecting poor countries to return it, in the process of which these countries become dependent on the bank? / Still, good promotion of the LGBTI+ agenda among the youth, particularly of gender ideology in the same package, brings good finances too: confused children, wanting to change their sex, at their disposal several gender clinics where therapies and surgeries cost at least tens thousands of Euros.” (Take responsibility, February 28th, 2022)

Finances is the key argument anti-gender movements employ to demonize civil society. Interestingly, information on the organizations’ financial activities is obtained from official websites, since civil society organizations regularly and transparently publish their statistics. Contrary to civil society organizations, anti-gender groups almost never publish clearly their financial reports. Research on anti-gender initiatives funds has never been conducted in North Macedonia, however, globally, similar research reveals broad financial intransparency and suspicious financial relations with certain oligarchy structures (Datta, 2018). However, our research deals predominantly with anti-gender narratives and strategies and their effect on the public rather than how such groups function and are financed. Far from dismissing the issue’s importance, we hope we might intrigue the curiosity of other researchers or journalists. At present, it is important to understand that such initiatives use “gender” and the alleged concern for the children and the “natural, real, biological” men and women not to protect them from the supposed threat, but rather to create antagonism and crisis seeking to replace one elite with another. The new elite of this subtopic implies exchanging current civil society (liberal and progressive) with a new civil society (a conservative one). Hence, organizations such as the Coalition “Margins”, HERA, Subversive Front, Helsinki Committee etc. are portrayed as corrupted and harmful for “the majority”, while anti-gender organizations such as “United We Stand Tall,” “Take Responsibility”, Coalition for Protection of Children and similar are portrayed as authentic and “protectors” of “the majority”.

5.3. On the Phenomenon of the Silent Majority

How 1 % of marginalized groups harass 99 % of honest people

As elaborated previously with the examination of right-wing populist definitions, most major researchers of the phenomenon agree that the term “majority/people/common people” does not refer to an already existing group, but rather to a construct of the populist discourse. Right-wing populist discourses construe “the majority, people, the common people” as a traditionalist and conservative group with stable ideas on family and society. Left-wing populist discourses portray the “majority” differently. We refrain from claiming that one or the other notion of “the majority” is real, authentic or correct. On the contrary, our position is that “the majority, common people” is always a discursive construct. In this sense, the analysis does not decide “what the majority is”, but rather examines how this fictional community is construed by anti-gender movements, to be able to better understand their strategies.

Anti-gender movements’ necessity to construe this “majority” is almost identical with the one of right-wing populists. The construct aims to further portray anti-gender groups or populist leaders

and parties as representatives of the people, i.e. as the only political groups and subjects allowed to represent the people. Anti-gender groups, as well as right-wing populist leaders and parties, believe that no one else (regardless of whether it is a group or a political party) cannot and must not represent social groups or policies. In other words, only anti-gender organizations may be considered as authentic and decent civil society, because, as their logic dictates, they represent 99% of the citizens on Earth or the world. This is precisely why the construct of the majority is exceptionally important for anti-gender initiatives.

“Have you noticed how the ones elected by the people to serve them instead serve LGBTI+ organizations, adopting laws the majority disagree with? They gathered to discuss the consequences faced by LGBTI+ people, who account for less than 1% of the entire population, and how discriminated they were, while bluntly disregarding discrimination against people with disabilities, children with disabilities, the homeless or sick in hospitals. None of them matter because LGBTI+ people have the advantage and are more important. Because their suffering and pain is greater than yours. People infected with Corona-19 virus die constantly due to lack of protocols, but they, on the other hand, are discussing their sexual preferences and the feeling that they belong to the opposite sex.” (Take Responsibility, February 6th, 2022)

“In addition, Spasevska represents 80,000 parents and citizens in Macedonia with different religious and ethnical affiliation, while Cvetkovic, on the other hand, and her 300 supporters, most of whom LGBTI+ people and activists and those who have no children at all, are just a drop in comparison to the sea called Citizens’ Initiative for Educational reforms “Textbooks and School Presence.” (Take Responsibility, March 6th, 2022)

The main result achieved with this antagonistic dynamics between the constructs “the people” and “the elite” is that anti-gender movements, similarly to right-wing populist parties, claim to give back “people” their voice. The global destabilization of the dominant neo-liberal hegemony is a mobilization opportunity for anti-gender movements, based on the idea of “the Macedonian people, the majority” being able to prevent the democratization of society portrayed as unjust and harmful. To present the human rights struggle of a certain group as unjust, it must be construed as a “struggle at the price of the others”. And so, delegitimizing LGBTIQ people’s struggle for rights, for instance, is portrayed as an attempt to exclude all other vulnerable groups, such as people with disability, female victims of domestic violence, children. In other words, anti-gender movements’ argument is built on the false logic that the human rights struggle of one group implies denying the rights or neglecting other people’s needs. In practice, it occurs through the following narratives: the fight for transgender rights is harmful and dangerous for “biological women and children,” the fight for gender equality is harmful for “biological men,” attention to LGBTIQ problems implicates distraction from the needs of people with disabilities etc.



Преземи Одговорност

15 February · 🌐

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КОИ СЕ ЧЛЕНОВИТЕ НА КОМИСИЈАТА ЗА АНТИ ДИСКРИМИНАЦИЈА?

Кон крајот на минатата година, во Македонија беше усвоен законот за анти-дискриминација. Ќе си помислите дека самата вест звучи одлично и дека со овој закон ќе бидат заштитени сите обесправени болни, лица со хендикеп, сиромашни оставени на маргините на општеството, интелектуалци што не можат да просперираат поради тоа што патот им е блокиран од оние со партиски книшки... Токму тоа треба да претставува тој закон и за тоа треба да се бори една Комисија што себеси се нарекува - Комисија против дискриминација. Меѓутоа, не е така со нашата Комисија (а всушност и со ваквите комисији секаде во светот).

Законот за анти-дискриминација беше донесен на туркање и лобирање од страна на ЛГБТИ+ заедницата. [1] На нивно барање беше изгласана и Комисијата. [2]

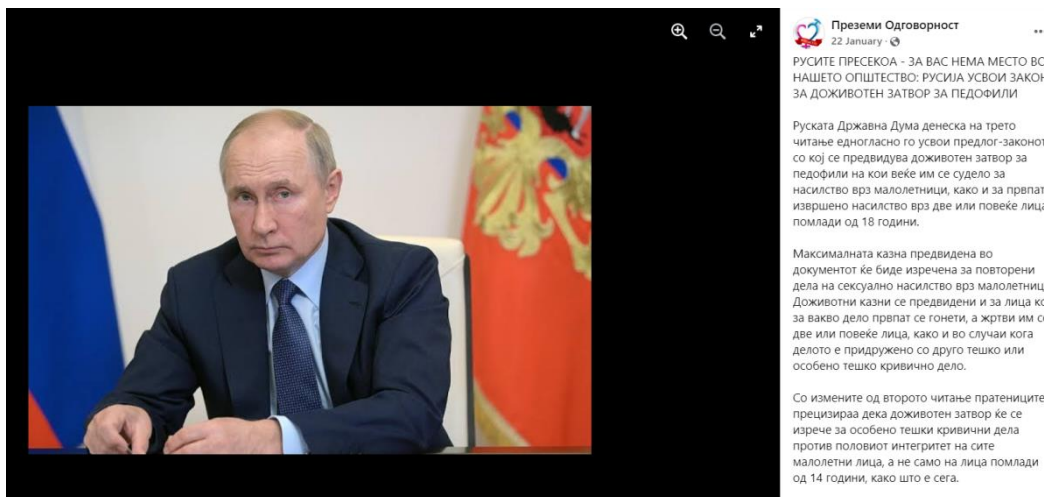
“WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION? / Towards the end of the year, the Law against Discrimination was adopted in Macedonia. You might think this sounds great and that the Law would protect all oppressed, ill people, people with disabilities, the poor on the margins of society, intellectuals denied of progress simply due to partisanship... This is what the Law is supposed to represent, and what the Commission calling itself – Commission against Discrimination – supposed to do. However, matters with our Commission slightly differ (as with all other commissions of this sort globally). / The Law against Discrimination was adopted with the lobbying of the LGBTI+ community. The Commission was also selected at their request.” (Take Responsibility, February 15th, 2022)

Anti-gender actors present themselves as the defenders of the “oppressed silent majority,” although nothing in their activities suggests any involvement in the improvement of the condition of other vulnerable groups, particularly of those sending out calls to: people with disabilities, the poor, the youth, victims of violence etc. On the contrary, the concern for these groups is manipulative, aiming solely to portray the fight for LGBTIQ rights as harmful. In other words, anti-gender initiatives are not concerned with the rights and well-being of vulnerable groups, but use them to delegitimize women’s and LGBTIQ social movements. Similar to populist leaders, the key ideologists of anti-gender movements are self-proclaimed defenders of human rights or defenders of freedom and democracy, which, “according to them, has been kidnapped from liberals and left-wing supporters.” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022) These actors, as mentioned above on the construction of “the corrupted elite”, claim to represent “the true” civil society, authentic and interested in the local population. By applying different strategies discussed in the publication, they mobilize local and national members and supporters, while simultaneously establishing a larger global presence with international coalitions and networks. With the successful portrayal of themselves as representatives of the poor and oppressed, together with right-wing populists, anti-gender actors encourage the process of changing the elite. In addition, the lack of scepticism regarding populists claiming to be “part of the people” is shocking. Politicians and world leaders endorsed by anti-gender movements, such as Orban, Putin or Tramp, belong to the elites of their societies, and their political engagement is often directed towards acquiring and monopolizing power, instead of re-distributing the resources and including marginalized groups in the social mainstream. However, anti-gender actors still fail to reconsider their portrayal of such leaders as protectors of the common people.

5.4. Opportunistic Synergy

The new elite versus tough leaders, people's people and protectors of the common people

Right-wing populist parties throughout the world join ultra-conservative actors, whilst accepting anti-gender rhetoric in order to enforce the populist image of themselves as defenders of the common people versus the immoral elite. Graff and Korolczuk call this an “opportunistic synergy”, or a dynamic involving political unions, ideological affiliations and organizational links allowing broad elite changes in governmental agencies, the academic community, cultural institutions and civil society (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). As was already asserted in the beginning of the chapter, the goal of anti-gender movements in North Macedonia is strengthening the cultural and political hegemony of conservatism, patriarchy and clericalism. However, such strategies are implemented quite wisely. Hence, the focus is almost exclusively on world leaders rather than local politicians or parties, except for isolated cases, of course. Their relationships and collaborations with right-wing and conservative political parties are often covert but could be decoded by: a) the use of anti-gender movement language by certain politicians, b) supporting the membership of certain political parties at events organized by anti-gender initiatives (protests, petitions etc.) and c) joint criticism of left-wing oriented parties “progressive policies”.



“THE RUSSIANS HAVE DECIDED – THERE IS NO PLACE FOR YOU IN OUR SOCIETY: RUSSIA ADOPTS A LAW ON LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR PEDOPHILES / The Russian State Duma unanimously adopted the third reading of the draft-law prescribing life imprisonment for paedophiles already convicted for violence against minors, as well as for first-time offenders who have violated two or several individuals bellow 18 years of age. / The maximum punishment prescribed in the document is reserved for repeated acts of sexual violence against minors. Life-sentences are prescribed also for people convicted for the first time, their victims being two or more individuals, and in cases when the crime was accompanied with other serious criminal act. / With the amendments to the second reading, MPs specified that life-imprisonment shall be sentenced to particularly serious criminal acts against the sex identity, not only bellow 14 years of age, as it currently stands.” (Take Responsibility”, January 22th, 2022)



Zlatko Buckoski shared a link.

4 December 2021 · 🌐



Премиерот на Унгарија - Орбан покренува референдум за да ја зајакне позицијата против Брисел во однос на новиот унгарски закон против ЛГБТ индоктринација на децата т.е. законот против педофилија како што го нарекоа.

„Не ми е грижа што вели Брисел за нашиот закон за заштита на децата и не сакам Венецијанската комисија да се меша во тоа како унгарците ги воспитуваат своите деца“
Ќе дочека ли Македонија ваков премиер кој ќе застане цврсто во одбрана на децата?



HUNGARYTODAY.HU

PM Orbán: Brussels 'Trying to Intervene' in 2022 General Election

Orbán accused the EU of trying to intervene in the 2022 general election, adding that Brussels ...

👍👏 99

3 comments

“X: Hungarian Prime Minister – Orbán announces a referendum to toughen the country’s position against Brussels in relation to the new Hungarian Law against LGBT indoctrination of children, i.e. the Law against paedophilia, as it’s called. ‘I do not care what Brussels has to say about our new law for protection of the children and I do not want the Venice Commission to tell us how to raise our children.’ Will Macedonia ever have such a prime minister to take his ground in defence of the children?” (Textbooks and School Presence,” December 4th, 2021)

As we already defined the relationship between right-wing populist and anti-gender movements as an opportunistic synergy, it becomes quite obvious that the collaboration is beneficial to both parties. Anti-gender movement researchers point to the fact that “right-wing populist often rely on anti-gender rhetoric to increase their moral legitimacy among traditionalistic voters and moralize the conflict between the elites and the people. In the meantime, ultraconservative organizations look for “open doors” to political opportunities, i.e. treat right-wing parties as powerful allies with the support of whom they could introduce legal amendments, gain access to finances and participate in the policy-creation process” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). As a result, this analysis on Macedonian anti-gender movements refrains from claiming that anti-gender actors necessarily are affiliated with certain political parties or act on their behalf. Despite the immense ideological mutualness of anti-gender actors with right-wing political parties rather than centre or left-wing ones, anti-gender organizations or groups are still independent and separate entities. This opportunistic synergy with certain political elites was significant to the research since such collaborations expose the true power transforming these movements into creators not only of social opinions but also of policies affecting the lives of many marginalized groups. Additionally, by employing right-wing populist rhetoric, anti-gender actors manage to strengthen social depolarization and division. During

our examination of anti-gender movements, their strategy to capitalize existing divisions and discord in various contexts became quite obvious. If right-wing populist discourses showed us how anti-gender initiatives capitalized from the polarization of society into two antagonistic groups (morally pure people versus decadent elites), the next chapter deals with the manners in which such initiatives capitalize from the division within the feminist movement, while at the same time reinforcing it.

6. Anti-gender Movements and Gender-critical Feminism *Causing divisions within feminist movements*

Issues related to gender and sex, affecting trans-gender people in particular, in this chapter are examined through the relationships between anti-gender movements and gender-critical feminists. We begin with an attempt to define gender-critical feminism. Gender-critical feminism is broadly known as “trans-exclusionary/ exclusionary radical feminism” (TERF), a term rejected by gender-critical feminists as offensive. The term TERF increased in popularity in online discussions in the 2000s, originating, however, in the late 1970s. Namely, in the 1970s, the need for a term to distinguish between radical feminists who supported transwomen and those who did not became apparent to radical feminists. As we already mentioned, today numerous anti-trans feminists claim that TERF is offensive, despite the opinion of many that it truly describes feminist beliefs. In the analysis we use the term they prefer – “gender-critical”, despite awareness that this is a euphemism, similar to the term “racial realists” used by white supremacists. (Tudor, 2020).

In Chapter 4 we examined the difficulty to find a sole definition of what anti-gender movements call “gender ideology”. The inability to thoroughly define the term makes it quite effective in causing moral panic related to the violation of traditional understandings of gender and rights, particularly visible in the increased mobilization of trans-gender rights movements. Moral panic is not usually limited to social public discussion but has the potential to directly translate into policies. We have witnessed a regression in legislative protection of transgender people in the last decade, particularly in member-countries of EU and USA. Such regressions are mostly visible in ignoring or erasing “gender” issues from laws and policies, instead defining women and men in laws solely on the basis of “sex at birth.” In March 2020, the federal state Idaho banned trans-gender people from changing the sex markers in their birth certificates, while the government of the Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban (a critic of “gender ideology”), on the first day of his mandate in April adopted a law defining gender identity and homosexuality as deviant. The shift in feminist movements is particularly important for the research due to the reinforcement gained with the collaboration between the anti-gender initiative and gender-critical feminists. In the previous chapter we explained the social polarization/division initiated and fortified by anti-gender movements. In this chapter we attempt to clarify anti-gender movement strategies on intensifying the polarization, division and discord in feminist and women’s movements.

A major researcher of anti-gender movements, Andrea Peto, dismisses the definition of anti-gender movements as typical anti-feminist initiatives, defining them instead as a “fundamentally new phenomenon launched for the sake of creating a new world order”. Research has confirmed this hypothesis. Mobilization and the anti-gender movement and gender-critical feminist struggle are best understood as a series of complex discursive and ideological battles from within (instead of against) feminism (Pearce, Erikainen, Vincent, 2020). Consequently, a key topic of the research was understanding and revealing strategies and narratives applied by anti-gender actors to deepen the divisions and discord from within feminist movements but also divide and separate the feminist and LGBTIQ movement.

The topic is divided into five subtopics examining the strategies on causing discord in the feminist movement. The first subtopic refers to discursive strategies on portraying transwomen as a danger, especially to women and children. The second subtopic studies discursive strategies on portraying transwomen as usurping women's space, i.e. entitlement. The third subtopic attempts to expose how anti-gender actors create discourses about the "true" nature of women. The fourth deals more thoroughly with questions on women and sexual purity by examining topics on sex work/prostitution. Finally, the fifth subtopic strives to analyse direct strategies on creating division and discord between the feminist and LGBTIQ movement.

6.1. Trans women as a danger to women and children

Gender-critical propaganda is almost entirely focused on the alleged degeneracy of trans women, citing rare and isolated cases of crimes performed by trans women, aiming to represent them as a threat against women and children (Tudor, 2020). Similar strategies can be identified among global anti-gender movements, but also among those in North Macedonia. A significant bulk of anti-gender texts refer to trans women, most of them depicting trans women as "monsters," "murderers," and "rapist." The authors call trans women "men," "women with penises," "dressed-up men", all exceptionally dangerous, particularly to women and children. Some of the titles examined in the research were: "A male serial killer transferred to a female prison," "Brazilian issue of Marie Claire pronounces a transsexual, pimp and a child abuser as a top women's rights activist," "England: transgender person rapes a patient, hospital dismissed it for a year," "A 'woman' raping babies," etc.

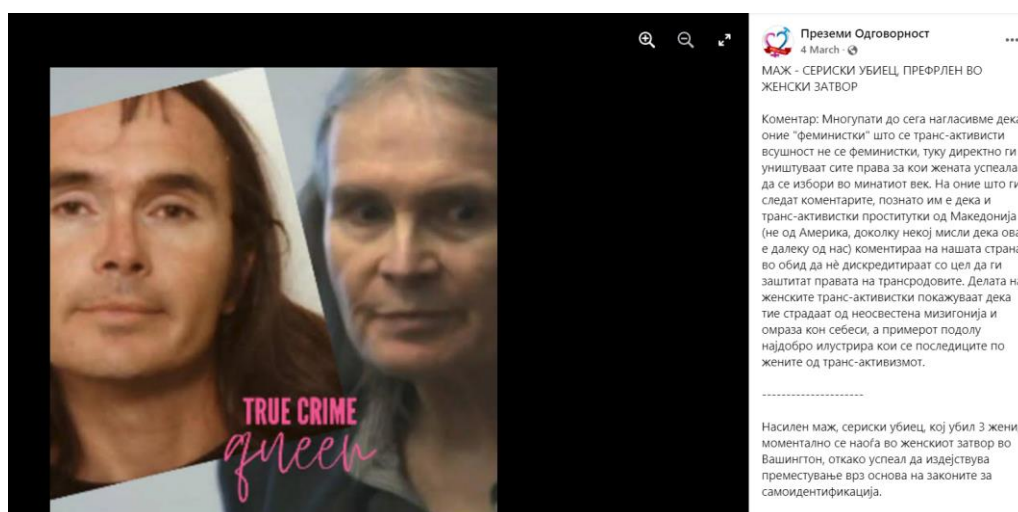
Arguments of this type are a contemporary manifestation of previous sex/gender essentialist discourses. Trans women have long been positioned as a threat against women's safety, particularly in Western societies, because bodies of trans women were traditionally discursively linked with the dangerous male sexuality and potential sexual predators (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that trans women are called "women with penises," highlighting sexuality and sexual features to cause fear and disgust among the public. Often, such texts include visual materials, images of trans women looking "mean," trans women with pronounced male characteristics, followed by images of women and girls intended to suggest vulnerability. The research showed that most of these cases are true, indicating to serious criminal acts conducted by several trans women, or men posing as trans women. However, anti-gender movement strategies, in its manipulateness, exploit such cases to portray the entire trans-gender community, particularly trans women (trans men are almost never mentioned), as dangerous and monstrous. Texts posted by anti-gender initiatives tend to omit statistics disclosing that trans women are actually the most vulnerable to violence. In their focus on isolated rape cases conducted by trans women, gender-critical feminists and anti-gender actors refuse to face the fact that, for instance, as many as 47% of trans women in the USA have been victims of a sexual assault¹⁰ in their lifetime. The research from our region points to similar numbers. The LGBTI research of the EU Agency for Fundamental rights indicates that around 20% of transgender people in the EU have been victims of physical or sexual violence in the last five years, while in North Macedonia this percentage is the highest from all countries, amounting to 39%.

¹⁰ For more see: <https://vawnet.org/sc/serving-trans-and-non-binary-survivors-domestic-and-sexual-violence/violence-against-trans-and>



“GIRL RAPED BY TRANS-BOY IN A SCHOOL TOILET, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION SILENT, ATTEMPTING TO HIDE IT / Comments / X: What would those mocking us say now? Come on Y, how do you justify the ideologies you defend? Shoot yourself twice in your leg or admit it? (laughing emoji) / X: Honey, you’re awfully quiet when it comes to defending women and girls. You weren’t so silent when you were defending trans ‘women’ raping real women. Ask your friend from HERA – a future councillor from Green City, Andrijana Papic-Manceva...” (Take Responsibility, October 14th, 2021)

“TRANS-ACTIVISTS FINALLY SHOW THEIR TRUE FACE / Dear parents and all concerned citizens following us regularly. / You can see below the true face and hypocrisy behind these LGBTI+ activists claiming to care about the safety of women and children. / Our regular followers must have noticed the comments left below our posts, surely you know that X is an LGBTI+ activist, defending HERA constantly, and also mocking the comments of concerned parents against CSE and gender-sensitive education in schools. Namely, X claims that it’s normal and acceptable for people and children to change their sex, that we should accept it and allow biological men in dresses to use female toilets and compete in female categories of sport. On the other hand, X, joined by HERA, claim to fight for women’s rights.” (Take Responsibility, October 16th, 2021)



“MAN – SERIAL KILLER TRANSFERRED TO FEMALE PRISON / Comment: How many times do we have to repeat that these “feminists,” who are trans-activists, are not feminists at all. They have managed to

eliminate all rights women have successfully fought for in the 20th century. Those reading the comments know that trans-activist prostitutes from Macedonia (not America, if you might've thought that this was somewhere far from us) also commented on our page in an attempt to discredit us and protect trans-gender rights. Female trans-activists show us, with their own actions, how unaware they are of their own misogyny and self-hatred, with the example bellow illustrating the consequences of female trans-activism. / A violent man, serial murderer of 3 women, is currently in a female prison in Washington after being granted a transfer pursuant to the law on self-determination." (Take Responsibility, March 4th, 2022)

Images and texts of this type aim to ensure one argument: women need protection, lesbians need protection, children need protection from trans-people and "trans influence." The argument employed by anti-gender actors and gender-critical feminists on women's absolute vulnerability can be interpreted as an attempt to gain bigger power (on account of trans-people), i.e. a complex strategy and policy exploiting "vulnerability" to provide a privileged discursive position. Consequently, the manipulative strategy of anti-gender movements capitalizes on women's factual vulnerability and the broad incidence of different forms of violence against women and girls, such as gender-based violence. Fixating on the fact that women are vulnerable to violence and often victims of violent behaviours, supported broadly by society, anti-gender movements go a step further. Such type of manipulative strategies succeed in enforcing trans-women as aggressors, i.e. divert the focus from complicated power positions to a marginalized community, dumping the burden of the male, institutional, systematic violence against women. Employing the argument of the "unknown danger" in relation to violence against women and girls is a phenomenon with a long tradition. This so-called strategy of "the few rotten apples" among men, i.e. the claim that somewhere out there such aggressors might exist, has been imposed on women and girls from an early age. Rhetoric of this type is, in fact, the basis for locating the guilt in the victim in statements such as: What were you doing alone at night? What were you wearing? etc. An identical strategy is employed by anti-gender actors and gender-critical feminists, or a simplified portrayal of the "other" (in this case, trans-women) as the usual threat, despite the fact that research and statistics show that women are most probable to be sexually assaulted by someone they already know.¹¹ Tudor justifiably wonders whether with the hyper focus on the supposed threat of trans women in women's spaces, gender-critical feminism ultimately allows misogynistic men to pass under the radar. By placing accent on isolated cases of violence against trans women or men claiming to be trans women, we ignore the systematic oppression and vulnerability of women, sustained by privileged groups and power relations among genders. In conclusion, anti-gender initiatives, along with their new partners from the lines of gender-critical feminists, aim to tarnish a marginalized group rather than protect women. Finally, the focus of such rhetoric on trans women is not unintentional. Trans men are almost never mentioned in anti-gender texts. This is further discussed in the third subtopic, within the discursive portrayal of "real" women. In the next subtopic we examine another manipulative anti-gender movement strategy, i.e., the fear of losing "women's" place, status and positions due to the alleged usurpation by trans-gender people.

¹¹ For more see: [Perpetrators of Sexual Violence: Statistics | RAINN](https://www.rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence) available on: <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence>

6.2. Trans Women as Usurpers of Women's Spaces and Entitlement

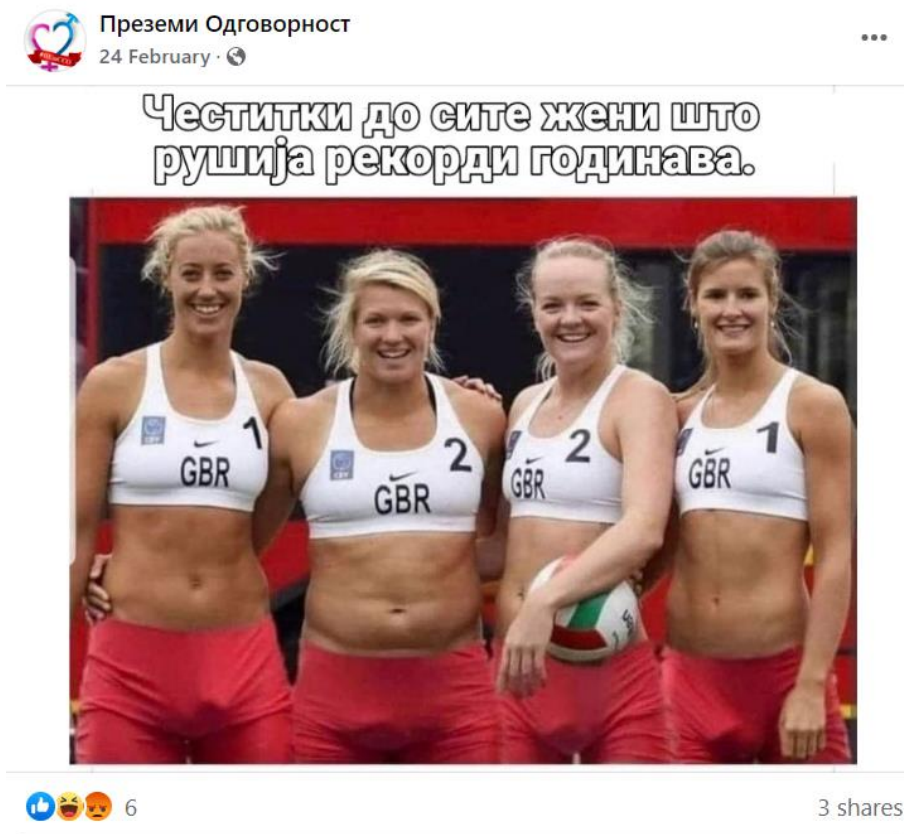
Unquestionably, throughout history, feminism has faced plenty of criticism regarding excluded or forgotten women, particularly marginalized women, i.e. women who belong to minority and marginalized groups or ethnicities, the key argument addressed to the first and second wave of feminism by contemporary feminists. It seems that the exclusionary politics of the third and fourth wave of feminism are partly conducted from within, far more deliberately than the case with the first and second wave. Our hypothesis is that anti-gender movements have significant role not so much in challenging, but rather in strengthening and expanding the discord, particularly with regards to feminism's relationship with trans-gender people and trans activism and policies.

While the previous subtopic dealt with how anti-gender actors present trans women as dangerous to women and children, in this one we shall focus on narratives tending to create an image of trans women as vicious thieves, robbing the few places and privileges affiliated with "real" women.

In the research, out of the bulk of texts aiming to divide the feminist movement, this subtopic is quantitatively second, immediately after the previous subtopic. Together with the first subtopic, they add up to half of the texts in this topic, which leads to the conclusion that anti-gender movements create and support divisions in the feminist movement by painting a negative picture on trans women, i.e. portraying them as dangerous enemies of "true" women and children. Consequently, anti-gender movements advocate for an exclusionary policy dictating that feminism is only interested in certain subjects defined through other discursive strategies as "real" women as opposed to those defined as "false/masked women". And so, a significant part of anti-gender texts published in North Macedonia are in the form of messages aiming to incite anger and rage due to the supposed loss of entitlement and status women enjoyed in the "good old days". It should be noted that precisely these seemingly lost spaces are, on the one hand, spaces in which women have been traditionally neglected or excluded (like for instance, sport), while on the other hand, although traditionally occupied by women, were often the goal of feminist criticism (for instance, beauty pageants, magazine covers etc.).

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post and a comment. The post is by Franklin Graham, dated 21 hours ago. The text of the post reads: "Where are we going as a nation when a nominee for our highest court will not define what a woman is? When USA Today names a biological man as a 'Woman of the Year'? And when biological males are allowed to participate in women's high school and college athletic programs and take titles away from females who have worked their entire lives to achieve excellence in their sport? Can you believe it has gone this far? Those pushing this agenda want everyone to ignore science, biol... See more". Below the text are three news snippets: 1. ESPN: "Amid protests, Penn swimmer Lia Thomas becomes first known transgender athlete to win Division I national championship". 2. Fox News: "USA Today names transgender Biden official as one of its 'Women of the year'". 3. New York Post: "Judge Jackson declines to define 'woman,' says she's 'not a biologist'". The comment is by Goran Iliev, dated 26 March. The text of the comment reads: "Франклин Грејм (синот на Били Грејм и еден од најпознатите христијански проповедници во Америка), изјавува: „Каде одиме ние како народ кога жената кандидат за судија во Врховниот суд не може (или не сака) да дефинира што е жена? Кога „USA Today“ прогласува биолошки маж за „Жена на годината“? И кога на биолошките мажи им е дозволено да учествуваат во женските атлетски програми во средно училиште и колеџ и да им ги одземат титулите на жените, кои работеле цел живот за да постигнат успех во нивниот спорт? Можете ли да верувате дека светот отиде толку далеку? Оние кои ја туркаат оваа агенда сакаат сите ние да ја игнорираме науката, биологијата и фактите - и што е најважно, да ја игнорираме вистината на Божјиот Збор. Мажите и жените се создадени различни - тоа е факт. Тие имаат различен хромозомски состав - тоа е факт. Бог, нашиот Творец, го дизајнирал човекот на тој начин - тоа е факт. See less". The comment has 62 likes and 8 shares.

“X: Franklin Graham (Billy Graham’s son and a renowned preacher from the USA) stated: ‘Where are we going as a nation when a nominee for our highest court will not define what a woman is? When USA Today names a biological man as a ‘Woman of the Year’? And when biological males are allowed to participate in women’s high school and college athletic programs and take titles away from females who have worked their entire lives to achieve excellence in their sport? Can you believe it has gone this far? Those pushing this agenda want everyone to ignore science, biology and fact – and most importantly, to ignore the truth of God’s word. Men and women are made different – That’s a Fact. They have different chromosomal makeup – That’s a Fact. God, our Creator, designed it that way – That’s a Fact.’” (Save Marriage and Family, March 26th, 2022)



“Congratulations to all women breaking world records this year.” (Take Responsibility, February 24th, 2022)

The selected texts and images disclose the lack of concern anti-gender movements have for true inclusion of women in all aspect of society and political living, and their intention to create the false perception that women are being excluded on account of trans women. Positions of false usurpation are clear in such statements. Hence, victims of this loss are the “real” women, the guilty party being the “fake” women, trans women, LGBTI activists, Western elites etc. Anti-gender movements employ such power relations, dictating that trans women are more privileged than women, to advocate for their own definitions of feminism, according to which mobilization and activism towards advancement of the rights and status of trans-gender women is impossible.

One such post from the Facebook group “Take Responsibility” exploits definitions worded precisely in that manner. According to them:

“Feminism means social, economic and political equality between the SEXES. What is a transgender woman? – A man dressed up as a woman, taking female hormones, or who has decided to undergo plastic surgeries in order to look like a woman. However, he remains a man because sex is in each cell of our bodies, and you can’t change all the cells.” (Take Responsibility, December 19t, 2021)

For those aware of this definition, this might sound ridiculous, which doesn’t, however, make it any less dangerous or manipulative. Accordingly, feminism belongs solely to biological women, excluding gender as feminism’s most important analytical category, and consequently not only limiting the movement, but also impeding feminist political mobilization resting on socially construed realities and power relations and not merely on its biological foundations. In other words, feminist fights are political fights for equality, challenging and problematizing inequalities understood as “faith,” „natural“, „the only normal“, supposedly unchangeable and fixed.

6.3. Real Feminism for Real Women

After having examined how anti-gender movements portray trans women as rapists, monsters and usurpers, aiming to stir emotions of hatred and anger among readers in the previous two subtopics, in the third subtopic we deal with discovering how “real women” are presented in order to generate belonging and identification. In the context of representing the self, or in this case, “real femininity” and the expected recognition by other members of a virtual community such as Facebook, we have already discussed the politics of belonging. The corpus of texts analysed in this subtopic is a useful example in depicting strategies and policies of belonging, created by demarcating those who belong and the bodies and subjects which do not belong, other bodies, dangerous subjects. Such texts aim to define real women and further define real feminism dealing with “real” instead of “fake” women.



Преземи Одговорност

8 March · 🌐



ЧЕСТИТ 8-МИ МАРТ И НА МАЖИТЕ?

Осми март или Меѓународниот ден на жената е ден кога се прославуваат економските, политичките и културните достигнувања на жената.

Но, нашите транс-активисти, коишто може да ги забележите како коментираат на нашата страна и ни проповедаат како ние треба да си ги воспитуваме сопствените деца, викаат дека и мажите можат да бидат жени, доколку така се чувствуваат.

Можеби денеска треба да им честитаме и на оние мажи со магични женски чувства за сите нивни достигнувања, постигнати благодарение на јакото лоби на ЛГБТИ+ транс-активистите и дебелие соросоидни спонзорства:

- за тоа што покрај машките права, ги грабаат и сите женски права
- за тоа што ги одземаат титулите и првите места од жените во женскиот спорт
- за тоа што ги одземаат стипендиите од девојчињата
- за тоа што имаат право да влегуваат во женски тоалети, а неретко и им се отвора одлична можност да силуваат со својот „женски“ пенис
- за тоа што, кога се осудени поради криминални дела, тие наместо во затвор, си поминуваат како во харем - во женски затвор, меѓу жени
- за тоа што ги земаат и присвојуваат женската облека, шминка и обувки со високи потпетици
- за тоа што доволно е да речат дека се "обесправени, дискриминирани и маргинализирани", за цел свет да клекне пред нив
- за тоа што го релативизираат зборот жена и ги обезличуваат вистинските жени
- за тоа што нивната агресивност е оправдана, поради тоа што се "маргинализирани", ама кога жените се гневни што повторно ги губат правата за сметка на мажи со психичко повеметвање на идентитетот. тогаш тие се

ОСТ

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„HAPPY 8TH MARCH TO MEN ALSO? / 8th March or International Women’s Day is the day when we celebrate the economic, political and cultural achievements of women. However, our trans-activists, commenting on our website and teaching us how to raise our children, claim that men can also be women if they feel as such. Perhaps we should congratulate this holiday to men who imagine to have female feelings for all their achievements, attained with the strong lobbying of LGBTI+ Trans activists and huge Soros funds for:

- *dispossessing women from their rights,*
 - *depriving women of titles and first places in female sport,*
 - *taking scholarships away from girls,*
 - *having the right to enter female toilets, and consequently gaining a great opportunity to assault with their “female” penis,*
 - *enjoy accommodation in a women’s prison among women instead of being placed in men’s prison when serving sentences,*
 - *For appropriating women’s clothes, make up and high heels,*
 - *They claim to feel “oppressed, discriminated against and marginalized” and the whole world kneels before them,*
 - *relativizing the word woman and disfiguring real women,*
 - *having their aggression justified because of being “marginalized”, but when women are angry for losing their rights on account of men with mental identity disorders they are labelled as violent and transphobic*
- Etc... / Photo: No more men-women! Happy 8th March to All! “ (Take Responsibility, March 8th, 2022)*



Преземи Одговорност

13 November 2021 · 🌐



ЗА НЕВЛАДИНИТЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ВО МАКЕДОНИЈА, НЕ МЕНСТРУИРААТ САМО ЖЕНИ И ДЕВОЈКИ

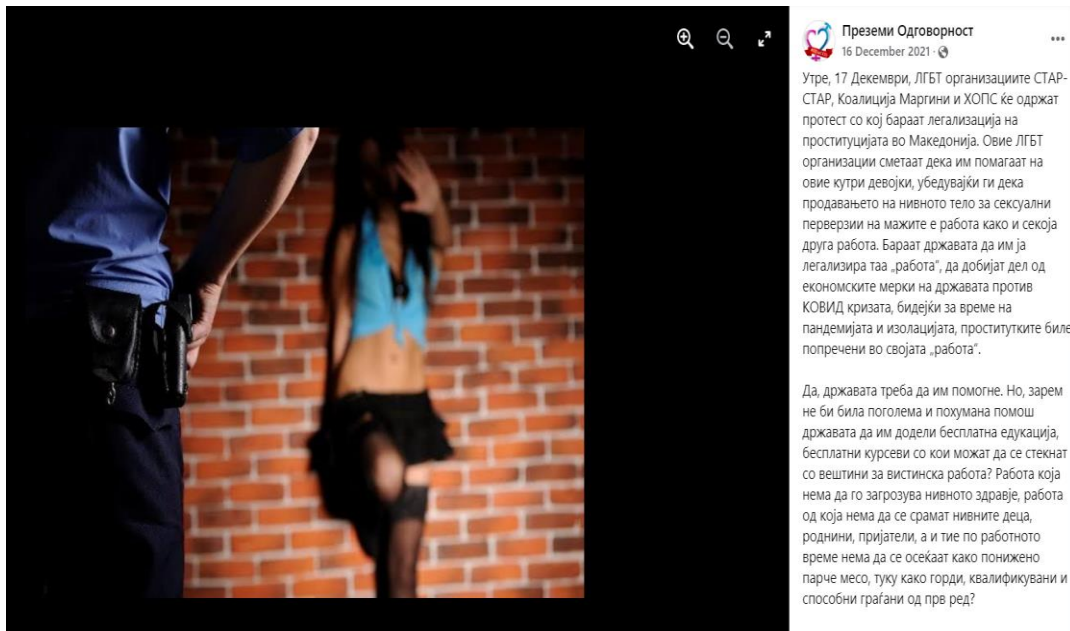
Во 2011 година се собрале четири скопјанки со феминистичка желба да направат и да поттикнат нешто во "сферата на женските права" [1], ама 10 години подоцна, во 2021 година, се збуниле што е жената и веќе за нив не менструираат само жени и девојки, туку и некои други луѓе. [2]

„NGOs IN MACEDONIA THINK WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES MENSTRUATING / In 2011, four women from Skopje with feminist tendencies gathered with the desire to do something in the “sphere of women’s rights”, but 10 years later, in 2021, they got confused as to what is the woman, so now they don’t think women and girls are the only ones menstruating but other people too.” (Take Responsibility, November 13th, 2021)

Important means in achieving such belonging and togetherness among women, all towards affiliating them with anti-gender initiatives, is capitalizing on the most important date for feminism – March 8th. All anti-gender organizations and groups in North Macedonia celebrate March 8th, sending a message that their mission is not “anti-women” but rather their goal is the supposed protection of women. However, anti-gender movement statements on the occasion of March 8th are not directed towards celebrating the history of women’s struggle, the success of the feminist struggle, or remembering current and future equality struggles, but simply aim to define real women and spread false panic about the true enemy of women - transgender people, LGBTIQ activists or civil society, all generated in the image of “Soros mercenaries”. In other words, March 8th is exploited to define “real” women as mothers, above all, creatures who menstruate and give birth, and thus revive traditional representations of women as wives, mothers and housewives.

6.4. Moral Erosion of Feminism towards Sexually and Morally Pure Women

In addition to definitions on “real” women, we also examine strategies labelling the “outcast” among women. Anti-gender movements advocate for quite a crude and fixed frame of “real” women, and every woman that does not fit the mould needs to be excluded (like trans women) or “converted” (like, for instance, sex workers). Female sexuality is considered quite a taboo by anti-gender movements. The only point of any interest in female sexuality is reproduction, i.e. the ability to reproduce and create families. Beyond marriage and family, female sexuality hardly exists. However, identifying the exact points when female sexual purity is brought into question is interesting. What would be the most typical place for such “interventions” if not sex work? Additionally, the feminist movement has been traditionally divided regarding feminist stand on sex work and pornography. Within this discussion, the LGBTIQ movement is closer to pro-sex feminists, i.e. feminists who restrain from problematizing women’s right to choose what they want to do with their body, whether it be offering commercial sex services, making it the perfect place for the anti-gender movement to heighten the discord within the feminist movement but also between LGBTIQ activists and individual feminists.



“Tomorrow, December 17th, the LGBT organizations STAR-STAR, Coalition Margins and HOPS are planning to protest for legalization of prostitution in Macedonia. These LGBT organizations believe they’re helping those poor girls by convincing them that selling their bodies to men for sexual perversions is a job similar to any other. They demand that the country legalizes this “job”, making them entitled to benefit from the state COVID financial measures, since during the pandemic and isolation, prostitutes were prevented from doing their “job”. True, the state should help. But wouldn’t be more helpful, humane, if the state gave them free education, free courses to acquire skills necessary for real work? Work that wouldn’t endanger their health, work that won’t embarrass their children, cousins, friends, even they wouldn’t feel humiliated after their working hours but proud, qualified and able citizens?” (Take Responsibility, December 16th, 2021).



Преземи Одговорност

18 December 2021 · 🌐



ДЕКРИМИНАЛИЗАЦИЈА НА "СЕСУАЛНАТА РАБОТА"?!

За да се постигне прифаќање на било која настраност од страна на општеството, најпрво се манипулира со говорот и со бразованието.

Така, оние што порано ги знаевме како "ку*ви", "проститутки" и "о*оспии", денеска се преименувани во - "сексуални работнички". Вие што нè следите подолго време, ќе се сетите дека веќе во неколку наврати посочивме дека тоа се прави со одредена цел. [1]

Зошто е тоа така? Затоа што самиот поим "сексуални работнички" е природно прифатлив од народот ако се подели на две асоцијации - секс и работа - сите луѓе имаат природна склоност кон сексуалност, секс, репродукција, а работата е нешто што е дел од нашиот секојдневен живот.

Со ваквото манипулирање на говорот не само што се постигнува нормализирање на проституцијата, туку и сите жени што со интелектуален и физички труд чесно си го заработуваат својот леб, се изедначувани и ставени на исто рамниште со проститутките како "работнички". Зарем ова не е понижување на женскиот род?!

Самите размислете дали секоја една жена може да биде проститутка доколку сака и дали секоја една проститутка може да биде докторка, доколку сака. Примерот е многу јасен - одговорот на првото е да, бидејќи за тоа е потребна само една вештина што секоја една жена ја има, а за второто - одговорот е не, зашто се потребни цела деценија студии и пракса, интелигенција, напор и труд.

Вчерашниот протест на проститутките за декриминализација и легализирање на проституцијата во Македонија започна од спомен куката на Мајка Тереза. Дали мислите дека тоа е случајност? Или едноставно сакаат симболично да кажат дека секоја една проститутка е еднаква на една таква чесна жена каква што била Мајка Тереза. [2]

Треба да нагласиме дека тука станува збор за уништување на моралните вредности на општеството, а не за помагање на жените и мажите што се нашле во незавидна положба и се одлучиле да си го продаваат телото. Најчесто тие организации, како Стар-Стар, Маргини и Хера, што се борат за "правата" на "сексуалните работнички", се трудат да ја придобуваат поддршката од обичниот граѓанин со сентиментални приказни, како на пример, некоја жена психофизички малтретирана од својот сопруг решава да ја напушти таа средина, но никој не ѝ подава рака, па завршува проституирајќи се.

Се разбира дека некој пат човек може да донесе погрешни одлуки во животот поради околностите, но помошта на една таква личност треба да се состои во подавање рака за излез од таквата незавидна положба, а не подлабоко туркање и оправдување на погрешно донесените одлуки. Наместо овие организации да ги рехабилитираат таквите индивидуи, тие ги охрабруваат и им помагаат да останат на дното, со изговор дека се борат за нивните права и против ХИВ и другите сексуално преносливи болести.

Понатаму, на првата фотографија (фотографирана пред неколку години) ќе видите натпис на костимот "my pussy, my business". Зошто е на англиски? Повторно од манипулативни причини - затоа што ваквите движења се дебело финансирани од странство т.е од Сорос [3] и затоа што доколку би било напишано на македонски "моја пи*ка, моја работа" би звучело многу поодбивно за обичниот народ.

Сето ова го нагласуваме бидејќи ваквите залагања за легализација на проституцијата и форсирање на истата да биде прифатена како нормална работа е поддржано од ХЕРА [4], токму онаа ЛГБТИ+ организација што го крои образованието на нашите деца. Ако тоа е став на ХЕРА, тогаш се разбира дека ќе го пренесат како "знаење" на нашите деца.

Токму затоа во исто време, друга ЛГБТИ+ организација - LEAD, повторно финансирана од Сорос [5], под превезот на загриженост за образованието на нашите деца, се обидува да наметне во училиштата да се изучуваат контроверзни теми, меѓу кои:

- Истополови бракови
- Легализација на лесните дроги
- Сексуалност и сексуален идентитет
- Религии и религиски определби [6]

И се разбира, сите останати "контроверзни" теми, како легализацијата на проституцијата и нормализирањето на "промената" на пол.

*„DECriminalization of sex work?! / In order for society to accept any deviancy, manipulation has to occur with speech and education. And so, those we used to know as wh**res, prostitutes, and sl*t*s, today are renamed as sex workers. Regular followers might recall that on several occasions we have*

pointed to their intention. What is that? Since the term 'sex worker' is naturally more acceptable for people, being divided into two parts – sex and work – all people have a natural affinity towards sexuality, sex, reproduction, and work is part of our daily life. Such manipulation in speech not only normalizes prostitution, but makes women who work intellectually and physically hard to earn their money on the same ground with prostitutes as 'workers'. Isn't that humiliating to the female gender?! / Think for yourselves whether every woman can be a prostitute if she wanted to and whether a prostitute can be a doctor if she wanted. The example is clear – the answer to the first is yes, because it requires only one skill every woman has, but for the latter – the answer is no, because it takes a decade of studying, practice, intelligence, effort and work. / Yesterday's protest of the prostitutes to decriminalize and legalize prostitution in Macedonia began from the Memorial House of Mother Theresa. Do you think it's a coincidence? Or they simply wanted symbolically to say that every prostitute is equal to such an honourable woman as Mother Theresa was. It should be pointed out that the fabric of society is being destroyed. Women and men in a tough situation who decided to sell their body are not being helped. Most often, organizations like Star-Star, Margins and HERA, fighting for the 'rights' of 'sex workers' try to win the support of regular citizens with sentimental stories, like for instance, a woman psycho-physically abused by her husband decides to leave this environment, but since no one helps her, she ends up being a prostitute. / Of course sometimes a person can make the wrong decision in life due to certain circumstances, but helping such a person consists of offering a hand to leave such a difficult situation, rather than pushing them even deeper under the wrong excuses. Instead of rehabilitating such individuals, these organizations encourage and help them reach bottom, under the excuse of fighting for their rights and against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. / Furthermore, the first photograph (from several years ago) is of a sign 'my pussy, my businesses. Why is it in English? Once again, in order to manipulate – because these movements are hugely financed from abroad, i.e. by Soros and because in Macedonian it sounds repulsive to the common people. / We stress this because such advocacies for legalizing prostitution and forcing its acceptance as a normal job are supported by HERA, the LGBTI+ organization shaping our children's education. If this is HERA's stand, then they will certainly relay that 'knowledge' to our children. It is why another LGBTI+ organization – LEAD, financed by Soros, under the guise of concern about our children's education, is attempting to enforce controversial subjects at school, such as: /


- Same-sex marriages*
- Legalization of light drugs*
- Sexuality and sexual identity*
- religions and religious beliefs.*

And of course, all other 'controversial' subjects, such as legalization of prostitution and normalizing 'sex change'. (Take Responsibility, December 18th, 2021)

Once again, anti-gender movements tend not to engage in the topic of sex work to “save” women, but rather denigrate specific civil society organizations and activists, as well as stir divisions into “real” and “fake” feminism (as described in the previous subtopic with the division of “real” and “fake” women). In their posts, sex workers as biological women are not selected as candidates for exclusion but transformation. Discursively, they are presented as “poor girls,” manipulated by specific civil society organizations, portrayed, on the other hand, as pure evil. This pure evil, according to the warnings issued by anti-gender initiatives, does not stop there. Their agenda is to turn men into women, women into sexually immoral and tainted subjects, children into sexually and gender confused -“neither men, neither women”– spiced with light drugs and atheism. Conspirational elements are often introduced in anti-gender initiative narratives, aiming to mark the enemy – transgender activists, LGBTIQ activists, but also all progressive voices in society. This leads us into the next subtopic on strategies of portraying “true” women as victims and progressive voices as “enemies”, making space to create political reality.

6.5. Creating Divisions in the Feminist and LGBTIQ movement

Divisions in the feminist movement regarding the position on transgender and understanding gender have been long-established. However, feminists joining the anti-gender movements, ideologically contrary to the key values of feminism, is a novelty in the division. Such strange coalitions are today political reality, not only in feminist debate, but also in activism, policies and legislation.

 Преземи Одговорност
27 January · 🌐

ИРОНИЈА: ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈАТА НА ОБЕДИНЕТИТЕ НАЦИИ ЗА ЖЕНСКИТЕ ПРАВА
ЌЕ ГИ ОТСТРАНИ ЗБОРОВИТЕ "ЖЕНА" И "МАЖ"

UN Women или организацијата на Обединетите нации што се бори за женските права низ светот, во 2019 година објави дека веќе нема да ги застапува само жените, туку дека "сите родови се еднакви". Односно, маж што се идентификува како жена има исто толку женски права како и биолошка, вистинска жена.


Организацијата, во документ наречен "12 мали дела со големо влијание за еднаквост на генерацијата", објаснува:

"Термините како 'машко' или 'женско' ги исклучуваат небинарните и интерполовите луѓе, кои не се вклучени во ниту една од овие категории..."

Секојдневниот јазик игра голема улога во рушење на родовите стереотипи и отфрлањето на бинарноста на машко и женско. Наместо да се користат фрази како 'дама и господа' или 'момчиња и девојчиња', сменете ги со родово-неутрални термини, како 'народе', 'деца' или 'сите вие'."

И повторно, овие организации упорно тврдат дека се многу загрижени за добросостојбата на жените и нивните права, а самите тие го разрушуваат поимот "жена" и "девојка" до неприпопознатливост.

Извор:
<https://www.dailysignal.com/.../the-irony-un-women.../amp/>



„IRONY: UN WOMEN, AN ORGANISATION FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN TO REMOVE WORDS 'WOMAN' AND 'MEN' / UN Women announced in 2019 that it no longer represents only women but considers 'all genders as equal'. In other words, a man identifying as a woman has equal rights as a biological, real woman. / In a document entitled '12 Small Actions with Big Impact for Generation Equality', the organization explains: / 'terms such as 'male or female' exclude non-binary and intersex people who don't fall into any of these categories... Everyday language plays a huge role in breaking

gender stereotypes and rejecting the binary of male and female. Instead of using phrases like 'ladies and gentlemen' or 'boys and girls', swap in a gender-neutral term like 'folks', 'children', or 'y'all'. / Once again these organizations claim to be very concerned about the well-being of women and their rights, while in fact they are destroying the term 'woman' and 'girl' until it won't be recognizable any longer. (Take Responsibility, January 27th, 2022)

The growth and mobilization of trans-gender people and activists contributed to the problematization and reconceptualization of gender by feminists. Intersectional feminism, as expected, opted for a more inclusive position by redirecting the focus on interactions between race, class, sexuality and gender. However, it should be pointed that certain radical feminists maintained their essentialist position regarding this question – what does it mean to be a woman? Unfortunately, a significant portion of these gender-critical feminists articulate their opposition to the concept of gender by employing anti-transgender rhetoric, finding theoretical stronghold in the works of Janice Raymond and Germaine Greer.

According to Lemert (2013), “If feminism had a goal, it would be to represent, support and provide shelter and community for those oppressed by the patriarchy.” Intersectional approach to feminism entails a more inclusive definition of femininity. Gender-critical feminists dispute all transgender people, however, a significant bulk of their literature focusses on how trans women “appropriate femininity” (Schweizer, 2020). The works of the prominent gender-critical feminist, Janice Raymond, continue to be quoted in discussions on trans women. Her arguments (made in the 1970s) correspond to those of contemporary gender-critical feminists and anti-gender actors. Namely, the key point in this merge between anti-gender movements and gender-critical feminism is the belief that trans women are not (and cannot) be ‘real’ women. Although Raymond and other gender-critical feminists encourage cisgender women to undermine gender roles, they also claim that every trans gender woman depicting herself in a traditionally female manner becomes a ‘parody’ or ‘caricature’ (Raymond, 1979). According to Raymond, and, as suggested previously, according to anti-gender initiatives, what makes a woman is “female” biology, “women’s history” (socialization), menstruation, “the ability to become pregnant” and “the history of female subordination in a male-dominated society” (Raymond, 1979).

The axis of convergence between gender-critical feminists and the anti-gender movement meets exactly in these elaborated points. Yet, they also serve as the axis of division among intersectional feminism, gender-critical feminism and the anti-gender movement. In both cases, anti-gender actors use this position of division to capitalize on their struggle, not merely an ideological one, for instance a social discussion, but rather a struggle affecting people’s daily lives, policies, laws and administrative procedures. Consequently, denying the right to gender, i.e. preventing transgender people from changing their sex markers in personal identification documents in North Macedonia was the result of the joint efforts of some female organizations and anti-gender movements. The division within the feminist movement and the split between part of the feminist and the LGBTIQ movement, even the disagreements within the LGBTIQ movement, resting on the different positions regarding transgender people, were exacerbated by the anti-gender movements. Finally, the only ones benefiting from this division were anti-gender actors, the losing side being feminists, LGBTIQ activists, and, of course, transgender people as the most marginalized group in society.

7. Anti-gender Movements and (Un)successful families, Relationships and Partnerships

7.1. Relativizing the Concept of Common and Commoning

Texts in which the predominant subject is the success of exclusively heterosexual partnerships, in particular marriage unions, disclose the aspect of the discourse by citing prominent political figures, artists, therapists and life coaches, missionaries and the Bible. Statements of this type tend not to mention different forms of partnerships, which are instead removed and declared as “unsuccessful” following anti-gender logic, in order to meet the required composition and set of behaviour. Digressions to the norm emerge only as instances of derision and humiliation. The posts tend to interpret marriage as a personal life achievement, central, above all, to the man, while the woman’s perspective is seldom disclosed. This is best illustrated in Winston Churchill’s quote: “My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me.” (Save Marriage and Family, February 8th, 2022). These text, primarily, depict the man as possessing special powers to convince his wife marry and respect him, a somewhat one-sided image, never implying reciprocity or satisfying the needs of both parties.

In such hierarchically established relations, the marital environment is complemented with a duration requirement, i.e. immortalizing this relation, regardless of the partner’s circumstances, abilities and desire to continue investing in it. The message is conveyed with quotations like “Where there is love there is life” by Mahatma Gandhi, and then recoded by anti-gender ideology (Save Marriage and Family, February 7th, 2022). Decontextualized, the message shifts in essence, clearly relaying the normative axis of the existence allowed: happy people, who have decided to eternally love their chosen partner at any cost, or, on the other hand, socially rejected and inadequate individuals, cultivating tanthological and necrophilic urges. The covenant of marriage, in this aspect, is interpreted as an indefinite punishment, and partners are obliged to serve their duty in the role of complying martyrs, pivotal, but with limited power – sufficient only to prevent them from succumbing to the temptation of separating. In this respect, the posts imply a line of thought, which, in the broader aspect of the anti-gender movement, ignores marital harassment and violence, concealed under the guise of marital service. At a linguistic level, the posts employ a rather narrow range of verbs, proposing that spouses are obliged to: forgive, endure, pardon and suffer. “Marriage is meant to keep people together not just when things are good, but particularly when they are bad. That’s why we take marriage vows – not wishes,” as quoted by Ngina Otiende. (Save Marriage and Family, February 10th, 2022).

Furthermore, the obligation to remain married, as the final justification offered, is construed as an undisclosed national debt of the individual to country and order, or as quoted by Newt Gingrich, “heterosexual marriage is the core of our civilization” (Save Marriage and Family, February 11th, 2022). Individual happiness found beyond the unification of marriage is understood as a direct threat to collective harmony, wellbeing, moral and to progress in a society. Consequently, the most ill-fated and violent marriages are seen as challenges waiting to be conquered by the individual. Accordingly, anti-gender posts tend not only to recycle assorted motivational quotes, but also share anecdotal stories commending child marriage (e.g. “Married for 91 years and still in love as newlyweds” from Save Marriage and Family, February 16th, 2022), normalizing marital violence. For instance, a member published a story, “Marital revenge,” about a man, who although hurt and humiliated by his wife, decides to punish his partner by making her fall in love with him again, only to leave her afterwards (Save Marriage and Family, February 14th, 2022). The defamiliarization twist ensues when the plan backfires and they fall in love, the moral of the story being that true love requires sacrifices on both

sides. The act of sacrifice finds its purpose by being decontextualized and romanticised towards encouraging forgiveness and overlooking harassing and violent behaviours in the name of the marital covenant.

7.2. Simulating an Attack on Heteronormative Family

During the Week of Marriage, the subject matter abounded with posts related to the traditional and narrow understanding of family, the “nucleus” of which is under constant scrutiny and problematization, i.e. reading it as a community consisting of two heterosexual parents and as many children as possible. This perspective is suggested in texts glorifying fertility and winners of competitions for families with multiple children.




Во Бугарија, неделата на бракот беше проследена со различни активности, меѓу кои и онлајн настани, со водечки меѓународни и бугарски говорници од областа на семејните односи. Се одржа и наградна игра за многудетно семејство и семејство со најбројни лајкови. Семејството Рајкови, победници во напреварот за многудетно семејство (со 6 деца) изјавија: „Семејството е нашиот најпредизвикувачки предизвик, но и нашата највозбудлива привилегија - тоа е изворот на нашите најдлабоки болки, но и нашите најголеми радости - тоа е најчистото огледало на нашите слабости, но и најсигурната поддршка во сите и околности“. See less

“The Week of Marriage in Bulgaria was celebrated with different activities, such as online events, with guest appearances of leading international and Bulgarian speakers on family relations. A competition for families with multiple children and families most liked on Facebook also took place. The family that gathered the most likes, the Rajkovs, winners of the competition for families with multiple children (6 children) stated: Family is our biggest challenge, but also the most exciting privilege – the source of our biggest pain but also our biggest joys – it is the purest mirror of our abilities, but also the safest support in all circumstances.” (Save Marriage and Families, February 12th, 2022)

In this regard, the only *family* worth mentioning are communities based and built on the principle of “linear growth, “carrying the obligation to create the “order” and relay this duty to future generations. Hence, communities who have failed to meet the basic parameters of the “family” are socially unacceptable and undesirable. Their very existence and actions, having a ripple effect on their surroundings, are perceived as a potential threat and peril to heritage expressed in the numbers of the progeny, i.e. rules of conduct to be relayed by future generations. Once a family is modified to fit the established mould, cannot break it. The prohibition subsists on a linguistic level as well anytime the spouses supposedly “ruined” or “destroyed” the family or disrupted the “marital harmony.”

Admin shared a post. +1 · 8 February ·

Да го зачуваме бракот и семејството



Othaya yetu
16 February 2021 ·
Family 🤔🤔

44 1 share

(Save Marriage and Family, February 8th, 2022)

These posts claim that the marital union should be maintained *at any cost*. Any other choice is unacceptable, likened to personal happiness bound to cause collective unhappiness. Those preferring their wellbeing are described as incorrigible, irresponsible and selfish, searching for instant and short-lived pleasures. Exploration outside of marriage is considered as promiscuous, while even the worst experience inside the union is swiftly forgiven:

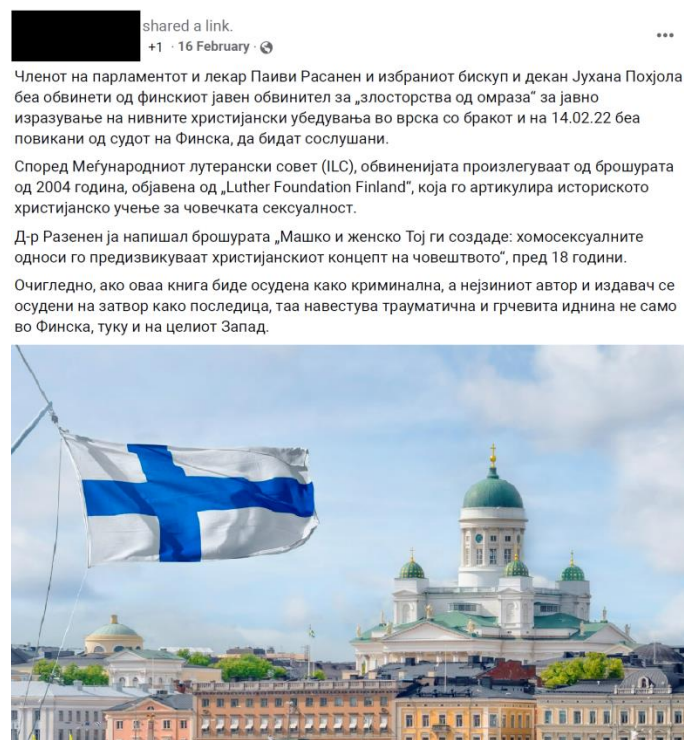
“The number of marital partners willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the family is decreasing. Their decisions are related only to personal happiness, not the happiness and needs of their children. The prevailing attitude is ‘better happy children and divorced parents instead of unhappy families’. The accent is placed on individual happiness, not collective, family harmony.” - stated by prof. d-r Svetlana Trbojevic, Head of the Institute for Social Work and Social Policy at the Faculty of Philosophy at UKIM. (Save Marriage and Family, December 11th, 2021)

Preserving the family perceived as the “nuclear cell of society” is the primary goal of anti-LGBTIQ, anti-gender and anti-democracy ideology. The family is the centre, demonstrating its power in this “moral” system by constantly fabricating its disintegration, in order to fortify its position and power. Consequently, communities recognized as queer, including LGBTIQ people, single parents, divorced parents, people with previous marriages, etc., are introduced in anti-gender ideology as the worst enemies, perpetuating something different than the desired. Such partnerships are depicted as

loveless, for in the ocean of dislocating meaning, “true love” exists only in successful marriages and families, not in “artificially created” modern partnerships. The first are identified as real, driving automatically the latter to the “arena” of the fictional.

7.3. A Call for Civic Participation Following the Principle of Exclusion

Unwavering acceptance and further strengthening of this position on marriage and family, demands more than simply locating the few targeted enemies. As a vivid illustration of how unacceptable these communities are, the analysed materials introduce even more terrifying stories from abroad, involving examples of interrogation, condemnation and criminalization of certain practices, such as hate crimes, aiming to help the audience better visualize the imagined threat as a wave coming from outside, projected to endanger the fabricated precarious position of heteronormative communities.



„Päivi Räsänen, an MP and a doctor, and Bishop Juhana Pohjola were charged for ‘hate crimes’ by the Finnish Public Prosecutor for having publically expressed their Christian beliefs on marriage. They were summoned to Court on 14.02.2022 to a hearing. According to the International Lutheran Council (ILC), the charges arise from a 2004 booklet, published by the ‘Luther Foundation Finland’, on traditional Christian teachings on human sexuality. Dr. Räsänen was the author of the brochure “Male and Female – he Created Them: Homosexual Relationships Challenge Christian Concept of Humanity,” 18 years ago. Obviously, condemning the book as criminal, and sentencing its author and publisher to imprisonment as a consequence, heralds traumatic future not only for Finland, but rather the entire West.” (Save Marriage and Family, February 16th, 2022)

Additionally, similar stories from abroad are employed for manipulation, making the development of domestic legislation to register as backward and problematic. Such posts aim to stir a reaction

encouraging the withdrawal of certain documents legally guaranteeing freedom and non-discrimination.

„Istanbul Convention REJECTED in Bulgaria! Bravo for the Bulgarian court. What about us? / “The Constitutional Court in Bulgaria yesterday ruled that the term ‘sex’ should exclusively be understood in its biological sense.” / The synod should reside and issue a statement and stand together with the parents in our fight against the implementation of Gender Ideology in Education, against the disputed content of the Istanbul Convention, as the starting point for all problems we face in our entire system and education! The Istanbul Convention is attacking the Traditional Family, Church and Education – we mustn’t allow it! React immediately!” (Textbooks and School Presence,“ November 2nd, 2021)

Advocating for rejection of conventions and other documents, as in the case mentioned, rests on proving that their implementation is directly introduced by previously tarnished profiles of LGBTIQ people and civil society organizations. In most cases they are portrayed as active supporters and members of the ruling party, although in reality they are rarely involved in offering advice or consultation, and almost never truly participate in the political system (self-governance, partnership and delegated joint decision-making).

In conclusion, opponents are profiled as worst enemies of traditional families due to: (1) the different behaviour and commoning in society and (2) discontinuing the transmission of imposed duties and values, via a horizontal, not vertical creation of collectives.

8. Anti-gender Expansion in Education

Disregarding small contextual variations in the manner of dispersing activities nationally in different countries, anti-gender movements everywhere, without exception, enforce their stand on education. These discourses are introduced by problematizing children as passive subjects under immediate threat, expanding as a danger to parents, young people, the teaching staff, but also the wider community, history, nationality and the future of the civilization. The range of issues at risk increases, transforming into a “funnel” containing a flush of social problems.

The first division to “endangered entities,” as the root of the stratification, is the perpetuity of the binary between child and adults. In fact, the analysis includes a special chapter on texts referencing education in order to examine the anti-gender narratives exploited by social control mechanisms to “maintain the dominant power relations that operate within cultural binaries such as: adult/child, parent/educator, teacher/student, heterosexual/homosexual, familial/extra-familial sexual abuse”¹² (Robinson, Kerry H.). Hence, anti-gender definition of childhood employs discourses indicating to the existence of a shared human experience, presenting an unreal notion of the child as universal and unchangeable unit with a “natural state”. Children are portrayed as innocent, vulnerable, as opposed to adults, depicted as the uncontested guardians of knowledge. Through this prism, the dominant discourse, characteristic for this ideology, is the parent’s right to decide what their child has the right to know. The secondary discourse, on the other hand, is the child’s right to be

¹² Robinson, Kerry H., *In the Name of ‘Childhood Innocence’*, Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 14, No. 2, September 2008, p. 115.

protected from different marginalized social groups, considered, by anti-gender movements, to abuse children to enforce and conduct personal agendas.

8.1. Depriving Parenting rights

The narrative, in the research, exploring the parental function is established primarily on introducing the division of “primitive” as opposed to “modern” parents, with a dose of sarcasm. “Primitive” are considered to be parents raising their children in the spirit of traditional values, the “modern” being those opposing this view point. The distinction is made by prominent anti-gender movement activists, the message being to humiliate a specific group of parents. Recognizing themselves in certain aspects, the target audience becomes apprehensive, feeling humiliation and insufficiency, as opposed to the noteworthy actions resulting from the parental sacrifice and selflessness of the other group. The comparison is to “modern” parents mocking this “dedication”. In that regard, this newly proclaimed group of parents, feeling threatened, perceive parenthood as something to be *possessed* and *given* to the children “devotedly,” in return for the collective/s gratitude and respect. They perceive their role in relation to the previously mentioned duty in heteronormative traditions along the lines of linear continuation of family and posterity (see more in subchapter 7.1. and 7.2.). Consequently, children don’t have the right to be consulted in decisions related to their educational needs, as each attempt to the contrary is perceived as denying the parents of their parental power. Usually, anti-gender movement contents discuss the loss of the parental reputation or status by depriving them of the opportunity to share certain knowledge with the children when the “true time” comes. However, this vague “period of knowledge” is never discussed further in posts. The “initiation phase,” when children are inducted in the “adult world,” is always mystified. Posts on this subject usually argue that the introduction of Comprehensive Sexual Education should occur at the “proper age,” however, the content itself never indicates as to the correct age. As Inappropriate is considered pre-school and school age, while coming of age is determined as the cross-section when young people are able to decide for themselves, without having previously adopted any knowledge on sexuality and health. Such an example is the moderator’s status of the Facebook group “Textbooks and School Presence”:

“We, the ‘primitive’ mothers nurture and sustain family, traditional and moral values. Yes, we want our children to have sexual education at an age appropriate for them to accept it, i.e., after they study biology as a science. Sexual education implies reproductive health, knowing the reproductive organs, sexual relations, contraception and protection from sexual violence. Comprehensive Sexual Education is quite a different problem? What are we supposed to comprehend? (...) I respect every life decision. Each adult has the right to determine themselves sexually as they please, feel as they please, be what they please. I respect and will continue to respect everything that makes a person happy. This, however, doesn’t give anyone the right to impose certain beliefs on our children and disrespect my beliefs”. (Textbooks and School Presence,“ Mach 6th, 2022)

By creating an “exclusive adult arena,”¹³ knowledge about sexuality remains reserved only for parents, children being perceived as asexual subjects, with no desires, ability to fantasize, or even real experiences (Robinson, Kerry H.). They are inserted in the category of the “innocent Others” and fictively protected by “being denied access”¹⁴ (*Ibid.*) to most information necessary to be acquired before reaching the adult phase. In addition, anti-gender movement calls parents “the true guardians” of children in various propaganda. In this regard, the possibility to control children is perceived as the sacred inherited power parents are allowed to abuse. They take the position of sole “overseers” of children who are to be overseen and are expected to continue this “pedagogy of the oppressed” (Freire, Paulo).¹⁵ The danger that such control should exist lies in its expansion in the different domains of the children’s world, such as school and other environments. In order to achieve such control, anti-gender movements act in the direction of creating different, constantly monitored environments, relativizing the role of all other public educational institutions before the public as being untrustworthy. All state agencies are presented as dubious agents working against public interest, covering information like conspirators:

„YET ANOTHER SHOCK FOR PARENTS! TO WHOM DO WE ENTRUST OUR CHILDREN? / I have already informed you that the Parents’ Council at the St. Kliment Ohridski Elementary School in Bitola delivered a request for public information to the Ministry of Education and Science in regards to gender-sensitive education, delivered then to the Bureau for Educational Development (BED). BED failed to respond to our questions but replied that the program will be harmonized with the programs of institutions like UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF ... (...). Since now BED failed to deliver a response in the legally prescribed period, the Council filed an appeal to the Agency for PROTECTION of the right to access public information!!! Do you know what the Agency’s response was? / 1. BED did not receive a letter. Despite the note issued to us that the letter was received! 2. Even if BED had received the letter, they didn’t have an obligation to respond since the information our children will learn in gender-sensitive education in times when all possible laws and the Constitution are violated, textbooks provided, no transparent teaching materials, while teachers are trained increasingly, but materials are hidden, IS NOT PUBLIC INFORMATION!!! / THE AGENCY SUPPOSED TO PROTECT OUR RIGHT DECIDED THAT IT IS NOT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST FOR PARENTS TO KNOW WHAT THEIR CHILDREN STUDY!!!,, (Parent-member of the Parents’ Council at the St. Kliment Ohridski – Bitola, United We Stand Tall, October 9th, 2021).

8.1.1. Increased Monitoring in School Environments

Anti-gender movements disseminate narratives related to increased monitoring of school environments, arguing that these have already been made unsafe by “gender ideology” for anyone passing through. With demands for increased control on children, a violent environment is created by introducing repressive attitude towards children. By employing such oppression, professors, teachers and members of school bodies are reconstructed as precarious subjects, trapped in the

¹³ Robinson, Kerry H., *In the Name of ‘Childhood Innocence’*, Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 14, No. 2, September 2008, p. 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 121.

¹⁵ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2005, p. 46.

network of LGBTIQ activists, NGOs, institutions and the government. The first are misleadingly described as collective heroes, individuals who have managed to fight against “gender ideology” and sacrificed social status, reputation and power to achieve higher goals. The various statements posted reveal personal stories about individuals believed to have been: forced to resign or were fired, replaced with less qualified individuals and suspended for having defended science and truth. The general idea such posts convey is that regardless of the position, everyone loses the “fight” against gender.

Two such instances, involving selective circulation of the full story, in order to create a collective hero, are the cases of Jordan Peterson and James Esses. Peterson was forced to resign as a full tenured psychology professor at the University in Toronto, while Esses’s contract at the Metaonia Institute, where he was teaching a therapist training course, was terminated. Peterson, publically advocating for numerous outdated and conservative stands, such as the “crisis of manhood,” and who largely contributed to the rise of right-wing populism in USA and Europe, introduces himself as professor emeritus and a psychologist forced to resign from his “honorary position” not because of his problematic positions but rather due to the “LGBTIQ” ideology. Esses, on the other hand, was expelled from the Institute he taught at for lodging a public petition to safeguard conversion therapy and counselling for LGBTIQ children. In fact, he endorsed himself as a “true defender” of vulnerable children, co-founding the so-called Thoughtful Therapists group, leading a campaign against gender transition in young people, and advocating for harmful interventions through reparative therapy. However, the background information on Peterson and Esses is missing from the posts, making their exclusion from the education system appear as an act of injustice, with the potential to unfold on other levels:

„One of the most eminent clinical psychologists and author currently, Jordan Peterson, resigned as a full tenure professor at the University of Toronto, due to the bad influence of WOKE and LGBTI+ ideology under the guise of DIE (diversity, inclusiveness and equity). His male white heterosexual students have no academic future, regardless of their high achievements. Read his full statement, because when organizations like Margins, HERA and the Helsinki Committee, aggressively demanding erasure of words from dictionaries and alteration of textbooks not matching their ideology, soon there will be no work for those who didn't ‘change’ their sex, aren't gay or don't deny science.” (Take Responsibility, January 26th, 2022)

In posts sharing stories of higher education professors, the aim is to disseminate fear among the general public, while in stories of teachers in elementary and high schools, the fake news is intended to terrify the current faculty. Anti-gender narratives suggest that the school environment is no longer safe. One such instance is a TikTok video of a woman claiming to have been expelled from a high school job because she rejected to meow like a cat. Once the view count increased, various media checked the facts and discovered the story posted by the woman, who was indeed a teacher, was completely fabricated. Subsequent posts clarified that her goal supposedly was to create a story in order to “raise awareness” on what children have to go through in schools. However, the post was shared in Macedonian by anti-gender groups without any information that the story was fabricated, but commenting on the first story they interpreted as true:

„A substitute teacher claims to have been expelled because she refused to meow like a cat. When the teacher started the morning roll call, she heard a meowing from one of the desks, thinking a child was joking. A little girl told her that a boy from the third row identified as a cat and that the teacher should meow back at him. Of course, the teacher thought it was a joke and started joking, to which the boy left the room in protest. Later, at the principal’s office, the teacher was told that the school no longer needs “her services, since she failed to identify with all the children in the classroom” and meow when a child addressed her with meowing. Yes, now, not only are men allowed to become women, but they can identify as domestic pets and everyone should join in the madness.” (Take Responsibility, January 25th, 2022)

Several of the sources examined in this analysis implicate classic conspiracy theories as well, where certain criminally punishable acts are exploited in favour of anti-gender ideology, causing further unavoidable negative consequences on the notion of LGBTIQ children in the educational system. By simplifying the nature of a sexual assault case in Loudoun County in Virginia, certain posts, in addition to relativizing the actions of the school and police in a rape case, portrays the school administration as an institution constantly attempting to conceal incidents of sexual violence and harassment – on behalf of LGBTIQ people. Briefly, in the specific case, a transgender boy raped a girl in the school toilet. Notwithstanding the criminal nature and injustice in the case, the broadcasted stories always failed to include the fact that the participants had previous sexual history and used to meet at the place of the incidents, all in order to stereotype transgender individuals as criminals and monsters transiting with evil intentions (to assault children and women in toilets) (see subchapter 4.3). Anti-gender actors misrepresented the facts to such a degree, that the police and the protocol on dealing with violence and harassment in the school environment is never a topic of conversation. The focus is redirected to the alleged dangers from allowing transgender people, i.e. transgender children to use female toilets. The more vocal ones, on the other hand, propagating stricter monitoring in schools and depriving children with fluid gender identity of any rights – become alleged defenders of children’s and women’s rights. Furthermore, the expulsion of individual members opposing the dominant anti-gender narrative from school boards, are presented as small victories in the corrupted and unjust system. This encourages polarization of the public, which, while cheering for one group and criticizing the other, is defocused from the real problem - sexual violence and harassment in school environments and among youth. Finally, in such instances, anti-gender activists never fail to support the story with local examples linked to a bigger conspiracy theory – where all events result from and are covered by left-wing currents advocating for “LGBTIQ ideology”.

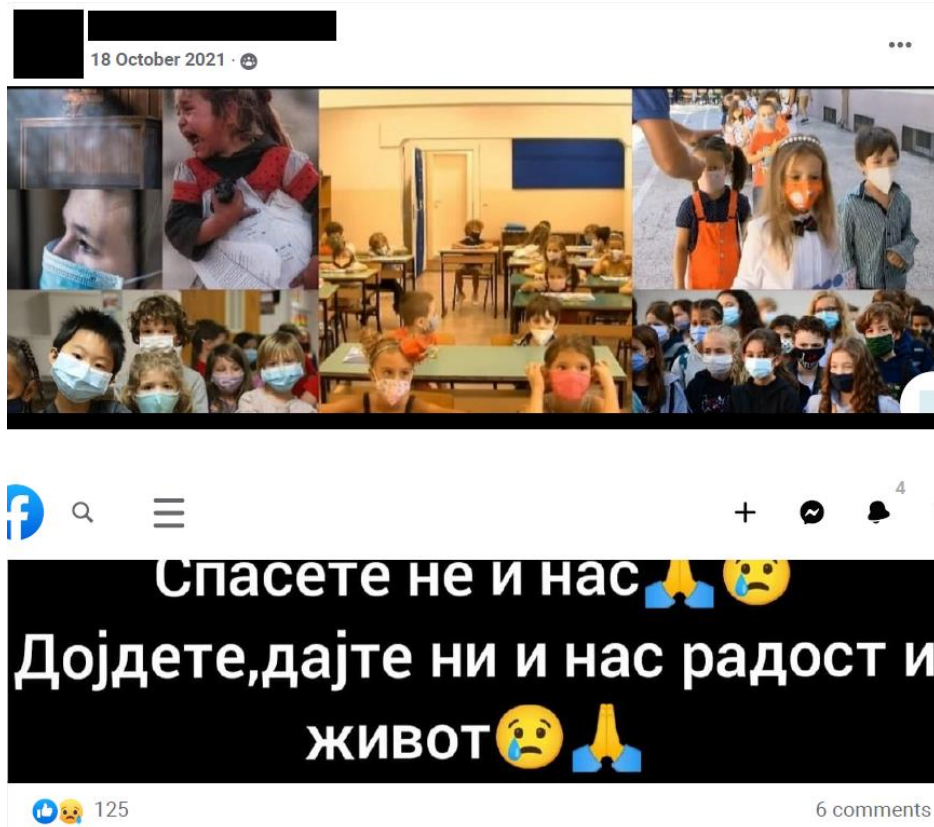
“Research on the case of the trans-gender boy who raped two girls in schools in Loudoun revealed new findings. Public schools in Loudoun are obliged to file an annual report to the U.S. Department of Education on events related to sexual harassment and violence, and inform the general public about it. However, the Stone Bridge School reported zero such events for the 2020-2021, including May 28th when one of the girls was raped. (...) Of course, members of the school board were aware of this. Monitoring the entire case and how the truth is being hidden by people at high positions far too long, a question arises: is the scout sex scandal the first case at all and will justice prevail, or will the people be defocused again in order to forget the event? / Lets stress: the events in Loudoun were covered up by progressive left-wing currents, advocating for LGBTI+ trans ideology. These are the ones pushing for CSU and all types of sexualisation of children, claiming to protect and fight for children’s and women’s rights. Is the story familiar?” (Take Responsibility, October 18th, 2021).

Finally, anti-gender worldviews maintain the opinion that school environments are unsafe because LGBTIQ organizations wish to enforce their own language and terminate democracy, thus limiting the freedom of speech of the majority. In addition, they strive to profile the LGBTIQ community as elitists, with powerful connections to the government, slowly occupying all working positions in education and depriving “truly qualified people” from work. In such content, the LGBTIQ community is depicted as having thoroughly infiltrated all educational institutions, superior above everyone else, encouraging actions for which certain marginalized communities are blamed. As a result of this hyperbolized threat, anti-gender followers are misled and initiated into creating waves of moral panic and mobilization towards antidemocratic, discriminatory and punishable actions. Consequently, in the eyes of anti-gender actors, schools and classrooms turn into dangerous and hazardous places, in need of a new type of control, or an environment totally unsuitable for children.

“Students suspended from school because they stood behind science / In September, a high school student from New Hampshire, England, was suspended from a school football match only for stating his personal opinion that there are only two sexes, male and female. (...) Such scenarios throughout the world are no longer isolated cases, but rather students are being constantly suspended for standing up for science and truth, and consequently not yielding to the manipulations of trans activists. Such censure has already been initiated in Macedonia as well. Currently, the focus is on ‘educating’ the media on proper LGBTIQ+ terms and the speech they are allowed to use. Seeing that LGBTIQ+ organizations in Macedonia maintain the same format of global LGBTIQ+ organizations, it would be proper to warn that our schools will soon enforce similar ‘rulebooks’ on limiting the democratic freedom of speech of the majority.” (Take Responsibility, November 25th, 2021)

“LGBT activists are taking job positions of people with proper qualification in education / A REQUIEM FOR A MINISTER / (...) Not dear Minister Carovska, I truly never intended to deal with you any longer in my life. But, as people would say – enough is enough! Dimitar Filipovski, an academic sculptor from Skopje – professor at the High School of Applied Art ‘Lazar Licenovski’ Skopje. (...) / COMMENT [from Take Responsibility]: The entire letter is worthwhile reading. You will realize that the sole criteria of Mila Carovska in appointing principals and people on high positions is – either to be part of the LGBTIQ+ community or to be an LGBTIQ+ activists and supporter. Without qualified and able staff, education will be completely destroyed – which was what the (dis) respected Minister managed. Parents and citizens of Macedonia, we hope this would teach all of us not to make the same mistake at the next elections. Requiem = Opelo.” (Take Responsibility, December 21st, 2021)

Finally, it is noteworthy to mention that the current health-political circumstances were fertile ground to portray schools, dramatically, as prisons for children, places where they suffer and are deprived of freedom of speech. Some posts and comments in the analysed materials prevail with opinions on not wearing masks during school hours during the Covid-19 pandemic, interpreted by the movement as part of the big conspiracy behind the destruction of education.



"Save us as well (praying emoji) (crying emoji) Come, give us joy and life (crying emoji) (praying emoji)." (Textbooks and School Presence, October 18th, 2021)

8.2. Depriving Children of the right to Access Necessary Information

The dominant discourse on the parental right to uncontested power over their offspring by introducing control on as many domains in their existence as possible, is based on the secondary, but equally important, narrative on the need to protect children from certain "minority" groups desiring to enforce personal agenda and deprive them of their "childish innocence". This discourse branches out further into two directions in the educational system by minimizing the role of formal education and generalizing extra-curricular and informal activities.

8.2.1. Minimizing the Role of Formal Education

First, through the prism of formal education, the best tactic anti-gender movements have at hand is exploiting the optional subject Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE), and, second, the introduction of Gender-sensitive Education (GSE), altering teaching contents, and digitalization. In discussions related to these several aspects, the only perspective is the parental one, i.e. parents being asked to liberate their children's' education from the chains of the educational system. The already established binary relation parent-child continues, maintained through the postulate of protecting the children from premature sexualisation and sexual predators. Anti-gender actors proclaim themselves as official advocates and representatives of the generalized group "concerned parents", recognizing their role to be one of unavoidably advocating for children and their ability to

decide for themselves what they require. However, such declarations go beyond the domain of virtual lobbying. Anti-gender movements' leaders publish photographs of submitted requests to educational institutions (such as the Bureau for Development in Education and the Ministry of Education and Science) on behalf of the supposed invisible "crowd" of parents supporting them. They give themselves the right to speak on behalf of the majority, spinning their justifications in uncertain and pale reasons, such as "receiving a huge number of parents' and teachers' requests". While portraying state agencies as inaccessible and failing to respond to requests by the general public, they represent themselves as direct, accommodating and close to the people. The posts are meant to address followers directly, offering updates on current activities, with a constant reminder of current achievements and projected ones. Consequently, Facebook users are kept enthusiastic and encouraged to contribute to a like-minded group of individuals they can actually identify with.

Mainly, when discussing the CSE program, anti-gender mobilization groups publish content from various materials on CSE as being exposed and interpreted for their true meaning. The implementation of the program is always discussed anecdotally, the other point of argumentation being certain supposed individual intentions of the government or civil society organizations, in addition to the multitude of lies and unverified information. Usually, there is referral to quotes from individual publications, regardless of whether the material is outdated or cited from official development CSE programs, combined to distort the facts. Sentences from different paragraphs, and on various aspects of sexuality, are combined to change the meaning of the original explanation. This is most obvious in the incorrect quotation of the definition "virgin" from the publication „CSE Alphabet.”¹⁶ The pamphlet also includes an illustration aiming to remove the stigma related to "virginity" among girls and women, who, by personal choice or involuntarily, have had a sexual intercourse at a certain period in life, considered as premature or too late by the surrounding. The example also attempts to normalize different bodily reactions during first sexual relations, distinguishing between facts and myths, and the expectation that first sexual experiences must be unpleasant or painful. However, anti-gender actors have interpreted this as encouraging minors to sex, which is just one example of how unethically information is communicated. The research could not divulge into examining all individual concessions to the truth in order to chart all changes in data, but certain cases were included to illustrate some of the methods anti-gender movements employ to achieve their determined goal.

On the other hand, anti-gender movements present themselves as open and transparent information networks, fighting against the alleged censorship of the truth. Their activities are supposedly based on trusted work, fact checking and citing public and free available sources of information. In cases when their posts, on the other hand, are subjected to fact checks and the opposite is proved, initiators are ostracized as corrupted and financed by foreign donors, denigrating and disqualifying them as "organizations sponsored by Soros" etc.

“TAKE RESPONSIBILITY has been transparent from the very beginning, supported by facts and evidence from government-issued documents from around the world, official statistics and statistics and information issued by the most renowned world media. Transparency being one of the basic work

¹⁶ Трајановска, Љ., Дамјановски, В., Најдовска, Х. *ССО азбука*. Скопје: ХЕРА – Асоцијација за здравствена едукација и истражување, 2016.

principles, all links are properly displayed, usually at the bottom of each text, so readers could have free access to check the facts contained in the texts.” (Take Responsibility”, October 6th, 2021)

Declarations of the (non)transparent activities are a precondition for claims of exposed harmful elements in CSE, GSE, changes in teaching materials and digitalization, perceived as secret tactics aiming to promote something unacceptable for their traditionalist beliefs (like abortion, transgender rights and young people’s sexuality, which they tend to ignore). Anti-gender movements prevent the breakthrough of new knowledge in order to maintain a status quo in the existing educational system, whether it is an outdated one or not. In the words of Paulo Freire, people rarely admit “their fear of freedom openly, however, tending rather to camouflage it – sometimes unconsciously – by presenting themselves as defenders of freedom.”¹⁷ Hence, anti-gender actors and their followers “confuse freedom with maintaining the status quo,”¹⁸ opposing every novelty, each proposed change in the content or format of learning materials, linking them to a collective conspiratorial scheme in order to prevent any progress, even technological. The current education resting on a “banking system” (Freire, Paulo) of unidirectional knowledge flow from professor to student, goes to their benefit since it never produces critical thinking regarding the teaching materials, preferring declaration of short-term adopted data and creating passive youth that never questions the existing hegemonies in its surrounding.

In the case of the introduction of Comprehensive Sexual Education, individuals with high social status obtained through their professional titles, tend to declare personal opinions. It enforces the stigma towards the LGBTIQ community, civil society organizations and the government, previously defined as “the people’s boogiemans” acting unidirectionally and together. The researcher and psychologist, Ana Blazeva, writes on the position of responsibility in the gender fights, indicating to the consequences of abandoning professional principles and the trust in psychologists as professionals.¹⁹ In times when history is being relativized, times of subtruth, no wonder the public relies on experts dominant among the public and in media. These “professionals” often diminish the role of formal education, particularly if it involves Comprehensive Sexual Education, encouraging attitudes that school, apart from being physically unsafe, endangers children’s mental health as well. In addition, such statements often transmit the terrifying message that – unless parents change the conditions in education, children will be forced to face an even bigger problem long after graduation:

“Comprehensive Sexual Education supports neurosis – Dora Popova Uzunovski, psychologists, Gestalt psychotherapists, Master in Clinical and Counselling Psychology / since you’re proposing the introduction of COMPREHENSIVE sexual education, I’m very interested whether you’re planning to introduce COMPREHENSIVE LOVE education, since they are both related. Sexuality is a bodily manifestation of love and they cannot be separated. I mean, technically, they could since the human brain is divided anyway, and people are used to living with this division instead of integration. Now you can further divide children by preaching your indoctrination from an early age. In the name of this division, people are sold all kinds of things, the mind is what it is, it wants to consume precisely this

¹⁷ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2005, p. 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Блажева, Ана. „Леснотијата“ на родовите културни војни и одговорноста. „Слободен печат“ април 2022.

and experiment with all kinds of things, collecting all kinds of bullshit in the process, seeking treatment afterwards (whether a diazepam or something else). (...) The problem is that some of us support neurosis instead of seeking treatment, and often times people's condition deteriorates instead of improving." (Take Responsibility", January 7th, 2022)

We should also mention content intending to spread fake news related to the introduction of CSE at pre-school age. Anti-gender actors tread carefully and gradually with regards to this aspect. First, the improper content is emphasized, followed by the alleged intentions for the subject to be studied from the start to the end of the educational process, as yet another threat to parents. In this version of the lies linked to the educational reforms, the message is that children have "no chances" from the very beginning, hence not being involved in the educational system, such as it is, could be better.

"The LGBTI+ organization HERA has attempted to push and introduce comprehensive sexual education in schools ever since 2009, hence the constant pressure on the government and the Ministry of Education. In 2019, the Ministry of Education and Science, led by the Minister Arber Ademi, accepted HERA's idea and started developing a plan on how to implement the idea of introducing CSE at PRE-SCHOOL AGE. (...) In February 2021, several organizations and groups, i.e. United We Stand Tall and Take Responsibility, revealed the plans of HERA and the Minister Carovska to introduce LGBTI+ Sexual Education as early as pre-school age. In February 2021, Minister Carovska fiercely denied this, claiming we are spreading fake news. In March 2021, HERA and several other LGBTI+ organization, as well as the Scouts' Union, concluded that CSE should be introduced at ALL levels of education. (...) In September 2021, the scandal with the sexual education conducted by the 'scouts' during their camp called "Sex, scouts and rock 'n roll happened. Do you really need more evidence?" (Take Responsibility, October 2nd, 2021)

"The truth is that in 2019, the government decided to introduce CSE in ALL schools. It is a reckless lie that it was to be studied only in the 9th grade. The official document released by the Ministry of Education and Science addressed to HERA was categorical – comprehensive sexual education will be introduced in ALL grades, starting with pre-school age (kindergarten). We recommend that MOE and BED go through their official documents, or, since they've already decided to manipulate the people, at least see that it's done professionally, without any visible evidence to support it." (Take Responsibility, October 5th, 2021)

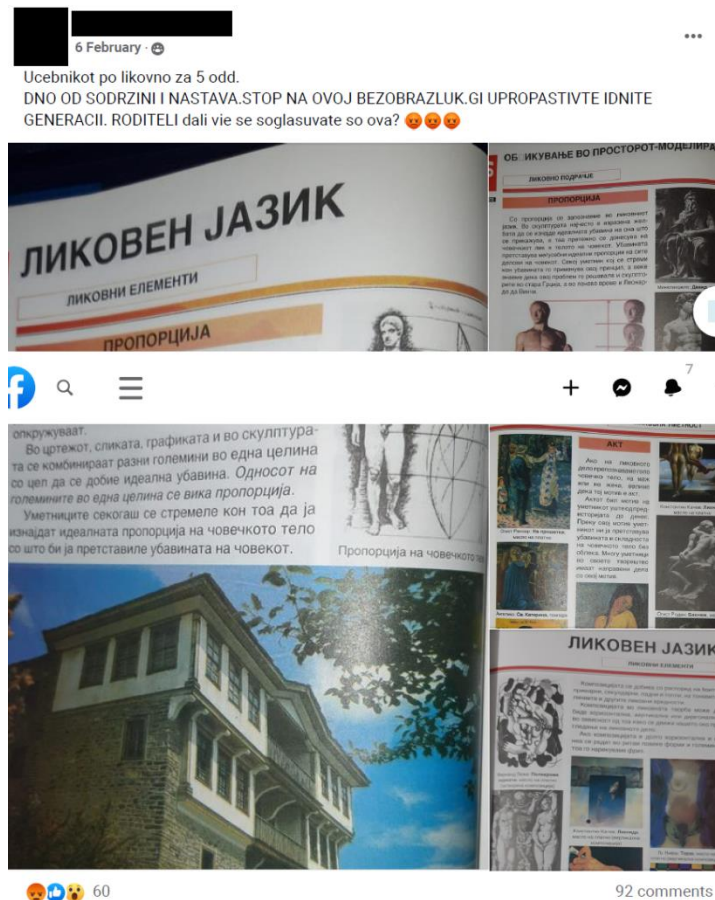
Gender-sensitive education, as an element of the educational reforms, as opposed to Comprehensive Sexual Education, in these discourses is circulated as a threat on all levels. Gender sensitivity is perceived as a danger to public education and part of the "transgender agenda" to be kept away from children. In order to support its claims against GSE, anti-gender actors use stories of transgender children who have de-transitioned with the help of the harmful conversion LGBTIQ therapy. The introduction of GSE is used as an excuse to propagate reparative theories and postulate incorrect information contaminating the severity of the transition in another gender identity, transition levels and personal choice of the individuals who have opted this choice. Anti-gender actors' narratives describe transition as "amputating healthy parts of the human body," "sterilization for lifelong infertility," and even "psychological and physical abuse in the hands of educators and our health

system” (*United We Stand Tall, October 5th, 2021*). In addition to the negative portrayal of transgenerness, such posts encourage feelings of disgust and depicting transgender people, particularly children, as irretrievable, lost victims of the educational process.

The subject matter covers a specific intrigue connected to the alterations introduced in teaching materials and curricula as part of the new educational reform implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2020. On the one hand, the posts express opposition to any changes, and an initiative to maintain the existing educational configuration at any cost, while on the other, certain existing content is criticised as newly introduced. Anti-gender actors present themselves simultaneously as defenders and correctors of educational contents, in order to keep education in stagnation. In this sense, the educational system, which seldom takes on a criticizing and emancipatory role, continues to convey outdated knowledge and loses the only other remaining dimension – being informative. It becomes a tool to strengthen nationalism and popularize right-wing politics, as a result of which its reformation, within the anti-gender ideology, acquires apocalyptic and dystopian characteristics. Any change, even related to changing the model of how knowledge is transferred and learnt, is liken to an attack on tradition, history and religion. Replacing textbooks with open and flexible teaching materials, the ability for continuous and easy advancement, complemented with contemporary information, is interpreted as obliterating certain values and “brainwashing our children” (*Save Marriage and Family, December 11th, 2021*). The reaction to such misinterpretation of the educational reform manifests in calling the public to: undertake severe measures, unite the people and “correct the damages already sustained” – with regression, i.e. maintaining the familiar old education model, deemed as appropriate in lack of functionality.

Any release of news related to the necessity to withdraw certain disputed content from a textbook is welcomed by anti-gender organizations with comments defending the controversial chapters. Such is the example with the posts related to the news that the Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination adopted an opinion and issued remarks on a 3rd year sociology textbook – reformed secondary school education. The discriminatory, gender-insensitive and scientifically incorrect information is linguistically sorted in normalizing categories: “normal,” “natural,” “socially acceptable,” “real” and “scientific” (*Take Responsibility, December 29th, 2021*). Additionally, anti-gender activists abuse such situations to associate the disputed contents with organizations and individuals, denigrating their social media profiles, formal education, professional knowledge and experience in their field of expertise, claiming that “LGBTI+ organizations are getting involved in our children’s education as if they are some kind of experts,” adding that debates with these individuals have succeeded in revealing their lies, although discussion of the sort, of course, has never occurred. (*Take Responsibility, December 29th, 2021*).

An example of the fabrications related to the existing textbooks is a post with photographs of a 5th grade art textbook, in which the chapter on drawing nudes includes various art works as an illustration. In this case, the disputed textbook is from the current, old program, misrepresented by anti-gender actors as an example of the new educational reform which goes against each one of their beliefs. Anti-gender followers describe the mentioned content as age-inappropriate, crazy and vulgar in comparison to the idealized “education from the past” which produced “many good generations”. In fact, a prominent anti-gender activist posted comments, calling for united protests and bigger efforts.



“5th Grade Art Textbook. Teaching and lessons have touched a new bottom. STOP this vulgarity. You have ruined future generations. PARENTS, do you agree with this? (Angry emoji) (Textbooks and School Presence, February 6th, 2022)

Last, although, certainly not least important aspect applied in the mystification of the educational reform, was the digitalization process. The demonstration of the digital platform, seen as a violation of the principle of one-way communication of information students are supposed to adopt and relay without having understood it, was welcomed with disapproval by the anti-gender movement in North Macedonia. The prospective of changing teaching contents pursuant to current scientific development, the opportunity for children with different needs and approaches to learn the curricula and access a source of information most suitable to them with a plethora of descriptive examples, was not seen as promotion of education in anti-gender circles since it was contrary to enforcing control over children, desired by these actors.

“A parent who gives a book to his child is only doing it harm,’ stated Carovska / What are the true reasons behind Carovska’s insistence that children should not study from books but rather from the digital platform completely under her control? 1. This way parents lose insight in the curricula. The digital platform allows dynamics in the curricula, and with literally one click you can add, remove or change lessons which are to be presented to children. 2. It is a great opportunity for Carovska and her sect (HERA) to include “propaganda videos” in order to indoctrinate children in destructive liberal ideologies on sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, changing sex pursuant to the child’s feelings etc.

– something we have observed for some time in Western countries, the main sponsors of Carovska's sext (HERA).” (Textbooks and School Presence, October 8th, 2021)

8.2.2. Defocusing the public from the real problems

During the research period, anti-gender actors concentrate on two occurrences used to simulate the incursion of civil society organizations in education via extra-curricular and non-formal activities, consequently spreading panic among the public. The first alarming situation was the dissemination of questionnaires on the international research *Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Study in Macedonia* – HBSACSM in North Macedonia, conducted every four years, for the twelfth time in a row. The strong reaction and parents' mobilization led to severe consequences in the realization of the questionnaire, conducted anonymously, with the parent and the student's permission, with questions related to the challenges faced by children aged 11, 13 and 15 (concerning social, mental and sexual health).

In the name of “protecting children's innocence,” they impacted the final results of the national sample, mobilizing parents to prevent children's' participation in the questionnaire, prohibiting as many as 8% of the students to talk about their daily problems and the field in which they most need help and understanding. Lina Kjostarova Unkovska, a clinical psychologist, specialist in trauma and crisis psychology and the lead researcher in the 1998 Macedonian HBSCM team, issued a statement on that occasion. She pointed to the difficulties in the realization of the Study, which “despite its long tradition in Macedonia, found itself on the moralistic road” of the organized anti-gender actors who claimed the questions were “inappropriate for the children,” “prompting them to do terrible things,” although day-to-day reality testifies that precisely those uncomfortable feelings are an integrated part of children's experiences, and bigger efforts need to be made in order to hear them out.²⁰ In fact, the message sent with the interruption of the questionnaire has an obvious premeditation. The parents lobbying claimed the questions were in no way related to the children's health, spreading tension in the public with suggestions that the remaining unknown questions must have certainly been dangerous, controversial and indecent, i.e. upsetting to the children. Discussions went so far that anti-gender followers claimed the questionnaires were not anonymous at all, and that children's location was exposed to abusers, rapists and pedophiles and “their destruction in front of everybody” by LGBTIQ activists.

„Dragana Spasevska: DEAR PARENTS! The study I previously informed you about, and for which the school needs your consent is being conducted! If you fail to sign, you indirectly give consent for your child to be surveyed! But how? The survey is controversial, dangerous, enforcing controversial and indecent contents, acts and behaviours to our children! (...) I can only imagine what those 70 questions contained! I can only imagine what those 70 questions were! PARENTS ARE UPSET AND WORRIED!!! It is quite normal to do surveys and research, but the INTENTION, however, here is DIFFERENT!!! I ASK ALL THE PRINCIPALS, HEADS OF CLASSES, TO BE CAREFUL WHAT THEY SERVE TO THE CHILDREN!!!

²⁰ Костарова Унковска, Лина, [Став] *Како да се избориме за детски живот?*. Радио МОФ, септември 2022.

EVEN WHEN A SURVEY IS ANONIMOUS, THE PRINCIPAL AND A TEACHER MUST READ IT AND INFORM THE PARENTS!!! ALL OTHER EXCUSES ARE GROUNDLESS!” (Take Responsibility, March 30th, 2022)

The second circumstance in which children’s extra-curricular activities were criticized was the camp scandal entitled “Autumn kisses and hugs, sex scouts and rock ‘n roll”, organized by the First Skopje Scout Detachment, in which under the guise of sexual education, students were forced to simulate sexual activities. Although the Health Education and Research Association called the institutions to act urgently, denying any connection to the event²¹, the anti-gender movement defined the case as abuse and premature sexualisation of children by civil society organizations, and specifically by HERA, portrayed as close to the government and the judiciary system. Namely, the entire development of the case with the scout camp was framed as part of a larger Western trend and conspiracy targeting Macedonia as well, under the umbrella of which thousands of children had been sexually abused abroad. The result was defocusing the public and the institutions from taking specific measures to solve the case.

“For those of you watching a lot of movies, imagining prosecutors as detectives protecting the helpless people, particularly children, we recommend you face reality. This is Macedonia and NO ONE will protect your children, except for yourselves! Let’s not forget that the LGBTI+ organization HERA has been connected with the camp for years, the organization tailoring the education of your children.” (Take Responsibility, March 30th, 2022)

8.3. Mobilization towards Systematic Degradation and Discrimination

All anti-gender narratives and visual tactics enforce powerful pressure and panic among the general population and institutions, in order to: (1) advocate for amendments to current legislation, (2) encourage a change of the government and positions of certain politicians in it and (3) participation in the creation of various policies.

The first approach is visible in the advocacy for amendments to the new Law on Primary Education, adopted in July 2019. In this context, they recommend complete abolition of the educational reform and revisiting previous curricula, pointing to the period before the political parties signed the Declaration to support CSE, initiated by the Youth Platform for Comprehensive Sexual Education in 2017.²² Additionally, there is the broadcast of news from abroad, presented as good practices, specifically in the case with the new Hungarian Law against LGBT Indoctrination of Children (adopted in July 2021) and the Law on Parents’ Rights in Education in Florida, enforced in July 2022.

“Hungarian Prime Minister – Orban initiated a referendum to strengthen the position against Brussels with regards to the new Hungarian Law against LGBT Indoctrination of children, i.e. the so-called Law against Paedophilia. ‘I don’t care what Brussels says about our new Law on protection of children and I don’t want the Venetian Commission telling Hungarians how to raise their children’.” “Is Macedonia

²¹ HERA issues a reaction: *We did not organize the scout event Sex Scouts and Rock’n’Roll.* “Sloboden pecat, September 2022.

²² HERA – Health Education and Research Association, *Ten Parties for Comprehensive Sexual Education*, January 2022. Available at: <https://hera.org.mk/10-partii-se-obvrzaa-za-sso/>

ever going to have a prime minister who will stand in defence of its children?” (Textbooks and School Presence, December 4th, 2021)

“On Thursday, in Florida (USA) a law prohibiting discussions of gender identity and sexual orientation in schools was passed. The Parental Rights in Education Act gives parents bigger insight in curricula and what children are learning and discussing in school. Of course, LGBTI+ activists and progressives did not like this, who with the intention to deny parents their rights, used their favourite terms – ‘homophobic, transphobic and discriminatory’ law, including President Joe Biden, who characterized it as ‘hateful’. According to the Law, ‘there will be no more classroom instructions by school staff or outside individuals on sexual orientation and gender identity, starting from preschool, to 3d grade, or in a manner deemed inappropriate for the age or development of students, in accordance with state standards.’” (Take Responsibility, February 27th, 2022)

The second anti-gender approach is manipulation about who truly possesses the alleged power to change the government and individual politicians, the effect of which is quite severe on the public, and often underestimated by politicians. The subject matter reveals this in the constant monitoring of the actions undertaken by the former Minister of Education and Science, Mila Carovska, whose change they considered a personal victory, made on behalf of the anonymous “majority of parents.”

“Dear parents and citizens of Macedonia, Mila Carovska is no longer the Minister of Education! (...) This is just a small battle won to our, the parents’, benefit, and to the benefit of our children. However, further battles await. Let us show the next government and the future minister of education, whoever it might be, that they should deserve our voices, serve the people who pay them, that our children belong to us, not to the state, and that they have no rights to meddle with their psycho-physical development. Should the next government make any attempts to play some perfid and manipulative games, we won’t stay silent! Regardless of who forms the government, the power is in us, in our desire to provide peaceful childhood for our children! OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE?” (Take Responsibility, November 6th, 2021)

The last approach refers to the direct participation of anti-gender actors in the creation of different policies, potentially to be realized in near future due to their demands for a working body in the Ministry of Education and Science to revise the Primary Education Concept, adopted in December 2020. Plotting the creation of such a body occurred under the excuse that “the parent also has the right to be involved in what is thrown at their child with the new reform concepts,” not just “financed profiteering organizations propagating for years in Macedonia in order to infiltrate in education and introduce their gender concept” (*Textbooks and School Presence, March 5th, 2022*). In order to achieve this demand, anti-gender actors claim to be advocating by asking direct meetings with the Ministry of Education and Science, meetings with MPs, organizing protests and participation in various TV shows.

“To every parent: watch Dragana Spasovska’s appearance in the show ‘Good Morning, Every Morning’ on TV Alfa with Iskra. Every word is worth hearing in order to be informed accurately on all circumstances children in education happen to be in due to a group of NGOs and marginalized communities and enforced surveys of students in primary schools throughout Macedonia. React on time. All in the interest of the children.” (Textbooks and School Presence, March 6th, 2022)

Lastly, this type of anti-gender advocacy activities in North Macedonia maintained the status quo in education, externalizing danger outside the range of family and home, and transferring it in the domain of school environments, silencing children, immobilizing institutions and the government in their attempt to continue the adoption and proposal of the planned educational reforms and strengthening the marginalized position of the LGBTIQ community. Additionally, aware of international events, the movement has the potential to cause regression in the current educational system by amending certain laws and introducing new ones, increasing restrictions in schools and endangering children's privacy, destroying the careers of the few teachers willing to adapt critical practices in the inflexible educational system and significantly decreasing the quota of people desiring to work in education. Unfortunately, regardless of the outcome, mobilization in order to cause regression in the educational system will most certainly strengthen the position of LGBTIQ people as "disposable", particularly LGBTIQ children, "relocating them to the margins and removing them from the eyes of the public" (Giroux, Henry A.).²³ Furthermore, such "pedagogic practice", typical for neoliberal pedagogy, will certainly result with bigger control and affect the broader culture and the ability for developing critical thought, but it would also "remove the discourse of democracy or its remnants within and outside of schools."²⁴

²³ Giroux, Henry A., *On Critical Pedagogy*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 92.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 8.

Overview of Key Findings

The publication is the product of a research on anti-gender movements' key strategies in the Republic of North Macedonia. A total of 269 pieces were analysed, published on four different social media, i.e. Facebook profiles and Facebook groups for anti-gender mobilization (see chapter 1.6. Sampling Strategy). In terms of authorship gender balance, 28.3% were written by men, 8.5% by women, and in 63.2% the authors were unknown or the texts were (re)posted from Facebook profiles making the definition of the author's gender in those cases difficult to determine. Out of the total number of texts, 22.6% were initiated by the moderators of the profiles and groups, while 62.2% were pieces published from Facebook profiles acting as admins to the groups. In only 15.2% of the cases, the posts were authored by members and supporters, meaning the dynamic of the groups and profiles was defined mostly by the frequency of posts by anonymous authors.

The analysis differentiates between: the ideological grounds of: (1) the traditionally-conservative part of society with negative opinions on feminism and LGBTIQ rights and (2) anti-gender movements. **Anti-gender movements** are international or transnational movements opposing what they call "gender ideology" or "gender theory". Anti-gender movements comprise of **anti-gender actors** with various characteristics, depending on the time and geographical context of their acting. A unifying element for anti-gender actors is the ability to "cram various discourses into a single big threat" and construct "gender/gender ideology" as an "attack on at least one of the *three Ns*, these actors claim to defend: *nature, nation and normality*."

In the Macedonian context, there are several anti-gender organizations and groups currently active, as well as the [Coalition for the Protection of Our Children](#)²⁵, uniting [26 entities \(civil society associations, informal initiatives, religious groups and political parties\)](#)²⁶. The Coalition had not been formed yet during the research period, and is not a subject of research. The analysis includes texts of several Macedonian anti-gender initiatives: Take Responsibility, United We Stand Tall, Textbooks and School Presence and Save Marriage and Family. The research pointed to different focusses. United We Stand aims to mobilize against gender sensitive education and trans-gender rights, and is one of the leading anti-vaccination organizations advocating against mandatory vaccination of children and mandatory wearing masks at schools as part of the Covid-19 protection measures. Take Responsibility is predominantly engaged on mobilization against promotion of transgender right policies and the LGBTIQ movement. The informal initiative Textbooks and School Presence focusses mostly on mobilization against gender-sensitive and comprehensive sexual education, as well as other aspects in the educational reforms, initiated in 2020. The informal initiative Save Marriage and Family is mostly fixed on promoting religious and patriarchal perceptions of marriage and family, and mobilization against initiatives aiming to promote LGBTIQ rights in the community. All mentioned groups and organizations are members of the "Coalition for Protection of the Children".

We define anti-gender movements as an organized form of acting against what they call "**gender ideology**," a form uniting different actors. However, the concept of "gender ideology" is such a fluid idea, conceptualized divergently and applied differently depending on the specific anti-gender group, making it difficult to pinpoint to a single definition. As we mentioned earlier, anti-gender

²⁵ For more visit: <https://www.zadecata.org/>

²⁶ For more visit: <https://www.zadecata.org/коалициони-партнери>

actors and groups vary ideologically, the sustainable factor in their coalitions being mobilization against “gender ideology”. Consequently, the most exploited definition of “gender ideology” describes the term as an “empty signifier”. Anti-gender actors manage to successfully construct the “empty signifier”, i.e. “gender ideology” as an idea channelling several issues into one big threat to which different actors can connect (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). The common framework is the construction of “gender ideology” as the biggest threat on the alleged: normality, nature and common sense.

From the corpus of texts published by **Macedonian anti-gender groups** elaborating “**gender ideology**,” four key features of the definition can be distinguished .

The first feature refers to the binary opposition natural-artificial applied on the understanding of *sex* and *gender* dynamics, depicting *sex* as natural, and *gender* as an artificial construct produced with a certain goal. The research showed that anti-gender actors avoid complex responses to difficult questions, such as “What is gender?”, “What is femininity/masculinity?” and “What is sexuality?”. Simple, even banal explanations are used, seeming as acceptable to the general public. Instead of acceptance and attempting to understand the intricate dynamics behind gender and gender identity, anti-gender movements focuss solely on “biology (with a strictly limited grasp on it) as the only source of absolute truth and knowledge, and accordingly as the only source of social stability and cohesion” (Denkovski, Bernarding & Lunz, 2021).

The second characteristic refers to creating a binary opposition between the concepts of *science* and *theory*, applied on biology (defined by anti-gender movements as a scientific discipline) and gender studies (defined by anti-gender movements as an ideological tackle and non-scientific theory). Macedonian anti-gender movements maintain the position that gender studies are not a scientific discipline, the main intention being to deflect academic interest on *gender*. By negating gender studies and the concept of *gender*, they dislocate the political mobilization on promoting the rights and social status of transgender people.

Insisting on “the invincible force that is biology/sex” is the third feature, relayed through detransition cases among transgender people. The research showed that anti-gender actors use people who have detransitioned in order to prove the “invincible” power of “biology”, “nature” and “common sense”. The manipulation of such rhetoric is underlined in the fact that anti-gender movements portray detransition as more frequent than it occurs in reality, spreading delusions among the public on gender transition. Finally, the key goal is to depict trans people as temporarily confused or suffering from a misdiagnosed psychological disorder. In addition, anti-gender movements employ such narratives to “prove” that being transgender can be enforced (on innocent, small children), which is precisely the goal of LGBTIQ+ activists.

The fourth feature is the possibility for such gender discussions to be included in specific laws, policies and practices aiming to promote the rights and status of marginalized communities. Anti-gender initiatives in the country, within its limited existence as an organized movement, has already experienced two important legal victories – one in the field of education and another in the field of legal gender recognition for transgender people. Mobilization against the latest draft-Law on Civil Registry (regulating the legal gender recognition procedure) resulted in the Coalition for Protection of Children, listing 26 members at present, most of which are civil society organizations and informal

groups, but also political parties and religious groups. Despite the fact that legal gender recognition is purely an administrative procedure, the movements managed to enforce the narrative that the law allows **sex change**. In their lobbying for the withdrawal of the Law from parliamentary procedure, anti-gender actors did not abstain from fake news, manipulation and moral panic to cause paranoia and fear not only among the population but also among decision-makers. Consequently, the application of common manipulative strategies made legal gender recognition an issue of protecting women and children (more on this in Chapter 6), warning against “hidden agendas” of the LGBTIQ activists striving to destroy society and the state (more on this in Chapter 5) and opening the door for conspiracy theories.

Furthermore, **right-wing populism** or populism in general is significantly prevalent in literature on anti-gender movements. As revealed by research on anti-gender movements, contemporary anti-gender discourses are structured as populist discourses, particularly in their essential feature: understanding the world as a dynamic among the majority of “gender-normal, natural” people, represented allegedly by anti-gender movements, and the corrupted, morally unclean elites spreading “gender ideology”. The research on Macedonian anti-gender movements indicated that the populist discourse is dominant in the treatment of almost any topic of interest. We came upon a corpus of texts containing key features of right-wing populism examined through the definitions included in the analysis. Four subtopics were distinguished within this corpus of texts.

In the first subtopic we analysed anti-gender narratives aiming to present “gender ideology” as imported from the “rotten West,” in other words, capitalizing on the existent growing anti-EU or EU sceptic positions in the country. Research indicates that anti-gender ideology in former socialist countries has gained an exceptionally nationalistic form, visible in the opposition of gender equality western ideologies, argued with narratives on “national sovereignty and the chance to restore the earned place in Europe’s moral geography” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Within right-wing populism, this position obtains the following form: antagonism between “the corrupted global elite” (West, EU, Liberal West) and “the innocent and pure population” (Macedonians, natural men and women from Macedonia, the Balkan). In other words, “the people,” construed through the narratives of Macedonian anti-gender movements, is a community of traditional, religious, simple and moral people under threat of Western secularism and liberalism. Anti-gender narratives in North Macedonia are not explicitly nationalistic, but they are easily adaptable to local nationalistic frameworks and feelings.

In the second subtopic we analysed narratives demonizing the current civil society in North Macedonia, i.e. strategies on painting an image of specific individuals or organizations as “the corrupted elite”. Within anti-gender strategies, demonizing “gender”, or the so-called “gender ideology,” serves to encourage and intensify social polarization and delegitimize political opponents, liberal or progressive speakers and certain individuals or civil society organizations. The key argument in such movements in North Macedonia is the alleged implementation of “monstrous agendas” from the West, through certain local individuals or civil society organizations in it for the “fat pay check”, “the big money”. The analysis of the selected texts revealed that the key focus when demonizing “gender”, i.e. the construction of “the corrupted elites”, is placed on the LGBTIQ community and movement. Despite the LGBTIQ community being the most vulnerable to discrimination and the most marginalized in Macedonian society (Kimov & Kimova, 2019), anti-gender actors successfully portray it completely the opposite. Hence, the LGBTIQ community and activists are depicted as a small but

powerful and privileged group, “enforcing” its own agendas on the rest, “normal” part of the population, i.e. “the pure Macedonian people”.

In the third subtopic we analysed strategies of representing anti-gender initiatives as those of the “common people,” i.e. strategies of constructing “the common people” suffering because of “the corrupted elite.” Anti-gender movements’ need to construct the “majority” is almost identical to the one of right-wing populist. It aims to further present anti-gender groups or populist leaders and parties as representatives of the people, i.e. as the only political group and subjects allowed to represent the people. Anti-gender groups, as well as right-wing populist parties and leaders, and no one else (regardless whether it is a group, association or a political party) is allowed and cannot represent social groups or policies. In other words, only anti-gender organizations can be considered as authentic and pure civil society, since, according to this logic, they represent 99% of the citizens on Earth. Precisely due to these reasons, the construction of the majority is exceptionally important for anti-gender initiatives.

Finally, **in the fourth subtopic we analysed strategies on creating “the new elite”** opposite “the corrupted elite,” as the true protector of “the people, the common people.” The goal of anti-gender movements in North Macedonia is reinforcing cultural and political hegemony of conservatism, patriarchy and clericalism. However, anti-gender movements are particularly cautious in the implementation of such strategies. Consequently, local politicians and parties are selected almost never or quite rarely, the focus being placed instead on world leaders. Relationships and collaborations with right-wing or conservative political parties are often veiled, but can be sensed through: a) the use of anti-gender movement language by certain politicians, b) members of certain political parties supporting activities organized by anti-gender initiatives (protests, petitions etc.) and c) mutual criticism of “progressive policies” created by left-wing parties. This analysis of Macedonian anti-gender movements refrains from claims that anti-gender actors originate necessarily from certain political parties or act on their behalf. Despite sharing closer ideological similarities with right-wing than centre or left-wing political parties, anti-gender organizations or groups act relatively independently and autonomously. The opportunistic synergy with certain political elites was important because such collaborations disclose the real power assisting these movements in becoming the creators not only of social opinions, but also of policies and laws affecting the lives of many marginalized groups.

In a separate subchapter we examined **anti-gender movement strategies on intensifying the polarization, division and separation in feminist and women’s movements.** Questions on gender and sex, particularly on transgender people, were examined through the relations between anti-gender movements and gender-critical feminists. Gender-critical feminism is generally known as “trans-exclusionary radical feminism” (TERF), rejected by gender-critical feminists as insulting. We separated 5 subtopics from this topic in an attempt to examine the strategies of dividing the feminist movement.

The first subtopic refers to discourse strategies on representing trans women as a danger, particularly to women and children. A substantial part of the texts written by anti-gender groups refer to trans women, with the majority representing them as “monsters,” “murderers,” and “rapists”. The authors call trans women “man,” “women with penises,” “men dressed up as women,” portraying them as exceptionally dangerous, particularly for women and children. Some of the titles researched

include: “Man – Serial Killer, Transferred to Female Prison,” “The Brazilian Marie Claire Proclaimed a Transsexual, Pimp and Child Molester as a Top Women’s Rights Activist,” “England: Transgender Person Rapes a Patient, Hospital Covers It up for a Year,” “‘Woman’ aping babies,” etc. In the texts analysed, trans women are almost without exception called “women with penises”, highlighting sexuality and sexual characteristics to cause fear and disgust among the public. Mostly, the texts are accompanied with visual materials, images of transwomen looking “evil”, images of trans women with prominent male features next to images of women and girls in order to suggest vulnerability. The research revealed that most of the cases are real and serious criminal acts, conducted by several trans women, or men falsely presenting themselves as trans women. However, the manipulation lies in the attempts to use these isolated cases to depict the entire transgender community, particularly trans women (trans men are hardly ever mentioned) as dangerous and monstrous. These texts intentionally fail to mention that statistics point to trans women as the most vulnerable to violence. According to the LGBTI research of the EU Agency for Fundamental rights, around 20% of transgender people in EU had been victims to physical or sexual violence in the last 5 years, the percent being higher in North Macedonia than other countries, amounting to 39%. Applying such a manipulative strategy, anti-gender movements capitalize on women’s factual vulnerability and the broad presence of various forms of violence against women and girls, as well as gender-based violence. Building on the fact that women are vulnerable to violence and are often victims of violent behaviour, a fact accepted as a broad social consensus, anti-gender movements go a step further. The manipulative strategies help them portray trans women as violators, removing the focus from the complex power positions to a marginalized community, dumping male, institutional, systematic violence against women on its shoulders.

The second subtopic refers to discursive strategies on portraying trans women as usurpers of female spaces, i.e. achievements. The key narratives here focus on depicting trans women as vicious thieves, successfully depriving “real” women of the few privileged places and positions. Anti-gender movements generate and support divisions in the feminist movement by creating a negative image on trans women, portraying them as dangerous enemies of “real” women and children. Consequently, anti-gender movements call to an exclusionary policy where feminism is solely interested in certain subjects successfully defined as “real” women with the use of further discourse strategies, as opposed to those defined as “fake/masked women”. Hence, a significant portion of the texts published by anti-gender movements in North Macedonia are messages aiming to cause anger due to the alleged loss of positions and status enjoyed by women in the “good old days”. Interestingly, precisely such seemingly lost spaces are, on the one hand, spaces in which women have been traditionally neglected or excluded (for instance, sport), while on the other hand, spaces and positions which, although traditionally occupied by women, are often targeted by feminist criticism (for instance, beauty pageants, magazine covers, etc.). As was pointed with the selected texts and images, anti-gender movements are not so much concerned with the real inclusion of women in all aspects of social and political living, as much as they are concerned with the false perception that women are excluded on account of trans women. All positions of the alleged usurpation are clearly marked in their posts. Consequently, the victims of this loss are the “real” women, with the guilty party being “fake” women, trans women, LGBTI activists, Western elites, etc. Anti-gender movements apply the positions of power, depicted in this manner, i.e. as trans women being more privileged by women, to advocate for their own definitions of feminism, according to which mobilization and activism on improving trans rights and status are impossible. In other words, feminism, according to anti-gender movements, belongs solely to biological women, excluding gender as the most important analytical category of feminism, consequently limiting the movement but also making feministic political mobilization resting on socially constructed realities and power relations rather than on biological as impossible.

The third subtopic attempts to disclose the manners in which anti-gender actors create discourses on what “real” women are. The texts analysed are particularly valuable in helping us read the strategies and policies of belonging, created by demarking those who belong from the bodies and subjects who don’t belong, other bodies, dangerous subjects. The goal is to first define real women, then outline real feminism dealing with “real” and not “fake” women. Crucial means to achieve this belonging and unity among women, in order to introduce them to anti-gender initiatives, is capitalizing on the most important date in feminism – March 8th. All anti-gender organizations and groups in North Macedonia celebrate and mark Women’s International Day, demonstrating how their mission is not “anti-women”, but on the contrary, aiming to allegedly protect women. However, anti-gender posts on this occasion refrain from celebrating the historical struggle of women, the success of feminist struggles and current and future equality struggles, rather simply defining real women, spreading false panic on the true enemy of women – transgender people, LGBTIQ activists or civil society sublimated in the image of “Soros mercenaries.” In other words, March 8th becomes abused to define “real” women as mothers, menstruating creatures who give birth, recreating traditional representations of women as wives, mothers and housewives.

In the fourth subtopic we examined thoroughly issues on women and sexual purity by studying topics on sex work/prostitution. Anti-gender movements advocate for quite crude, fixed framework on “real” women, excluding (trans-women, for instance) or “converting” (sex workers, for instance) each woman who does not fit the mould. Female sexuality is a true taboo for anti-gender movements. The only point of interest in female sexuality is reproduction, i.e. the ability to reproduce and create families. Female sexuality does not exist beyond marriage and family. Sex work as a topic is never employed towards “saving” women but rather to denigrate specific civil society organizations and activists, and encourage division between “real” and “fake” feminism (similarly to the previous subtopic and the division between “real” and “fake” women). Consequently, sex workers as biological women are considered as candidates, not for exclusion, but rather conversion. Discursively, they are framed as the “poor girls,” manipulated by specific civil society organizations, depicted as the embodiment of evil, on the other hand. Such pure evil, as anti-gender initiatives warn, does not end there. First of all, men will become women, women turned into immoral and impure subjects, children sexually and gender confused “neither men nor women” – all this spiced with light drugs and atheism. Conspiratory elements are quite common for anti-gender narratives, aiming to mark the enemy – trans activists, LGBTIQ activists, but also all progressive voices in society.

Finally, the fifth subtopic attempts to analyze direct strategies on creating division and discord between the feminist and LGBTIQ movement. Divisions in the feminist movement on the position of transgenerness and understanding gender are nothing new. However, feminists joining anti-gender movements is a novelty, since their ideological positions are contrary to the key values of feminism. Such odd coalitions are nowadays a political reality, not only within feminist debates but also activism, policies and legislation. For instance, denying legal gender recognition, i.e. preventing trans-gender people to change the sex marker in personal identification documents in North Macedonia was the result of joint efforts of women’s organizations and anti-gender movements. The discord inside the feminist movement and between the feminist and LGBTIQ movement, even the discord within the LGBTIQ movement, rooted in the different positions regarding transgender people, was intensified by anti-gender movements. Finally, the only ones to benefit from this division are anti-gender actors, with feminists, LGBTIQ activists and, of course, transgender people as the most marginalized in society, being the losing party.

The next subject of analysis were **anti-gender movements and (un)successful families, relationships and partnerships**. Three subtopics here examine anti-gender tendencies to: relativize the concept of togetherness and commoning, simulating attacks on heteronormative families and calling to civil participation following the exclusion principle.

The first subtopic analyses the types of communities preferred by anti-gender movements towards dominating the concept of common. Anti-gender discourse refers solely to heteronormative success in partnerships, maintained through a specific form of pressure and propaganda, citing politicians, artists, therapists, missionaries and life coaches. Anti-gender movement posts never mention different types of partnerships, automatically removed and declared as “unsuccessful.” Marriage is perceived as a personal life success, preferring its longevity to the partners’ abilities and desires. Those outside this matrix are socially rejected as incapable individuals nurturing thantalogical and necrophiliac tendencies, and interpreting marital union as a life sentence. Consequently, harassment and marital violence are ignored in the long-term, hiding under the veil of marital service. On a linguistic level, the terminology uses a narrow spectre of verbs, proposing spouses are obliged to: forgive, endure, pardon and suffer. Additionally, remaining in the marriage is interpreted as a hidden national debt the individual owns to state and prosperity. Individual happiness found beyond marriage is considered as a direct threat on collective harmony, wellbeing, moral and progress in society.

In the second subtopic we deal with the anti-gender need to simulate attacks on the heteronormative family, in order to preserve it as the “building cell of society.” Anti-gender ideology perceives family as the centre, demonstrating its power in this “moral” system by constantly forging its break-down/fall, which, on the other hand, further enforces its position and power. It is understood as a community of two heterosexual parents producing many children. Contextualized in this manner, families are only those communities based and built on the principle of “linear increase.” They are entrusted with the obligation to create “prosperity” and relay that obligation to future generations. Consequently, all communities failing to satisfy the basic parameters of the “family” are socially unacceptable and undesirable. Additionally, they are portrayed as its chief enemies and a direct threat to the heritage expressed in the quantity of the population, i.e. rules of behaviour expected to be relayed to future generations, which these supposed opponents are not going to support. Those daring to leave the nucleus of the desired family are described as irresponsible and narcissist, searching for quick and short-term pleasures.

In the last subtopic of the Chapter we examine the calls for civil participation anti-gender movements make, always following the principle of exclusion. In order for this position on marriage and family to be unquestionably accepted and fortified, anti-gender content introduces threatening stories from abroad. These involve cases of interrogation, condemnation and criminalization of certain practices, such as hate speech. Hence, domestic legislation registers as backwards and problematic, followed by initiatives demanding the withdrawal of certain documents legally guaranteeing freedom and non-discrimination. Advocating for the rejection of conventions and other documents is always based on proving that their implementation is the direct result of previously tarnished LGBTIQ people or civil society organizations. Consequently, anti-gender ideology profiles these as the greatest enemies of traditional family due to their: 1) different behaviour in society and 2) ability to stop transmitting imposed duties and values by creating horizontal rather than vertical collectives.

In the last research topic, we examined **anti-gender expansion in education**. The permeation of anti-gender discourses in the educational system was analysed through the introduction of the binary children and adults, which further causes a series of layers. In this first division, children are presented as innocent and vulnerable, as opposed to the adults, who are the sole guardians of knowledge. The dominant discourse in this prism is the parent's right to decide what their children have the right to know. The secondary discourse is the child's right to be protected from various marginalized social groups believed to abuse children in order to enforce personal agendas. Consequently, children are described as passive subjects under immediate threat, a threat spreading and posing danger to parents, young people, teaching staff, and the future of the broader community, history, nationality and future of civilization. The range of endangered issues increases, evolving into a "funnel" into which social problems are poured. Several subtopics were introduced in this part: 1) depriving the parental right, followed by demands for increased monitoring of school environments, 2) depriving the child's right to access necessary information, followed by: minimizing the role of formal education and defocusing the public from true problems and 3) anti-gender mobilization towards systematic degradation and discrimination.

In the **first subtopic on depriving the parent's right in anti-gender discourses, we attempted to investigate the function of the parent giving knowledge and controlling the child within the educational system**. In this sense, anti-gender actors mostly differentiate between "primitive" and "modern" parents. This newly proclaimed group of "primitive" and endangered parents see parenthood as something to be *possessed* and "devotedly" *given* to children, to be reciprocated with gratitude and respect from the collective. This role is associated with parents' "duties" in heteronormative traditions on linear continuation of family and prosperity. Consequently, an "exclusive adult arena,"²⁷ is created, where knowledge on sexuality is set aside only for parents, while children are perceived as asexual subjects, with no desires, imagination or phantasies, even actual experiences (Robinson, Kerry H.). They are inserted in the category of the "innocent Others" and fictively protected by "denying them access"²⁸ (*Ibid.*) to a bulk of information necessary before reaching adulthood. In addition, various propaganda calls parents as the "real guardians" of children. In this context, the opportunity to control them is perceived as the uncontested inherited power only parents are allowed to abuse. The position they take is that of independent "overseers" of children who are to be monitored and are expected to continue this "pedagogy of oppression" in future (Freire, Paulo.)²⁹. The danger in such control lies in its expansion into different domains in the children's world, such as school and other environments in which they circulate. In order to achieve this, anti-gender movements act towards creating different, constantly monitored environment, relativizing the role of all other public educational institutions they no longer trust. In fact, all state bodies are portrayed as suspicious agents working against the public interest, conspiring the cover up of information.

The second subtopic in this last chapter examines **children losing their right to access necessary, secure information**, as an element of the secondary, but equally important anti-gender narrative related to advocating for protection of children from certain "minority" groups allegedly enforcing personal

²⁷ Robinson, Kerry H., *In the Name of 'Childhood Innocence'*, Cultural Studies Review, Vol. 14, No. 2, September 2008, p. 116.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 121.

²⁹ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2005, p. 46.

agendas on them, in an attempt to deprive them of their “childish innocence”. The second discourse branches out into two directions, penetrating the educational system by minimizing the role of formal education and generating extra-curricular and informal activities.

First, the best tactic available to anti-gender movements in this context is attacking the optional subject Comprehensive Sexual Education, the introduction of Gender-sensitive Education, changes in teaching contents and digitalization. Such discussions convey parents’ perspectives in terms of their obligation to fight and liberate children from the chains of the educational system. The established binary relationship of a parent-child remains, sustained through the postulate of protecting children from premature sexualisation and sexual predators. Anti-gender actors are self-proclaimed official advocates and representatives of a generalized group of “concerned parents,” identifying their parental role as taking a stand to voice children’s needs. However, these proclamations exceed the domain of virtual lobbying. Anti-gender leaders publish photograph of requests filed to educational institutions on behalf of the supposed invisible “crowd” of parents standing behind them in support. They have the audacity to speak on behalf of the majority, concealing their justifications in vague, uncertain terms, such as “the huge number of requests from parents and teachers”. Portraying state bodies as being inaccessible and uncommunicative with the general public, they claim to be direct, attentive and close to the people. The stream of new knowledge is thus prevented, due to their goal to maintain the status quo in the existing educational system, whether outdated or not. In the words of Paulo Freire, people rarely admit “their fear of freedom openly, however, tending to camouflage it, sometimes unconsciously, by presenting themselves as defenders of freedom.”³⁰ Consequently, anti-gender actors and their followers “confuse freedom with the maintenance of the status quo,”³¹ opposing every novelty, every proposed change in the content or format, all connected in a joint conspiratory scheme aiming to prevent any progress, even technological one. The current education resting on a “banking system” (Freire, Paulo) of a unidirectional transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, due to the lack of any critical thinking, prefers instead a declamation of short-term learned data, creating a passive youth without the ability to question existing hegemonies in their surroundings.

Finally, the third subtopic, examines **anti-gender mobilization directly encouraging systematic degradation and discrimination**. As previously seen, narratives and visual anti-gender tactics trigger fierce pressure and panic among the public and institutions in order to: 1) advocate towards amendments to current legislation, 2) impact a change in government and the positions of certain politicians in it and 3) participate in the creation of various policies. Their activities in North Macedonia helped maintain the status quo in education, exteriorizing danger beyond the family and home, transferring it to the school environment, silencing children, immobilizing institutions and authorities in continuing with the adoption and proposal of planned educational reforms, and reinforcing the marginalized position of the LGBTIQ community. Further stagnation in current education may be caused by amending certain laws and introducing new, harsher restrictions in schools encroaching on children’s privacy could be introduced, the careers of the few teachers enthusiastic in applying critical practices in the inflexible educational system destroyed and the quota of people willing to even work in education be significantly decreased. Finally, anti-gender

³⁰ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2005, p. 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*

movements in this country will most certainly enforce the stigma on LGBTIQ as a “disposable” category of people, particularly LGBTIQ children who would be “transferred into the margins and removed from the eyes of the public” (Giroux, Henry A.)³². Anti-gender control in education is solidifying, which undoubtedly impacts the broader culture and ability for developing a critical thought, but it would also “remove the discourse of democracy in and outside of education.”³³

³² Giroux, Henry A., *On Critical Pedagogy*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, p. 92.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 8.

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