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Filling the Gap? Female Entrepreneurs in Szeklerland, Romania

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Abstract

This paper presents some facts and results of a research made among Hungarian women from a rural region, named Szeklerland (Harghita and Covasna county, Romania), women who are running their own micro, small or medium sized business. The empirical background is provided by interviews and a survey made among more than five hundred female entrepreneurs. According to the collected data there will be presented the socio-demographic profile of this women, and also the type of the business activity – which are mostly related to the traditional female roles' work area. By presenting the main motivating factors behind business starting we will understand better the "entrepreneurial" attitude among this population, where the entrepreneurial identity is encountered as expletive to women, mother, wife, "family responsible" identities.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, female entrepreneur, small business, rural women, female self employment

¿Rellenando el Vacío? Mujeres Empresarias en Szeklerland, Rumanía.

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Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación realizada entre mujeres húngaras de una región rural, Szeklerland (el condado de Harghita y Covasna, Rumania), mujeres que están desarrollando su propio negocio, de pequeño o medio tamaño. Las evidencias empíricas provienen de entrevistas realizadas en una muestra de más de quinientas mujeres emprendedoras. Según los datos recogidos aquí presentamos el perfil socio-demográfico de estas mujeres y también el tipo de negocio - principalmente relacionado con el trabajo tradicional de las mujeres de la zona-. Presentando los factores motivadores principales que se encuentran tras el inicio del negocio, podemos entender mejor la actitud "emprendedora" de esta población, donde la identidad emprendedora se cree impropia de mujeres, madre, esposa, "responsable familiar".

Palabras clave: empresariado, mujer empresaria, pequeño negocio, mujer rural, autoempleo femenino.

In Romania after the change of regime in 1989 the macro social structural fluctuation induced several social variations having the effect of degradation of the state public sector became untenable. The secession from the state sectors, the evolution of private sectors started slowly and manifests itself as a slow process, even nowadays. The economic and labor market changes enabled the development of business sector in Romania as well. The everyday experience shows that it is already a significant number of small and medium-sized firms even in the rural areas, and this is likely to increase. As women around the world are becoming increasingly active participants in the business sector, so in our region (Szeklerland, Romania) is also visible this phenomenon, even if among the entrepreneurs, women are represented on a very low level¹. In this paper we will present a research focused on this rural region's female entrepreneurs. This paper presents the main question and research design of a PhD thesis.

Research-Antecedents, Legitimacy of the Topic

The emergence of entrepreneurs and small businesses around the world play an important role in boosting up the economical situation. International researches show that female entrepreneurs can also play an important role in this area (Maxfield, 2005). For low-income countries with development deficiencies like Romania the existence of entrepreneurs (including women entrepreneurs) can be a pivotal issue (Ashwin, 2000). Both entrepreneur management problems and successes have an impact on a macro-social level (Firestone, 2010). Nevertheless the development of the business sector may be an indicator of a predictable legal structure and a prosperous economy.

The topic of the research and the Ph.D. thesis is the sociological study of female entrepreneurs' motivation for starting up and managing small and medium sized businesses in two Romanian counties. The research was conducted in a significant part of Szeklerland, the two administratively identifiable territories of Harghita and Covasna counties. Our goal was to describe the socio-demographic profile of female entrepreneurs and to analyze the cultural and territorial connections of the experienced entrepreneurial behavior. In addition,

we studied the profile of these businesses, and we endeavored to a description of individual or collective patterns of business-running logic and to capture these in relation with family-lead modalities.

The female characters that appear among entrepreneurs could be responsible for the introducing of an emphatic, complex innovation practice, which might generate significant changes at a societal level. This change suggests the splitting with age-long practices. The cognition of the issue presumes the understanding of a very complex, elusive, multi-factorial process. The problem is organized around two key-concepts: the *inheritance* and the *innovation*. Bequeath and reproduction of the traditional social roles appears next to a form of modernity launched (as well as) by socialism (Bodó, 1998). We are speaking about a traditional society where the social definition of gender roles follows a longstanding system of norms valid for centuries. However, all this had been radically modified by the forced urbanization and modernity brought by the socialism. These norms, regarding to gender roles were not eliminated, but were expanded (Magyari-Vincze, 2004; Geambasu, 2004).

The women's business practice – in post-socialist transition countries – should be interpreted in a different social context than in case of men (Welter-Kolb, 2006, p. 8). The Soviet socio-ethical norms introduced and left a paradox situation for women: besides the uptake and the expression of gender equality (women's education, work), it also left the former model like "housewife" role and motherhood as a part of the female role in society (Ashwin, 2000). Thus, since the second trimester of the twentieth century, the women had to engage to endure double or multiple burdens (Ashwin, 2000; Welter-Kolb, 2006; Magyari-Vincze, 2004). The four decades of the socialist era has provided for women living in Romania the opportunity, the desire and the aspiration for self-realization, in turn, it did not transfer the route map to achieve all these. After the beginning of the post-socialist era, the gates of consumer society elements, material and post material values were opened. Direct and indirect methods opened the possibility to explore Western model – the most frequent practice was the work-migration (Bodó, 2008). Hereby, people (in our case: the women) from this region had to confront again with a new challenge. Although the participation in this

immigration process was less characteristic to female gender roles (Kiss-Csata, 2004, p. 112), as in the long-term and seasonal work-migration were involved mainly young, married men (Bodó 1996, p. 74). This also means that sometimes women had to carry alone the burden of the whole family and also means that compared to men, women accumulated a significant disadvantage in terms of human capital and labor market perspectives (eg. experience).

The social relevance and importance of the issue is also due to the fact that women had the opportunity to actually shape their own careers only after 1990, in the "new world". Even though the women's roles and responsibilities have become increasingly complex, the inhabitants of this region had the opportunity to experience these changes for the first time in their history. It was the first time when a woman could operate independently, respect to the economical, financial terms of organization and task divisions.

After 1989, the country (Romania) suffers from multiple disadvantages. For an area without industry, without a major driving force, this pertains even more. The women have to pass through an unfavorable labor market situation: they have only few and low paid employment opportunities. Women could not have „high level” networks from Soviet times and as some researches demonstrate, women entrepreneurs lack the level of social capital and contact like men had or could have. This was and (still is) disadvantaging them in the early stages of transition in getting started (Welter-Kolb, 2006, p.8). Research also shows that the entrepreneurial success depended in many post-socialist regions (Welter-Kolb, 2006) and in Szeklerland as well (Kiss, 2004) on the convertibility of this social capital. And this puts the question of woman entrepreneurs in a highly interesting light: from this kind of social situation, how does someone become a risk taking innovator? Who becomes such person? Why exactly do they become entrepreneurs? How, in what way is it possible the harmonization of these wide range – external and internal – expectations?

The social relevance of the question is also important, because on one hand the understanding of business practice could bring significant social benefits from a regional developmental point of view. The successful practices and solutions might generate further positive

processes. And this kind of sociological approach – highlighting these questions in the media, conducting research programmes and projects regarding to this issues, presenting positive, successful stories in books, magazines, journals – could have a role in the shaping and strengthening of female entrepreneur identity. Nevertheless, the importance of professional analytical work consist not only in coloring a "white patch" but it also brings a specific example of a „catching-up” exercise in wider post-socialist regional and European context.

The Importance of Female Entrepreneurship Research

A sociological investigation focusing on the female entrepreneurial is justified, since there are no researches dealing with women's entrepreneurial culture, this field seems to be untouched in the region and in the country as well. Why is a research like this important in a small-town and rural area? First because the everyday experience shows that even today a substantial number of female owned small and medium sized firms appear. This number is expected to grow rapidly and as a result a female role-growth can be expected (Epstein, 1993). On the other hand, however - according to cultural anthropology researches - this area still operates with a lot of traditional cultural models, which still have very strong impact on the social gender roles, on social identity and self-determination (Magyari-Vincze, 2004). The division of male and female social roles, the beliefs about women's place and role still follow – in many aspects – the traditions of previous decades (Magyari-Vincze, 2004), the raising of children and household activities remained – almost exclusively – in the female role-package (Welter – Kolb, 2006), as the traditional "order" is followed as well.

In this context is worthwhile examining how women succeed in establishing and running efficiently substantially different roles from the traditional patterns and beliefs. The female role-construction appears as a kind of challenge: for women entrepreneurs but for their social environment as well.

Theoretical Framework

The entrepreneur is a key actor of the market economy (Lampl, 2008,

p. 235). A strong entrepreneurial class is an essential element not only for an economic development, but an independent business sector is also necessary for the edification of democracy (Lampl, 2008). In fact the entrepreneurial culture and its level of development is the key-factor of economy. It is crucial how one country, region, area can motivate the entrepreneurs to develop their firms and people to start a business (Startiene-Remeikiene, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that the entrepreneurship appears in the focus of the social research, it is understandable that in recent decades the sociology is increasingly turning to the entrepreneurs, to the entrepreneurial practices (Thornton, 1999).

Over the past few decades women around the world become increasingly active participants of the business sector (Boon, 2005, p. 161). The authors acknowledge this with normality, because – according to them – a private firm is the only option for avoiding gender gap (Firestone, 2010), serious personal and professional fulfillment can be achieved, career-building obstacles, like direct or indirect discrimination or the glass ceiling phenomenon can be eliminated (Arenius-Kovalainen, 2006, p. 31). In addition, of course, the entrepreneurship is also a way of attaining financial income, personal autonomy (Arenius-Kovalainen, 2006, p. 32), but having an own business – as many empirical studies claim – creates the opportunity for the harmonization of business and family activities and duties in such way the employee's status does not permit (Arenius-Kovalainen, 2006, p. 32). Not surprisingly, therefore, that in the last 20-30 years the proportion of women who became entrepreneurs increased worldwide. According to some authors, even so the number of women entering a business is still far short compared to the number of male entrepreneurs (Arenius-Kovalainen, 2006).

Empirical history

The Romanian entrepreneurial literature in social research is colorful, but it is highly heterogeneous regarding to approach, topic and methodology (Sandu, 1999a; Csata, 2006). Surveys tangentially deal the question of entrepreneurship, but in the majority of cases only tinge the

subject. The topic-related researches are offering a lot of useful information, especially those that are studying and presenting the business practices in one locality or region (Sandu, 1999b; Lăzăroi, 1999). The studies and researches regarding to Hungarian people from Romania, especially Szeklerland can be directly or indirectly associated with the business practices. A significant part of the analysis and the database concerns the situation of family households (Mozaik, 2001; Household survey, 2004; etc.) focusing especially on what kind of role have the private firms in the family workforce-use and on the income structure (Biró, 2007).

The transition period, experienced by the post-communist countries, induced a number of socio-economic changes. After 1989 Romania also passed through a very significant institutional transformation, one of the most important is the private, non-state sector-led economic build-up, operation and development. In the establishment of the private sector the emergence of companies and firms had a leading role and in the development of the economy besides large companies the small and medium sized firms have an increasingly larger role as well. The increasing number of private firms in the post-soviet countries – where the private sector did not exist for decades – has become one of the main topics of the socio-economic analysis regarding Central and Eastern Europe. However, in contrast with the economical analysis – approach, for which this process is exciting in terms of profit and loss – the focus of a sociological research is rather the social conditions of establishing and managing a small and medium-sized firm (Scase, 2003; Aidisa et. al., 2007; Csata, 2006).

We also might presume that the entrepreneurial spirit should be pursuit primarily not in individual aptitudes, but in socio-environmental conditions (Sandu, 1999b). In an emerging market economy the entrepreneurial behavior means – according to Sandu – a social innovation and social role-learning process, the learning procedure of a whole new way of thinking compared to the earlier models of socialization practices in "a negative social-economic-political environment" (Sandu 1999b, p. 117). This is a big challenge for entrepreneurs in the rural sector.

Methods

Research Questions

The research investigates the following questions:

1. Along what characteristics can be described the typical woman, who is starting a business?

2. How is and can be compatible an entrepreneurial life with the "traditional" female roles?

3. For what kind of purpose the women in this region are becoming entrepreneurs?

Which primary motivations could be attributed to one female entrepreneurship start? Which could be the secondary motivations for women to start a business? Does the lack of job-opportunity leading women to become force-entrepreneurs or more positive incentives affect this decision?

4. What kind of narratives are behind their professional and personal lives? How appears the business and what kind of meaning have in their narratives? How is in their professional and personal story interpreted the existence of entrepreneurship? How, in what way do they integrate the entrepreneurial role in their personal life stories? How do they define the relationship between business and family?

Hypotheses

H1. Social-demographic factors

We can presume that among women entrepreneurs women with middle and higher education are overrepresented. In the same time entrepreneur women are mostly married and have family.

H2. Cultural factors

Among the population in this region traditional gender role is still dominant, so we assume that this is characteristic for the firms-owner women, too.

In the same time we can presume a decisive role to the labor market socialization: the women having age over 45 years (who could or were already working in the socialism) they are mostly organizational entrepreneurs, the younger (post-generation members of the regime), more dynamic entrepreneurs.

H3. Entrepreneurial profile

About the women population of firm-owners can be mentioned that the entrepreneurial culture is on a very low level. Mainly small and medium-sized firms can be found, and the women entrepreneurs are likely concentrated in some very peculiar domains, mainly in those fields, which are mostly dominated by other women (service sector, mainly pensions, shops, second-hand shops etc.).

Also it can be presumed that women mostly are starting a business in a so-called „traditional female” field: cooking (a catering firm), housekeeping (a cleaning service firm), child-caring (owning a private nursery-school).

According to Sandu (1999a), we presume that even among women entrepreneurs (as among male entrepreneurs in Romania after 1989) we can find mainly old-new entrepreneurs, as well as trader-types².

H4.Motivation

We can presume that the push factors (Boon, 2005; Orhan, 2005) could have a more important motivation role in the entrepreneurial decision-making. Mainly external stimulus (pressure) resulted in the decision to be taken. Those in who's cases the pull factors were important, for them the higher income and flexible hours would have had the most important motivating effect.

Methodology

Basically, two methods were used, this resulting that the research methodology is based on two pillars: a survey was conducted and interviews were taken as well. So during the data collecting process the quantitative and qualitative methods were used at the same time.

In this research we operated with a special entrepreneur concept: it was considered to be an entrepreneur the person who owns and runs an officially registered company. The researchers deliberately ignored those women who are family doctors or dentists, veterinarians, since in this kind of professional areas is required to have a private practice, so there is no entrepreneurial activity behind the decision.

The survey research was launched in 24 March 2010. We have created a database from electronically accessible data regarding

companies registered in Harghita and Covasna counties. There were Thus the base of the sampling was constituted by this name list including 8504 people (female). Starting from these lists we made a random sampling, taking into consideration the size of the town or area in order to narrow to 20-30-40 the list of people selected for direct interviews. This is how the final sampling was established: 240 questionnaires in Covasna County and 360 questionnaires in Harghita.

The qualitative research began in late 2008 and ended in May 2010. During this time 31 in-depth interviews were conducted with women who have an individual business or operate a business as a partner and this is mostly practiced as full time “job”. The starting point in selecting these persons for interviews was the local network of friends and then by the snowball method more persons were included in the research. At the selection of the interviewed we paid attention to selecting people from both counties, living in urban and rural areas as well and we have also tried to keep the equity regarding the age of the interviewed.

Research findings

During the research conducted among women entrepreneurs in Szeklerland has been accumulated – within a couple of years – considerable amount of empirical material, from which only a part has been processed in this study. The further analysis of the research results will occur in the future. The present work is based on interviews and a questionnaire survey covering around five hundred of respondents in order to present the population of entrepreneur women in the two counties of Szeklerland. Our goal was to analyze with sociological research methods the motivation of the women in starting and managing a small and medium-size firm. We wanted to draw a picture about the socio-demographic profile of these female persons, and nevertheless to analyze the cultural and territorial connections of the experienced entrepreneurial behavior. In addition, we studied the profiles of these businesses and we endeavored to a description of individual or collective patterns of business-running logic and to capture these in relation with family-lead modalities. After the data analysis we can conclude that the major part of the formulated hypothesis has been confirmed. We present the results as follows.

Socio-demographic profile of the women

We could say that the typical female entrepreneur is middle-aged, has secondary education, is married and she is mother of two children (Walker-Webster, 2006). The women entrepreneurs have slightly higher levels of education than the women from Szeklerland in average, are more willing to study, to participate in vocational-training, they have better communicative competence in Romanian language, and many of them speaks English as well.

The research survey, but perhaps even more prominently the analysis of the interviews demonstrated that the level of social commitment to the traditional female roles is very high, which determines the attitude toward business as well. For the majority of woman the entrepreneurial activity must be absolutely compatible with family life and mostly everything is in the second place: individual self-fulfillment, professional success and career development.

The age is clearly an important determinant for the character of entrepreneurship, for the entrepreneurial attitude, for the entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurial type. Nevertheless, our hypothesis that the labor market socialization is extremely dominant was only partly verified and proved to be correct mainly regarding to age. Older and younger women entrepreneurs manifest different style, attitude in a series of behavior-related issues. However, this can be attributed to individual life situations (family, children, age), to labor market experience, and no squarely to the socialist working culture before 1989. But it is a fact that older women are less risk-taking entrepreneurs, rather organizational ones. Younger women are those who are willing to take on considerable financial risks, they are more flexible, more courageous, are opened to other kinds of "territories" in terms of entrepreneurship, they are much more dynamic.

Old and young female entrepreneurs – Some differences and similarities.

The theoretical approaches to literature and interviews with women entrepreneurs in Szeklerland empirical experience shows that in case of

women entrepreneurs education, residence, family background are factors which are undeniably important determinants of the entrepreneurial decision. However, seems that the most significant variable are the age and the previous labor market socialization. These two variables appeared to be the most significant in order to determinate a range of entrepreneur-related “coefficient”, such as: the type of the business, the chosen career path and nevertheless the female entrepreneurial attitude (Gergely, 2010).

The research subjects can be aligned into two groups: those women who had been present on the labor-market even before 1989, and those (mostly younger) women, who entered the labor market only in after 1989. There can be identified six aspects along which can be compared this two groups of somehow innovative female persons, who are running a business. These aspects are: (1) the socio-demographic profile of the entrepreneur, (2) the (hi)story, the circumstances of starting a business, and the personal motivations, (3) the earlier labor-market experiences, (4) the opinion regarding the question of family and work-harmonization-problem, (5) the willing and attitude of risk-taking, and (6) what kind of entrepreneur can be identified, according to the theory of the carrier-paths (Moore, 2005). This comparison points out the influence of the work culture before 1989 to the entrepreneurial behavior (see Table 1.).

Seems that the earlier labor market experience and age have probably the most important impacts on the business dimension. The younger women are a bit more dynamic, more courageous, they also dare to start business in an area in which may not have professional experience. However, an undeniable fact that for all of them it is very important to work something different from housework. Even because for the family income supplement, but the female individualization is important as well. At the other hand, the traditional family values are important as well: in their narrative the family always comes first. For them, success is also a smaller scale read: they think they are successful when their business are not loss-making. Most of these women do not formulate the goal of economic gain, but rather it is considered a success if the role of mother and wife can also be completed (Gergely, 2010, pp. 149-150.).

Table 1.

Older and younger female entrepreneurs

	Middle age women entrepreneurs	Young women entrepreneurs
1. socio-demografic profile of the entrepreneur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - age above 50 years -usually have secondary educational level -are married - have children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - age under 35 years - commonly have secondary and high educational level -usually are married or have a partner - about a half of them have children
2. The circumstances of of business-startings motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -family-income supplement -making earlier job/work official - taking a chance in a confused economical situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -becoming independent -creating the desired job/workplace
3. Earlier labor-market experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -determinative: usually they are sharing a business in a same domain. - they usually can use succesfully their professional knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - less determinative: they usually start a business in another field, domain - they seem to make a good use if their competences better

	Middle age women entrepreneurs	Young women entrepreneurs
3. Earlier labour-market experiences	- the income have an important prestige, the family is considering this.	-huge energy-input before child-undertake, the partner understands this
4. Family vs work	-they believe it can be harmonized, specially if the children are (almost) grown up	-in their opinion harmonized is complicated, something must be given up, or will be pushed in background and -in their opinion- the entrepreneur-role will be this one, to the advantage of the motherhood
5. Risk-taking	-variable, mainly moderate - the stability is the most important	-articular, notable - the aspiration of independence is most important than the profit
6. Entrepreneur-type	-corporatepreneur, intrapreneur, challenger	-brounderipreneurs: professionals, market kreator, neche seekers
	- brounderypreneurs as well	-corporatepreneurs as well

Entrepreneurial culture

The data also continuously confirmed our assumption, that we will find an emerging, but atomized entrepreneurial strata, which will be characterized by a low level of entrepreneurial culture. We have seen that the entrepreneurial identity is encountered as expletive to women, mother, wife, "family responsible" identities. The entrepreneurial ideals are less incorporated. The culturally embedded, the mild community prejudice and "collective suspicion" against entrepreneurs generate a constant sub-dimensioning of entrepreneurial activity and evokes continuous self-explanation attitude among women. At the same time almost exclusively small individual stories, ideas, plans dominate the women's ideas about entrepreneurship. Women, or women's entrepreneurial associations are less or do not exist at all. Or if there are, they exist mostly formally. The associational work, the common fundraising, the collective interests are just experimental and isolated experiences.

What about gender roles?

Mostly these women run small businesses and these enterprises are related to the traditionally female roles' work area. The most frequent are groceries and mixed shops, firms in beauty industry (hairdresser, manicure, pedicure), flower or gift shops, firms specialized in nutrition (bakery and pastry shop, restaurant, cafe, catering company operating), in textile industry and clothing (new and used clothing and footwear store operation, dressmaking), services (bride clothing rent, cake preparation, gymnastics). The number of financial services (accounting, financial advisory services) and other kind of business services (translation, tender advice) are few and vanishing. It is also clear that there can be find mainly merchant-type businesses (Sandu 1999b). However is common the service activity within firms, but those who have a productive activity are very low in number.

Motivations

Indeed we found a group of women entrepreneurs who can be described as model follower. The most common situation is that the husband is entrepreneur, the second most common that the father, rarely the

brothers or a female member of the family is an entrepreneur (eg. aunt), but this only in very few cases. In these cases is more identifiable a courageous and a more significant risk-taking attitude and the entrepreneurial identity is more solid. These women are the ones who consider themselves and their businesses prosperous and have stronger, bolder plans.

For the influence of the pushing factors (Boon 2005) as dominant factor in the entrepreneurial decision sufficient evidence could not be found, it seems that exists a group that we could consider forced entrepreneurs, but not so large in number as we previously assumed. The pushing factors are much less dominant factors – in the light of the research results.

Mostly instrumental-entrepreneurs (Lampel 2008) can be found in our population, the ones who mainly choose to start a business as an instrument for achieving a better living, a more relaxed family life and a comfortable everyday life. Only a small number of women can be called intentional-entrepreneurs: they are the ones with the old dream, and the desire of creating an individually imagined job, a special working environment. Independence occurs as a very important motivating effect: in those cases, for the non-forced entrepreneurs the most important motivating effect was independence, income and flexible working hours.

Female entrepreneurial types

We draw four group of ideal types of female entrepreneur along four criteria: (1) according to the type of work/task, we established *trader*, *supplier* and *producer* entrepreneur types; (2) according to the bound between the business and personal life we can talk about *quasi-random*, *instrumental* and *intentional entrepreneur* women; (3) from the perspective of the entrepreneur ideals we can say that within the studied population can be found a technocrat entrepreneur, but also *profit-seeking* entrepreneurs and *carrier-building entrepreneurs*; (4) regarding motivation we believe that there can be identified four types: *model-follower*, *job-creators*, *ambitious* and *check desirers* (Gergely 2010: 148-149).

Table 2.
Female entrepreneurs - Typology

I. Type of work/task	Business and personal life II.
trader	quasi-random
supplier	instrumental
producer	intentional
III. Entrepreneurial ideas	Motivation IV.
technocrat	Model-follower
profit-seeker	job-creator
carrier-buldier	ambitious
hobby-runner	check-desiderer

Conlusions

Along the research results we can clearly make a series of statements regarding the female entrepreneurs from Szeklerland. First of all we can say that there are only a small number of groups who are having and leading a firm as a full time job. This is especially characteristic to the region due to a lower level of entrepreneurial culture and due to the deeply embedded traditional role patterns. The lack of mutual trust can also be the cause for the fact that entrepreneur spirit is still low. However, advocacy, professional associations, lack of consent contributes to the fact that very few dare to run a business.

Second we have also seen that thanks to the economic transition, the changed labor market offers a very limited number of work opportunities, especially for women. In order to compensate this, women launch small and medium sized businesses. To remediate the labor market deficiencies or to avoid the inadequate job-offers they have decided along the entrepreneurial status. Or maybe only in this way can they harmonize the work with the family and childcare. That is why micro and small enterprises are mostly owned by women (Epstein 1993), with small capital, few number of employees and the firms usually remain at this level. Only a small number of entrepreneurship can step out from this starting position. But the youngest are interpreted as important economic agents, because are generators of workplaces even if only for themselves.

Third we can convince ourselves about the human resource provisions of the area, seeing that the female entrepreneurs have higher education, are more opened and flexible, more receptive to learning and to adult training, dispose of more urban habits and lifestyle and at more points can be considered innovators (Sandu 1999b): they launch a business in an area where major distrust can be felt over against entrepreneurs and where the traditional female roles are not associated with the perceived independence and material success.

Nevertheless it should be noted that this firms have their activity in a rural region, not in a consumption-oriented one. The women open a shop, provide in beauty industry etc, carry out such activities that mainly can be called market generator and customer behavior-shaping, rather than focusing on demand services. However, there are some persons who started very new things in the region. So - if not in the classic, Schumpeterian sense (Oláh 2006) - these women can be viewed and called innovators (Sandu 1999b). Women often can be successful only in certain sectors, supposing that in these sectors the male entrepreneurs are less interested (eg. beauty, clothing). Only few of them have the courage to start a business in some other areas.

It should be also mentioned that women initiated and developed their business mostly in those areas where the family and household tasks are more compatible (eg. close to home, or the "work place" is at home: hostel, home bakery, close shops etc, or is more kind of "women work": catering, cake-service, aerobic training, private nursery schools etc.). However, the age did not prove to be a dividing line in the area of self-realization. It is important to all of them to "work", to work for a certain degree of self-fulfillment and of course - at some level and form - success as well. And they do all this by not neglecting the household tasks and family roles. This is true to all age categories and for all kind of entrepreneurships. So it is important, undeniable their supply to the family income, but the importance of the personal (female) individualization can be state as well. In this manner, their success floats at a more modest scale: if the firm is not in loss, they estimate it as a success, they never boast and they rarely engage to objective assessment of the financial situation of the firm. The desire to obtain profit almost never appears in the narratives. For them, the "real" success means the harmonization of the role of wife, mother with the role of the women

entrepreneur.

The social innovative role of this group of female entrepreneur's occurs as a challenge not only in the terms of economic activity (such as profit-raise or regional, territorial development promoting). In addition, these women entrepreneurs could be leaders in the restructure process of the female social roles' system. Both tasks are cumbersome tasks, the second one even more since the elements of role structure heritage have the same impact as the newly-ins. So the fact is that this group may be a multi-innovative one at community level. They seemed to be reckless because the financial risk-taking is not part of the traditional mentality. At the same time courageous, because they start an activity with self-confidence, an activity for which they got no model. In addition, they have to be innovative, because they invent for themselves a brand new or a not so typical activity. And they manage to create a market for their products, their services. They are also crisis-managers, because they find the way to resolve difficult situations and to supplement the family income. And of course, they do all this without neglecting the family and the children, remaining loyal to the traditional roles. Last but not least, this women managed to develop an effective method to avoid the unemployment, seeking to redress the deficit of the labor market.

Why could we say women are filling a gap by running a firm? Is there a gap? Yes, we can say in the region (but in the all country as well) the female population is in a less favorable labor-market situation as men are, for example by discrimination is job hiring, And yes again: gap in gender roles, with a strong traditional mentality which puts women in very hard situation, in a constant strong family-work duality. Also thanks to the traditional character of gender roles a lot of women have no self confidence and low self-esteem. An important disadvantage can be attributed to the unfavorable social policy as well. In this kind of social and mental environment an entrepreneurship for a women – small and medium sized business running even from low financial base – means a job, even in rural areas. Nevertheless: running a small business means a possible way to combine the traditional and “modern” gender roles and expectations. And we have to mention another important factor: this female entrepreneurs – in order to be succesfull in their “small world” – are also forced to find, to create or to answer to special local needs and lacks. This means that this women (might) have an

important role in local development and business sustainability.

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