

Summary

KOBOVÁ, Ľubica – MAĎAROVÁ, Zuzana. 2007. *Kradmá ruka feministky rozvažuje za plentou : aspekty parlamentných volieb.* [A feminist invisible hand reasons behind the voting screen : aspects of parliamentary elections.] Bratislava : ASPEKT. 120 p. ISBN 978-80-85549-67-6.

The publication results from the project “Slovak parliamentary elections 2006 – gender views“ carried out by the Feminist publishing and educational project ASPEKT and financially supported by the Slovak–Czech Women’s Fund. The aim of the project was to point to the ways, in which women in politics are symbolically used and misused, furthermore to explore the processes, by which women’s position in political parties, the political system and journalist practices are undermined.

In the first part, *How (not) to get women into the parliament*, candidate lists of all parties are examined. Several parties’ candidate lists are subject to closer scrutiny, which makes use of Pippa Norriss’ theoretical framework analyzing institutionalization and formalization of the candidates selection process. Briefly also the role of women’s party organizations is discussed.

The second chapter *How to rule the state and its women and men* offers an analysis of all 21 party programmes that were introduced prior to the parliamentary elections in June 2006. Despite their focus on the „typical citizen–voter“, election party programmes are important political documents fostering particular ideas on the gender fabric of society, which openly or mediately stems from parties’ ideologies.

The third part “*Soft femininity*” consists of content analysis of printed media in the period from March to August 2006. It is complemented by a commented overview of the most often used gender stereotypes in the media. Several comparative examples of stereotyping are given in radio broadcasting and newspapers. At the end, tips on how to change routines in journalism to more gender sensitive ones are offered.

The additional materials in the publication include a rich bibliography that might serve as one of the primary information

sources for the public interested in the issue, as well as annexes with the list of all elected women MP's in the Slovak parliament and the list of all political parties and women's positions on their candidate lists.

One of the main project findings is that enabling roles that diverse factors play in making women candidates into MP's have to be understood in their interconnections. A positive result is not guaranteed even when several conditions (e.g. closed candidate party list, formalized process of candidate selection, proportional election system) that are deemed enabling are fulfilled. According to the electoral law in Slovakia, candidate lists are open – though they may be seen as unfavourable to women, e.g. in the case of former women MP's from Christian Democratic Movement, preferential voting helped them to overcome internal party structural barriers.

For quite some time a discussion on necessary change of the electoral system were taking place in the public in Slovakia. However, according to theoretical accounts the electoral system in effect in Slovakia is one of the most favourable towards women – proportional, with Slovakia as the only voting district. One can agree with the findings of many researchers and surveys of Interparliamentary union that there are no legal obstacles to women's participation in politics. Still, how can we account of the fact that women made 22,6 % of all candidates, and only 16 % of all MP's elected in Slovak parliamentary election in June 2006? In our opinion, low women's representation on the level of the national parliament is to a great extent due to rather low support of gender equality among the broad public and political representatives that do not willingly identify with striving for gender equality.

It is important to note that women candidates and women's issues were put into the forefront in several parties' election campaigns. We argue they were used as an indicator of moral cleanliness after parties' corruption scandals, furthermore they were included as an issue in postmaterialist politics of a centrist party. Several small and emerging parties engaged in the process of "party contagion", in which parties rhetorically adopted equal opportunities or gender equality discourse in order to make themselves visible.