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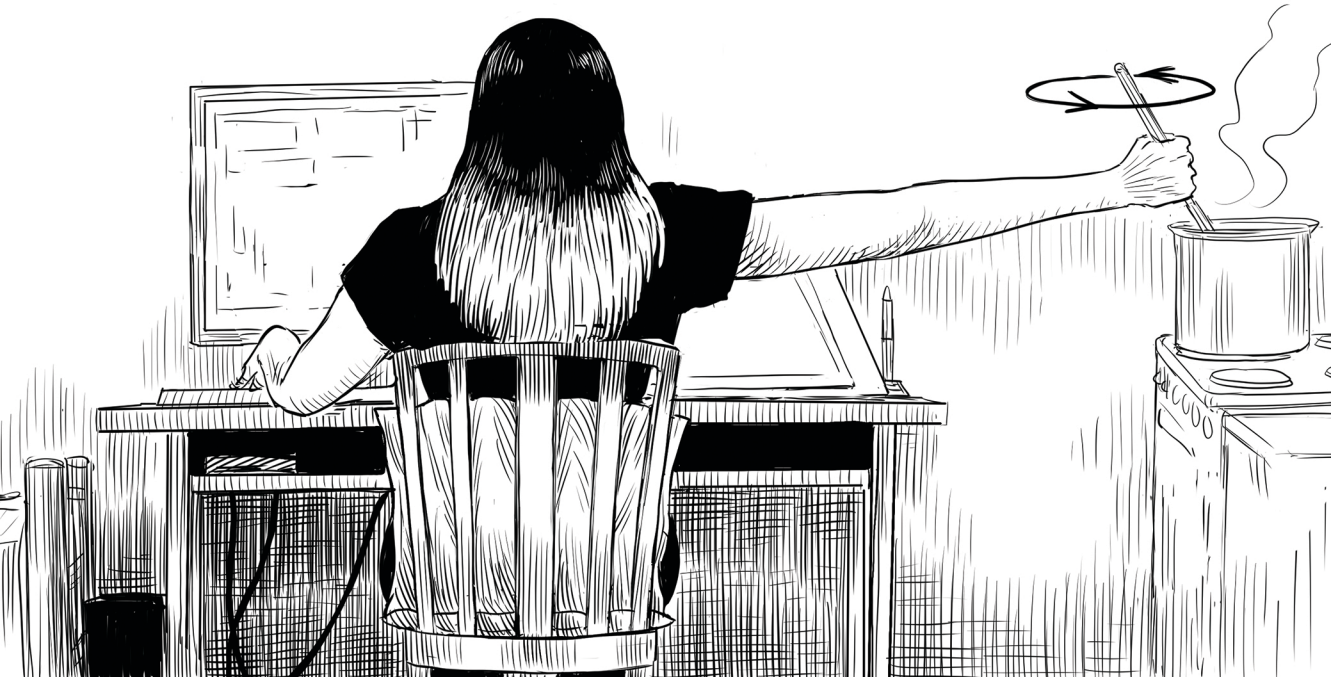
GENDER AND LABOR IN THE CULTURAL FIELD IN SERBIA

Predrag Cvetičanin · Tatjana Nikolić · Nađa Bobičić



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In accordance with decision no. 1041/11 taken by the Academic Council of the Faculty of Arts, University of Niš on May 17, 2023, the book "Gender and Labor in the Cultural Field in Serbia" authored by Predrag Cvetičanin, Tatjana Nikolić and Nađa Bobičić is hereby approved for publishing.

This is a translation into English language of the book "Rod i rad u kulturnom polju u Srbiji".

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Introduction

The final years of the second decade of the 21st century saw a process gather ever more speed in the cultural scene of Serbia, as well as in the scenes of the entire post-Yugoslav region, one of shaking up old practices and relationship modes – relationships that were fundamentally based on a gender unequal position of women cultural workers. A multitude of formal and informal associations, ad hoc campaigns and reactions, as well as increased research interest in gender analysis of the cultural field, emerged from different cultural domains. These diverse and numerous initiatives have now thrown into stark relief the questions feminists have been trying to ask for decades, yet which have long been disregarded, actively stifled and silenced.

Why do women cultural workers have less power and less visibility, and why are they valued less although they are professionally at the same level as their male colleagues, while at the same time being doubly burdened with caregiving activities in the private sphere, as well as by a multitude of "backstage" work in art organization and production? What is the reason behind the historically immeasurable significance of women's work in the arts being actively erased and disregarded on all levels of arts and general education? Why do women cultural workers have lower wages and pensions? And why are they disproportionately likely to be subjected to gender-based violence? The questions kept piling up, whether posed by women actors raising their voice against violence, or by women authors and critics demanding that their work be valued and rewarded equally to that of their peers, women musicians encouraging young girls to make their stage debut with confidence, or women scholars unearthing a wealth of artistic production created in the past by women and women's collectives.

The dynamic period during which women cultural workers became increasingly vociferous and united in their goal of rebelling against gender inequality was precisely the context in which the project "Gender equality for cultural diversity" was initiated and later realized, with the support of UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity. The project was coordinated by the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia (Belgrade), in partnership with FEMIX Young Women's Collective from Belgrade, Rebel Readers from Belgrade, the NGO MillenniuM from Kragujevac, Kulturanova from Novi Sad, Elektrika from Pančevo, the Studio 6 Collective from Belgrade, and Center for the Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe from Niš.

In the 2020 call of UNESCO's International Fund for Cultural Diversity, out of 1,027 projects worldwide, this project was selected among the top six and as the only one from Serbia. This international support and recognition was the best confirmation of our starting premise regarding the importance of introducing a gender perspective into cultural policy analysis and creation, not only in our local context but also internationally. The overall goal of this project was the creation of preconditions for a more equal perspective that would offer women, as culture creators, equal opportunities with regard to creativity, pay and career in the cultural field in Serbia.

Its specific objectives include:

(1) identifying the mechanisms which generate gender inequalities in the cultural life of Serbia, as well as identifying the institutions, organizations, groups and individuals that ought to ensure greater participation by women and their improved position;

(2) the development of professional skills, knowledge, self-awareness and visibility of women working in the cultural and creative sectors in Serbia, through a tailored educational program and mobility program;

(3) creating a network of women's organizations and female independent artists, managers, curators and entrepreneurs working in the cultural and creative sectors in Serbia, which would serve as a platform for mutual collaboration and support, exchange of resources, mobility and knowledge exchange. This network is to be an active participant in initiating changes in cultural policy in Serbia and the region of Southeast Europe, with a view to improving gender equality in cultural life and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions.

In order to gain accurate insight into the current state of affairs and the needs of female cultural workers, the study was conducted in three phases. First, a survey study of 206 respondents was carried out. Although this was a conventional sample, there was a sufficient degree of variability according to criteria of geographic distribution, age, type of institution/organization/company they worked in, as well as type of employment contract. The results of survey data analyses were "brought to life," so to speak, using the respondents' individual experiences, through 32 semi-structured interviews during the second phase of the study. Finally, in the last phase, a focus group was conducted with women experts, whose knowledge helped formulate recommendations for improving gender equality in the field of culture. This volume, intended to be promoted throughout Serbia, as well as being translated into English, summarizes the results of the study.

The study findings served as a point of departure for designing a capacity-building program aimed at enhancing knowledge and skills in the community. Within this program, four seminars were held, for developing skills in financial management and fundraising, public relations, association and personal organization, time management and self-care. Next, we ran two workshops that opened up a space for the exchange of experiences of female cultural workers from different artistic fields. Additionally, free consultation sessions were offered to women working in culture and creative industries, specifically in public relations and financial management in the cultural sector; expert consultant teams were formed, available to the cultural workers for the duration of the project, either via email or via virtual "open doors." Special emphasis was placed on capacity-building for the next generation, such as by organizing the Rock Camp for Girls, contemporary critical readings training and a street-art workshop for girls and young women. One of the key activities was the mobility program, which gave twelve artists the opportunity to learn and exchange knowledge directly with their peers in the south-east European region. All of these activities were regularly presented in the media, and a monthly newsletter was also launched as part of the project.

The third and final segment of the project was the founding of a national network on gender equality at the founding conference in Novi Sad in May 2023. The character of this segment is twofold. While it rounds off all the already completed activities, it is only the final part of the initial phase in the formation of a broad network, the first of its kind on a national level in Serbia, including women from diverse areas of art and culture. The founding period will be followed by the implementation of two campaigns for raising awareness and visibility of gender discrimination in cultural life and for raising awareness among professionals and decision-makers regarding accountability and the possibilities for improving current working conditions and gender equality in the field of culture. In addition, five workshops will be held on the topic of the fight against gender discrimination, in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Pančevo, Niš and Kragujevac.

Nevertheless, the necessity that engendered the formation of this network doesn't solely concern the partial interests of those who are gender underprivileged (although they comprise over half of the population of Serbia). The changes brought about by gender mainstreaming of cultural policies have a knock-on effect on the entire structure, helping to shift it toward a more equitable distribution of resources, protecting and promoting the value of labor and working conditions, greater transparency in decision-making, a reduction in party political influence, and the implementation of principles of decentralization, be it regarding region, gender, age or power. Anticipating the needs of cultural workers with very diverse identities and working with them, getting involved in

the process of advocating for the diversity of actors in the scene, implementing the three program segments and activities in multiple formats – all this was done with the aim of laying the groundwork for networking, with a view to improving the cultural scene in terms of gender equality, and consequently improving culture in general as well.

In what follows, the reader will first be introduced to two contexts of crucial importance for understanding the results of our study: the historical context of gender analyses in the domain of art and culture in Serbia and the post-Yugoslav region, as well as the social context in which female workers and entrepreneurs currently operate in the field of cultural production in Serbia.

The introductory section provides an overview of the methodology used in the study, whose research design was multi-method and mixed method, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. We identify the characteristics of the sample in the survey study as well as of the sample comprising our interlocutors in the semi-structured interview and focus-group interview, and present the questions asked in the survey questionnaire, interview guide and focus group.

Since one of the primary tasks of our research was to identify the different mechanisms that generate gender inequalities in cultural life in Serbia, at the outset of presenting the results we provide an overview of the ranking of general and gender-specific problems that hinder and jeopardize work in the cultural field in Serbia, as seen by our interlocutors.

The central portion of the study analyzes the mechanisms generating gender inequalities in three spheres: education, respondents' private life (especially bearing in mind how they balance private and professional commitments), and their professional life, paying special attention to the different forms of gender discrimination typical of this sphere.

The concluding segment of the analyses, based on results of the expert focus group, is followed by a list of recommendations identifying possible avenues for improving the current situation, as well as the institutions and agents responsible for implementing the proposed solutions and putting the changes into effect.

Continuity of gender and feminist analyses in art and culture in the region

The project *Gender Equality for Cultural Diversity* and the present study both rely on previous research conducted in Serbia, the Western Balkans region, Europe and beyond, on the topic of the position of women artists, cultural workers and entrepreneurs, both in the cultural sector as a whole and in its individual branches and artistic domains.

For decades now we have been witnessing, in the national and regional scenes alike, continued efforts by individuals, women's and feminist associations to highlight the contribution of women to cultural production and cultural life, through important artwork, research, events, publications and projects. Using various formats, women artists, cultural workers, researchers and authors try to intervene into memory politics in their local and national communities, reminding them of important women from domestic cultural history, as well as to mitigate some of the gender inequalities in the contemporary art scene and creative industries. In this part of the study, we present some of the most significant initiatives and studies to date, which are characterized by diverse approaches, methodologies and research foci, yet which simultaneously indicate numerous shared elements and mechanisms for discriminating against and marginalizing women in different spheres of artistic and cultural production.

Exploration of these topics has had a long history. As part of the IV April Meeting (Aprilski susret) at the Student Cultural Center in Belgrade on 9 April 1975, the discussion Women in Art was held, with the participation of artists from abroad, like Gizlind Nabakowski, Urlike Rosenbach, Katherina Sieverding, Natalia LL and Iole de Freitas, as well as Yugoslav artists and cultural workers at the time like Ida Biard, Nena Baljković, Jasna Tijardović, Irina Subotić, Jadranka Vinterhalter, Biljana Tomić and Dunja Blažević. This activity is considered one of the direct or indirect inspirations for the idea of forming the Feminist research group *Woman and Society (Žena i društvo)*, which played an important role in establishing an organized contemporary feminist movement in Serbia and Yugoslavia from the 1970s onward.

Later, during the 1990s, it was precisely the women artists whose work fused with their activism, such as Milica Tomić, Saranda Bogujevci, Fljaka Haljiti, Jelena Šantić, Zorica Jevremović, Dah teatar and others, that figured prominently in protests against nationalism and militarism and in the women's peace movement of the time, s. omething This is discussed in a recent study by Krasnići and Petrović (2019), published by the "Jelena Šantić" Foundation. The artists were continually engaged in helping socially marginalized groups, like refugees and asylum seekers, which Nikolić (2019) has written about in an article for the magazine *Interkulturalnost*.

The study *Women's Voices in the Performance Arts of Western Balkans 1990-2010 (Ženski glasovi u izvedbenim umjetnostima Zapadnog Balkana 1990–2010*; Nelević, 2011) maps women's participation in and contribution to the performing arts scene in particular in the region during the final decade of the 20th and first decade of the 21st century. The study was conducted within the Network of Women in the Performing Arts in Western Balkans, established with the aim of boosting the impact of women's and feminist performance practices on the region's cultural scene and discourses. The analyses pertaining to Serbia note the effects of the centralization of cultural life and differences in position and influence enjoyed by female artists in relation to the part of country they live in, differences in the amount of media coverage of their work and in how visible the artists are. This study also revealed a lack of interest regarding women's position and work in the arts on the part of decision-makers in both local and republic-level cultural policy at the time (Vilenica, 2011). It additionally showed that female playwrights tend not to identify as feminists, since this would be detrimental to them, given the anti-feminist character of the scene they work in, where such engagement is seen as "hatred toward men" and faddism (Đurić, 2011).

Of note in the domain of dramatic works is also the anthology *Women, Drama and Performance: Between Post-socialism and Post-feminism (Žene, drama i izvedba: između post-socijalizma i post-feminizma*), edited by Lada Čale Feldman (2015). The goal of this publication was to present and encourage female modes of collaboration and experimental forms of dramatic writing, and to stand in opposition to traditional (and) patriarchal formats and modes of work, both in the theater and in literature. It also deconstructs, among others, the mechanisms of resource and power distribution in the theater, and identifies new ways in which women are marginalized and their work exploited. Texts in this anthology identified a frequent practice of regional nomadism among the authors, the semiperipheral character of contemporary women's dramatic writing in the region, as well as common motifs of the body, female folklore tradition, violence and war.

Important initiatives and studies were conducted in Croatia in the first two decades of the 21st century. A roundtable was held in Pula in 2008, titled *The Visibility of Women in Croatian Cinematography (Vidljivost žena u hrvatskoj kinematografiji),* which then also resulted in an eponymous publication, published by the Gender Equality Office of the Republic of Croatia. It states that only 5% of feature films produced in Croatia between 1990 and 2007 were directed by women; namely, out of the 108 feature films made in this period, only six were directed by women directors (Štimac Radin, 2009). Producer Sanja Ravlić conducted an in-depth analysis of the participation of female authors in the 2007 and 2008 open calls in support of films across different genres, and showed that female authors comprised between one tenth and up to a maximum of one quarter of applicants in their categories (live-action film, documentary, animated, short, feature film, etc.). Ravlić also identified those genres and competitions in which female authors were not approved a single project they applied with, as well as a (dis)proportion between the number of applicants and number of recipients from a gender perspective (ibid:13). At the time, women comprised 35% of the Filmmakers Association of Croatia, only 3% of whom were videographers, while over half worked in editing and set design. On the other hand, they comprised 16% of the Croatian Society of Film Directors (pp. 13–14).

In February of 2009, Slobodan Šijan ran a roundtable discussion titled "Women Directors of South-Eastern Europe" ("Rediteljke Jugoistočne Evrope"), as part of the 37th Belgrade International Film Festival FEST. Participants included Ronald Holloway, Dina Jordanova, Bernd Buder, Ivana Kronja, Dušan Makavejev, Nevena Daković, Melina Pota-Koljević, Biljana Maksić, Milena Dragićević Šešić, Nenad Dukić, Pavle Levi, Čarna Manojlović – at the time the artistic director of the Women's Film Festival in Belgrade, Silke Johanna Räbiger – the then director of the International Women's Film Festival in Dortmund, and others. The roundtable was followed up with an eponymous publication of the participants' presentations (ed. Šijan, 2009), which included, among other things, a list of 68 women directors identified in South-Eastern Europe, along with the titles of their films, as well as a list of the 30 festivals of women's film in existence at the time worldwide, the majority of which took place in the US. As part of the Roundtable Accompanying Program, there was a screening of three films by Soja Jovanović.

A subsequent analysis of gender relations and narratives, especially in the dynamic with constructing a (supra)national identity between 1945 and 1991, showed a historical inequality and a tangible lack of women's presence in cinematography across the entire former Yugoslavia (Bogojević, 2013).

In 2019, a group of researchers in Croatia conducted an analysis of the visibility of women in the cultural sector in Croatia, the recognition they get for their work, and their participation in positions of power. They found a decrease of inequality in tertiary art institutions, but also that women employed in the public sector enjoyed a better position than those working in the independent scene. However, women's participation in decision-making was found not to be proportional to their participation in the workforce – in particular, there were disproportionately few women in positions of artistic leadership and authorship, and there was a noticeable gender pay gap. Balancing their personal and professional lives was especially challenging for women in the independent scene. Moreover, women received recognition for their work less frequently than their male counterparts, and their work was performed in public less often. This study, like some of the earlier ones, also emphasized the necessity of introducing gender-sensitive monitoring and statistics (Uzelac, Lovrinić and Franić, 2019). The specificities of work in the creative industries appear *prima facie* to favor women and take into account the traditional gender expectations of women and their private and family commitments. However, the fact that these workers identify with their creative work makes it difficult to achieve balance, set boundaries and practice self-care, which Barada and Primorac term the "golden cage" (2018).

The Rijeka analysis, *How Do Female Artists Live? (Kako žive umjetnice?)*, showed that over a third of the women cultural workers surveyed had been subjected to workplace bullying. One out of five had suffered a work-related injury, whereas work was likely to lead to health issues in nearly 60% of them. The respondents did not want to discuss workplace bullying, one of the reasons being that "bullying is difficult to prove in the domain of artistic work"[1] (Banich and Gojić, 2018, pp. 15–16).

This study showed that, during 2016, over half of the surveyed women artists in Rijeka had received below-average monthly pay for Croatia, while over a third had been paid even below that year's minimum wages for Croatia. It is hardly surprising then that over four fifths of those surveyed deemed their income from cultural work insufficient to meet basic needs. A major portion of the work put in by these artists in the course of their art production fell under unpaid work, such as submitting applications to open calls, and preparing project documents and reports (pp. 21–23). The respondents had different interpretations of free time – some as time outside the workplace, some as time when they didn't have to worry about housework or take care of family members, others as precisely the

1 "As with mobbing, the respondents stated they mostly dealt with any injuries themselves, and out of pocket, more often than not in order to be able to go on unhindered with the work that had caused the injury in the first place" (p. 16).

time when they were free to dedicate themselves to their art (p. 30). Nearly half of them had encountered discrimination, while some were unable to gauge whether what had occurred was discrimination or not: "which confirms the extent to which, across all domains of life, we are continually exposed to, on the one hand, the pressure of systemic discrimination, and, on the other, the internalization of guilt"[2] (2018, p. 29).

The data from this study demonstrate that about one third of the respondents could not afford additional professional development, while half were paying for this out of pocket. A significant number of those surveyed who had attempted to have their degrees earned abroad recognized in Croatia were dissatisfied with the length and conditions of the nostrification process (pp. 12–13).

When it comes to current initiatives in Serbia, the first Festival of Women Filmmakers was held in Novi Sad in June 2021, organized by Off. It was preceded by a series of research papers, such as *Pioneering Women Dramatists in Serbia (Prve srpske dramaturškinje)*, which presented the work and contributions of Ljubinka Bobić, Milica Janković and Natalija Arsenović, and Women of Our Cinematography (Žene naše kinematografije), which introduced the readership to Zora Dirnbah, Vera Bjelogrlić, Oja Kodar, Vera Crvenčanin Kulenović, Suada Kapić and others.[3] This was followed by the launch of a youth educational program on gender and film, *IRIDA's Movie Club*, which engendered new texts and analyses of contemporary film production from a gender perspective.

A recent study by Ana Dubljević (2021), published by Station Service for Contemporary Dance (Stanica Servis za savremeni ples), presents a contribution toward conceptualizing and illuminating feminist dramaturgical thought in the context of dance and performance praxis.

2 "Among examples of practices or discrimination they came up against, respondents listed avoiding confrontation, backing out of conflict situations, de-escalating through conversation, performing their work tasks with dedication and professionalism, working overtime, allowing their professional achievements to speak for them, proving themselves through their work, persisting in their opinions and attitudes, strengthening their positions, developing argumentation, disseminating experiences through artistic work and activist actions, putting up resistance in everyday life, "drawing a line in the sand," speaking up about discrimination in their community and their workplace, reporting cases of discrimination and harassment to their superiors" (2018, p. 30). Authors of this study also researched strategies of conflict resolution among women musicians, as part of the project titled *Women's Leadership in Music*, while similar topics are also covered by Barada and Primorac (2014).

3 https://offns.rs/izoffa/off-grid/feminizam/

A series of papers by Iva Nenić (2012, 2015, 2019), in Serbian and in English, provide an analysis not only of the systemic mechanisms of the marginalization of women traditional musicians throughout history, but also of the (invisible) obstacles women musicians are faced with in neotraditional and alternative music in Serbia today. According to Nenić, women's playing has always been put in the position of an exception historically and this continues to be so today, while women instrumentalists always seem to start anew, being "the first" or "the only," which only reinforces their marginalization. Their playing is always linked with the perception of the female body and with women's gender roles; any errors in their performance are ascribed to their sex, and they have to do more than their male counterparts in order to prove their worth as musicians and instrumentalists.

According to an analysis of women's contribution to musical composition on the national level, women composers emerge already in the 18th century in Serbia, and their works attest to a consonance with the dominant styles in Europe at the time. Unfortunately, they have since faded into oblivion and their music is almost never performed. The achievements and results of women composers in the national scene are nowadays presented as exceptional[4], given the lack of support for composition or of any strategic action whatsoever on the part of cultural and musical policy in Serbia (Novak, 2011). The same paper notes that, in the first decade of the 21st century, women actually outnumbered men in this profession, which begs the question whether this was the case precisely due to such treatment of the profession and the working conditions therein. The author places special emphasis on the successful international careers of women composers from the region, but also explains that they left Serbia precisely due to social and economic problems (2011, p. 25).

Studies of women's participation in traditional music have shown that gender roles were divided in a traditional manner, and that transgression, or the crossing of gender-role boundaries, was a rare exception. Women are typically placed in the role of the singer, while instruments are reserved for men. Women are passive and better at transmitting heritage; they are less often authors and more frequently performers and guardians, less often in the public and professional domain and more frequently in the private and amateur sphere[5]. When participating in music events, women instrumentalists are an attraction, and they do not get to decide whether they will join in or what will constitute their repertoire. The visual element of the performance is important, and a site of the creation of additional narrative

4 About a possible women's writing in music in Serbia, see Adriana Sabo (2013).

5 In the study conducted by Ana Hofman (2012), the interviews with women former singers and musicians in rural areas showed that they often did not consider these activities a legitimate conversation topic and tended to view them as something worthless.

and discourse of the body. In rural areas, women's musical activities are frowned upon, which is why event organizers tend to have to talk their family members and relatives into participating, since a male family member's approval is needed for such activities. Otherwise, women's musical and singing activities are regarded as promiscuous and akin to flesh trade.

Since 2013, the young women's collective FEMIX has employed interviews, focus groups, as well as gender analyses of festival repertoires to collect the experiences of young women musicians and other artists and cultural workers, both in the national and regional scenes, as well as gathering data on the presence of women musicians, filmmakers and other authors in national festivals. A study published in 2016 found that women were far outnumbered by men in the sociocultural cycle of alternative music, except when it came to education, as well as that there was clear division in accordance with stereotypical and conventional ideas on gender. According to this study, most production companies – whether in popular or in alternative music – were owned and run by men. At alternative music festivals in Serbia, women musicians were part of only one in five, or even one in ten, performances, and it was observed that, the bigger and more successful the festival, the less represented women were.

> "In Radio Beograd 202 charts, all-male bands were featured 88 times more often than all-female bands, while all-male bands were featured as many as 8 times more often than bands with at least one female member" (Nikolić, 2016, p. 145).

According to the results of this study, "the system has various ways of convincing the women musicians that they themselves are responsible for inequality, that it is due to their lack of courage, boldness, confidence and the like, diverting attention away from mechanisms of exploitation and objectification" (Nikolić, 2016, p. 148). The author of the study identifies the following as actors of relevance for enhancing gender equality in the country's musical scene: the Ministry of Culture, city secretariats for culture and local self-governments; public institutions in the domain of music, culture and the arts; music schools, faculties, and independent music educators; festivals and the private sector of the music industry, including publishers, producers, managers, owners of studios, concert venues and clubs; music event donors and sponsors; the media; relevant civil sector organizations; male musicians; the women musicians themselves; as well as the audience (pp. 164–173).

Between August 2020 and February 2023, the Faculty of Music conducted a study jointly with the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, with support from the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, titled *Women's Leadership in Music (Žensko liderstvo u muzici)*.[6] According to the results of this national study, women musicians in Serbia primarily rely on their own, very limited resources, and are forced to work multiple jobs simultaneously. They work precariously in surroundings that are hostile and sexist more often than not, and with little support from their environment. Young women musicians often view long-term professional work in music as incompatible with family life in the conventional sense, but also as fulfilling (Nenić and Nikolić, 2022).

Nenić and Nikolić point to certain specificities of women's leadership, noting that women frequently find themselves in leadership positions out of necessity. Initiative, leadership and taking on responsibility are ways of overcoming the obstacles and exclusion based on gender stereotypes and patriarchalism of the scene. The authors also suggest that women's leadership in music includes practices of collective and transformational leadership which provides role-models, as well as being in service of the scene, genre, community or society as a whole (ibid.).

The latest study on the position of women in music focuses on the position of women instrumentalists in the jazz genre and was conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation at the School of Media and Communications, Singidunum University. It identifies the masculine characteristics of the music discipline itself, as well as the social practices surrounding it, the specificity of experiences of the rare women instrumentalists and leaders in this genre, especially in the peripheries like South-Eastern Europe, as well as phenomena like tokenism, discontinuity, stereotyping and female-female exclusion (Jovićević, 2022, 2023).

Furthermore, in 2019 producers Ksenija Đurović and Ana Vuković tried to conduct a study in Belgrade replicating the Rijeka study *How Do Women Artists Live? (Kako žive umjetnice?*), but were unable to finalize it due to a lack of resources. However, preliminary data from a sample of 100 participants indicated that almost half of the artists surveyed had been subjected to workplace bullying and discrimination. Only three respondents had reported these incidents to the authorities, whereas in all other cases the women either did not report what had happened, or they did report it and this proved completely ineffectual. In numerous cases, respondents commented that this was in fact an "open secret," unacceptable behavior that was

6 This research project has also resulted in an international collection of papers "Women`s Leadership in Music" (Nenić & Cimardi (eds.), 2023), published by Transcript, as well as a short documentary film on women leaders in the domestic alternative music scene, and a practical policy proposal for the promotion of gender equality in the domestic music and cultural scenes, accepted by the Academic Council of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade.

generally known, or stated they wanted to report it but there was no one to report it to, they didn't know how to go about it, they were discouraged from reporting, etc. [7] Within the domain of gender analysis of literature and history of literature, it is important to note the decades-long contribution of Professor Biljana Dojčinović from the Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University, Professor Vladislava Gordić Petković from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, as well as others.[8] Professor Gordić Petković also edited the 2011 thematic issue of the journal Kultura, *Women's Expert Potential in Cultural Work (Ženski ekspertski potencijal u kulturnim delatnostima)*, while one of her papers on women's voices in contemporary Serbian literature states that "it is as if, occupying a position where they are not understood or accepted themselves, women authors are best attuned to the stateless, that is, the authors working in the shadows and on the margins" (Gordić Petković, 2011b, p. 314).

In literature, the unequal relationship between male and female literary authors in the domestic scene appears to be "a firm constant, occurring even in places such as literary magazines, where there is equality among male and female critics" (Šljukić and Bobičić, 2017, p. 9). Unfortunately, the equal participation of women critics is no guarantee, either, that women authors' work will be given equal coverage as that of their male colleagues; instead, women authors will at best be afforded a third of the space, e.g., in trade journals, and only a sixth in the more popular media. It is also of interest that it is easier for younger women authors to get coverage, which begs the question of their long-term continuance in the scene (ibid., pp. 21–22).

Moreover, when it comes to representation in the media, the data show that the media landscape of Serbian culture has been completely masculinized, regardless of the fact that there are more women working in culture departments than there are men (Valić Nedeljković, 2011). Editors of media programs, public discussions and panels often justify their decisions to invite mostly male guests and participants by saying there are no women experts in the relevant field, although there are increasing indicators this is not even close to being the case.[9]

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7 We would like to thank the initiators of this study for allowing us access to unpublished research results.

8 It bears emphasizing that Dubravka Đurić wrote, as early as 1998, about the contribution of women poets and prose writers, as well as visual artists, to the scene in Belgrade and Serbia in the 1990s (Đurić, 1998).

9 The Bureau for Equality (Biro Jednakost), initiated by the feminist cultural center BeFem – a list of women cultural experts, as well as their other lists, demonstrate this. For example, https://www.befem.org/biro-jednakost/lista-kultura/; "Interlocutors" – a list of women's studies alumnae who have been recipients of the Reconstruction Women's Fund (Rekonstrukcija Ženski fond) scholarships https://www.sagovornice.rwfund.org/; the Manels of Serbia collective and digital

In her seminal study *Famous and Ignored: Toward a Critical Culture of Remembering (Slavne i ignorisane: ka kritičkoj kulturi pamćenja*; 2018), Svetlana Tomić writes about a paradox present in patriarchal cultures such as the Serbian one, namely that "the more significant a woman had been, the more she was suppressed from public memory." This study also shows that there are systemic interruptions in history and breaks in the continuity of existence when it comes to notable women authors, and that, consequently, new generations, of women authors in this case, are left without role models to look up to. At the same time, the author's earlier study warns of the dangers of irreversible loss of women's cultural legacy (Tomić, 2013).

> "Official historians 'reinvented the past' at the same time as generating amnesia, jeopardizing the identities of educated women, as well as opportunities for their work in the public domain, for social transformation. Other women were therefore unable to construct a clear history of their own based in fact, nor see the connection between past and present. This is from whence arose this situation of being condemned to the same vicious circle of problems and to blindly, and ultimately ineffectually, operating in the present... In the history of Serbian literature, an illusion has been imposed on us, namely that we have only had two great women writers, Isidora Sekulić and Desanka Maksimović. New writers were assured that literary greatness was beyond reach. They could not know the long history of inadequate regard for women writers " (Tomić, 2018, pp. 55–56).

In 2019, three publications came out exploring the creative output and life of Maga Magazinović, the "founder of modern dance" in Serbia, precisely as part of the nurturing of a culture of remembering women of significance to the cultural history of this region. The 22nd *Festival of Choreographic Miniatures,* held in 2018, was dedicated to none other than this important author and pioneer. Vera Obradović Ljubinković, who had previously published work on choreo-drama in Serbia in the 20th and 21st centuries from a gender perspective, edited the festival proceedings, and also published a 360-page monograph dedicated to Magazinović (Obradović Ljubinković, 2019a, 2019b). The afore-mentioned Svetlana Tomić, also helped bring to light the life and work of Maga Magazinović with her analysis of memoir literature from the Historical Archives of Užice (Tomić, 2019), trying, among other things, to obtain some more precise data about the alleged collaboration during WW2 of which some historians have accused Maga Magazinović.

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activism https://twitter.com/pr0zivka; "If you don't know, ask a female comrade," the Mašina portal, March 28, 2018 https://www.masina.rs/ako-ne-znate-pitajte-feministkinju/

Similarly, the 2014 study by Milena Dragićević Šešić on the topic of remembering women in World War I in Serbia also emphasized the need for nurturing a culture of remembering as part of cultural heritage public policies, something which would include female family ancestors and their contribution to the cultural and social history of our society.

Furthermore, the study by Jelena Ognjanović (2019) demonstrated a lack of a clear strategy at the level of museum institutions, and of local or national cultural policies that would prescribe or enable gender-equal museum acquisitions, which leads to an ignorance on the part of the general population regarding women's artistic output.

At the same time, in early 2019, the international map of women's museums comprised 73 physical museums, 19 virtual museums, and another 47 initiatives for establishing one (Mustedanagić, 2019, p. 226). Numerous studies of women's legacy in Vojvodina and Serbia resulted in female-focused tourist maps and other publications for the cities of Novi Sad, Kikinda, Belgrade, etc. (Stojaković, 2019). That same year saw the launch of the digital platform *ŽeNSki muzej (WomeN'S Museum*), managed by (*Re)Konekcija, Association of Feminist Organizations of Novi Sad*, with the goal of systematizing women's and feminist heritage, as well as contemporary women's creative outputs in Novi Sad and Vojvodina[10].

As part of her doctoral thesis (2018, 2020)[11], curator Sanja Kojić Mladenov researched the work of multiple women visual artists as pioneers, leaders and figures of importance for the national and regional visual, media, video, digital and multimedia scenes, yet whose work has been undervalued and lacked visibility, such as Lidija Srebotnjak Prišić, Marica Radojčić and others.

Papers, exhibitions and publications by Milena Zindović and her associates from the *Association of Women Architects* also emphasize the need for more in-depth analyses, a re-evaluation and critical re-examination of dominant narratives on the work of women architects, as well as the significant yet often completely overlooked contribution of women to the field of architecture (Zindović, 2014; Ivanović Vojvodić, Zindović, 2020). In 2018, the Association of Women Architects, in collaboration with Belgrade International Architecture Week, also led by a woman architect, organized the walk *Women in Architecture between 1900 and*

10 https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/

11 In 2018, Kojić Mladenov defended her doctoral thesis, titled Discourses about gender in art: Construction of Vojvodina female artists' professional identity in the realm of new media at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century (Diskursi o rodu u umetnosti: konstrukcija profesionalnog identiteta umetnica koje se bave novim medijima u Vojvodini krajem 20. i početkom 21. veka), at the Centre for Gender Studies of the University of Novi Sad.

1960,. Furthermore,they also worked with the Museum of Applied Art to realize the program *Women's Creative Output in Architecture and Design: European and Local Contexts*[12]. In addition, at the 2020 conference of the Engineering Academy of Serbia, *Women in Engineering*, they held a presentation titled *Women in Architecture and Design in Serbia*[13].

When it comes to positions of power and decision-making, in 2017 the Center for Study of Cultural Development published its first-ever study focused on gender inequality in the cultural sphere in Serbia, albeit limited to the public sector alone. What the results of this study show is that the cultural sector in Serbia is feminized (i.e., female employees outnumber male employees), in part due to a lack of resources, funds and social power that often characterizes professions in this field. It is also noted that women's participation in decision-making positions decreases as the position's prestige increases, but also that party membership is a requirement for obtaining a leadership position. Once again, there was an understanding that, in order to keep her position, a woman has to prove her worth more than her male colleagues, that "women's work is scrutinized daily, and any mistakes perceived as more serious" (Milanović, Subašić and Opačić, 2017, p. 202). According to Mikić (2020), too, there is more gender equality in the creative sector than in other economic fields when it comes to the representation of women in the workforce. However, women tend to be employed mostly in culture's public sector, while only constituting a small minority in the more profitable and financially more significant sectors pertaining to information technologies. This is particularly significant in the context of the gender pay gap in certain lines of work, which is bound to persist and deepen unless there is more focus on inclusion of women in jobs in the growing IT sector and in entrepreneurship and more profitable branches of the creative industries overall (Mikić, 2020).

A gender analysis of the 2020 budget of the Ministry of Culture (Nikolin, Vladisavljević, Milenković Bukumirović and Vujović, 2021) criticizes the lack of gender-sensitive data in documents issued by the Ministry of Culture (pp. 33–45), but also relays that, the year before, it funded 16 projects that "enhance gender equality" (p. 32). This study analyzed the operation and budget of the Ministry of Culture, since "the work it does represents the mainstay of true gender equality in society, different from the formal gender equality that already exists in laws yet is not always consistently present in practice" (p. 44).

12 https://www.zua.rs/sr/events/zensko-stvaralastvo-u-arhitekturi-i-dizajnu-evropski-i-lokalni-kontekst/

13 https://www.ias.org.rs/include/ppt/Zene_u_arhitekturi_i_dizajnu_u_Srbiji.pdf

According to this analysis, during 2020, as a consequence of budget cuts caused by the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ministry funding was (also) cut in relation to item *Support for cultural activity of socially vulnerable groups*, which runs afoul of principles of gender equality and human rights, even during times of crisis (p. 40).

During the pandemic, women working in the domain of culture and the arts faced multiple threats and pressures. This included increased unpaid housework and care for family members, professional engagements that were paid less due to funding being cut or terminated, as noted earlier in the text, as well as the inability or restricted ability to hold cultural events. This in particular was studied and thematized by local illustrators and comic strip artists, in collaboration with the Center for Women's Studies, FEMIX Young Women's Collective, both individually and as a network[14].

Additionally, at the start of the 2020 pandemic, a study was conducted with young women artists, on the topic of what social problems they perceived as burning issues, their relationship to feminism and gender equality, as well as their use of social networks for expressing socio-political opinions. Although these were some of the more successful artists, professionally they did not express much ambition, nor did they have a plan for their career development or a specific target demographic of their artistic output. They were hesitant to speak their mind directly and doubted "their right to comment" (Nikolić, 2020, p. 94). When asked about gender equality, they tended to state that women working in culture were in a better position compared to the rest of society and other professions, while at the same time noting they had encountered numerous situations which could be characterized as sexism and misogyny (ibid.).

> "It is as if some of the authors feel that they have no right to protest and assume a critical orientation, since their experiences haven't been as negative, nor their position as jeopardized as that of others. Consequently, they tend to normalize these situations, expecting themselves to handle things or to isolate, not to let it get to them, to be tough and thus minimize or do away with the problem. In a nutshell, talented, capable, responsible and dedicated young women take on this additional responsibility and work" (p. 99).

14 In the regional and domestic comics scene, networking, independent publishing and exhibition, as well as informal mentoring, have been present for two decades already, as attempts at undercutting the strongly male ethos among comic strip artists (Dobrić, 2002; Adamović, 2018).

The research, initiatives and publications mentioned above all served as inspiration, basis and support for the current project of the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia, and as foundation for the research we conducted with the goal of throwing some more light on the topic of gender (in)equality in the art scene of Serbia.

In the chapters that follow, we present the data obtained by our research team, which complement and build on previous studies conducted by other scholars, artists, institutions and collectives, . They encompass all fields of activity in culture and the arts, the public, civil and private sectors, . The data also cover independent artists, workers and experts working in culture, their position in the professional domain, work-life balance, and any experiences of discrimination based on gender or other personal characteristics.

Research methodology

On the one hand, our research task was to provide an overview of the different mechanisms that generate gender inequalities in cultural life in Serbia during the early 2020s, using varied research methods (survey, semi-structured interviews, focus group); on the other, it was to identify the institutions, groups and individuals that ought to facilitate improved participation of women and their more equitable representation in the cultural field in our society.

Step one was the survey study, which was realized over the spring and summer of 2021 and which included 206 women cultural workers and entrepreneurs from all three cultural sectors (public, private and civil), from different parts of Serbia and of different ages. The survey was filled in online and it was based on a questionnaire comprising seven batteries of questions. The first battery pertained to standard socio-demographic data (respondents' age, permanent place of abode, highest level of qualification); the second referred to the cultural domain in which they worked, their occupation and the type of employment they have secured in the field of culture. The third segment of the survey questionnaire focused on identifying the fundamental challenges facing women cultural workers and entrepreneurs, the mechanisms for overcoming these issues, and the actors that could help improve gender equality in the cultural field in Serbia. The fourth battery of questions addressed the respondents' class position (measured by their levels of economic and cultural capital), while the fifth group concerned the manner in which housework was divided in their households, since both of these dimensions of living conditions have a significant impact on respondents' professional lives. The sixth battery of questions employed a Likert scale to explore participants' attitudes to gender relations, while the final questionnaire segment dealt with experiences of gender discrimination over the course of one's schooling and professional life.

Sample characteristics are presented in tables 1–10. This is a conventional sample, which cannot serve as a basis for generalizing onto the population, yet which, due to its variability, can serve well for exploratory research.

Regarding age and, indirectly, work experience, our sample included one group of respondents at an early stage in their career (18 to 35 years of age), two groups marked by professional maturity (36 to 45, and 46 to 60 years old), with the latter comprising more women in leadership positions, as well as a group of respondents at the end of their professional careers (table 1).

Table 1 – Respondents grouped according to age

Age group	Number	%
18 to 35 years old	70	34.0%
36 to 45 y.o.	82	39.8%
46 to 60 y.o.	46	22.3%
Over 60 y.o.	8	3.9%
Total	206	100%

As expected, the majority of respondents in the survey sample were from Belgrade, yet nearly half of the respondents were from 25 other cities and towns across Serbia, which enabled us to gain insight into the experience of working in culture in smaller towns and different regions of the country (table 2).

Table 2 – Respondents grouped according to permanent place of residence

Mesto boravka	Number	%	Place of residence	Number	%
Belgrade	107	51.9%	Čačak	2	1.0%
Novi Sad	22	10.7%	Kikinda	1	0.5%
Niš	11	5.3%	Knjaževac	1	0.5%
Subotica	9	4.4%	Lazarevac	1	0.5%
Pančevo	9	4.4%	Prijepolje	1	0.5%
Kragujevac	8	3.9%	Ruski Krstur	1	0.5%
Zrenjanin	5	2.4%	Smederevo	1	0.5%
Zemun	5	2.4%	Sombor	1	0.5%
Pirot	3	1.5%	S. Mitrovica	1	0.5%
Požega	3	1.5%	S. Karlovci	1	0.5%
Loznica	3	1.5%	Užice	1	0.5%
Zaječar	2	1.0%	Vrnjačka Banja	1	0.5%
Kruševac	2	1.0%	Vršac	1	0.5%
No data	3	1.5%			

In terms of regional distribution, following the Belgrade region, most respondents were from Vojvodina, followed by similar numbers of those from Šumadija, western Serbia, and southern and eastern Serbia.

Table 3 – Respondents grouped according to region of abode

Region	Number	%
Belgrade	113	54.9%
Vojvodina	50	24.2%
Šumadija and western Srbija	21	10.2%
Southern and eastern Serbia	19	9.2%
No response provided	3	1.5%
Total	206	100%

In general, cultural workers tend to belong to groups with the highest educational attainments in a society (Cvetičanin, 2014, 2020), and the sample in our study is no exception to this. As table 4 shows, over 90% of respondents in our sample hold a bachelor's or higher degree.

Table 4 – Respondents' highest level of education

Highest level of education	Number	%
High school	7	3.4%
College	3	1.5%
Bachelor's degree	74	35.9%
Master degree	74	35.9%
Magister degree	22	10.7%
Doctorate	24	11.6%
No response given	2	1%
Total	206	100%

In terms of occupation, a large number of respondents were working multiple jobs, which is also more the rule than the exception nowadays in the cultural field. The majority of respondents were artists, with a likewise significant number of managers, producers and project and program coordinators, as well as curators (table 5).

Table 5 – Respondents' occupation

Occupation	Broj	%
Multiple occupations	42	20.4%
Artists	56	27.2%
Managers, producers, coordinators	32	15.5%
Curators	30	14.6%
CEOs and owners	9	4.4%
Media workers	13	6.3%
Professors, theorists and critics	15	7.3%
Other	7	3.3%
No response given	2	1.0%
Total	206	100%

Not only did respondents in the sample work in multiple occupations, but the majority of them worked across different domains of culture. In addition to them, the most numerous group in the sample were respondents working in the domain of performance art (music, dance, theatre), visual arts and architecture, and within cultural heritage (table 6).

Table 6 – Cultural domain in which respondents work

Cultural domain	Number	%
Multiple domains	44	21.4%
Music and dance	32	15.5%
Film and photography	13	6.3%
Theatre	15	7.3%
Literature	17	8.3%
Visual arts and architecture	32	15.5%
Cultural heritage	20	9.7%
Media	12	5.8%
Multimedia and new media	11	5.4%
Other	6	2.9%
No response given	4	1.9%
Total	206	100%

Regarding the type of organization which employed them or engaged their services (table 7) and the type of employment contract based on which they engaged in professional activity (table 8), the sample also features a sufficient degree of variability. The sample includes both cultural workers employed in cultural institutions, and those working in private companies and the civil sector. There is also a considerable number of those working in educational institutions.

Table 7 – Type of organization in which respondents were employed

Place of work	**Number**	**%**
Public institutions	74	35.9%
Private companies	14	6.8%
NGOs	59	28.6%
Educational institutions	38	18.5%
Other	21	10.2%
Total	206	100%

In terms of employment contracts, the two dominant groupings comprised respondents whose services were engaged based on a permanent contract (full-time) and those engaged based on temporary employment agreements and work-for-hire agreements. The differences between these two groups' work experiences were substantial, and it was their respective experiences (and the differences between them) that we were particularly interested in.

Table 8 – Type of employment based on which respondents engaged in professional activity

Type of employment	**Number**	**%**
Employment for an indefinite period of time (full-time)	91	44.2%
Fixed-term employment– up to 24 months (full-time)	18	8.7%
Employment for an indefinite period of time (part-time)	4	2.0%
Fixed-term employment– up to 24 months (part-time)	5	2.4%
Work-for-hire	82	39.8%
No response	6	2.9%
Total	206	100%

In the latter group, those self-employed or freelancers (comprising over 40% of the sample), several different segments could be discerned, which were also likely to have different life and professional experiences.

Table 9 – Segments within the self-employed/freelancing group

Self-employed/freelancers	Number	%
Agency owner	18	8.7%
Independent artist	30	14.5%
Independent cultural expert	9	4.4%
Independent artist (not granted this status by a representative association)	20	9.7%
Independent cultural expert (not granted this status by a representative association)	10	4.9%
No response given	119	57.8%
Total	206	100%

We also found that a significant number of respondents held leadership roles in cultural institutions, organizations and the projects they realized. In interviews with participants who were in leadership positions, we discussed whether they had encountered limitations in career advancement, their experience of being in leadership roles, and whether men seemed to have any issues with having a woman as their superior.

Table 10 – Do they hold a leadership position in their institution/ organization/ project?

Leadership position	Number	%
Yes	95	46.1%
No	108	52.4%
No response given	3	1.5%
Total	206	100%

On the whole, our survey sample consists of successful, exceptionally well educated women, working in multiple professions and across different cultural domains, nearly half of whom hold a leadership role in their respective organizations. Our sample is therefore far from being representative of the

population of women workers and entrepreneurs working in the cultural field in Serbia; however, it may be considered representative of the segment that is potentially interested in working toward achieving gender equality in the cultural field in Serbia.

Immediately after the survey was completed, in the autumn of that year, 32 semi-structured interviews were realized. We talked to nine women artists, eight cultural managers from cultural institutions, four cultural entrepreneurs, four theorists and researchers working in the arts, and seven freelancers and respondents from the NGO sector. Six respondents were from Belgrade, five from Šumadija and western Serbia, ten from southern and eastern Serbia, and eleven from Vojvodina.

In order for us to gain a more in-depth insight into our topics of interest, the semi-structured interviews took pride of place in our study. Moreover, we believed it would be better to give our interlocutors the opportunity to speak about their life and work directly – through slightly longer conversational excerpts – instead of us retelling this. In the interviews, we discussed four primary topics and a large number of sub-topics with the participants. In accordance with the characteristics of semi-structured interviews, participants were also able to introduce new topics into the conversation, which were then accorded due attention in the analyses.

The first interview topic concerned respondents' educational experiences – from choice of education, experiences at university, their assessment of the study program they took in terms of gender-related content and a gender perspective being present, through to their experiences (if any) of gender discrimination or some form of sexual harassment or assault over the course of their education. The second central interview topic concerned respondents' experiences regarding their professional life: working conditions at their job, relationships with their coworkers, exploitation and self-exploitation, whether they felt overworked and whether they were experiencing any health issues due to being overwhelmed at work. The third core interview topic revolved around the ways in which respondents try to maintain a balance between their professional and private lives, between the public and private spheres – how they balanced parental duties with work commitments, whether they shared housework with their partners, whether their partner and family were supportive, whether they had free time and how they used it. The final, yet in many ways the most central, interview topic regarded discrimination at work – whether, in their opinion, their professional career was affected (positively or negatively, and in what way) by the fact they were women, whether there was any division of

labor into male and female in their workplace/team, or a different distribution of responsibilities between men and women. Next, if they themselves occupied a leadership position, what their experience of leadership was like; whether their environment exhibited any specificities in terms of gender relations, especially in the case of small towns, and whether they had ever been subject to some form of sexual harassment or assault at work, and what this consisted of.

At the end of the research portion of the project, in December of 2021, we held an online expert focus group with nine participants who have been actively working on promoting gender equality in the cultural field in Serbia for years. If the survey study and semi-structured interviews were primarily aimed at determining the position of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia and identifying the problems they faced, the central topic of the focus-group interview were recommendations for overcoming the current state. The discussion focused on the following questions: (1) how can the identified obstacles to improving the position of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs be overcome, and (2) who are the key actors bearing the responsibility for and having the ability to mitigate gender inequality in the national scene.

Characteristics of the field of cultural production in Serbia

In order to understand the position of women artists, cultural workers and entrepreneurs, one also needs to take into account the characteristics of the context within which they are working, in particular the field of cultural production in Serbia[15].

These include the following:

- Central role of the state in the cultural field, both in terms of funding and organizationally;
- Proportionately little funding allocated toward culture compared to other countries in South-East Europe;
- Meagre investment in international cultural cooperation;
- Extreme centralization of cultural life, with two cultural centers – Belgrade and Novi Sad;
- An under-developed culture market and a nearly total dependence of all cultural subjects on government funds;
- Cultural policy creators' central focus on maintaining the system of cultural institutions, rather than on funding cultural production;
- The marginal role played by creative industries (private sector) and citizens' associations (civil sector) in the field of cultural production in Serbia;
- Sporadic cooperation between organizations from the public, private and civil sectors, mostly dependent on individual initiatives and the willingness of individuals at the helm of cultural institutions to participate;
- Only nominal support to the development of creative industries, absence of institutional grants for civil society organizations working in the cultural field, and, in practice, absence of systemic support for independent artists/ freelancers, especially those working outside Belgrade, who are left high and dry.

15 For the characteristics and analysis of the field of cultural production in Serbia, see Cvetičanin, 2014 and 2020, which this portion of the text is partly based on. Those wishing to learn more about the Bourdieusian concept of the field and concept of the field of cultural production can consult studies such as: Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992); Bourdieu (1993); Bourdieu (1996); Swartz (1997), Calhoon, Li Puma, Postone (eds.) (1993), Grenfell & Hardy (2007); Grenfell (ed.) (2008); as well as papers like Levi Martin (2003), Warde (2004); Bottero & Crossley (2011).

The Ministry of Culture and Information is the state institution which creates cultural policy, introduces laws in the area of culture and information, provides funding directly to 26 republic-level institutions of culture and 14 provincial-level cultural institutions dislocated from Kosovo, and announces annual open calls for projects in culture and the media. Based on the 2002 Omnibus Law, the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities shares the responsibility for creating cultural and media policy with the Ministry of Culture and Information, and, since 2011, has directly funded 17 provincial institutions from the budget of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. There are 24 towns and 165 municipalities in Serbia that provide funding for the cultural institutions on their territory through secretariats for culture or secretariats for social activities. The provincial secretariat for culture and most cities in Serbia launch open calls for the financing and co-financing of projects in the domain of culture.

In table 11, which presents data on the budget of the Ministry of Culture and Information between 2015 and 2022, two trends can be discerned. On the one hand, the total budget of the Ministry of Culture and Information has been decreasing, from approximately €137,666,000 in 2015 and 1.54% of the total budget, down to €125,177,000 or 0.86% of the country's overall budget in 2022. On the other hand, especially since 2019, there has been a sharp increase in funding for the cultural sector at the Ministry of Culture and Information, reaching nearly 113 million euros, and 0.78% of the total budget in 2022.

Table 11 – Budget of the Ministry of Culture and Information and budget of the cultural sector (2015–2022)

Year	Total budget of Republic of Serbia	Culture and public information	% of the RS budget	Culture	% of the RS budget
2015	RSD 1,082,988,184,000 €8,939,234,000	RSD 16,678,247,000 €137,666,000	1.54%	RSD 7,530,257,000 €62,156,000	0.70%
2016	RSD 1,085,308,426,000 €8,890,141,000	RSD 11,041,145,000 €90,442,000	1.01%	RSD 6,880,719,000 €56,362,000	0.63%
2017	RSD 1,123,195,679,000 €9,093,229,000	RSD 12,819,522,000 €103,785,000	1.14%	RSD 8,266,877,000 €66,927,000	0.74%

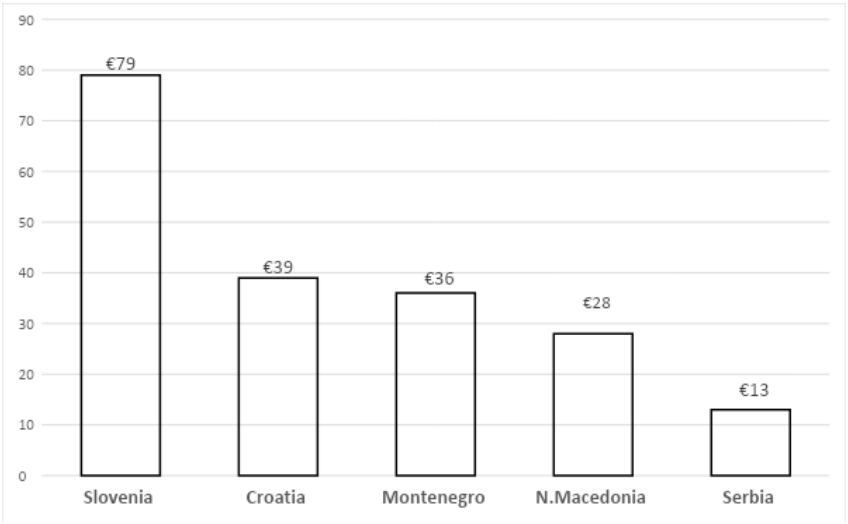
2018	RSD 1,179,248,230,000 €9,909,649,000	RSD 13,170,547,000 € 110,677,000	1.11%	RSD 7,493,969,000 €62,975,000	0.64%
2019	RSD 14,404,509,000 €121,721,000	14.404.509.000 din 121.721.000 €	1.13%	RSD 9,415,666,000 €79,565,000	0.74%
2020	RSD 13,286,217,000 €112,595,000	13.286.217.000 din 112.595.000 €	0.99%	RSD 9,800,424,000 83,054,000 €	0.73%
2021	RSD 12,708,694,000 €108,094,701	12.708.694.000 din 108.094.701 €	0.85%	RSD 11,256,127,000 €96,739,789	0.76%
2022	RSD 14,770,854,000 €125,177,000	14.770.854.000 din 125.177.000 €	0.86%	RSD 13,316,419,000 €112,851,000	0.78%

Nevertheless, according to a 2019 study conducted by the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia and Center for the Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe, Serbia has the lowest culture spending in the region of South-East Europe, both as a percentage and per capita.

Table 12 – Culture spending as a percentage of the total budget, 2015–2022 (South-East European countries)

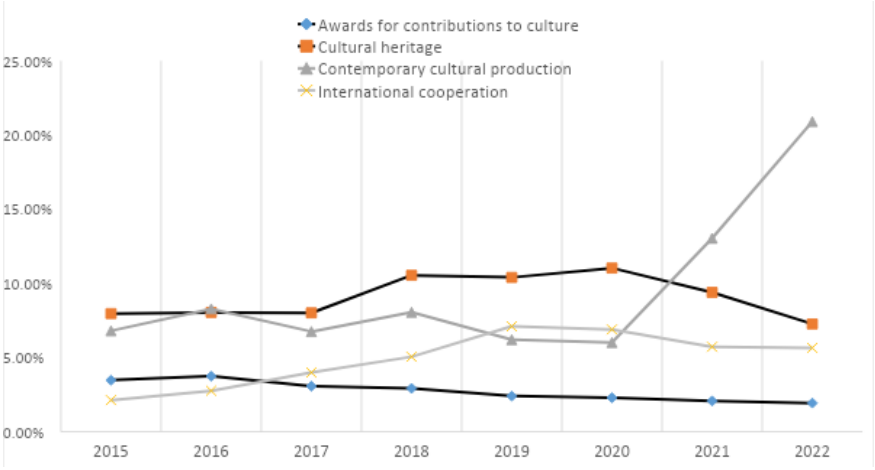
Country	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Serbia	0.70%	0.63%	0.74%	0.64%	0.74%
Slovenia	1.69%	1.54%	1.57%	1.64%	1.68%
N. Macedonia	2.15%	2.23%	2.21%	2.06%	1.55%
Croatia	0.61%	0.69%	0.63%	0.81%	0.88%
Montenegro	1.02%	1.08%	1.13%	1.15%	1.13%

For example, Serbia's per capita culture spending is six times less compared to Slovenia, and three times less than in Croatia.



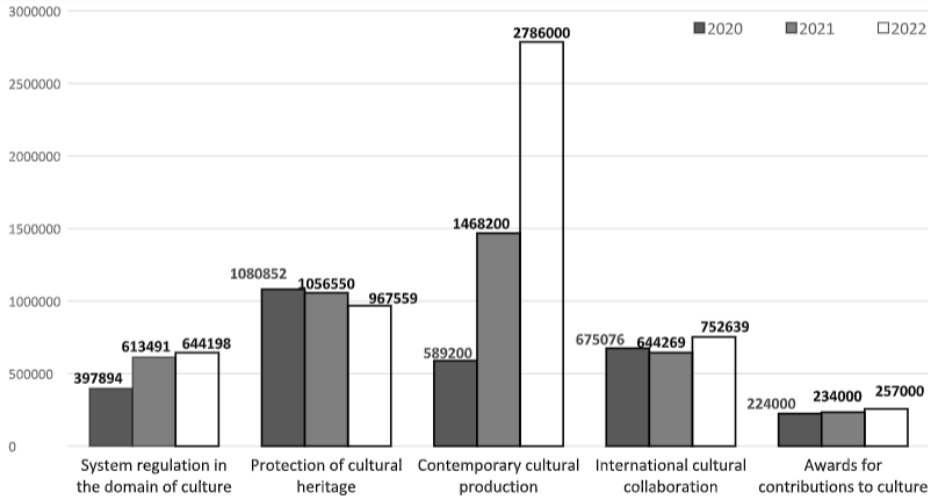
Graph 1 – Per capita culture spending in countries of South-East Europe (2019)

It should be noted that there was a significant shift in priorities for the Ministry of Culture during the period in question, namely from 2015 through 2022, which was also reflected in the structure of their budget. The most significant change concerns the nearly triple percentage increase of the budget for contemporary cultural production, from a little under 7% of the budget in 2015 to nearly 21% in 2022, alongside a minimal decrease in the budget for cultural heritage, which had theretofore been a top priority for decades (7.96% in 2015, and 7.26% of the budget in 2022).



Graph 2 – Changes in the structure of the Ministry of Culture's budget, for the period 2015-2022 (expressed as percentages)

This increase, which has been especially prominent since 2020, is even better visible in graph 3. Whereas the budget for contemporary art production was around €4,990,000 in 2020, only two years later it had increased nearly fivefold, to about €23,600,000.[16]



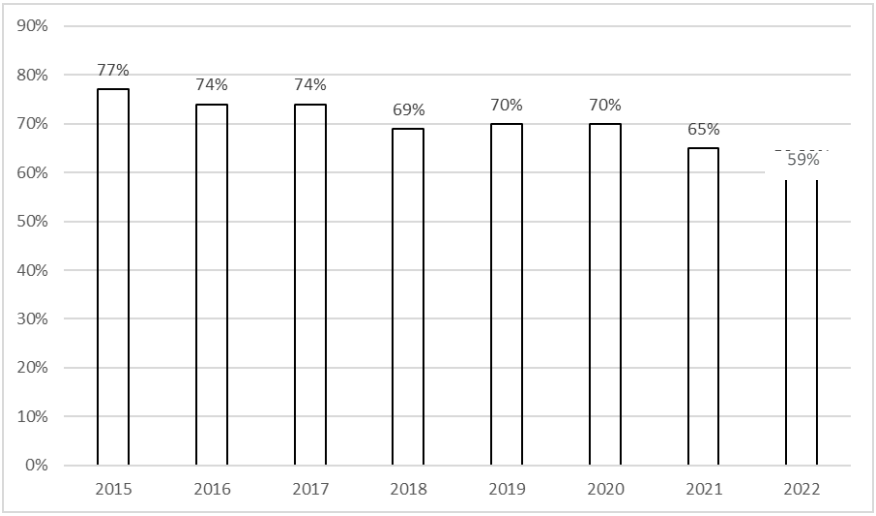
Graph 3 – Budget structure of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, 2020-2022 (in thousands of RSD)

Moreover, graphs 2 and 3 show Serbia's relatively modest allocation for international cultural cooperation, despite its increase when viewed as a percentage – from 2.13% of the Ministry of Culture's budget in 2015 to 5.65% of the budget (or €6,400,000) in 2022. Even though the Ministry of Culture and Information shares the responsibility for international cultural cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these funds are certainly inadequate for improving a country's international cooperation.

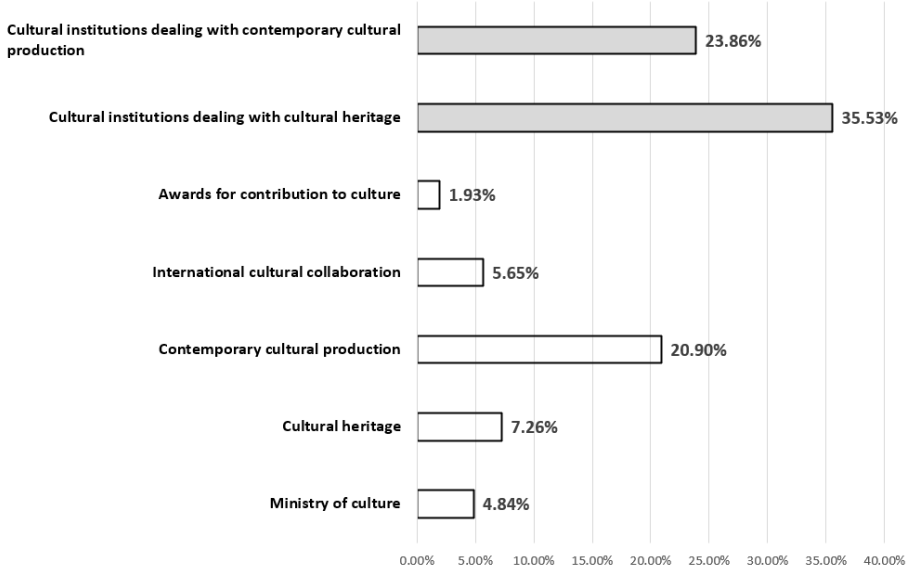
Viewed from the perspective of cultural actors, the central position in the field of cultural production in Serbia is occupied by the system of cultural institutions consisting of 522 such institutions, 26 of which are republic-level cultural institutions, 31 are province-level ones, and the remaining 465 are local cultural institutions with over 12,000 permanent staff. Within this system of cultural institutions, the majority are polyvalent culture centers (176) and libraries (160), museums (69), as well as 36 professional theatres, 41 archives, 21 art galleries, 14 institutes for the protection of cultural monuments, and 5 institutions of other types.

16 It remains unclear whether this is a strategic volte-face by the Ministry of Culture towards more support for contemporary cultural creation, a matter of personal preferences on the part of the Minister of Culture at the time, or some third influence or circumstances.

Graphs 4 and 5 show the significance of republic-level cultural institutions within the cultural field of Serbia. They receive an enormous portion of the Ministry of Culture's budget – in 2015, they received nearly four fifths of the budget, while at the lowest level, in 2022, these institutions were still accorded almost 60% of the Ministry of Culture's budget.



Graph 4 – Percentage of the Ministry of Culture's budget received by republic-level cultural institutions



Graph 5 – Structure of Ministry of Culture's budget (in 2022)

As we can see from graph 5, republic-level institutions working in the domain of the protection of cultural heritage received over a third of the total budget of the Ministry of Culture, whereas those working in the domain of contemporary cultural production received a little less than a quarter. For comparison, an area like international cultural cooperation was granted just a little over 5% of the budget.

The second characteristic of the system of cultural institutions – republic-level, province-level and local ones – is their high degree of dependence on resources they are allocated from the budget, accompanied with a low level of earned income. As data in Table 13 demonstrate, according to budget acts between 2015 and 2022, the independently earned income of republic-level cultural institutions ranged between 3% and 10%, whereas they received the remaining 90% to 97% of funding necessary for their operation from the Ministry of Culture.

Table 13 – Budget of republic-level cultural institutions, 2015–2022

		Total	**%**	**Earned income**	**%**
2015	RSD	5,819,738,000	100%	347,925,000	5.98%
2016	RSD	5,042,899,000	100%	130,800,000	2.59%
2017	RSD	6,201,811,000	100%	150,200,000	2.42%
2018	RSD	5,546,278,000	100%	150,200,000	2.71%
2019	RSD	6,824,855,000	100%	707,318,000	10.36%
2020	RSD	6,205,228,000	100%	660,908,000	10.65%
2021	RSD	7,233,162,000	100%	672,978,000	9.30%
2022	RSD	7,964,279,000	100%	701,665,000	8.81%

Based on the available data for Novi Sad and Niš, it can be concluded that the local-level cultural institutions are equally reliant on funding from city budgets, which is where they receive between 80% and 95% of the funding they need for their operation.

The underside of this almost complete financial dependence is the susceptibility of these institutions to political control, which consists of the appointing and removal of executives in these institutions (once done directly, nowadays behind a façade of open competitions); the hiring of party faithful after each election cycle, general and local; and a high degree of self-censorship on the part of program creators in cultural institutions, making sure they don't do anything that might damage their relationship with the political centers of power (on which their survival depends directly).

The third important characteristic of actors from the cultural institutions system is that a considerable percentage of their budgets goes toward staff salaries (about 60% on average), as well as material expenditure and investments into venue and equipment maintenance (20% to 30%), whereas between 10% and 20% of the budget is used for program activities.

The fourth important characteristic concerns the fact that the system of cultural institutions in Serbia is extremely centralized. The data collected as part of the groundwork for mapping out the *Strategy for Culture Decentralization in Serbia* (2008) indicate that, when it comes to the accessibility of cultural organizations and associations in Serbia, four groups are clearly discernible. The first comprises libraries and cultural centers, available in nearly all somewhat larger towns in Serbia. The second group, which is also for the most part evenly distributed in terms of territory across the different regions of Serbia, includes organizations in the domain of amateur cultural practices (e.g., folk ensembles). The third group consists of traditional cultural institutions: theatres, museums, music orchestras, art galleries. Over half of all such institutions in Serbia are located in the capital. Finally, the fourth group are organizations working in the area of cultural output distribution (publishing houses, record labels, magazines, film production companies), which are almost exclusively centered in Belgrade[17].

Arguably the biggest contributing factor to the centralization of culture in Serbia is the fact that nearly all republic-level cultural institutions are located in Belgrade and nearly all provincial-level cultural institutions are located in Novi Sad. In addition to 30 cultural institutions that were founded by the City of Belgrade (12 theatres, 8 institutions dealing with cultural heritage, 4 libraries, 6 culture centers and galleries), another 21 republic-level cultural institutions are set in the capital. These institutions are "republic-level" only in that their activities are funded by all citizens of Serbia through taxes, yet their theatre productions, exhibitions, concerts and movie screenings are, with the odd exception, only seen by those who live in Belgrade. The situation is similar in Novi Sad, where, in addition to 13 cultural institutions and 8 culture stations (created during 2022, when Novi Sad was a European Capital of Culture), 14 out of 17 province-level cultural institutions are also located.

In the cultural field in Serbia there is a whole host of organizations active as part of creative industries and the civil sector in culture – in excess of 300 cinematographic companies, over 60 companies for music production and

17 Cf. the list of cultural institutions, concert halls and exhibition venues created as part of the project "E-kultura" (http://e-kultura.net/), as well as the electronic map of cultural institutions and organizations in Serbia (https://a3.geosrbija.rs/share/111135adf09a).

reproduction, more than 300 television and radio broadcasters, over 600 literary publishers, and over 200 newspaper publishers, more than 70% of which are located in Belgrade. It would be difficult to ascertain exactly how many people are employed in the "creative industries" in Serbia, how many companies and organizations operate within this framework, or how much revenue they generate[18]. According to numerous studies[19], the creative industries sector in Serbia is a collection of small organizations with low numbers of permanent staff (between three and twenty employees), average annual revenue of between €10,000 and €50,000, and little actual power in the field of cultural production in Serbia. The only exception are a handful of media giants, relative to the Serbian context, which are part of the propaganda machinery of ruling political parties and whose influence should not be underestimated, as well as a number of IT companies. In the period between 2002 and 2017, there were multiple initiatives for creating a national program for the development of creative industries, launched by the Ministry of Culture and Information, and, in 2018, a Council for Creative Industries was formed by the cabinet of the Prime Minister of Serbia[20]; however, this advocacy for the development of the sector has mostly remained at the nominal level.

There are about 550 active non-governmental organizations working in the civil sector in the cultural field in Serbia that have culture as their primary activity, 200 of which are in the domain of contemporary art. Non-governmental organizations working in the domain of contemporary art are the most active participants in international, especially regional, cultural cooperation. According to study results[21], they constitute the group with the highest educational attainment in the field of cultural production in Serbia, whose members are best versed in the skills of project writing and management, yet who have the least developed technical and financial resources. Since 2010, more than 90 of these organizations have been operating as part of the national network Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia (NKSS), which is also a member of the Regional Platform for Culture Kooperativa.

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18 According to data in the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends, in 2016 there were 6,841 companies in Serbia, with 13,697 entrepreneurs working in this sector, while most of these companies were micro-enterprises with less than three employees.

19 Jovičić and Mikić, 2006; Mikić, 2013; Rikalović, 2012a and Rikalović, 2012b, Đerić and Milojević (eds.), 2013, Dragićević-Šešić, Mikić and Tomka 2018.

20 Formation of the Council for Creative Industries was criticized by a large portion of the independent scene due to the lack of transparency in its operation and its operation in parallel with existing institutions.

21 Cvetičanin, 2010, 2020.

In addition to these organizations, amateur-cultural organizations and professional associations of artists are also classified as organizations of civil society in culture. There is no consensus regarding the number of amateur-cultural organizations currently in existence in Serbia, nor on the number of members therein. Representatives of the Amateurs' Association of Serbia speak of over 3,500 associations with over 450,000 members, whereas studies conducted by the Center for Studies in Cultural Development identified 695 amateur-cultural associations (2009), that is, 769 amateur societies (2011) in Serbia excluding Belgrade. If the data is correct that there are 114 amateur-cultural organization with around 40,000 members in the Association of Amateur-Cultural Organizations of Belgrade, then it is likely that the number of currently active societies of this type in Serbia is not over a thousand and, accordingly, that the number of members is approximately three times less (than the estimate by the Amateurs' Association of Serbia). Folklore-related creation is the dominant artistic activity among amateurs; however, there is also activity in the area of music, literature, fine arts, photography and film (Vukanović, 2011).

There are also 34 associations of artists in the civil sector in culture in Serbia, with over 12,000 members, 2,500 of whom are independent artists. These associations operate, on the one hand, as professional associations safeguarding professional standards and the quality of artistic production in the branch of art they represent, and, on the other, as artistic trade unions of sorts, granting the status of "independent artists" and campaigning for a better social security system for artists holding this status; finally, some of them also organize exhibitions and other cultural events.

All actors in the field of cultural production in Serbia, with the exception of cultural institutions (and national minority councils), have to rely on annual open calls by the Ministry of Culture and Information as a key public source for cofinancing their operation. However, as is evident from table 14, the funds awarded in these calls are laughably small compared to the budgets of cultural institutions. In the 2022 open call for contemporary creative output, from the Ministry of Culture's total budget of €112,851,000, the amount of €4,353,000 or 3.86% of the budget was allocated. Of that amount, €1,965,500 or 1.74% of the Ministry of Culture budget was awarded to projects of all the civil society organizations working in culture (non-governmental organizations, amateur-cultural organizations professional associations of artists, foundations). At the same time, projects by members of the Association Independent Culture Scene, which includes over 90 of the most active organizations in contemporary art, received €134,400 or 0.12% of the budget. This distribution accurately reflects the significance these other actors in the cultural field in Serbia hold for the creators of its cultural policy.

Table 14 – Distribution of resources in open calls by the Ministry of Culture and Information

In euros	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total budget of the Ministry of Culture	€ 62.975.000 (100%)	€ 79.565.000 (100%)	€ 67.180.000 (100%)	€ 96.740.000 (100%)	€ 112.851.000 (100%)
Total open calls for contemporary creative output	€ 3.087.000 (4.86%)	€ 3.145.000 (3.95%)	€ 2.343.000 (3,46%)	€ 4.335.000 (4.54%)	€ 4.353.000 (3.86%)
Total funds allocated to projects of NGOs working in culture	€ 871.000 (1.37%)	€ 950.000 (1.19%)	€ 765.000 (1,14%)	€ 1.921.000 (1.98%)	€ 1.965.500 (1.74%)
Total funds allocated to projects by members of NKSS	€ 148.500 (0.23%)	€ 130.000 (0.16%)	€ 96.350 (0.14%)	€ 168.000 (0.17%)	€ 134.400 (0.12%)

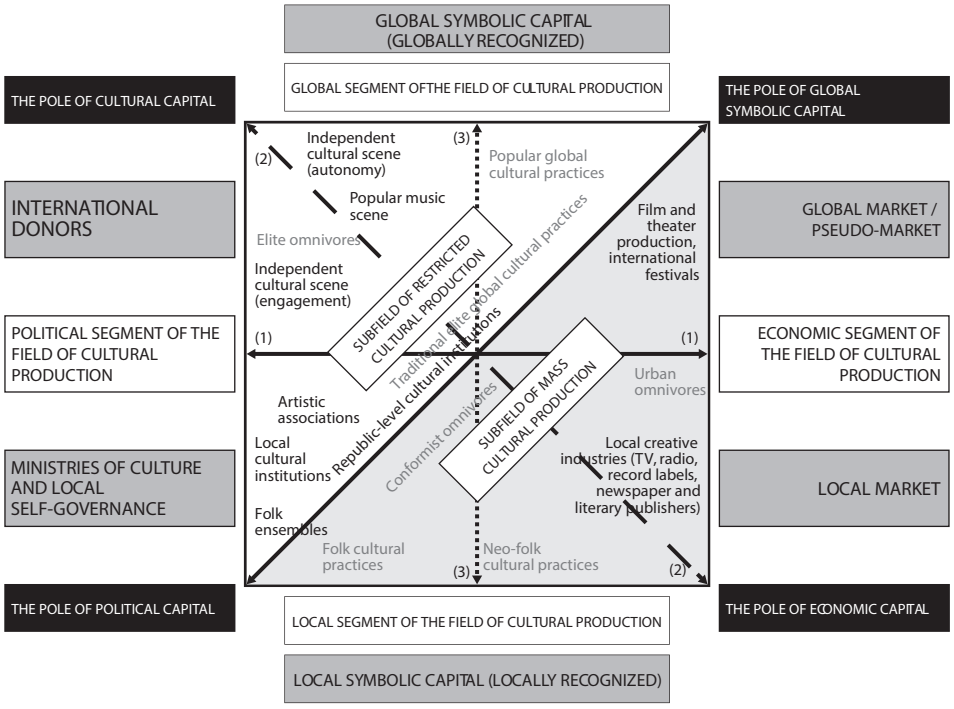
It should also be noted that all actors in the cultural field in Serbia, with the exception of republic-level cultural institutions, are eligible to participate in open calls. Thus, for example, in 2021, out of a total competition fund of €4,334,000, almost a third, or €1,312,000 (30.3%), was allocated to local cultural institutions, another €1,101,000 to private companies (25.4%), and about €1,921,000 to civil society organizations (44.7%). The average grant amount in that call was RSD 505,930,000 or about €4,290, while for projects by civil society organizations (CSOs) it was RSD 397,737,000 or €3,370.

All the data presented above start to make more sense once we take into account that the field of cultural production in Serbia is defined by three main oppositions: 1) between the heteronomous influence of politics (the “political” segment of the field of cultural production) and heteronomous influence of economy (“economic” segment of the field of cultural production); 2) between the heteronomous influence of economic capital (the sub-field of mass cultural production) and autonomous influence of cultural capital (sub-field of limited cultural production); and 3) between locally acclaimed (legitimated) artists and artworks (local segment of the field of cultural production) and those

who are globally acclaimed/legitimated (global segment of the field of cultural production).

The central opposition in the field of cultural production in Serbia is that which separates actors into those working under the auspices of politics, which enables them to enjoy a state of "pseudo-autonomy" and a seeming independence from audience demands and the laws of the market (the "political" segment of the field of cultural production), and those actors whose work takes place in the market, depends on it and is valorized in it (the "economic" segment of the field of cultural production). At the same time, the fact that the struggle between political and economic influences is a decisive factor in the operation of actors in the field of cultural production is indicative of the low level of autonomy of this field in Serbia.

Figure 1 – A model of the field of cultural production in Serbia[22]



22 This graphic representation of the field of cultural production in Serbia was first published in Cvetičanin, 2014.

The second main type of opposition in the field of cultural production is that between the sub-field of mass cultural production and the sub-field of limited cultural production. In this opposition, the dispute centers around what the most important principle is for ascribing value to cultural products and practices – their esthetic worth, their social (emancipatory) effect, or the economic value they generate (both for their creators and for the community at large). Characteristics of artistic practices and products of the juxtaposed actors follow directly from this. If the first type of opposition most clearly juxtaposes cultural institutions and creative industrie[23]s, then in the second type the opposition is strongest between representatives of the civil sector who work in contemporary art and cultural industries.

The third principal opposition in the field of cultural production is that between the "local" and "global" segments of the field of cultural production. Viewing the field of cultural production in Serbia from this vantage point, one can discern, on the one hand, those whose creative output is primarily aimed at a local audience and who expect acclaim on a local level – from the political entities ensuring their survival, local art critics and those handing out awards in culture, or from a local audience (those who are locally acclaimed, yet globally unknown). On the other hand, there are those who primarily follow global trends, who strive to measure their creative output using global criteria, who address a global audience and expect the legitimation of their work to come from international donors, international creators and art critics, that is, from an audience abroad (those with global acclaim, who are locally unknown and, more often than not, despised).

These three principal oppositions in the field of cultural production in Serbia can elsewise be viewed as oppositions between actors in the field in relation to:

1) how they ensure their survival;

2) the basic characteristics of their cultural production; and

3) who comprises their audiences.

Of course, these three aspects are closely related to each other, and the operation of each of the actors in the field and their "positionings" should be considered synchronously in relation to all these dimensions.

23 In particular, local cultural institutions and local creative industries.

When analyzing the position of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs, as well as the problems they face and the mechanisms generating gender inequalities, it is necessary to also take into account the determinants imposed by the field of cultural production in Serbia. In each of the analyses that follow, in the results obtained based on survey data, when reading our respondents' statements, one should bear in mind the central role of the state in the cultural field in Serbia and the role played by political parties in the appointing and removal of executives in cultural institutions, or in hiring in these institutions, setting their budgets or (furtively) supporting them in open calls. One should also bear in mind the low level of protections for workers' rights in Serbia as a whole, and especially in the cultural field. Other factors to consider include the commensurately low allocations for culture, an under-developed cultural market, nearly total dependence of all cultural actors on funds from the state budget, and, on the whole, an attitude of distrust toward non-governmental organizations. All this results in cultural workers being underpaid, creative industries in the country being underdeveloped (which are often a "one-(wo)man show" and operate under conditions of extreme uncertainty), and exceptionally precarious working conditions in the civil sector in culture. Absence of continuous cooperation between actors from the public, private and civil sectors is yet another characteristic of the cultural field in Serbia important for understanding the analyses provided in this study. It bears reiterating that Serbia is an extremely centralized country across all aspects, including the cultural sector, and that the experiences of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in Belgrade as compared to all other parts of the country (except perhaps in Novi Sad) are drastically different. Throughout, the reader should bear in mind the absence of systemic support for independent artists/freelancers, both men and women, who are then left to their own devices, which makes burnout the rule rather than the exception.

Only then will it become clear that the problems and obstacles facing women cultural workers and entrepreneurs are largely systemic in character, and that these structural factors are what facilitates interpersonal interactions where their rights are violated, gender-based violence is enacted and their health is put at risk. The focus should therefore be on raising awareness of these and the efforts to change them, as much as it should be on the individual cases of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs being impugned, hindered and threatened.

Mechanisms generating gender inequalities in the cultural field in Serbia

We studied mechanisms generating gender inequalities in the cultural field in Serbia across three spheres: the sphere of education, respondents' private lives (especially with regard to how they balance private and professional commitments) and their professional lives. Finally, we focused on different forms of gender discrimination in professional life.

In the survey, we provided respondents with a list of 20 different problems cultural workers might encounter, compiled based on the results of an internal focus group organized within the research team. The list mostly included problems that are not gender-specific, but that affect all those working in the cultural field.

Table 15 – Problems encountered by women workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia in the course of their work

Main problems	Yes	No	Total
Insufficient public funds for support of cultural programs	92 (44.7%)	114 (55.3%)	206 (100%)
Party-based appointment of leadership of public cultural institutions	90 (43.7%)	116 (56.3%)	206 (100%)
Corruption and nepotism in open calls, casting, program realization	76 (36.9%)	130 (63.1%)	206 (100%)
Party-based hiring and nepotism in hiring	72 (35.0%)	134 (65.0%)	206 (100%)
Obsolete and inadequate legislation in the domain of culture	71 (34.5%)	135 (65.5%)	206 (100%)
Excessive bureaucracy in project realization	65 (31.6%)	141 (68.4%)	206 (100%)
Underdeveloped market for cultural and artistic products	60 (29.1%)	146 (70.9%)	206 (100%)

Absence of tax exemptions for activities in the domain of culture	59 (28.6%)	147 (71.4%)	206 (100%)
Coworker incompetence	53 (25.7%)	153 (74.3%)	206 (100%)
Moratorium on hiring in cultural institutions	52 (25.2%)	153 (74.8%)	206 (100%)
Lack of opportunities for cultural worker mobility	52 (25.2%)	154 (74.8%)	206 (100%)
Censorship and self-censorship (due to pressures from parties and conservative groups and institutions)	51 (24.8%)	155 (75.2%)	206 (100%)
Donor-driven policy, with donors who support one-off projects, with no aspiration toward systematic solutions	51 (24.8%)	155 (75.2%)	206 (100%)
Decreasing numbers of donors for organizations working in culture	50 (24.3%)	156 (75.7%)	206 (100%)
Inadequate equipment for realization of cultural programs	44 (21.4%)	162 (78.6%)	206 (100%)
Unequal opportunities for working and advancement of cultural workers outside Belgrade and Novi Sad	42 (20.4%)	164 (79.6%)	206 (100%)
Poor collaboration between cultural institutions and NGOs in culture	39 (18.9%)	167 (81.1%)	206 (100%)
Lack of opportunities for professional development and additional training	36 (17.5%)	170 (82.5%)	206 (100%)
Lack of any legal protection for independent artists	36 (17.5%)	170 (82.5%)	206 (100%)
Non-payment of earnings, untimely payment, or payment not in accordance with contract	28 (13.6%)	178 (86.4%)	206 (100%)
Unequal work and advancement opportunities for men and women	26 (12.6%)	180 (87.4%)	206 (100%)
Non-payment of pension, social and health insurance contributions	20 (9.7%)	186 (90.3%)	206 (100%)
Selective inspections and oversight	8 (3.9%)	198 (96.1%)	206 (100%)

We made sure the list included problems characteristic of each of the three sectors in culture, as well as of the self-employed, i.e. freelancers. In order to see how respondents' answers formed into groups, that is, what clusters of problems tend to appear together, we conducted a factor analysis, the results of which are available in table 16.

Table 16 – General problems facing respondents in the cultural field in Serbia

	Components/factors				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Lack of opportunity for cultural worker mobility (to travel and exchange experiences with cultural workers from other cities and other countries	**.729**				
Lack of opportunities for professional development and additional training	**.661**				
Inadequate equipment for realization of cultural programs	**.590**				
Unequal opportunities for working and advancement of cultural workers outside Belgrade and Novi Sad	.425				
Excessive bureaucracy in project realization	.396				
Party-based appointment of the leadership of public cultural institutions		**.697**			
Party-based hiring and nepotism in hiring		**.652**			
Censorship and self-censorship (due to pressures from parties and conservative groups and institutions)		**.540**			
Absence of tax exemptions for activities in the domain of culture		-.464			
Non-payment of earnings, untimely payment, or payment not in accordance with contract			**.670**		

Unequal work and advancement opportunities for men and women			**.517**		
Moratorium on hiring in cultural institutions			-.418	-.350	
Decreasing numbers of donors for organizations working in culture				**.590**	
Insufficient public funds for support of cultural programs				**.590**	
Donor-driven policy, with donors who support one-off projects, with no aspiration toward systematic solutions				**.506**	
Corruption and nepotism in open calls, casting, program realization		.340	.364	.403	
Selective inspections and oversight					**.720**
Lack of any legal protection for independent artists and experts (unless their status has been regulated through a representative association)					**.460**
Non-payment of pension, social and health insurance contribution					**.456**
Coworker incompetence				-.304	.430
Underdeveloped market of cultural and artistic products (paucity of audiences and buyers)				.319	.403
Poor collaboration between cultural institutions and NGOs in culture					.302

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.a

a. Rotation converged in 68 iterations.

The analysis identified five factors, or five mutually distinct groups of problems[24]. The first group of problems refers to the *nonexistence of conditions for successful cultural work and development* ("lack of opportunities for mobility of cultural workers"; "lack of opportunities for further development and training", as well as "inadequate equipment for the realization of cultural programs"). These problems are present in all cultural sectors. The second factor pertains to *political party control over the operation of public, cultural and educational institutions* ("party-based appointment of executives in public cultural institutions", "party-based hiring and nepotism in the recruitment process" and "censorship and self-censorship (due to political-party pressures and pressure from conservative groups and institutions)"). Similarly, the third factor concerns the *flouting of legal obligations, including those on gender equality,* which consequently means it, too, is not sector-specific ("the non-payment of fees, or payments not made on time or in accordance with the contract" and "unequal opportunities between men and women for work and advancement"). The fourth factor refers to problems linked to *the politics of donors in culture*, which are mostly specific to work in the civil sector in culture ("ever decreasing number of donors for organizations working in culture"; "insufficient public funds to support cultural programs" and "donor-driven policy, with donors who support one-off projects, with no aspiration toward systematic solutions"). The fifth group of problems relate to *absence of security and support for those working in the business sector, self-employed and with freelancer status* ("absence of legal protections of any kind for independent artists and experts (whose status has not been regulated through a representative association)"; "non-payment of pension, social and health insurance contributions" and "selective inspections and oversight").

In the next question, respondents were again provided with a list, this time with gender-specific problems. At the top of the list was *the negative impact of undefined working hours on respondents' private lives* (for nearly half of them); next was the influence of age (over a third of the respondents) and *physical appearance on their professional career* (nearly 30% of the respondents). Also high on the list of issues was that respondents were *considered incompetent or less competent than their male coworkers* (more than a third of respondents) and that, *in leadership positions in organizations/ institutions/ projects, they faced not being accepted, being ignored and being disregarded* (a quarter of the total number of respondents, but over half of those currently or previously in a leadership role in their organization).

24 The most salient factorial "charges" that help define the meaning of factors in the tables are marked in bold.

Table 17 – Gender-specific problems facing women workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia in the course of their work

Have the respondents encountered any of the following problems:	Yes	No	Not applicable to me	No response	Total
Undefined working hours have had a negative impact on your private life/ marriage/ relationship with your partner/ parenting	99 (48.1%)	60 (29.1%)	31 (15.0%)	16 (7.8%)	206 (100%)
Your age has in any way influenced your professional career	73 (35.4%)	85 (41.3%)	25 (12.1%)	23 (11.2%)	206 (100%)
In your professional work, you were considered incompetent or less competent than your male coworkers because you are a woman	71 (34.5%)	85 (41.3%)	29 (14.1%)	21 (10.2%)	206 (100%)
Your physical appearance has in any way influenced your professional career	59 (28.6%)	94 (45.6%)	29 (14.1%)	24 (11.7%)	206 (100%)
As an executive in an organization/ institution/ project, you came across unacceptance, being ignored and disregarded because you are a woman	52 (25.2%)	93 (45.1%)	36 (17.5%)	25 (12.1%)	206 (100%)
You were paid less than your male counterparts for the same job, role or position	51 (24.8%)	103 (50.0%)	27 (13.1%)	25 (12.1%)	206 (100%)

Credit for joint work or co-authorship was attributed to a male coworker or coworkers	47 (22.8%)	100 (48.5%)	33 (18.0%)	26 (12.6%)	206 (100%)
You postponed parenthood due to professional commitments	38 (18.4%)	103 (50.0%)	39 (18.9%)	26 (12.6%)	206 (100%)
Family commitments limited your educational attainment	25 (12.1%)	116 (56.3%)	42 (20.4%)	23 (11.2%)	206 (100%)
You had to cut short your maternity leave due to professional commitments	22 (10.7%)	86 (41.7%)	69 (33.5%)	29 (14.1%)	206 (100%)
Others' attitude toward your sexual orientation has in any way influenced your professional career	7 (3.4%)	120 (58.3%)	49 (23.8%)	30 (14.6%)	206 (100%)

Here, factor analysis identified two basic components, or two distinct groups of problems (please see table 18). One cluster of issues pertains to the *different forms of gender discrimination at work* ("as an executive in an organization/ institution/ project, you came across unacceptance, being ignored and disregarded because you are a woman"; "you were paid less than your male counterparts for the same job, role or position"; "in your professional work, you were considered incompetent or less competent than your male coworkers because you are a woman" and "credit for joint work or co-authorship was attributed to a male coworker or coworkers"). The second factor, on the other hand, indicates *respondents' difficulty balancing working in culture with private life, and a cultural system unconcerned with women's additional duties in the private sphere* ("you postponed parenthood due to professional commitments"; "undefined working hours have had a negative impact on your private life/ marriage/ relationship with your partner/ parenting"; and "you had to cut short your maternity leave due to professional commitments"). We can also identify within this factor work issues related to physical/ biological characteristics, which do not impact men's careers in the same way ("your age has in any way influenced your professional career"; and "your physical appearance has in any way influenced your professional career").

Table 18 – Factors of gender-specific problems facing respondents in the cultural field in Serbia

	Components/factors	
	1	**2**
As an executive in an organization/ institution/ project, you came across unacceptance, being ignored and disregarded because you are a woman	**.738**	
You were paid less than your male counterparts for the same job, role or position	**.683**	
In your professional work, you were considered incompetent or less competent than your male coworkers because you are a woman	**.662**	
Credit for joint work or co-authorship was attributed to a male coworker or coworkers	**.629**	
Others' attitude toward your sexual orientation has in any way influenced your professional career	.446	
You postponed parenthood due to professional commitments		**.596**
Undefined working hours have had a negative impact on your private life/ marriage/ relationship with your partner/ parenting		**.579**
Your age has in any way influenced your professional career		**.516**
Your physical appearance has in any way influenced your professional career	.339	**.493**
You had to cut short your maternity leave due to professional commitments		**.476**
Family commitments limited your educational attainment		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

These seven groups of problems, pertaining to:

(1) nonexistence of conditions needed for successful cultural work and development;
(2) flouting of legal obligations, including those concerning gender equality;
(3) party control over the operation of public, cultural and educational institutions;
(4) donor politics in culture;
(5) lack of protections and support for those working in the business sector, self-employed and those with freelancer status;
(6) difficulty balancing working in culture with respondents' private lives, and lack of concern of the cultural system for women's additional commitments in the private sphere, and
(7) different forms of gender discrimination in the workplace,

all served as our guide in identifying the obstacles our interviewees had faced in their life and work, and the mechanisms that produce gender inequalities. We also used them when formulating the questions for the semi-structured interviews, which were the central method in our research.

Educational experiences of women cultural workers, artists and entrepreneursin the cutlural field in Serbia

Aware of the significance of education in shaping gender relations in a society, we dedicated a considerable portion of our study to this topic. Although our focus was on education in the cultural sector, we found the analyses from the related sector of science education very useful.

In their papers *Three approaches to gender equity in science education* (Sinnes, 2006) and *Gendered education in a gendered world: looking beyond cosmetic solutions to the gender gap in science* (Sinnes and Løken, 2014), Astrid Sinnes and Marianne Løken define three approaches aiming to achieve gender equality in education. They term these gender-neutral education, female-friendly education, and gender-sensitive education.

The approach advocating a *gender-neutral education* holds that there are no differences between men and women in terms of engaging in science (or, in our case, art) or what their education should look like. On this view, women are kept out of the world of science (and art) through political and social mechanisms external to science (or art) itself. Accordingly, initiatives for bringing about gender equality in education should be oriented toward removing the political and social obstacles preventing girls/ young women from developing their abilities, which are not lesser than, nor different from, those of boys/ young men. At the same time, the curriculum and teaching materials should not include or promote stereotypical roles of men and women. This position is identified as *equality feminism* by Sinnes and Løken, characteristic of the first wave of feminism.

Those advocating the approach of *female-friendly education*, like Kate Nash, hold that women have characteristics and abilities different from those of men, which need to be recognized and acknowledged as valuable (Nash, 2000, in: Sinnes, 2006). Their criticism of equality feminism is that it accepts the "patriarchal masquerade of neutrality" (Franklin, 2000) and they view the issue of "gender equality" as problematic, as it reproduces male standards as the norm. According to them, scientific knowledge, processes and priorities are crucially defined by the gender identity of the researcher. They maintain that, historically, science developed without the contribution of women or non-Western cultures, and that it therefore lacks the feminine qualities that would enhance its practices

and effects, and especially its social impact (Harding, 1998, in: Sinnes, 2006). This approach, which Sinnes and Løken term *difference feminism*, advocates for reform based on the premise that men and women can contribute to science in different ways, and that it is important to recognize and encourage these gender differences, as well as to encourage girls during the educational process to value and develop their own gender experiences and interests. Similar claims could also be made for art and arts education.

The authors label the third approach *gender-sensitive education*. In an early mention of this notion, Jane Roland Martin (1981, in: Sinnes, 2006) notes the systematic exclusion of women's contributions to the development of intellectual disciplines. Men's influence throughout the history of these disciplines was evident not only when deciding on the curriculum of various disciplines, but also their goals, how they defined their research subject, the methods they used, their canon of objectivity and principal metaphors. According to her, women have no problem mastering these competencies; however, this comes at a cost – having a masculine mold imposed on one. In opposition to this, Martin proposes a gender-sensitive education, where gender is taken into account when it brings about difference, and is ignored otherwise.

However, in the view of Sinnes and Løken, the position of *gender-sensitive education* was inspired by ideas of postmodern feminists, who questioned the view of women as a homogeneous group united by their biological characteristics. They criticized difference feminists, who, in emphasizing the differences between men and women, disregard the differences among women[25]. According to postmodern feminists, thus, many female voices don't get the opportunity to be heard. Donna Haraway (Haraway, 2003, in: Sinnes, 2006) thus states there are no epistemologically privileged positions, and no one, whether dominant or subjugated, sees the world better than the other. All knowledge is situated and everyone sees the world from their personal perspective. She, however, doesn't promote the thesis that all perspectives are therefore equally valuable, but that multiple perspectives, multiple stories, multiple voices are always better than one (Haraway, 1989). Accordingly, different female perspectives would have to be present. Sinnes and Løken follow in a similar vein, suggesting that one possible approach would be to listen to many "smaller stories" in order to gain knowledge of the world. It is important, however, to ensure that this approach doesn't result once again in a position where gender inequalities are overlooked, where achievements are simply the result of differences in ability and preference – concealing the marginalization women experience.

25 Similarly, Mac an Ghaill (1994), Epstein (1998), Reay (2001) and Connell (2000) also note the manifold of male and female experiences.

According to Christine Forde (Forde, 2014), one of the possible ways of avoiding this is the approach advocated by Becky Francis (Francis, 2010). In formulating her perspective, she builds on Judith Butler's analyses (Butler, 1990) of gender as performance and Bakhtin's (Bakhtin, 1934) analyses of monoglossia and heteroglossia[26]. Based on her own empirical research, she proposes an approach which, on the one hand, allows for many different gender positions and behaviors that cannot be reduced to binary oppositions between men and women (gender heteroglossia), while, on the other hand, acknowledging the existence of a dominant gender monoglossia which treats masculinity as rational, strong and active, and equates femininity with being emotional, weak and passive.

Any educational reforms that would take the direction of gender-sensitive education should not assume that all students will have the same preferences and needs just because they belong to the same gender, but should instead encourage all pupils and students to value their own experiences and interests, and include them in their activity. At the same time, Forde stresses that it is of great importance not to use gender alone in order to explain educational experiences and educational achievements. Instead, it is necessary to introduce the idea of intersectionality, which takes into account the influence of other social factors, like social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.

Where domestic literature is concerned, the paper *Feminist Pedagogy and Literature Studies (Feministička pedagogija i studije književnosti)*, by Ana Kolarić, offers the perspective of feminist pedagogy at the intersection between the sectors of science and education in culture. In that sense, it is of interest here not only for its broader theoretical framework, but also as a personal testimony from the domestic tertiary context of literature studies. Using the distinct example of a curriculum, it presents the practices of feminist pedagogy which is based on syllabi that 1) include writings by women authors and theorists, as well as a feminist analysis of the canon; 2) include areas of study which shift the standard ways of presenting literary tradition; 3) promote discussion instead of individualist student work (Kolarić, 2018).

Bearing in mind these approaches, when researching educational experiences, we discussed five basic topics with our interviewees. The first topic concerned their choice of educational path: why they selected an art education, whether

26 Bakhtin uses the term "monoglossia" to denote the dominant forms of language which express the worldview and interests of dominant social groups, whereas "heteroglossia" denotes the multitude of varieties within one language. Thus, while on the macro level there is stability (monoglossia), on the micro level there are varieties, contradictions and resistance (heteroglossia).

someone from their family worked/works in art, and whether someone had influenced their choice of education (and who). The second topic regarded studies and the experience of going to university – what they studied and where; if they didn't go to university in their hometown, what was the experience like of changing their place of residence; how they funded their studies and whether they worked while studying. One of the topics concerned continued education and self-education. We asked our interlocutors whether they worked on furthering their artistic/ professional education, as well as whether they were doing so on their own or were part of a formal or informal educational program, and, if the latter was the case, who funded this. Questions also covered whether their town/city provided opportunities for in/formal professional education, and whether members of their collective/ team/ family were supportive of this. The fourth topic related to the curriculum with regard to a gender perspective: their evaluation of their study program in terms of the presence of gender-related content and a gender perspective, whether the program included women artists, authors or cultural workers, and whether some of them were their role models. Finally, we discussed the different forms of gender discrimination they had encountered in the course of their education and incidents of sexual harassment some of them had been exposed to.

Choosing an arts education

At the very first step, regarding the choice of education, strong class, gender and territorial influences were evident, refracted through family support or lack thereof, and the reasons listed by parents for and against an arts education and a career in the arts.

In our sample, among those who had attended high schools for the arts or graduated from art-related university programs, a relatively small number of respondents came from families of artists. In their case, parental support was almost a given.

> *My parents had a decisive influence. They were both into art. Dad had a large art collection. I would go to exhibitions with him, and this got me into reading, so when I got my first paycheck as a tour guide I bought a book titled "Slika i smisao" ("Painting and Meaning")… I forget the author (laughter), a well-known critic at the time, and so I decided at 17 to study history of art.* (**Interviewee no. 9, retired art historian, 70 years old**)

As a matter of fact, I come from a family of artists, visual artists, and I've essentially done art since I was very little, but I started with music before anything else, and then the dramatic arts. Fine arts were always sort of present, and in fact, both the artistic spheres I work in, it was born out of this idea of a fight for equality. Also, setting socially engaged topics within the framework of art. (**Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer, about 40 years old**)

On the other hand, where family members were not artists or were not artistic, the choice of an arts education or a career in the arts was frequently frowned upon, primarily because this profession was seen as lacking security and profitability.

No one in my family had ever been in a similar line of work. From a very young age I dreamed of how amazing it would be if I could work in film, that's what interested me [...] However, my family were not supportive, precisely because none of them had ever done this and it was too abstract for them to grasp, plus they saw it as being a bit difficult for a woman perhaps. The consensus always seems to be that it's better for a woman or girl, that is [...] to have a safe job in an environment familiar to her family, where they might be able to help her out [...] So there was no support [...] they managed somehow to convince me this was impossible for me, especially [name of the school], which has a reputation as a faculty most people get into using connections. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

In this specific instance, the parents posed a serious obstacle to the respondent's artistic aspirations, using the argument that this was not-for-the-likes-of-us. In his studies of education in France, Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated that working-class children, even if they possess equal or higher ability than those from middle-class families, abandon their studies more often as they believe they were not intended for people like them.

Gender inequality compounds this class inequality. In her paper *Gender and the Artist Archetype: Understanding Gender Inequality in Artistic Careers* (2016), based on extensive feminist literature and building on Joan Acker's theses of gendered organizations, Diana Miller creates a composite sketch of sorts of the paradigmatic cultural worker. Acker sees as gendered those organizations and jobs that have an inherently masculine organization, since, deep in the substructure, they are based on the principle of gender difference that reflects men's interests. Like the paradigmatic worker, the paradigmatic artist, too, is implicitly male, which means that women cultural workers work in an environment not organized in accordance with their needs (Miller, 2016). From this perspective,

the challenge for women artists-to-be when it comes to selecting an education becomes greater still, because they are preparing to enter a field systemically built on inequalities. Moreover, what is true of gender is also true of class and other social inequalities.

Such a state of affairs in the field of culture is easily compounded by conservative ideas, as in the testimony above, about how certain professions are not suitable for women as they are seen as "difficult" or "unstable." On the other hand, somewhat ironically, it is precisely sectors like culture and education that are highly feminized. This means that they employ more women, but also that salaries are lower in these sectors and their social status less valued. Relatively recent data on the cultural sector in Serbia are available in the aforementioned study *Women in Public Cultural Institutions* (Milanović, Subašić and Opačić, 2017). However, even if these are feminized professions, there is a division within them into "male" and "female" jobs (pp. 79–82). Labor is stereotypically divided based on requiring "greater physical strength", e.g. for the job of an archaeologist, or a certain "sensibility", such as the job of a curator. All such divisions are based on prejudice, merely excusing the unequal power relations between men and women cultural workers. The "male" profession of directing is a perfect illustration of this, as this particular segment of filmmaking remains a bastion of gender inequality (as argued by Bogojević, 2013; Štimac Radin, 2009; and others).

Bearing in mind all these different levels of inequality, parental opposition to one of the respondents' choice of a career in the arts is hardly surprising.

> *My father was the main obstacle there. He thought it was absolutely idiotic. So what, now you want to make movies, only kids of movie industry professionals can afford to do that [...] their parents all move in the same circles. We're like working-class and you want to do this, that's just dumb, we don't even know anyone who's in that line of work, [...] and even if you get into that school, you're still going to have an insecure future because you're not from that world [...] So there (smile) then maybe I was a little, because I was 18, it's like you're young, you believe that, uh-huh okay, maybe he's right. But you can't shake the idea, and then you decide to give it a go anyway, come what may…* (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

Our respondents who had studied the humanities, such as archaeology, had similar experiences. When their parents were working-class or lower-middle-class, it wasn't just the symbolic crossing of class borders that was a problem; there was also the practical issue of funding studies in one of the university cities.

My mother is a teacher, my father worked in a steel mill [...] my parents' professions couldn't have been more different than this, but they still had a lot of understanding for what I wanted to do. They didn't like it, though. At the time when I enrolled, 1993, we all know the circumstances back then, it actually did make more sense to enroll in something with a better outlook, with possibilities of getting hired and working in the job you were studying for [...] However, I have always followed this inner impulse of mine, and finally it boiled down to archaeology. Now at that time, during those years, the intake at archaeology was 16 government-funded [students], and we all know what the financial situation was like, so they were sincerely hoping I wouldn't get in [...] But I had their full support later on to continue my studies. They didn't pose any sort of hindrance. They were proud, I'd managed to get government funding, as one of only 16. So it was like, we'll manage, what can we do, we'll take it one step at a time and figure it out. So that was… (**Interviewee no. 10, museum director, about 50 years old**)

Despite these obstacles, when deciding on an arts education, the feeling that this was their calling was the deciding factor for many of our interviewees. Even when, like this interviewee, they enrolled in and came close to graduating from other study programs, what would finally tip the scales was a sense that their future should be connected to art and that they had the ability required.

It matters probably that I come from outside the capital, so it was like a game of telephone. We couldn't even get first-hand information about what the entrance exam looked like, instead I had people telling me it was in fact impossible, that it was all done through connections, that it was this closed circle of people [...] So I enroll in English [...] And I studied English language and literature, made it to the fourth year. However, I just couldn't shake this idea that I just want to make films, so in the end I secretly (smiles) attended a preparatory course and took the [name of school] entrance exam. I got accepted and stayed there. **(Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

The influence of love of art and the powerful impact of a sense of one's calling is evident in the example of the pianist who chose her profession as a child. Not even the numerous obstacles, such as the lack of an instrument, could discourage her from following her dream.

In enrolled in music school out of sheer curiosity. I do come from a musical family, my mom is a very good singer and she loves music. My aunts as well, all three of them. Also, my two older cousins played the guitar. They lived in [name of city]. The music school principal used to live across the street from them. So we would often spend summers at their house, and I was always like, everybody else would be outside playing and I'd get the guitar and start fiddling with it, trying to figure something out on my own. They showed me some things, taught me, they're my idols – I'd always looked up to them. So that's sort of how I started playing the guitar [...] It wasn't like I was thinking about going to music school, but when we were in around the second grade of primary school, the guys from music school came to advertise that they had like a preparatory class and that we could visit the music school. So the friend sitting next to me wanted to go. So I stayed after school with her so she could take that entrance exam and, because I was bored outside, I came in after her, like I'll do that entrance exam too. So I do it, and later when the results came out I see my name on the list, see I'd been admitted. So I come home to my mom and dad and tell them: "You know what, I got into music school." They start laughing, "when did you get in", I say "the other day, I went with Jelena, we both got into music school. So I'd like to go." [...] So I go and I realize I can't play the guitar, because in [name of town], which is where we lived, it's this tiny town, they only had piano, accordion and violin classes. And that's how I started playing the piano. So for the next 2 years or so I'd pester my dad every day, after he'd come home from work, to take me to music school so I could practice. And after 2 years, when he realized I wasn't going to quit, he'd finally had enough and he bought a piano. So that's how I got my own piano, and it was as if I already knew then that I would definitely be… a pianist as well – perhaps not only a pianist, but a pianist for sure.
(**Interviewee no. 23, pianist/pedagogue, about 40 years old**)

Another point we found significant in relation to the choice of an arts education was how many of our interviewees, at a time when the role of schools and educators is on the whole underappreciated, cited their teachers and educators as having had a crucial influence on their direction in life and the choice of a career in the arts.

Why I chose acting in the first place? Yes well. That's exactly what I cited in an interview. My primary-school Serbian-language teacher, who was this amazing person, [first and last names], he died a while ago. He would assign us poems to learn by heart as usual, but I always did this differently. That is, it was inspiring to me to say it in the first person and to mean what I say. And I always sounded different to the others, because I would

do it with ease. So he would then assign me more and more, and he sort of took note, and I already knew at that point that I feel best when I say what I mean. Which is what acting is. (**Interviewee no. 15, actress, about 40 years old**)

I was actually just talking with some friends about how I think my literary taste was formed in my high-school Serbian language and literature lessons, where our teacher [first and last names] exerted the biggest influence on my friends and me. Her influence was extremely positive, both in the manner of thinking things through and in the selection of works and in the manner of thinking through the books we didn't like, the techniques of giving and receiving [...] And her influence, which didn't only include literature but also this general onrush into the cultural sphere, actually had a lot to do with where and how I am today. (**Interviewee no. 8, author, NGO sector, about 40 years old**)

And that was where my piano teacher [first and last names] had a decisive influence on me. She was really a one-of-a-kind person in my life, she was, as they say, everything to me. She could take the place of anyone, both a parent and an idol and absolutely anyone. At that there moment, I just wanted to be like her. It often comes back to me now. [...] now I can be and I really try to be for my students what my piano teacher was to me back then. She had this credo that not all children who go to music school are going to become artists, not all of them will end up doing that for a living. But, if they are introduced to music in the right way, they will all definitely become music lovers and attend concerts, they will be able to enjoy music, which is actually what we should all have. (**Interviewee no. 23, pianist/ pedagogue, about 40 years old**)

The arts education of girls and young women unfolds within the context of a gender unequal and insufficiently sensibilized system. Additionally, the challenges facing future artists are compounded by class, geographical and other inequalities impeding their access to education.

This system that fails to recognize their needs is counterpointed by their personal efforts, the efforts of their family and immediate communities, including supportive educators. Nevertheless, the women in our study are those who have managed to prevail over inequalities and who have positioned themselves as cultural workers. The question of the number of women, young working-class women living outside large urban centers, who fall by the wayside in the process remains an open one.

The experience of going to university in a different city

Territorial obstacles are also frequently mentioned in the interviews. A considerable number of our interviewees originally came from small towns, whereas tertiary arts education is only available in the few university cities – Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš and Kragujevac. Leaving their childhood home, adapting to a new environment, and facing financial problems presented serious challenges to these young people. This was especially the case with those interviewees who studied in the early 1990s, a period of wars, international sanctions and hyperinflation for Serbia.

> *It was a really grueling and difficult experience because I enrolled in the fall of 1993 when there was terrible inflation. We were literally starving. We would bring frozen food from back home, barely scraping by as best we could. The move itself was traumatic for me in the context of really being affected by the deprivation, poverty in every sense of the word. That year it was the inflation, the next it was power blackouts, when we had problems with the heating, with the light we needed for studying. You find yourself in a different city, with no money, needing a thousand little things that you can't get because they are not available and you don't have the money to buy them [...] I knew I had nowhere else to go, I couldn't go back. It's like when someone who's been through something terrible tells you: "I had to persevere until the end because there was nowhere for me to go back to, and nothing to go back to." It was this really major thing in my life. There was no place for me to go back to. My parents were factory workers – my father worked in [name of company], my mother in [name of company]. Their wages at the time were one mark each, we couldn't even afford rent, so I ended up living with my godparents. So it was literally a struggle for survival [...] But I think it made me stronger. Yes, I became stronger as an individual, as a person. I positioned myself as a fighter and someone who, however many times I fall, I have to use all my resources to get back up again and continue where I left off, and that's that.* (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, director of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

> *I enrolled in 1992, with the inflation at its worst. It was an insane experience really. Like, the deprivation, no heating, no power, nothing. Freezing to the bone at university. Since I met my first-year program requirements already in December, I had to start working in January, regardless of the fact my father was a doctor and my mother a teacher. They had three daughters, and the only way for us to continue our education was a sort of a "make-do" system. I started working, and worked the entire time I was studying,*

through to the end of my senior year. I dragged my feet for a little while after that, because that's when the bombing happened and everything, but essentially completed it successfully, and it was a great experience. I fought really hard, for myself, my sister and for all of us, and it really made a difference. I mean, I felt good, and independent and capable and everything was different. (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

Even for those who studied in the 2000s, under more normal circumstances, leaving the parental home as a teenager and moving to bigger cities wasn't easy.

*Essentially it is hard in the beginning. I mean of course, to uproot yourself so to speak and move to a different city. It was a little challenging at first, but as I said, I have part of my family here, and then, as soon as I came here I started living with my sister, so it wasn't that traumatic for me. And essentially I've [...] been living in [name of city] for 14, 15 years now. I've grown accustomed to being here, I dunno… When I graduated from university, it was like, am I going back home, am I going someplace else or what [...] it's true, unfortunately, of all of us who come here from smaller towns, afterwards it's really difficult to make the move back, because you then realize all the opportunities the city has to offer. I mean, it was unthinkable for me. (***Interviewee no. 17, sociologist, creative industries NGO, 35 years old**)

Major, really. More in terms of life itself, in the sense that I became totally independent at one point. When I moved to [name of city], I didn't even know where you went to pay the utilities or what "Informatika" was [a public utility company in the city; authors' comment]. So I learned all of this like life stuff, I grew more independent, realized it was time for me to take full responsibility of myself, and actually this led to me finding employment. Already when I was in my second year at university I started working as a journalist with the public broadcasting service of Vojvodina... It was actually a major change, a change anyone originally from a small town experiences. I wasn't unfamiliar with [name of city]. I used to come here before of course, spent time here and lived here even before uni, during this transition between the final year of high school and start of university, for 5 months or so I think, so I was already here, I found my feet so to speak. I've come to have a finger in every pie in town, so much so that [...] I think [name of city] has become sort of small for me. (**Interviewee no. 3, PR and marketing manager, NGO, 27 years old**)

Still, most of our interviewees speak about these as invaluable experiences that served them well later in life. Many pointed out that they matured during those years, gained the skills needed for living independently, and found their path, both personally and professionally.

> *In a way, I think it's a privilege not to study in your home town, but somewhere else. It's like a whole other university in its own right as they say, when at eighteen you have to live on your own, to manage money, decide what you're going to eat, make sure your laundry gets done and so on. That in itself is important for anyone who gets the chance to do it.* (**Interviewee no. 29, theatre executive director, about 30 years old**).

Between the material challenges of renting, inflation, financial crises and a poor living standard, on the one hand, and a desire to learn and gain independence, on the other – that would be our respondents' experience of going away to university in a nutshell. Whether becoming independent really has to be a navigating between the Scylla of material difficulty and Charybdis of gender inequality remains an important question to take into consideration when creating educational policy.

Continuing education

Our respondents' love of their work and of art in general was also evident in that nearly all of them stated they were in a continual process of development, that they were always learning, gaining new knowledge and skills. At the same time, and especially for those in the cultural industries segment, continually keeping abreast of any developments, building on their knowledge and updating their skills was a necessity of "keeping up" with others, so that they would stay competitive and be hired for new jobs.

For some of our interviewees, gaining skills in the area of project writing and project management has enabled them to work in their primary area, artistic activity.

> *I expended so much energy, together with my coworker, we did a lot of volunteer work before we reached this stage where we now have six or seven projects, which involve so many tasks and us doing various types of jobs. I can honestly say I have learned a whole new trade besides acting, because project management and writing project proposals is no small feat. But I learned how to do it, so I'm not afraid anymore and I know*

how to find funding for some of my ideas. When I was only an actress, though, this was impossible, like, I had ideas but who was going to give me the money to put them into practice? So that's sort of the idea, what I'm thinking is, to gather artists of various backgrounds, give them support, so they realize they can work on their art by first coming up with the funds they need themselves [...] I use all of my knowledge toward the goal of creating in my city an atmosphere in which you are free to create, to exchange, to learn. **(Interviewee no. 20, actress, NGO, 35 years old**)

Doing two, and sometimes even multiple, jobs in the cultural field, which requires women artists' engagement in the fields of management and raising funds as well, is a result of insufficient investment into the cultural sector, which we have discussed earlier in the text. In relation to this excessive workload, we found of particular interest the remark made by an anonymous respondent, expert from Slovenia working with people who suffer from burnout syndrome, from the study *Burn-out Aid: Burnout Syndrome in Non-governmental Organizations in Poland, Croatia and Slovenia. Expert Interviews Conclusions* (2020a). Namely, her estimate is that 40% of her work in the non-governmental sector is spent on administrative tasks, whereas the Social Security Chamber caps the norm at 20% (p. 13). Similarly, excessive workload, resulting from tasks that are completely outside the primary job description, is at least double what is prescribed and/or formally recognized. What such working conditions have to do with the feeling of being overwhelmed is, among others, the topic of the next chapter.

The great majority of our interviewees stated that they take continued education extremely seriously and that they were prepared to pay out of pocket to participate in educational seminars.

I'm someone who is definitely going to be learning for as long as I'm alive, I'm always in a process of learning. Now too. No, I don't have any financial support. Any type of decision to do something means one of two things: either I found something I can currently follow online or something that's free and thus affordable, or I will simply buy myself a masterclass, a seminar or something else I'm interested in. I'm always planning where I'm going to go, who I'm going to hear speak, following these people who are important in my sector, where they're giving talks and such, so then I can maybe plan to attend. Of course, I do this out of pocket, of course, which always involves some budgeting acrobatics… (**Interviewee no. 21, music pedagogue/ theoretician, about 40 years old**)

For others, development is mostly linked to informal forms of education, participation in free online seminars, literary or translation workshops, or following certain podcasts that deal with issues in culture and the arts.

> *Mostly informal. The older I get, the less satisfied I am with this formal element. My children graduated from university, I didn't. But I somehow couldn't go back. I'm constantly moving in these artistic, literary circles, I attend seminars, follow podcasts to do with literature and culture in the region. There are a number of interesting ones in Croatia, both when it comes to children's books and for translation.* (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

However, there are also those who are thinking about continuing their formal education, at the highest level.

> *Yes, yes, yes … Definitely. I'm always learning, and I'm actually currently considering doing another PhD somewhere abroad. I think it's time for me to shake things up a little, since I have this need also through my practice, because I work with people, researching topics that are both local but also universal, so I've been thinking I should either do a postdoc or another doctoral program. I do a lot of reading and studying and I'm kind of always trying to develop my opinions, how I articulate my work, media-wise, technically, on every level.* (**Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer, about 40 years old**)

It was also clear that, with only a single exception, this immense desire and readiness for self-development on the part of the cultural workers we interviewed wasn't accompanied by any form of systemic support on the part of cultural institutions or government bodies.

A similar trend of absence of systemic support for development was found by a study of the related area of academic work, titled *Juggling Patriarchy and Precarity: How Women in Academia Balance Family and Professional Obligations (Žongliranje između patrijarhata i prekarijata: Usklađivanje porodičnih i profesionalnih obaveza akademskih radnica;* 2018), by Ćeriman, Fiket and Rácz. The respondents in that study also noted that their further development was typically not funded by their institution, nor by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development at the time, except in exceptional cases (cf. Pudar Draško and Rácz in this study, pp. 51–53). In the meantime, this ministry has introduced some practices of financial support for development. It is still unclear how the new plans and strategies of the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation are going to promote

gender equality. While the situation has improved somewhat, the experiences of respondents from 2018 remain relevant. Comparatively, it can be concluded that it appears that the situation both in science and in culture isn't satisfactory when it comes to systemic investment in staff development.

The gender aspect of the topic of continued education and professional development lies in the significance it is attributed by women, who are continually exposed to doubt of their abilities, even when they possess formal confirmation of their qualifications and knowledge, but especially when they do not, the data on which are presented in the chapter *Discrimination Against Women in the Workplace in the Cultural Sector*. In many professions, criticism of women is harsher, they face higher expectations and double standards, and any errors are ascribed to the inferiority of their gender (Nikolić, 2016, using the music scene in Serbia and the region as an example). Men are appointed to leadership positions with a frequency that is disproportionate to their workforce participation in the cultural field, and they tend to secure more revenue and credit even when these should rightfully go to a woman. Consequently, it is not unusual that so many women turn to intensive development in an attempt to mitigate such experiences proactively, by acquiring knowledge and working on personal development. This is especially significant in relation to the socialization of girls and women in the direction of education and schooling over some other spheres of life and work, on the one hand, and the individualizing discourse of personal development in a neoliberal society, on the other.

Assessment of study programs in terms of the presence of gender themes and a gender perspective

The fourth topic related to educational experiences dealt with gender themes and a gender perspective in study programs. Of the three aforementioned approaches to education striving toward gender equality – gender neutral education, or education that doesn't contain negative gender dimensions, female friendly education, and gender sensitive education – our interviewees' experiences only included elements of the first.

Some of them noted that, in the course of their studies, there were no specifically gender-related themes, nor the examining of course content from a gender perspective, but also that there was no need for this. At the same time, the interviewees emphasized that women artists ("the few that there have been") were represented in their study programs. While at university, they themselves had not experienced any form of gender discrimination; on the contrary, they felt they had been offered the same opportunities as their male classmates.

Of course they were. It's the history of world literature. The history and theory of world literature, and we absolutely, so, completely equally, on an equal footing, from ancient literature through to the 20th century… In fact, we didn't differentiate at all, so to speak, between… we didn't focus on women's writing so much. We did study all women authors – the few that there have been – who are relevant to the history of literature very, very carefully, even in the theory and history of literature, and in literary criticism. **(Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**)

Believe it or not, I never paid attention to this. I absolutely read what I had to and what I chose to based on my preferences. I never made any distinctions there, nor would I specifically make a choice based on one gender or the other. I don't know, if I tried to recall it now… I would give an inaccurate answer. (**Interviewee no. 7, librarian, cultural institution, about 60 years old**)

On the other hand, a gender perspective was important to the majority of our interviewees, and was something they had found lacking during their studies. Not one of them stated that their study program systematically included a gender perspective, not even when the teaching faculty consisted almost exclusively of women. They cited individual examples of professors who worked on gender themes, and consequently also included them in their syllabus.

In terms of the program, there was absolutely nothing there to that effect. Since most of the specialist-subject professors at the camera department, that is, not most but all of them, were men. There's not even a single woman teaching. [...] At that time they didn't even realize that it might be interesting for us as young women to have some information about women behind the camera, that it might be inspiring [...] They did accept five female students, but I don't think it crossed their minds even for a moment that perhaps they could teach about some women behind the camera. They were running their program totally unrelated to this. I think that, at that time, it wasn't at all, they just didn't get it… So, none of that stuff was in the program. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

Well, it was never discussed really. In my entire experience at university, and I'm including all the years since I graduated, only once in my life [...] did I hear a talk about something that could be termed a gender perspective in architecture… (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, 35 years old**)

Where women authors are concerned, for example women composers, it's… come to think of it, literally no one's ever problematized it. I did have this experience when I was teaching in school, when I realized this, I was teaching this great class of seniors then. This happened in the music school in [name of town]. So one of my students, a girl, asks me: "Can I ask something, Miss? We've learned about so many things in the history of music, from early human communities onward, Ancient Greece, the Middle Ages and so on. You know what I've realized – there haven't been any women composers. How is that possible? There aren't any, none." I go: "Whoa, what do you mean there are none?" So they reached their senior year, they're eighteen, and no one's ever told them [...] same as me. But someone did ask this question, and that's already a step in the right direction. But for no one to have ever mentioned a single woman composer. Ever. And this is a subject they'd attended all four years. (**Interviewee no. 21, music pedagogue/ theoretician, about 40 years old**)

Some interviewees noted it was surprising that in art departments, where students prepare for unconventional professions, feminism was treated like some sort of bugbear and that the significance of gender equality is not recognized. Out interviewees therefore propose gender sensitizing in all aspects of studies, bearing in mind different forms of gender discrimination, both toward faculty and toward students.

It might sound dumb, but feminism is still some kind of bugbear for the teaching faculty, also, which is really weird, in art schools. Gender equality too, it is absolutely not seen as something that still requires some sort of struggle, although we are faced with different forms of discrimination every day, whether against students or against faculty. There have also been various incidents at the academy so I think we should be working on this daily and reacting to it. (**Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer, about 40 years old**)

Respondents' experiences in this segment are negative in unison, which only highlights the lack of a gender sensitized approach to educational policies in Serbia today. Ironically, this presents a significant discrepancy from the country's important corpus of feminist work, as evidenced by the collection of papers *Women Scientists in Society (Naučnice u društvu*, 2020), edited by Lada Stevanović, Mladena Prelić and Miroslava Lukić Krstanović.

Gender discrimination and sexual harassment over the course of education

We learned from our interviewees' personal experiences that, unfortunately, gender discrimination and different forms of sexual harassment do occur during education. At this point, and before we go into further analysis, it is important to note that some of the respondent testimonies may be upsetting.

In response to the question whether they had been exposed to certain forms of sexual harassment and discrimination during education, as many as two thirds of survey respondents stated they had been addressed in a lascivious manner or received inappropriate sexual comments during education. One third had been subjected to unwanted touching, and as many as 22 respondents (over 10% of the sample) to sexual violence. Another 14 attested to having been victims to sexual blackmail, and there were also examples of harassment due to sexual orientation, as well as social exclusion due to disability.

Table 19 – Forms of sexual harassment and gender discrimination during education

In the course of education, were you exposed to:	**yes**	**no**	**n.r.**	**total**
a) Lascivious speech and inappropriate comments	135 (65.5%)	68 (33.0%)	3 (1.5%)	206 (100%)
b) Unwanted touching	67 (32.5%)	134 (65.0%)	5 (2.5%)	206 (100%)
c) Sexual assault/violence	22 (10.7%)	175 (85.0%)	9 (4.3%)	206 (100%)
d) Sexual blackmail	14 (6.8%)	186 (90.3%)	6 (2.9%)	206 (100%)
e) Harassment due to sexual orientation	5 (2.4%)	189 (91.7%)	12 (5.8%)	206 (100%)
f) Exclusion due to disability	6 (2.9%)	183 (88.8%)	17 (8.3%)	206 (100%)

The interviews included several distressing personal testimonies[27] about inappropriate conduct of teachers and professors toward female students.

> *One of the most important segments, which may have defined my university studies, was the professor who mentored me, my female classmates and myself, who treated us, primarily us girls, in a way a professor should not … It's only in hindsight that I realize it was actually some sort of sexual harassment. But at the time we accepted it as normal, that it was sort of the done thing. And even when we like complained to one of the female professors, she said, well, he's male, you're female, you're not minors, you're young women, it's up to him to lunge at you, and it's up to you to defend yourselves.*

> *So then it was difficult to gauge how to react. Because after all, he's your teacher and has this sort of authority over you … So then you need to like defend yourself and keep some shred of dignity, but also not overdo it so you end up excommunicated from the faculty or have it create even more of a problem for you.*

> *I don't know, there were others we heard stories about, in the sense that they supported what he did, they considered it normal, but I haven't heard that they were like that themselves. And in general, if everyone says "Everyone knows about him," like everyone's aware of this … He's been married three times, twice to his students, and they had children and everything. Absolutely everybody knew, but of course no one said anything, it's like it is what it is …*

What they worried about at the time and what is especially concerning is the lack of reaction on the part of other members of the faculty, who – instead of sanctioning sexual harassment and protecting students – frequently normalize such behavior. What is more, the predator's victims can be accused as if they were somehow guilty for having been exposed to professors' inappropriate actions.

> *Of course, there were those who were sort of in a relationship with him, in love for real and what not… But it would be dumb to say "they asked for it." Whether or not they consented, they were twenty-five, he was fifty. He could manipulate them as he pleased [...]*

27 In order to protect our interviewees' privacy, we have omitted any identifying data from these testimonies.

Yes, of course. The women were perceived to be doing this to gain access to some privileges or graduate from university and the like. He was judged least of all. Mostly the girls were [...] I don't know, even when we used to talk about, for example, the way he acted, how he'd make very inappropriate comments or even position himself physically in a way that felt threatening [...] They'd say to us, so why did you have to work with him, nobody forced you [...]

This absence of mechanisms of protection, not knowing who to turn to for help, and the fear that "no one is going to believe you" were as traumatic as the harassment act itself.

It's certainly not normal. And the position of power he is in cannot be justified by the fact it is [...] But of course you're always afraid because it's presented to you in this way, shush, don't complain, you'll create more trouble for yourself, no one is going to believe you. Okay so what, it's him, he's not some maniac, he's just pursuing you, you can always say no [...] But no one at the time would acknowledge this was traumatic for you [...] That there was no need for it, and it shouldn't be happening. And we also didn't know who we were supposed to go to [...] Where do you even report this, and what can you expect from doing so. Instead it boils down to you complaining to your parents, trying to get some advice about how to handle it, or to your boyfriend, so in a way you create a sort of deflection from that whole business.

We heard an almost identical testimony from another interviewee. For them, this was the experience that defined their studies and shattered their illusions both about studying and about the profession itself.

Yes, that's even worse, and there were these professor-student, female student, relationships at university. For example, you just reminded me, in the prep course, some of them were basically flinging themselves at the professors, just so they'd pass the entrance exam. For instance, to me, that's sexual harassment, he kissed my friend against her will, and she only wanted to study painting with him, drawing and painting. I could see from the way she was acting she wasn't alright, she wasn't communicating with anyone. I asked her what happened and she said that, that he'd kissed her against her will, and then another friend said her too, that he had done the same to her. Some of them were in a relationship with that professor [...] I just can't fathom that, it disgusts me, this sort of relationship between a teacher, professor, and a student, to me it's [...] You come to this institution to learn and to get experience in your field of work, and then this jerk comes along and does that to you.

However, there are such examples from high schools as well, where teenage girls faced not only the abuse of the power differential on the part of the teacher, but also their community's condemnation.

> *There were such cases. There was this one guy, he was a high-school teacher who had relationships with certain students. Everyone was like "Hey, this one's crazy, she was with him"… I would say he's the one who should be held accountable, he has authority over her. Like, even if she was chasing him and was in love with him, in my opinion he mustn't do this. He mustn't get involved with students, or have anything at all to do with them in that sense. (…) But people said it was her fault, they did. Because she like wanted to be with a famous artist or teacher or something like that … In my opinion that's not it at all, I think it's all about being blinded by this older man.*

In this testimony as well, not only did the student who had been subjected to violence not get protection from the institution itself, but she was further terrorized during her studies by the professor whose "advances" she had rejected.

> *I have to go back to this friend of mine whom he'd kissed against her will [...] Afterwards he wouldn't provide her with any sort of feedback in class. Like, he froze her out completely because she rejected him. So then she comes out as a bad person because she rejected him [...]*

Unfortunately, gender-based violence that is not prevented in the educational system in the first place, nor adequately sanctioned if it occurs, is a strong foundation for gender violence that is then perpetuated in the work environment, which is a topic we cover in greater detail in the chapter on gender discrimination against women in the cultural sector.

Summary

The results of our study demonstrate that already during education girls/young women face a host of challenges and obstacles, starting from choice of education, through gaining independence while at university, to encountering various forms of discrimination.

Analyses have identified the immense significance of the support of one's family, or lack thereof, but also the strong influence of educators in elementary and high school when it came to selecting a career in the arts. Class barriers emerged as obstacles when choosing a career in the arts – the belief that this was not for working-class people; however, the gender factor was far from trivial as well – that this education and these professions aren't for girls.

Further, since a significant proportion of our respondents came from small towns, they also faced the obstacle of leaving their parents' home to go to university and making their own way in the city.

Especially problematic are the various forms of discrimination they were subjected to, and perhaps even more so the lack of systemic support and protections, which society and educational institutions in the domain of art should provide when they are at risk.

Professional experiences

The second central topic concerned the experiences of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in relation to their professional life. Bearing in mind current working conditions in the cultural sector, characterized by exploitation and self-exploitation, we asked out interviewees whether they worked fixed hours and how many hours their typical working day lasts, whether they felt overworked and whether they were experiencing health issues due to being overwhelmed by work, the so-called burnout syndrome. We also discussed how their place of residence affected their professional life, what opportunities were available to them in terms of professional development, and what sorts of obstacles they encountered (especially in the case of small towns). Since this study was conducted in 2021, questions pertaining to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their professional life were inevitable: whether work in their organization was organized differently during the pandemic and whether they had more or fewer responsibilities, as well as how the coronavirus pandemic affected their private life.

In order to understand the professional experiences of the women cultural workers and entrepreneurs working in the cultural field in Serbia, it is necessary to understand their contradictory social position. On the one hand, they certainly work in precarious conditions, with minimal resources, unspecified working hours that frequently take up the entire day, and also, in the case of those with freelancer status, an uncertain and low income. On the other hand, most households of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia belong to middle class, and sometimes upper middle class. In the study conducted in Croatia by Valerija Barada, Jaka Primorac and Edgar Buršić, this range between the working conditions and general living conditions of those working in the cultural field is defined as the social position of the "elite precariat" (Barada, Primorac and Buršić, 2016).

According to some authors (Ross, 2003, 2008), work precarity in the cultural field currently and beyond entails, among those in creative professions, the introduction of non-standard and insecure working conditions previously characteristic of workers with a low level of qualification and migrants into white-collar professions. Ross terms this process the "industrialization of bohemia."

The term precariat is a portmanteau of the words *precarious and proletariat*, used to denote the emergence of a new global class fundamentally characterized

by existential insecurity. The first academic use of the term is traced to early works by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu[28] and his late-1990s essays directed against neoliberal dogmas[29].

The term came into widespread use through a series of texts and books by Guy Standing, in particular his studies *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class* (2011)[30] and *A Precariat Charter. From denizens to citizens* (2014)[31].

According to Standing, precariat as a "class-in-the-making" is primarily characterized by three dimensions: distinctive relations of production, distinctive relations of distribution, and distinctive relations to the state. As a consequence of neoliberal policies of numerical flexibility, functional flexibility and wage flexibility at a time of globalization, the precariat is characterized by casual and temporary employment, accompanied by periods of unemployment, inability to secure permanent housing and uncertain access to public resources.

These precarious relations of production are a result of the fact that – under circumstances of a multiple increase in the size of cheap labor force available globally, and especially in developing countries – global capital can impose them, and is in return guaranteed the lowest labor costs, that is, the highest profits. Uncertain and flexible labor of the precariat is necessary for contemporary global capitalism; therefore, Standing insists, the precariat is not a sub-class.

The precariat also includes distinct relations of distribution, i.e. a distinct income structure. The precariat can only rely on wages for their short-term jobs, so with no health and pension benefits, no social assistance, no savings, and, frequently, no support from their families or their community, live lives of chronic existential uncertainty[32].

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28 Pierre Bourdieu, Claude Seibel, Alain Darbel, Jean-Paul Rivet (1963), Travail et Travailleurs en Algérie, Paris: Mouton.

29 Pierre Bourdieu (1998), Acts of Resistance, Against the Tyranny of the Market, New York: New Press.

30 Guy Standing (2011), The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

31 Guy Standing (2014), A Precariat Charter. From denizens to citizens, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

32 According to Standing, over the course of the 20th century, social networks of solidarity and mutual assistance in workers' communities gradually disappeared from developed industrial welfare states, as their social functions were taken over by governments and corporations. Then, during the period of globalization, they were dealt a death blow by the privatization of social services.

Finally, perhaps a key factor in defining the precariat, according to Standing, is that of their distinctive relation to the state. Members of the precariat are denied many of the rights enjoyed by those in the traditional working class and salariat[33] – they are, in Standing's view, denizens[34]. The precariat is steadily losing its economic and social rights, especially in the area of social security and the right to practice an activity; they are losing their civil rights, in the form of the right to due process in court; they are losing their cultural rights, in the form of the cultural marginalization of minorities; as well as losing some of their political rights. For the first time in modern history, the state is systematically taking rights away from its citizens. In Standing's view, it is of the utmost importance when it comes to understanding the position of the precariat and the nature of the class struggle it is involved in that the precariat is in the role of a supplicant, a beggar, who doesn't have "the right to have rights," left entirely at the mercy of the state, privatized agencies and charities.

In addition to these three key dimensions, Standing notes that the precariat is also characterized by: the lack of a professional identity; absence of control of time; entirely instrumental relationship to work; low degree of social mobility; being overqualified for the work they do; lack of resources to cope with life's contingencies; the traps of poverty and precarity. He stresses that these ten characteristics together define the precariat. According to him, "[n]ot all are unique to it. But taken together, the elements define a social group, and for that reason we may call the precariat a class-in-the-making" (Standing, 2014, p. 28).

Standing's concept came up against some harsh criticism, especially from the political left. It was maintained that the precariat is not different from the proletariat in terms of its objective material interests; that Standing was arbitrarily combining into one class groups whose objective social positions are exceedingly different; that he was completely ignoring the symbolic aspects of social stratification; that his concept was Eurocentric and only applicable to the global North, but not to the global South; that his ten criteria for defining the precariat are not even applicable to the three groups comprising the precariat,

33 Salariat (from the term salary) comprises those in full-time employment of indefinite duration, whose contract also includes various benefits (health and pension insurance, paid time off, paid maternity leave, etc.).

34 Denizens are defined in relation to citizens. In medieval England, denizens were foreigners permitted by the authorities to reside in cities and perform their line of work, but they did not enjoy the same rights as citizens.

etc[35]. However, it would be hard to refute that he at the very least anticipated some of the significant changes unfolding in the neoliberal globalized world.

Numerous scholars working at the beginning of this century (Florida, 2002; Reich, 2000, Beck, 2000; Flores and Gray, 2000) suggest that cultural workers represent a model for this new type of labor, which involves substituting a stable career with informal, uncertain and discontinuous employment, where the employees assume the totality of the risks and responsibilities involved. According to Leadbeater and Oakley (1999), the experiences of workers in the creative industries at the turn of the millennium are what is in store for most workers today.

Studies have shown that work in the creative sector is characterized by fixed-term, casual and uncertain work; exceedingly long working hours that do not leave much room for partners, children and friends; erasing of boundaries between work and free time; "forced" sociability, low pay and high mobility of workers into other activities (McRobbie, 2002, 2003; Gill, 2002; Gregg, 2008, Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Banks, 2007). Work in the creative sector is also characterized by a "bulimic" pattern, where patterns of intense activity alternate with periods with no work whatsoever, which has significant consequences for the workers' physical and mental health and social life (Pratt, 2000; Perrons, 2003, 2007; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2007, 2011, 2015).

This necessitates most employees in the creative industries to be young, physically able (those with any form of disability or illness who can cope with the challenges of these jobs are a rare exception), university educated; this workforce being characterized by hidden gender inequalities, especially in the form of tacit requirements of employees to be free from family obligations, childcare in particular, as the results of our study will also show; as well as complex effects of class, race and ethnicity on their composition (Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Banks, Gill & Taylor (eds.), 2013).

On the other hand, those working in the creative sector are characterized by a distinct attitude which is a mixture of entrepreneurship and bohemia. They, too, at least in the first stage of their career, are characterized by a passionate attachment to these jobs, despite all the challenges they entail. According to

35 Cf., for example, Eric Olin Wright (2016), Is the Precariat Class?, Global Labour Journal, 7 (2), 123–135; Ruy Braga (2016) On Standing's A Precariat Charter: Confronting the Precaritisation of Labour in Brazil and Portugal; Global Labour Journal, 7(2), 148–159; Jan Breman (2013), A Bogus Concept?, New Left Review, 84, 130–138; Ronaldo Munck (2013) The Precariat: a view from the South, Third World Quarterly, 34 (5), 747–762.

workers in the cultural sector themselves, this contentment is enhanced by the dynamic and creative character of the work, operating autonomy without managerial supervision, flexible working hours and challenging tasks which, once completed, prove rewarding (von Osten, 2007; McRobbie, 2010; Banks & Milestone, 2011; Barada, 2012; Barada and Primorac, 2014; Barada and Primorac, 2018).

The combination of structurally unfavorable working conditions and these workers' passionate dedication to work obviously brings in enormous profits to capital owners, which is why these models of "flexploitation"[36] have been spreading rapidly into other sectors of the service industry as well.

However, Mitropoulous (2005) and Neilson and Rossiter (2005) argue that, historically, the experience of precarious work is, in fact, the standard experience of work under capitalism, and that the Fordism and Keynesianism which had resulted in welfare states in the period between the economic crisis of 1929–1933 and the 1980s in Western Europe and the United States are more the exception than standard practice – spatially and temporally. Feminist scholars, such as Laura Fantone (Fantone, 2007) and Rosalind Gill (Gill and Pratt, 2008), argue that women have always done the kind of work that is nowadays labeled "immaterial" and "affective" labor, both in the workplace and at home, whereas precarity only emerged as a topic of discussion once men in the Western world started to feel the effects of the flexible, post-industrialist market.

In Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Europe (2002) and *Getting in, getting on, getting out? Women as career scramblers in the UK film and television industries* (2015), Rosalind Gill and associates outline three aspects of work in the creative sector which lead to discrimination against women: informality in the hiring of associates, flexibility of work practices, and what they term the postfeminist problem.

The informality of work and relationships in the creative industries is frequently offered as one of their main advantages. Gill, however, notes that informal practices in the employment and hiring of associates tend to affect women negatively. In the majority of teams, selection is made based on personal recommendations – that this person is reliable and easy to work with, so it is much more important "who you know than what you know." Such practices

36 Flexploitation is a portmanteau of "flexibility" and "exploitation," introduced by Pierre Bourdieu to refer to how job insecurity forces workers to accept temporary, casual and poorly-paid jobs, as well as the erosion and revocation of their rights (to health, pension, and social security, paid time off or maternity leave), resulting in increasing levels of exploitation.

produce semi-permanent teams which move from one project to the next (Blair, 2001). Consequently, arguably the most important part of doing business in the creative sector may be networking, which then assumes the characteristics of "forced sociability" (Gregg, 2008). In order to be hired, you must constantly keep in touch with colleagues and those awarding contracts. However, men tend to feel more at ease than women in the spaces where networking mostly unfolds – pubs, restaurants and bars. Especially when we take into account that this socializing happens following a long day at work, it is mostly inaccessible to women with family commitments, and with childcare commitments in particular. Thus, they frequently tend to be excluded from future projects. This leads to what Deborah Jones and Judith Pringle term "unmanageable inequalities" (Jones and Pringle, 2015), as no mechanisms are available through which they could be eliminated.

Like informality, flexibility is also frequently cited as one of the attractions of work in the creative industries. However, according to Gill and associates, it, too, has proven illusory. Flexibility means that workers in the creative industries do not have fixed working hours, that is, they are free to choose when they will work. However, as this type of work is project-oriented, with very short deadlines, what this means in practice is that working hours are not a matter of choice, and one works non-stop instead. There is also flexibility in being able to choose where to work, i.e. being able to work from home as well. Studies have found that most men work in rented studios, together with their peers in a similar line of work, which helps them avoid feeling isolated and clearly demarcate the place of work from places of leisure. Such opportunities are available to women to a lesser extent, while working from home is not a solution for them since, for them, it is typically not a place for free time and relaxation. Thus, even when women do work from home, it is not by choice but is something imposed on them (cf. also: Barada and Primorac, 2018).

Gill and associates term the third aspect of work in the creative industries which contributes to discrimination against women the "post-feminist problem." When it comes to women's work activities, the authors argue there is no escaping the fact that, in families with children, women are the ones most often taking care of them. Across numerous studies, mothers employed in the creative industries pointed out the impossibility of them getting institutional assistance with childcare (e.g., nursery) or hiring a nanny, due to unpredictable working hours or frequent night work. Studies have also shown that many women stop working in this sector as it is impossible to reconcile family and work commitments, or, conversely, they decide against starting a family and having children in order to maintain a career. What is more, the women who have taken time off work to have a baby face the fact that their portfolio seems weaker compared to that

of their male colleagues, as well as losing touch with those awarding contracts. Research conducted in Serbia on the position of women cultural workers has reached similar conclusions regarding working from home, and the "deceleration" in career advancement due to going on pregnancy or maternity leave (Milanović, Subašić and Opačić 2017, pp. 84–86), as well as regarding work in music and its perceived or actual incompatibility with maternity (Nenić and Nikolić, 2022).

According to Gill and associates, regardless of whether or not they actually had children, women in the creative industries also encountered sexist attitudes and discrimination based on the very possibility of them having children. There tends to be the assumption that it is "more rational" or "safer" to hire men, as they are less likely to stop working or ask for a leave. This leads to what is often termed "rational" or "benevolent sexism" (Glick and Fiske, 1996).

In our literature, this concept has been presented by Marija Todorović in *Benevolent Sexism and Gender Equality (Benevolentni seksizam i rodna ravnopravnost,* 2013). Following the work of Swim and Hyers, she explains that "sexism comprises not only opinions but also behaviors, as well as organizational, institutional and cultural practices that discriminate based on gender and support inequality in status between men and women" (Swim and Hyers, 2009; in: Todorović, 2013).

The paper presents the theory and scale of ambivalent sexism, with hostile sexism at one end of the pendulum and benevolent sexism at the other, complementing and reinforcing one another. These concepts were formulated and analyzed as part of a comprehensive international study carried out by Glick and associates in 2000. The study included fifteen thousand participants from nineteen economically and culturally different countries, and it demonstrated that, the higher the degree of both types of sexism, the lower the level of gender equality. It also demonstrated that, across all countries in the sample, hostile sexism was more prevalent among men. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, was equally distributed among men and women in half of the countries studied. One finding that was particularly symptomatic was that, in countries with the most rampant hostile sexism, benevolent sexism was more prevalent among women. Thus, one of the conclusions of this study was that higher levels of hostile sexism motivate women to use benevolent sexism as a possible defense mechanism (in: Todorović 2013).

At the same time, according to Gill and associates, women working in the creative sector often refuse to relate the problems they face with the fact they are women, despite the fact that their careers are gendered to a great extent. Within the individualistic and meritocratic discourses of creative industries, where

successes and failures are treated as the consequence of individual achievement and mistakes, doing so would be unacceptable and could potentially jeopardize their career. This is what Gill and associates term the "postfeminist problem." Taken altogether, when considered based on the usual indicators – the number of jobs awarded and revenue brought in – the endlessly lauded individualism, informality and flexibility of work in the creative industries emerge as mechanisms for producing and reproducing gender inequalities.

The class position of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs

Results of the study "Socio-economic status, working conditions and lifestyles of cultural workers in the civic sector in South-East European societies" ("Socio-ekonomski status, uslovi rada i stilovi života zaposlenih/angažovanih u civilnom sektoru u kulturi u društvima jugoistočne Evrope")[37] have demonstrated that the majority of surveyed artists, cultural managers, curators and producers working in the civil sector in culture in South-East European societies were working in extremely precarious conditions.[38]

The results obtained showed that in Serbia, for example, less than a quarter of those working in the civil sector in culture were in permanent employment of indefinite duration; likewise, three fifths of respondents hadn't had regular income in the 12 months prior to being surveyed, while nearly a third had had no income whatsoever related to this work[39]. The low income, however, is just one aspect of the quite unfavorable working conditions of those employed/working in the civil sector in culture. Sixty percent of respondents stated they did not have fixed working hours, which meant working more and not less, whereas a little less than half of those surveyed worked more than 8 hours a day frequently

37 This study, coordinated by the Center for the Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe, was realized during 2016 and 2017 as part of a pilot program by Kooperativa – Regional Platform for Culture. A total of 500 artists, cultural managers, producers and curators were surveyed – 157 respondents from Slovenia, 130 from Serbia, 62 from Montenegro, 56 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 53 from Kosovo, and 42 respondents from North Macedonia.

38 For overall results of the study, see Nezavisne kulturne scene u jugoistočnoj Evropi (Independent Cultural Scenes in South-East Europe; Cvetičanin, 2020). For results pertaining to Serbia, see Živeti (i umreti) u civilnom sektoru u kulturi u Srbiji u 12 slika (Living (and Dying) in the Civil Sector in Culture in Serbia in 12 Figures), in MANEK no. 5.

39 The average monthly income (among the respondents who generated one) was €215 in Kosovo, €230 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, €255 in Montenegro, €324 in Serbia, €356 in Albania, €380 in North Macedonia and €903 in Slovenia.

or always, and over 30% worked in excess of 40 hours a week frequently or always. Furthermore, nearly a third also worked nights often or always, half also worked weekends, 43% of respondents stated they worked while on holiday, and 63% that they were not paid for overtime work. At the same time, 16% of respondents in Serbia had no health insurance, and 33% had no retirement benefits.

A seminal study on working conditions in the arts in Serbia was conducted by the Working group for improving artists' work status, at ULUS (Association of Fine Artists of Serbia), consisting of Tijana Cvetković, Milica Lapčević, Tanja Marković, Vahida Ramujkić, Irena Ristić, Srđan Vukajlović and Milan Đorđević, and using Karl Marx's *Workers' Inquiry* (1880)[40] as their point of departure.

The ULUS research team recognized in Marx's survey a goal similar to theirs, namely to look at the problem of poor conditions in the arts from the perspective of workers in this field, in order to stimulate their self-awareness and self-organization in the fight for better working conditions. Even though the survey is a century and a half old, as the study authors emphasize, its relevance is also seen in the fact that a similar survey was used in other modern collectives and contexts. Among others, Bojana Piškur and Đorđe Balmazović (of *Škart*) analyzed the position of cultural workers in Belgrade and Novi Sad in September 2012, following on from the research conducted by the *Radical Education Collective* (Ljubljana) and *Workers Inquiry Group* (Madrid) at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid in 2010 and 2011[41].

The team of the ULUS Working group for improving artists' work status pointed out that the process of "translating" the survey into the context of contemporary work in culture meant including questions about whether working in the arts was like any other type of work, whether an artist was a worker, entrepreneur, or something else (and if so, what), as well as a series of other questions about the process and value aspects of this type of work. Finally, for practical reasons – obtaining measurable data of the largest sample possible – the final version of the survey was shortened and adapted for online completion (ULUS, p. 30).

In their theoretical framework, the ULUS research team refer to Guy Standing's theses on the precariat. Additionally, they cite similar studies conducted in the

40 This is a questionnaire comprising 101 questions which investigate in detail the working conditions of wage laborers in France, intended as an instrument for raising self-awareness of the workers' position.

41 Results of this study were summarized in the publication A Brief Analysis of the Workers' Inquiry (Kratka analiza radničke ankete; Fond B92 / Kulturni centar Rex, 2014).

SFRY context as a point of particular significance against which they compare their research. The position of cultural workers was also precarious in the period of socialist Yugoslavia. However, literature from that period reveals a high degree of researcher interest in their position and the attendant development of a support system and improvement of said position. In comparing research then and now, the ULUS team note that, during the period of self-governing socialism, such research was conducted by public institutions and professionals in the humanities (pp. 36–37). Nowadays, on the other hand, this topic is mostly addressed by cultural workers themselves.

A minimum of three reasons are provided to explain the reduction in scope and realization of such studies – no longer within the state system but within the nongovernmental sector. The first reason identified is the dependence of academic institutions on the neoliberal system that maintains and funds them, thus discouraging a critical attitude toward that system, seeking instead to justify capitalism and present it as a just system. Secondly, due to atomization, each group is oriented toward its own struggles and organization. Thirdly, nowadays precarity has spread to almost all areas of work, including artistic work, which means that other groups are in equally unstable and difficult working conditions.

The ULUS research team state that the goal of their study was to obtain accurate data from the field about key problems, where representative artists' associations could get involved in solving these problems in order to represent the interests of cultural workers from different disciplines. They also see the study's results as a potential basis for formulating recommendations aimed at improving artists' financial and social position, as well as working conditions in the arts overall. The team also explicate that one of the intended outcomes of the study, in addition to cultural workers answering questions about their current position, was to determine whether workers were aware of their position and whether they were satisfied with it, as well as whether they were even considering any future organizing with a view to improving their current circumstances (pp. 40–41).

The study was conducted based on a convenience sample of the artist population (N=499), comprising 62.9% of women, 36.7% of men, and 0.4% of those with a different gender identity. Regarding the territorial distribution of the sample, 76.4% lived in Belgrade, 22% in other parts of Serbia, and 1.4% lived abroad. The study collected data on educational levels, membership in artist associations and profession, as well as on respondents' current employment status.

The research instrument included 36 open-ended and close-ended questions, segmented into five groups. The introductory group of questions referred to basic information and demographic data. The next set pertained to living

conditions in relation to the working and retirement status the respondents provided in the introductory portion of the questionnaire. The second part of the survey focused on conditions of artistic production when it came to funding artistic work, the impact of technology, how work was organized and the length of breaks, as well as the manner in which work was obtained in the arts. The third segment dealt with the assessment of legal protections, while the fourth focused on social security. The fifth and final portion of the questionnaire dealt with art's social role and its potential for effecting social change.

The invitation to complete the survey was widely distributed to all artists' associations in Serbia, as well as to the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia. It was available during December of 2020, and the invitation was taken up by 727 respondents; however, after eliminating incomplete answers, 499 of those surveyed were included in the final sample. Study results and analysis are presented in five groups.

Regarding the first part of the study, it was found that the majority of artists lived in their own homes (over three fifths), one fifth lived with their parents, and a little under a fifth were renting. However, what the numbers obtained by this study speak to unequivocally is that most of them are unable to make a living from their work. Almost half of the artists said that they were never or rarely able to secure a living income from artistic production – a little over one fifth made only RSD 15,000 per month, a quarter made between RSD 15,000 and 30,000, while nearly 80% made under RSD 60,000 per month. The researchers note as particularly devastating the finding that only a quarter of cultural workers actually manage to live off their work, while just over a quarter more partly support themselves with income from their art. In the case of the latter, the fact that their primary profession is underpaid necessitates them working double jobs in order to secure their existence.

The study's second segment provided data on the *conditions of artistic production in Serbia*. A little over half, or 55%, of cultural workers surveyed worked in the space where they lived, 14.4% worked in their studio, 14.2% in the organization where they were employed, 11.4 % in a rented studio/space, 3.4% in a dedicated public space, and only 1.6% in an allotted studio/space. As stressed by the study authors, taking into account the fact that two thirds of the respondents were from fine and applied arts, this meant they were using materials, chemicals and processing techniques that can be very dangerous in residential spaces and other spaces not equipped for this type of artistic activity, in addition to presenting a limiting factor in terms of production.

Lack of workspace, which was already difficult to fund in 2020 at the prices at that time, stands out as one of the biggest problems this study has identified. Since this study was completed, with the current galloping inflation and mass influx following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, renting prices have multiplied, not only in cities but in small towns as well.

When asked how they funded their artistic work, the study participants provided the following data – 32.7% from their income from non-artistic jobs, 19.1% with their family's help, 18.5% through projects, 16.8% through direct sales, 10.1% had no possibility of funding their artistic activity, and 2.8% funded their artistic work from their pensions.

This study segment also yielded some very salient data showing that only 10.6% of cultural workers earned their income continuously from their art, whereas everyone else experienced breaks in income generated from their art – up to three months 20.6%, up to six months 26.5%, up to a year 27.5% and up to two years 14.8%. What the numbers show, then, is that those with a break in income of up to two years outnumber, by several percent, those with regular income from their artistic work.

Legal protection and the extent to which it is unavailable to cultural workers is very vividly illustrated by the ULUS study finding that less than a quarter of those surveyed regularly signed contracts when engaging in artistic activity. This study segment also found a significant degree of work in the so-called gray economy, when the researchers compared the quite significant percentage of those claiming to earn an income from the private sector in the previous segment, with the fact that most of them stated they did not regularly sign contracts when their work was commissioned or sold.

Additionally, the ULUS research team complement this analysis with the fact that a large number of respondents (70.8%) were doing business on the international, European and regional levels, and had a positive assessment of the impact of digital technologies on working conditions in culture. Accordingly, they conclude that artists, unable to earn an income in Serbia, and notwithstanding all the risk involved, make the decision to offer their work on the international market through online channels.

The situation is not much better regarding the *social security of cultural workers in Serbia.* Namely, the ULUS study found that a third of respondents did not have retirement benefits, while almost half estimated they would not be able to survive on their pension and would have to supplement their income by working to cover basic living needs. The research team also highlight other paradoxical

findings, such as that retired artists generated more income than active independent cultural workers. On the other hand, very few pensioners from the sample were able to live off their pension (14.8%), over half were unable to do so and were forced to find additional work, 18.5% could not survive on their pension but generated no additional income, while 14.8% had additional income (inheritance, rental, support from family).

The final segment of the study is titled *Art and Society*. The majority of respondents, namely two thirds, stated their artistic work was intended for the general public, 18.4% for experts, 12.7% stated it was intended for specific groups, 2.3% for friends and family and 0.2% for no one. Asked if art was an instrument of social and political change, a little over 40% of those surveyed replied it was. Nearly another half of the respondents said that art was partly involved in social processes, primarily through its reflexive role. The smallest percentage of respondents, namely 11.2%, are those that deny the role of art in such change.

This study also included very interesting and important answers to the question of whether artists should organize in order to exercise their rights, and if so, who they should organize with. Almost half of them would organize with all other artists, about a third would do so with all workers, while a little over 15% would organize with their sector only. Only 2.7% of respondents were against association.

The very end of the survey was designed as a list of possible demands for improving working conditions, from which respondents had to choose three they considered the most important. Analyzing the results obtained, the ULUS research team notes that expectations for improving this type of work tend to be primarily linked to government cultural policies, while there are fewer expectations pertaining to the development of the art market. The conclusion in this regard is that cultural workers predominantly see themselves as social agents who contribute to their community, rather than as entrepreneurs who rely on the profitability of artistic work under market conditions. In brief, the study demonstrated that the current situation in terms of economic and working conditions in culture was unenviable, but also that there was a willingness and need to organize and fight to improve this situation.

In our survey study, we collected a large amount of data, not only about the respondents' working conditions but also their living conditions. Some of the data is presented in tables 20–36.

Most respondents live in households of two, three or four members, whereas the segment of those living alone comprised equal numbers of those aged between 18 and 35, and those aged 36 to 45.

Table 20 – How many members comprise the respondent's household?

Number of members	Number	%
1	31	15.0%
2	66	32.0%
3	50	24.3%
4	45	21.8%
5	6	2.9%
6	1	0.5%
No response	7	3.4%
Total	206	100%

As table 21 shows, almost 60% of our respondents live with a partner (a spouse or common-law partner), and less than 20% live with their parents, where the majority of those living with their parents are not in the youngest group but in the group aged between 36 and 45.

Table 21 – Do they live with a partner (either a spouse or a common-law partner or romantic partner) or with their parents?

With a partner	Number	%	With parents	Number	%
Yes	123	59.7%	Yes	36	17.5%
No	83	40.3%	No	169	82.0%
Total	206	100%	No response	1	0.5%
			Total	206	100%

Nearly half the respondents have children, mostly one (24.8%) or two (17%), although it should be noted that the majority of respondents do not have any children.

Table 22 – Do they have any children and how many children live in their household?

Children	Number	%	Number of children	Number	%
Yes	94	45.6%	1	51	24.8%
No	111	53.9%	2	35	17.0%
No response	1	0.5%	3	2	1.0%
Total	206	100%	4	1	0.5%
			n.r.	117	56.7%
			Total	206	100%

Nearly 80% of those with children have young children, and among those, there is an equal number of those with nursery- or kindergarten-age children and those with elementary-school age children.

Table 23 – How old are the children?

Under 7	Number	%	Between 7 and 15 years old	Number	%
1	28	16.6%	1	34	16.5%
2	10	4.9%	2	4	2.0%
No response	168	81.5%	n.r.	168	81.5%
Total	206	100%	Total	206	100%

Nearly 70% of respondents' households have their own apartments or houses (table 24), and the respondents themselves are the owners of the property more often than their partners (table 25).

Table 24 – Is the apartment/ house they live in owned by members of the household:

	Number	%
Yes	144	69.9%
No	59	28.6%
No response	3	1.5%
Total	206	100%

Table 25 – Does the respondent have ownership of the apartment/ house:

	Number	%
Yes	79	38.3%
No	94	45.6%
No response	33	16.0%
Total	206	100%

Around 30% of respondents live in apartments and houses with an area of under 50 m2, mostly in households of one or two members. Majority live in residential units of between 50-75 m2 and 75-100 m2, while around 10% live in houses/ apartments larger than 100 m2. As shown in table 27, those living in large apartments and houses are mostly also the owners, while those renting typically reside in smaller units.

Table 26 – How big is the apartment/ house in which they live (in m2)?

	Number	%	valid %
House < 50 m2	61	29.6%	31.8%
House 51 – 75 m2	75	36.4%	39.1%
House 76–100 m2	38	18.4%	19.8%
House > 100 m2	18	8.7%	9.4%
Total	192	93.2%	100%
No response	14	6.8%	
Total	206	100%	

Table 27 – How big is the apartment/ house they own (in m2)?

	Number	%	valid %
House < 50 m2	33	22.9%	24.6%
House 51–75 m2	52	36.1%	38.8%
House 76–100 m2	33	22.9%	24.6%
House > 100 m2	16	11.1%	11.9%
Total	134	93.1%	100%
No response	10	6.9%	
Total	144	100%	

Nearly a third of respondents' households had country houses/ vacation homes, but, unlike the apartments and houses they resided in, these were typically not owned by the respondents. Most vacation homes were relatively small (up to 50 m2), but there were a number of cases where the houses were larger than 75 m2.

Table 28 – Does the household own a country house/ vacation home?

	Number	**%**
Yes	60	29.1%
No	143	69.4%
No response	3	1.5%
Total	206	100%

Table 29 – Does the respondent have ownership of the country house/ vacation home?

	Number	**%**
Yes	16	7.8%
No	93	45.1%
No response	97	47.1%
Total	206	100%

Table 30 – How big is the country house/ vacation home (in m2)?

	Number	**%**	**valid %**
Vacation home < 50 m2	24	11.7%	46.2%
Vacation home 51–75 m2	11	5.3%	21.2%
Vacation home > 75 m2	17	8.3%	32.7%
Total	52	25.2%	100%
No response	154	74.8%	
Total	206	100%	

Most respondent households owned cars, with some owning several cars (table 31). In 40% of the cases, the respondents themselves were owners of the vehicle (table 32). A fifth of households had old or second-hand cars of little value; however, over a third owned what, in the Serbian context, can be regarded as a luxury car (table 33).

Table 31 – Do members of the household own cars?

	Number	%
One car	109	52.9%
Multiple cars	25	12.1%
No car	70	34.0%
No response	2	1.0%
Total	206	100%

Table 32 – Do the respondents own cars?

	Number	%
Yes	54	26.2%
No	88	42.7%
No response	64	31.1%
Total	206	100%

Table 33 – Approximate overall price of the cars, in EUR, were they to be sold

	Number	%	valid %
Car < €1,000	23	11.2%	20.0%
Car €1,001–2,500	28	13.6%	24.3%
Car €2,501–5,000	25	12.1%	21.7%
Car €5,000–9,000	21	10.2%	18.3%
Car > €9,000	18	8.7%	15.7%
Total	115	55.8%	100%
No response	91	44.2%	
Total	206	100%	

The majority of respondents' households had a monthly income between RSD 60,000 and 100,000, and between RSD 100,000 and 180,000, with identical numbers of households (14.1%) with below-average income (less than RSD 60,000) and above-average income (over RSD 180,000).

Table 34 – Total monthly household income on average (from all sources)

	Number	%	valid %
Household income < RSD 60,000	29	14.1%	17.2%
Household income RSD 60,001–100,000	53	25.7%	31.4%
Household income RSD 100,001–180,000	58	28.2%	34.3%
Household income > RSD 180,000	29	14.1%	17.2%
Total	169	82.0%	100%
No response	37	18.0%	
Total	206	100%	

As shown in tables 35 and 36, the respondents themselves also make a significant contribution to the household budget. One third of respondents have income below RSD 60,000, while a little over 10% have monthly income of RSD 96,000 (about €800) and above. What is equally important, as shown in table 36, respondents' share across all household income categories is proportional to their partners' contribution.

Table 35 – Respondents' average monthly income (from all sources)

	Number	%	valid %
Income < RSD 48,000	38	18.4%	21.5%
Income RSD 48,001–60,000	36	17.5%	20.3%
Income RSD 60,001–72,000	37	18.0%	20.9%
Income RSD 72,001–96,000	41	19.9%	23.2%
Income > RSD 96,000	25	12.1%	14.1%
Total	177	85.9%	100%
No response	29	14.1%	
Total	206	100%	

Table 36 – Share of respondents' income in total household income

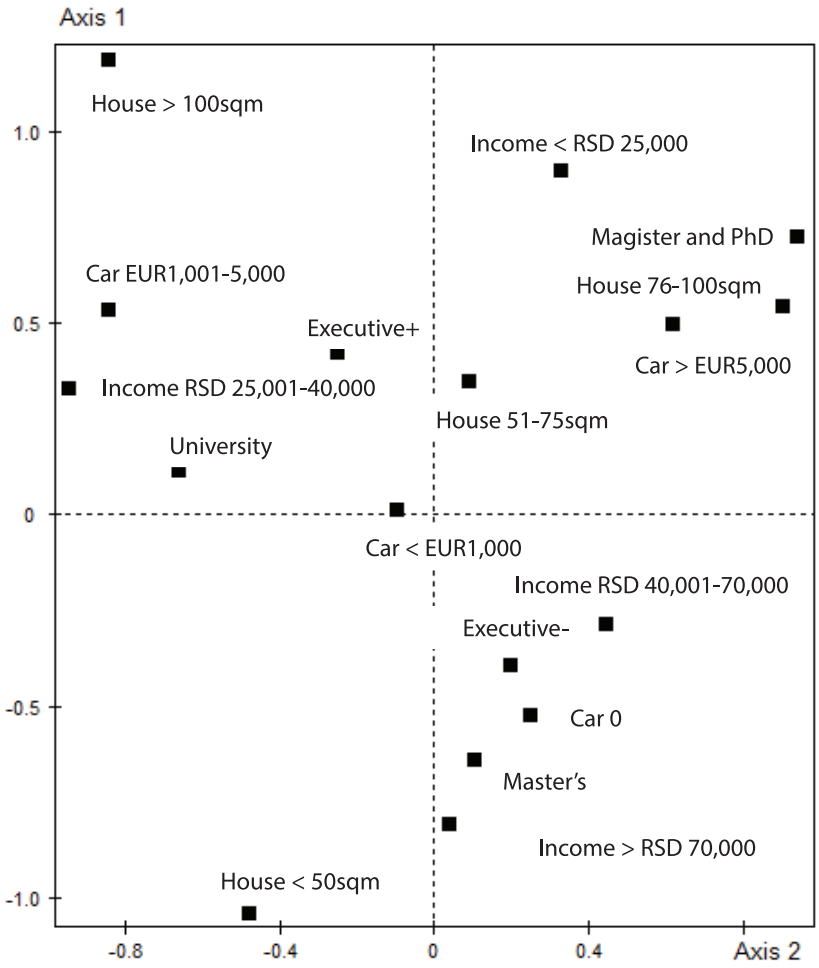
Household income/ Respondent income	Under RSD 60,000	Between RSD 60,001 and 100,000	Between RSD 100,001 and 180,000	RSD 180,000+	Total
Under RSD 48,000	**15 (46.9%) 55.6%**	10 (31.3%) 19.2%	6 (18.8%) 11.1%	1 (3.1%) 3.6%	32 (100%) 19.9%
Between RSD 48,001 and 60,000	**11 (34.4%) 40.7%**	11 (34.4%) 21.2%	9 (28.1%) 16.7%	1 (3.1%) 3.6%	32 (100%) 19,9%
Between RSD 60,001 and 72,000	0 (0.0%) 0.0%	**18 (51.4%) 34.6%**	14 (40.0%) 25.9%	3 (8.6%) 10.7%	35 (100%) 21.7%
Between RSD 72,001 and 96,000	1 (2.6%) 3.7%	10 (26.3%) 19.2%%	**16 (42.1%) 29.6%**	11 (28.9%) 39.3%	38 (100%) 23.6%
RSD 96,000+	0 (0.0%) 0.0%	3 (12.5%) 5.8%	9 (37.5%) 16.7%	**12 (50.0%) 42.9%**	24 (100%) 14.9%
Total	27 (16.8%) 100%	52 (32.3%) 100%	54 (33.5%) 100%	28 (17.4%) 100%	161 (100%) 100%

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, on the whole, these are respondents from well-off middle-class, and in a number of cases also upper-middle class families, who mostly live in their own apartments and houses. In fact, they, rather than their partners, tend to be the owners of this real estate more frequently. A third of these households own country houses and vacation homes, while two thirds own cars. Their households' monthly incomes are mostly above average for the Serbian context, as is the respondents' personal income.

When a multiple correspondence analysis and hierarchical cluster analysis were carried out, using the data on respondents' economic capital (household income per household member, ownership of houses/apartments and cars), their cultural capital (highest qualification attained) and social capital (whether they hold a leadership position), a rather clear division into three categories was obtained.

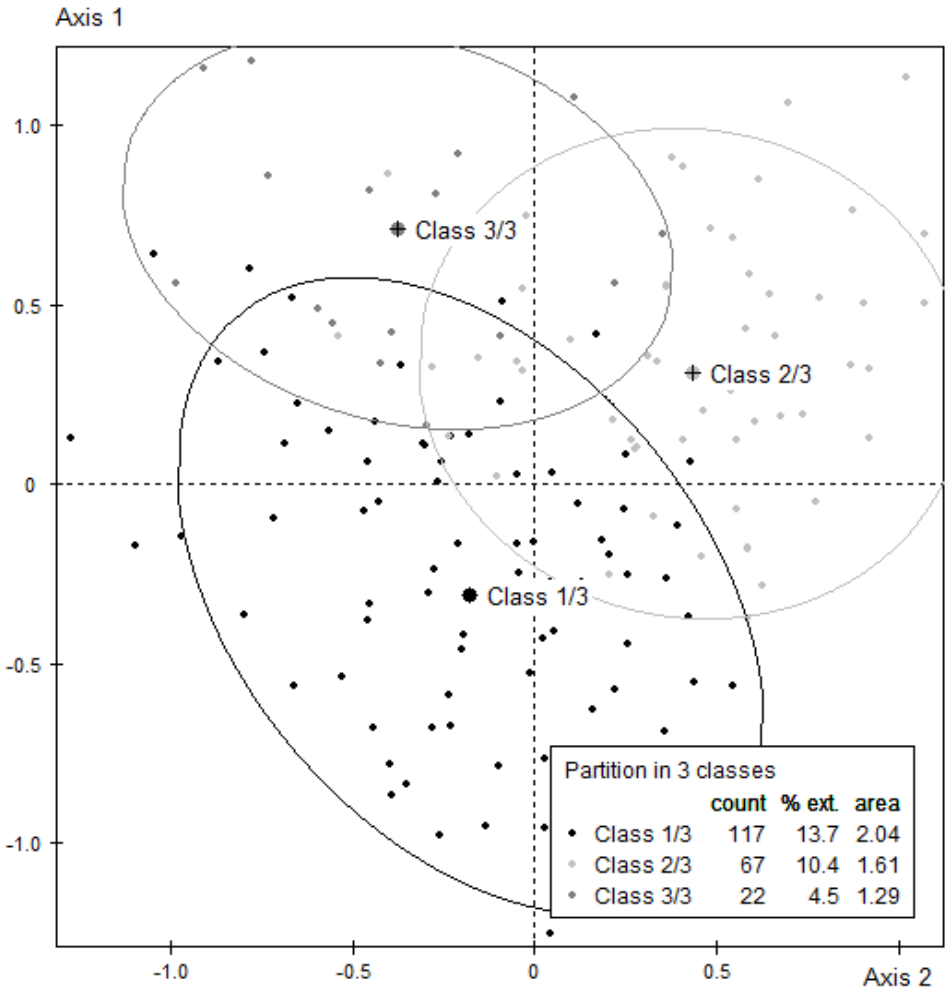
As shown in Figure 2, the upper left quadrant contains a concentration of indicators of large properties (House > 100 m2), leadership positions in institutions/ organizations (Executive +), a university education (University +) and average income per household member (which is mostly a consequence of a large number of household members). The upper right quadrant contains indicators of the highest level of cultural capital (masters and doctoral degrees), proportionately large properties (House 76–100 m2 and Car > €5000), and a relatively low household income per household member. The lower portion of the map contains indicators of small properties, yet high incomes per household member.

Figure 2 – Social space



This division becomes even clearer in Figure 3, where hierarchical cluster analysis grouped respondents according to similar characteristics.

Figure 3 – Respondent clusters in the social space



Respondents in the most numerous cluster, Number 1 (in the lower portion of the map), mostly belong to the youngest group, between 18 and 35 years of age. They tend to live in one- or two-member households, mostly with no children, which explains their highest income per household member, their key resource. They are most represented among those working across multiple domains of culture; they work in the media, private companies and nongovernment organizations, mostly full-time, however on a fixed-term contract.

In cluster 2 (middle right), whose key resource is cultural capital, there are the most respondents aged between 36 and 45. They live in three-member households and typically have kindergarten-age children, which indirectly speaks to delayed parenthood. Most of them work in educational institutions and cultural institutions, employed on a permanent contract and working full-time. Their activity areas tend to be the visual arts and architecture.

Cluster 3 also comprises the most respondents aged between 36 and 45, although there is also a significant number of those in the mature phase of their career, aged 45 to 60. This group has the highest number of women in leadership positions, and their key resources are social capital and properties. They mostly live in four-member households, with school-age children, which accounts for the discrepancy between their income per household member (which is relatively low) and their properties (which are large in proportion). They mostly work in public cultural institutions, theatres in particular, full-time on permanent contracts, although some work in the domain of multimedia and belong to the group of freelancers.

Precarious working conditions in the cultural field in Serbia

On the other hand, regardless of their middle-class position, our interviewees' experiences, as presented in the interviews, present an almost paradigmatic example of the self-exploiting relationship typical of professions in the cultural field of today, and especially characteristic of women in the creative industries (Barada and Primorac, 2014). Significant numbers of them point out that they are unable to make a distinction between their working hours and their free time, the public and private spheres; they note that their working days tend to go on indefinitely, and that they are not ready or able to refuse any job that they are offered.

> *My working day lasts non-stop basically (laughter). [...] Sometimes I literally sit at my computer from morning till night, and other times it just so happens I can be a bit more flexible. But I think it is all due to the fact we have a tendency not to turn down any work. It's like, whatever someone offers, we're like we're in, you can't pass this up. And on the other hand also, now when I say "we" I mean my coworkers at the university, we also tend not to think of this work as work. [...] It's literally running around like a headless chicken, where there comes a point where you have no idea any longer – now I'm going to do a little research, now I'm going to go over these student papers (laughter).* (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, around 35 years old**)

It sort of just happened, and then at some point it becomes your lifestyle. I had these crises when we bought the apartment, and we got the loan, it was all really hard as a freelancer so I thought like, hey let's get a proper job somewhere [...] Though I think freelancers work a lot more than people in companies, because you're working 24 hours, while they work but then they go home. When you work from home, you're always working. (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

I'm really poor at organization, and I don't think I have working hours really. And I don't think that's good. Instead I work all day long. When I go to my mom's, like yesterday I was there for lunch, and my phone rings and I get up and take the call... That's a flaw of mine, and it's a problem, because I'm unable to distinguish between work and friendship and hobbies, with me it's all intertwined. [...] Yes, I have too many commitments. And I think it's like I'm constantly raring to go. And I often have this guilt about all the things I haven't got round to doing. I think I take on more commitments than I can come through on. And I'm responsible, so then I worry. I don't have health issues for now. I'm unable to sort myself out and get it together, and it's always like this. To be perfectly honest, I don't actually take real time off. (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

As we have seen, work flexibility, that is, the flexibility of working hours, is often listed as a significant advantage of working in the creative sector; however, this flexibility is illusory, since, pressured by short deadlines in the numerous projects they work on simultaneously, those working in this sector in fact work non-stop. In fact, Papadopoulos and associates (2008) argue that the precarity of work in this domain primarily consists of loss of control over time, in that the lives of these workers are entirely shaped by their working hours, erasing the boundary between work and leisure.

We heard both sides of the story related to work flexibility from our interviewees in Serbia. They point out that they enjoy the flexibility they are afforded by creative work, but simultaneously stress that they feel that undefined working hours are infinitely exhausting.

The thing that's actually the most interesting to me when this job is concerned is not having the 9-to-5 hours. So, on the one hand, I can be very flexible. On the other, it often seems to imply you're available always, including the weekends, if you don't have working hours, you don't, right, and then it still happens that they'll let me know on Friday night that something needs to be done urgently, either for the day after or for Monday and so on. (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, around 35 years old**)

The experiences of those working in the civil sector in culture are not very different, which is why the stance of those who "like having working hours" is hardly surprising, especially in the case of respondents in the mature phase of their career, who are trying to come by more structured working arrangements.

> A*ctually, as dumb as that sounds, I like having working hours. They imply I know when I'm going to be busy. I think freelancing in Serbia involves a certain discourtesy that says you always have to be available. And if you're not, that's seen as rude or what not... Which is something I think really needs to change, and we need to have more respect for each other's time.* (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, 40 years old**)

One of the constants across all studies is the fact that the careers of women in the cultural sector, especially of freelancers, are to a great extent defined by whether or not they have children and whether they are the only ones charged with childcare. A separate challenge is the impossibility of separating work life from private life and caring for children, the elderly and the ill, as well as the "second" and "third" shifts women start once their regular work commitments are completed (Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

Within Serbian literature, this topic was dealt with in depth by the authors of the study *Women in Public Cultural Institutions (Žene u javnim ustanovama kulture*; Milanović, Subašić and Opačić, 2017). This study by the Center for Studies in Cultural Development showed that as many as two thirds of respondents believed that a woman's career progressed with interruptions at work due to giving birth and childcare, which was not the case with their male colleagues. Participants in this study stress that career advancement stops not only during pregnancy and maternity leave, but also after coming back from leave. Namely, they note that, in case of a child falling ill, women are faced with the social expectation that their role as a mother takes precedence over their professional role. That is why mothers take time off for childcare more often than fathers do (p. 84).

The respondents in our study talk about being overwhelmed in a similar fashion:

> *How long's my working day [...] My working day lasts from morning until night. So it starts at seven in the morning when… Uhm… When I say working day, I also mean childcare, I also mean private life by that. Like I don't have defined working hours, so that they're differentiated from my private life clearly and with no mixing. None of that. Instead I fit in with kids' commitments. Then I also take care of granny, who used to take care of us, right, while she was living with us in [name of town]. So there's also a lot of this running left and right with that, take that there, bring that*

by, buy this, do that or whatever, so it gets pretty hectic then, and all the rest gets inserted in between this. So practically when the day starts I'm out from seven AM, and it goes on until I'm done with rehearsals, say ten, ten-thirty at night. With a few breaks, but they're at such breakneck pace they're negligible really. That's it, frankly, I mean while we're on the topic, that's what my day is like. (**Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, music teacher, band musician, 35 years old**)

I used to work in [province-level public institution], but I was never registered. I was officially unemployed, I had two small children. Of course, I worked during the night, typing away, the baby in my arms, until four-thirty in the morning, then I'd go to bed, then the other kid gets up [...] So then I get a call from my professor, who wielded political power at the time, offering me work in a company. He asks me: [Name], would you be willing to work, to be employed, I'll let you think about it for two hours… I said there's nothing to think about, I'm unemployed, I'll take any job, and so I took the job, came into this company and started working there. (**Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, around 50 years old**)

The absence of fixed working hours is not only characteristic of freelancers and those working in the creative industries. Many of those employed in cultural institutions also have to be available throughout the day. Most cultural programs are scheduled for the evening, and this is preceded by the organizational portion of work, mostly done during the morning.

I don't have working hours [...] I don't mean to complain like I'm working too much. My hours can't be set because, here, for a week, or rather ten days, I had this event that starts at 7PM. I have to go to work in the morning, I have to be there with the guests both before the literary soiree, during the soiree and afterwards. So there are absolutely no working hours to speak of there, not to mention when we have an exhibition opening. Exhibitions are scheduled, that is the openings are scheduled starting from 6 or 7PM. [...] You go home, eat, change and go back into work (laughter), so [...] But no, no… I don't find it hard. I really don't. I have free time periodically, but since it's been a successful year, there's been less free time. (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, cultural institution director, around 50 years old**)

Three further characteristics of work discussed in the introduction also featured in the interviews we conducted in our study, especially in the case of those not working in cultural institutions: uncertainty, i.e., not knowing if and when you will be hired, forced sociability, and extremely low pay.

I've met some people and over time I've met others still and that's that, but I have to stress that this is also a drawback to this kind of work, the fact that you're really always in this limbo because you [...] Okay, so maybe you did a project, for example, I don't know, and you're paid very well for Serbian circumstances, which is again okay because you also work a lot, you work for 12 hours, you have no [...] I like to say I've sold my life for three months to this production, so it's like okay, you are paid well, but then you have to make that money last, and you're always like, wait, when's the next project going to be. So that's it in a nutshell [...] And then sometimes it may turn out that it's all [...] Depends on the year. Some years are great, you have two, three projects, and then it's like woo-hoo, awesome, and then there are years when there's only one project, and when it makes absolutely no difference in terms of monthly income whether you worked in retail or you did that one series. I mean, once you divide it up, if one payment is for one series, if you only had the one series during that entire year, when you divide that by 12 months, it could be the same as maybe having worked in some shop. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

I'm currently teaching in a high school, and I was in an elementary school until recently. I serve as a substitute teacher; it varies a lot. During the school year, when they call me in to sub, I get to spend some time at that school and then move on, like some traveling salesman. There is, yes, yes, there is [...] It's very visible and it's awful. [...] It's like there's this trade in what you have to offer, unrelated to the specific job you're there to do. **(Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, music teacher, band musician, 36 years old**)

For those with freelancer status, meeting new people and building new connections is always an opportunity for new work. Thus it is necessary to dedicate a significant portion of one's (working) time to this, and it often unfolds in environments and contexts that aren't necessarily pleasant or women-friendly, which we discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

I also see as positive, for instance, building some connections; like connections, mobility, some things or these paths that open up, say, that don't necessarily have to be financial. [...] Or some, I dunno, if you're around theatre people, again that can open some doors for you, some opportunities. That's how I see it. [...] Anything can serve a purpose. (**Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, music teacher, band musician, 36 years old**)

Those employed in cultural institutions in Serbia on permanent, full-time contracts do not have high salaries; however, in the case of those working in the civil sector and those working part-time or on a temporary service contract or copyright contract, the pay is very low indeed. More often than not, interviewees were registered as earning a minimum wage, which, on top of everything else, they were not paid regularly[42].

> *Regarding my monthly salary, it's very good now as well, and it's fully "above board." Because previously, even in places where I was registered as an employee, they would typically register me as earning minimum wage, except maybe for the past 2 years in [name of organization], but all the rest was as minimum-wage work, so that also then includes some other and different conditions. So maybe, if at some point my pension benefits are calculated… the time I'll have spent working at [current workplace] will bring up my overall average a little, which will otherwise be a disaster.* (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, about 40 years old**)

> *You know, the pay at the faculty is really miserly. It's like, it used to be 35,000 dinars, I don't know, 40,000 to start with, then it was 35,000, and then every year, every two, three years it went down. So that now this associate pay is 25,000 dinars per month. That's like literally nothing.* (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, around 30 years old**)

Those interviewees in the position of entrepreneurs also face the serious challenge of charging for their work. Both in the literal sense of getting paid by their clients, and in general, in determining how much all that work invested is worth.

> *The only complicated position is the fact that any type of work where "you're your own boss" is generally very difficult here. I don't think being a man or woman matters there [...] I think many entrepreneurs will identify with this, especially if they work in the creative industry, and that is how to charge for your work. How much does it in fact cost? It's a big problem.* (**Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, around 35 years old)**

A frequent explanation as to why they agree to the uncertainty and poor pay these jobs offer is that they hope that, if they work hard and have patience, over time this will lead to better working conditions (which, more often than not, doesn't happen).

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42 The minimum net monthly salary in Serbia is currently RSD 36,800, or approximately €300.

My primary job is as university teaching associate at [name of faculty]. I've been working there for eleven years now, on all kinds of contracts. Starting with a copyright contract, followed by contracts of casual and temporary employment, and finally service contracts. They hire me during the term, and then over the summer break the contract stops and then again, once the academic year begins in October it is renewed, and it's been like this for eleven years [...] It could happen, you know, like maybe a coworker quits and then maybe I could be employed in her place, or if someone retires, but there's no guarantees. Of course, when my professor retires, the Academic Council also need to vote to choose me, then maybe for someone else not to have a candidate of their own, or some interest to have someone else hired. (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, around 30 years old**)

As we could see based on studies from the US and Western Europe discussed above, one of the reasons that make it possible for processes of exploitation and self-exploitation to unfold in the cultural field despite poor working conditions and low pay is the love that those working in this field have for their work and the fulfillment it affords them.

According to Maurizio Lazzarato (Lazzarato, 1996), immaterial labor in the creative sector involves a number of activities that are typically not treated as "work." They used to be a privileged domain of the activity of children and, in leisure, members of the bourgeoisie. Even today, artists often discuss their activity as something other than work.

I'm satisfied in that I can't imagine doing anything else. Not in the sense of being a general manager, I just can't imagine working anywhere else but the theatre. I'm doing what I love, I'm doing it in a nice environment, I work with people I love, I come in to work happy. Now, in terms of the material side of things, that's ridiculous. My salary is under six hundred euros, and that's prescribed at the state level [...] my motivation is that I love the theatre. I can't imagine doing anything else, whether my salary here was even lower or double what it is now. I've found fulfillment here. (**Interviewee no. 29, theatre general manager, around 30 years old**).

For others, the satisfaction of working in the creative sector stems from the flexible hours, the opportunity for travel and for meeting interesting people.

It could be this is the kind of life (laughter) that suits me, and that this was why I chose to work in film. Because obviously, I'm not like my parents, someone who could like work from seven in the morning to three in the afternoon until retirement. If I was the type, I probably wouldn't have gone into film. On the other hand, I did have some jobs that had that more rigid structure of eight hours of work. These were newspaper photographer jobs that were on a permanent basis. It's a lovely job and it's all great, but unfortunately (smile) you cannot make a decent living doing that in Serbia. It's ideal in the sense of having free time, you're doing something that's nice, you're meeting interesting people [...] I found it interesting because I was working on current affairs, culture, I like connected some of my own interests. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

For some of our interviewees working as freelancers, the feeling of satisfaction stemmed from relaxed and team work, and collaborating with like-minded people, something not seen frequently in cultural institutions.

When we lived in that small apartment, I would always write in the bathroom. I always tell this story to my kids and they laugh. On the washing machine. Because we had a dog and with all the people and everything, the only place I could have some peace was the toilet. We've since moved into a large apartment and I got my own study, but I still write in the dining room. Although I have the opportunity, I have my own room, I like to write in the dining room. I have a laptop, a cell, it's never something top-of-the-line [...] But I do have solid support, which pleases me. There's always people around who I'm fond of. If we have a difference of opinion, it always gets resolved, it never escalates into arguing, into a problem. And there's this great joy, which is somehow the most important to me, to feel joy when working. That's above all else, including money. It sounds crazy to say nowadays, but that's my opinion. If I'm in some sort of team, I like to feel good, to be at ease, not to have a lump in my throat or a knot in the pit of my stomach. (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

On the other hand, our study found that entering the mature phase of one's career can often lead to a more realistic perception of the advantages and disadvantages of work in the cultural field, which then typically also results in loss of the initial enthusiasm, something also found by Barada and Primorac (2014).

When I started working, I was very, very satisfied (laughter) with my job. I remember many people, when we'd bump into each other and they'd ask what I did and so on, they were surprised, like, they'd say it was rare for them to hear from someone that they were that happy in their job. And it really was like that, and that's changed (laughter). That enthusiasm has worn off in that sense [...] (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, around 35 years old**)

In cultural institutions, it is often the routine, the lack of initiative and refusal to change the settled ways of working and try something new that lead to those working there losing the will to change something and leave their mark.

At first it was a challenge, because you now had to do something you'd only learned about theoretically, but it turned monotonous very quickly, because at the time there was no willingness in galleries to engage in these new practices. I may not even have been interested in that at first, but, precisely because these practices were lacking, I became interested in them. And it was sort of dismissive towards anyone younger, because I'd just graduated, and I wasn't allowed to speak my mind. During that period, it was exuberant at first, and then really hard for me. I'm speaking from my perspective, but maybe my coworkers were also having a hard time with me. I find it hard to understand that we are unable to deal with some subjects at this day and age, and that we simply have to work in the same way things have been done habitually for decades. (**Interviewee no. 30, curator, around 40 years old**)

On the whole, across a number of aspects our study corroborates the findings of studies conducted in other societies. Nearly all features of labor identified in the creative sector were also mapped in our interviewees' statements: an almost non-stop working day, the inability to refuse any job offered or to distinguish between one's work and free time; uncertainty regarding if and when you will be hired again, forced sociability and extremely poor pay.

A salient feature of work in the creative sector is the love of this type of work, which results in processes of exploitation and self-exploitation continuing despite poor working conditions and low wages.

Political dominance in the cultural field in Serbia

Women cultural workers in Serbia also face numerous obstacles related to the interference of political parties in their work.

As we saw when examining the characteristics of the field of cultural production in Serbia, cultural institutions are characterized by a very low level of their own revenue and, consequently, a nearly total dependence on funding from the state budget. Another aspect of financial dependence is these institutions' susceptibility to political control, consisting of: the appointing and removal of executives in these institutions; hiring based on party affiliation following each general and local electoral cycle; and a high degree of self-censorship on the part of cultural institutions' program creators, lest they do something that might disturb their relations with the political centers of power (on which their survival is directly dependent).

These problems rank among the five major issues facing cultural workers in the Serbian scene. Out of the twenty responses provided, the party-led appointing of executives at public cultural institutions came second, as nearly half of the respondents singled it out as a priority issue, whereas the fourth biggest problem in working in culture was hiring according to party affiliation and nepotism during the employment process (35%).

While in the early 1990s, during the early days of the multiparty system in Serbia, the public would be in uproar over the appointment of incompetent party apparatchiks to leadership positions in cultural institutions, as well as over the installing of inept people in the management boards at these institutions, today this practice is nearly normalized. There are very few cultural institutions where executives have not been appointed based on party support; as a matter of fact, it is often the case that the staff in these institutions actually prefer to have such people heading the institution, as they will have access to city/ municipal officials and are therefore able to secure additional funding for the functioning of the organization. In the rare cases of cultural institution executives who are not people of the party, all their troubles, firings, refusal to change their status from acting director to director can be traced back to their unwillingness to become members of one of the parties in the ruling coalition.

Anything troublesome pertains to some political situations. During 2008-2009, I was acting general manager. Replaced for political reasons, that is, this position was yielded to coalition partners from the SPS[43] [...] That was when the real problems started, because they changed our statute so that it no longer mattered whether you possessed the requisite competencies or were simply politically suitable. So then I was acting director from 2015 to December 2019, during the last year and a half of which my term had expired and my resignation was lying in a desk drawer, ignored by everybody. And twice by first bringing forward the proposal for my nomination as director in the assembly, only to then block that same proposal on purpose, in a way that was literally scripted. So they nominate me and they block the proposal themselves. So that was awful. But then, as I said, the "1 in 5 million" protests start and all these different sorts of rallies. So I attended the very first (laughter) protest, stood under the nearest streetlight, and was warned I should move away, as I could get into trouble. But I said to them, that's precisely why I'm here, to express my opinion. The very next day they finally removed me with immediate effect and I was liberated (laughter), and could finally breathe again, because it's never been this bad.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Interviewee: *The political situation in general and the way it works [...] I can't even talk about this. It's awful stuff, because once you become a member, it's just one compromise after the other, one favor after the other, and I didn't want that. At least not against myself and my profession.*

But yes, I had this situation where a certain elderly gentleman asked to meet with me two or three times. A man who knows my parents, who knows my father-in-law, who, the first two times, presented himself as being there in a friendly capacity, as someone who supports me, who supports the museum, who understands the importance of our profession, how important it is to preserve this, what a treasure it is, how it impacts our city's standing, and that there are people, which is true, who come to [name of the town] precisely for the museum and our town … Only to finally give me, the third time we spoke, only to tell me he was prepared to offer me protection and that there are people who would provide me with protection, if I were to just sign the membership form. (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

43 Socialist Party of Serbia

A considerable number of interviewees with freelancer status explained their choice as a reluctance to take part in the existing mechanism of joining political parties in order to get employment in cultural or educational institutions.

> *I'm not prepared to have anything to do with politics. I'm not prepared to do that. Like any party, just no [...] Any party, but especially the ruling one [...] There, that's how I feel. I find it disgusting. It's really palpable here, probably even more so since this is a small town.* (**Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, music teacher, band musician, 36 years old**)

For those already working in cultural institutions, party patronage over culture means, first and foremost, that it is impossible to work on anything not politically/ ideologically neutral, i.e., according to many, entirely culturally sterile and therefore not interesting to the audiences for the most part. It also means that cultural institutions operate as enthusiasm-squashing machines that, due to this lack of freedom, over time turn cultural activists into bureaucrats.

> *There is of course a sort of, how shall I put it, considerable political usurpation. And when there's that, the people who are professionals and who ought to be creative and manifest their creativity, they get thwarted and actually turned into these bureaucratic individuals, so to speak. Actually, "bureaucratic individuals" doesn't quite work together, but these completely bureaucratized drones who in fact don't get much of a say in what they'd like to do, how they'd like to work, and it all really varies from one case to the next.*

> *The way we, our institution, works is we have certain projects we work on, and it's mostly in these projects that we sort of get a little bit of freedom to do them as best we can and the way we want to. On the other hand, however, we of course know that, if that project isn't let's say ideologically neutral, it simply won't get accepted, it won't go through, it won't get done, it won't make it in the institution's annual plan... So in that sense for years now we've been performing a balancing act, some of us, myself for example, trying to do soft versions of what we normally would have done. Like, not compromising on values, not going into sensitive topics such as culture of remembrance for example, such as ideological topics, such as discussions on all the things I as a culturologist consider extremely important, and know that unless we finally start discussing all of this, we actually won't be able to reset this value system for real. I can do that in my NGO say, but not in my institution.* (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**)

The fact that the central juxtaposition in the field of cultural production in Serbia is one between the political influences of those who allocate budget resources to fund the work of cultural institutions, providing them with the illusion of being independent from market dictates, and the economic influences of a market that does not acknowledge cultural value unless it is expressed through profit – puts cultural workers and entrepreneurs in a situation where they feel cornered between the rock of party patronage and the hard place of capital.

Place of residence and professional life

The next group of obstacles to work pertains to the issue of the severe centralization of culture in Serbia. As noted earlier, there is noticeable concentration, of the creative industries in particular, in the capital. All the media allocated national frequencies and nearly all the companies and organizations working in cultural output distribution (book publishing companies, music publishers, magazines, film production companies) are located in Belgrade. In addition, over half of all traditional cultural institutions – theatres, museums, music orchestras, art galleries – are based in the capital.

What this means is that small towns offer no possibility whatsoever of working in certain professions.

> *There's no way I could [work] in [name of town]. Not with this profession. Because [name of town] no longer has, for example [...] There used to be like two television stations, and now there's one, but it's like it's not even there, no one watches it. I don't even know if they broadcast regularly. Sometimes they're on, sometimes they're off. So it's like in [name of town] I just wouldn't be able to do anything with my occupation. Literally. Now, if I were in a different line of work, there would probably be different opportunities [...]* (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

> *Well, a lot, in the sense that there isn't, it's unlikely I'd have been able to do any of the things I've done had I stayed in [name of town]. I'd probably be doing some other stuff, not as related to my profession. Chances are slim I'd be making a living as a journalist and working in [name of town]. Then again, you get to meet a lot of people who are, who have similar interests, after all it's a small circle in small towns. [Name of town where she now lives] gives you the opportunity to meet people, to like actualize your potential on this professional ladder and to sort of get things rolling,*

and then some. But I do think that this town, too, is (laughter) quite small. It really depends on a person's appetite, but, you can grow out of that too. **(Interviewee no. 3, PR and marketing manager, NGO, 27 years old**)

Another problem lies in the fact that small towns tend not to have the appropriate resources, especially when it comes to performing arts, which turns cultural work into "making do."

Everything around here is about making do. I mean, depends on how you manage to scrape by. It's not like Belgrade, for example, where there's a studio you can rent and practice there. It's much simpler in Belgrade in terms of spaces, there's so many where you can both practice, and record yourself, and record the rehearsal, for example and so on. You pay for a slot, right. There's none of that here, instead when people start something they have to improvise and they typically end up modifying a space to use for rehearsals, etc. (**Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, band musician, music teacher, 36 years old**)

For those whose activity extends beyond the perimeter of their local surroundings, who are members of national organizations or collaborate with parent institutions in Belgrade, travelling also poses a serious problem – in terms of time, organization, as well as finances. Considering the fact that Serbia possesses no fast means of transport and its railways are at a nineteenth-century level, most people take the bus, which means going to Belgrade or Novi Sad may require setting apart an entire day, depending on the part of the country. Moreover, according to numerous testimonies from our interviewees, cultural institutions, especially small-town ones, tend to have senseless bureaucratic rules in place with relation to travel, which make their work even more difficult. Finally, there were numerous interviewees who were not cultural institution employees and who paid for their own travel. They noted that, when they are invited to meetings or conferences in Belgrade, which are a quick mosey down for most participants (since they reside in Belgrade), more often than not the organizers "forget" to cover their travel expenses.

There's so much to do, and we spend so much time travelling so that turns into our biggest issue. It takes me six hours to get to Novi Sad and just as many to come back. This means, if I plan to go there in a professional capacity for one day, I actually need to spend two nights there [...] And recently they imposed this new rule, something that's nowhere to be found in the law, that I need to get the mayor's permission for every business trip, even though I already have funds allocated through the financial plan, funds that are limited and it's clear how much I can spend [...] So now I have to check in for every business trip:

- May I go?
- Yes, you may.

You can imagine how hard it is for me then. I actually went to [name of institution in another town] on my own hook, because they hadn't gone round to signing my permission slip. (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

The position of artists is much harder in a small town than it is in a large city, a hub. There's so much more opportunity in Belgrade and I must have wished a thousand times and felt [...] When I attend these workshops and whatnot, it's taken for granted that I can cover my expenses, even though there is neither a train nor a bus running from Belgrade to [name of town] [...] I mean, you travel for four, maybe five hours [...] It's taken for granted that you're in the center. That's another thing that motivates me, I want to build a center here. No, you come to [name of town] for all this amazing stuff, no more me having to go to Belgrade! So decentralization is definitely the battle I've picked. (**Interviewee no. 20, actor and NGO, 35 years old**)

When analyzing the 2022 competitions run by the Ministry of Culture and Information for the financing and co-financing of projects in contemporary art, we found that these competitions, which were supposed to be one of the mechanisms for decentralization of culture, in fact encouraged its further centralization.

As shown in table 37, of the total number of funded projects, 42% were projects by organizations based in Belgrade, who were awarded over half of the total competition funding (51.61%), and the average project value of projects from Belgrade was higher than that of projects from elsewhere in Serbia.

Table 37 – Projects co-financed in the 2022 competition of the Ministry of Culture and Information (in RSD)

	Number of projects per region	Funds per region	Average per project	% of total number	% of total funds
Vojvodina	294	116,300,000	395,578.23	27.35%	22.64%
Belgrade Region	448	265,125,000	591,796.88	41.76%	51.61%
Šumadija and West Serbia	130	57,390,000	441,461.54	12.09%	11.17%
South and East Serbia	167	60,750,000	363,772.46	15.53%	11.83%
Kosovo	36	14,100,000	391,666.67	3.35%	2.74%

Of course, one reason for this is that more project proposals tend to come from Belgrade and they tend to be of better quality, but also because committee members (who are mostly from Belgrade) tend to be familiar with the work of organizations submitting project proposals, which is not the case with those from other towns. This holds true not only of Ministry of Culture and Information competitions, but also of tenders in the creative sector.

> *We have felt discriminated against in certain, say, architectural competitions that aren't anonymous, because we're from [name of town] [...] That is, it's not necessarily that they're discriminating against us because we're from [name of town], it's just that Belgraders are just always there, they're present, and [name of town] is just like [...] I have this impression that in Serbia, in this professional setting, right, where architecture's concerned, if someone thinks of [name of town], it's the same as when we here think of national minorities, like we need to include them (laughter). It's sort of like it's exotic, it's like, there, there's one jury member from [name of town], like, you can't say they're not there, you know, and not because like, maybe not because they think the people are of high quality, but because you need to like be inclusive.* (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, around 35 years old**)

However, there are different experiences that show some of the advantages of living in small towns, even in activities which are by definition linked to big hubs, such as fashion design.

> *One thing that's pretty convenient, I'm here in [name of town], what's convenient is this local-patriot way of communicating. It's like, I call my fabric supplier and I get everything done already over the phone. I get everything delivered right to my address when I'm really under the gun and the like. They're willing to give me an extension with payment, because we've built that friendly rapport and trust. At the same time, like I said, I'm an introvert and that feels comfortable, I feel at ease there. And on the other hand, I'm not at all limited in terms of sales, I mail everything. I even mailed my products to New Zealand, I wasn't discriminated in terms of geography so to speak. If I were in Belgrade, for example, I'd probably have better brand recognition, at least to start with. People are always asking me, like, why are you not in Belgrade, because I have a lot of buyers there, both in Belgrade and in Novi Sad. But it just so happened that people asked to contact me directly and there was no sense paying rent someplace and such, or hiking margins, so I'm able to do it from here as well.* (**Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, around 35 years old**)

Perhaps it is unrealistic to call for decentralization in culture in a country that is entirely centralized politically. Nevertheless, there should at least be better awareness of the extent to which the position and working conditions of women cultural workers from outside of Belgrade and Novi Sad are different and more difficult than is the case with those working in the cities that are the centers of republic or province-level administration, parent institutions and the media.

Influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives and work of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs

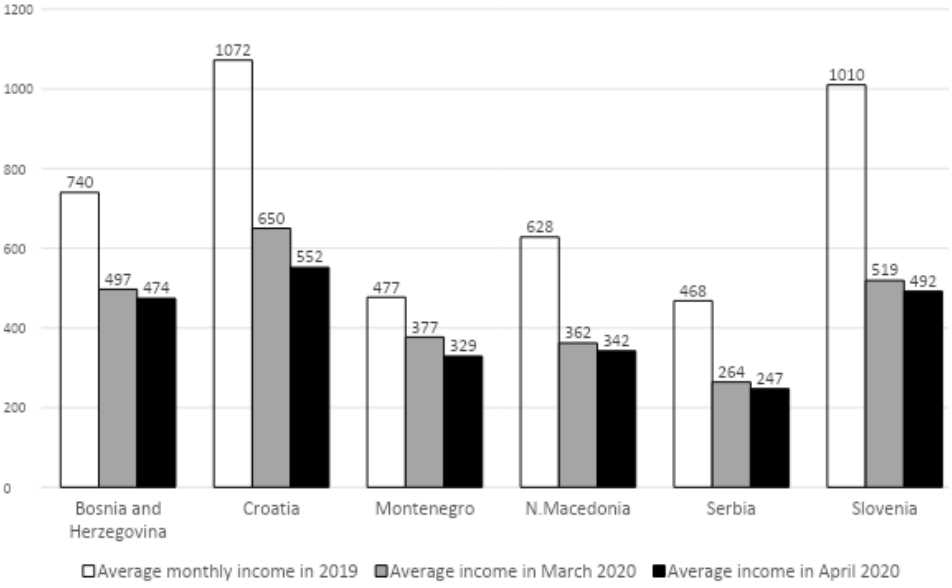
At the very start of the pandemic, between May and July 2020, a regional survey study was conducted, titled *It's Just More Visible Now: The Life and Work of Cultural Workers During the Coronavirus Pandemic (Sada je samo vidljivije: život i rad kulturnih radnika i radnica u vremenu korona pandemij*e) and coordinated by the Center for the Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe. A total of 544 respondents from South-East European societies took part in the survey, namely in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia. The study was based on an online survey questionnaire comprising 44 questions, the last two of which were open-ended (the negative and positive effects of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus)[44].

The objectives of this project were: a) to document the living and working conditions of cultural workers in South-East European societies as the pandemic unfolded, and the effects of the pandemic on their lives and work; b) to determine whether there were any mechanisms of assistance for cultural workers during this period, as well as to lobby for such mechanisms to be put in place and implemented; and c) to try to identify tendencies that are very likely, as a consequence of the crisis, to change the life and creative output of cultural workers in South-East European societies.

The first effects of the crisis were certainly financial ones. As shown in Graph 6, since the beginning of the crisis in March 2020, in most of the countries where we conducted our research, respondents' monthly income was halved, only to continue decreasing in the months that followed.

44 For more on this study, please see the journal MANEK, no. 9, pp. 22-32, 2020.

Graph 6 – Average monthly income in 2019 and at the start of the pandemic (in EUR)



The average monthly loss, as reported by the respondents, was around €120 in Montenegro, €210 in Serbia, €260 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, €280 in North Macedonia, €470 in Croatia, and €530 in Slovenia, which means they were expecting losses of between €3,000 and €5,000 in 2020 (around €8,000 in Slovenia), which was about half of their income during 2019.

Prior to the outbreak of the crisis, a relatively small number of respondents had managed to build up somewhat substantial savings providing at least temporary mitigation of the effects of the crisis and affording them some time to re-orient themselves. Over a third of respondents had no savings whatsoever, the savings of another third were under €1,000, while only a quarter of respondents in the sample had saved €1,500 or more. At the same time, before the outbreak over half the respondents had been paying off a loan of some kind, which was over €150 per month for over a quarter of those surveyed.

In addition to this regional study, at the start of the pandemic, between March and April 2020, the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia (ULUS), Union of Associations of Fine Artists of Vojvodina (SULUV) and Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia (NKSS) designed and conducted a survey study in Serbia. They surveyed 333 artists, curators and cultural managers, while the majority of respondents (56.4%) had independent artist status. The results of this study showed that the first two months of the pandemic saw the cancellation, postponement or transition-to-virtual of 80.8% of art events in public spaces (performances, exhibitions, concerts), as well as 61% of international projects, 60.4% of art workshops, and 56.8% of educational programs. During this state of emergency, nearly 40% had lost all their income, and a quarter had lost most their income. Most (20.7%) stated that, due to the pandemic and the Government's measures during this period regarding the suspension of gatherings they had lost between RSD 25,000 and RSD 50,000, 15.9% had lost between RSD 50,000 and 100,000, whereas 16.8% lost over RSD 100,000. Consequently, almost 70% of respondents were worried about the impact of the pandemic on securing their income, and almost two thirds worried about securing future work.

In addition to the financially deleterious effects of the crisis, respondents' answers also identified problems related to artistic work, negative influences on respondents' mental and physical health, and broader negative social and political influences.

Problems to do with artistic work were most common among those in the performance arts. Completely independently of the devastating financial impact, the artists complained that the crisis had negatively affected their artistic work (lack of contact with the audience, working from home, losing their stamina…). For many respondents, the financial problems, not being able to work and isolation led to physical and mental health issues – stress, uncertainty and anxiety, although very few spoke of fearing illness itself. Something else that came as an unpleasant surprise to artists during those first months of the health crisis was the image being spread during the pandemic, of cultural workers as "parasites," "gobblers" or "guzzlers" of national or city budgets. For a significant number of cultural workers, the negative effects of the pandemic primarily had to do with the broader social and political effects – the curtailment of democratic standards, human rights violations, a further dismantling of the welfare state and media censorship.

Among the respondents, four groups became clearly discernible in terms of dealing with the crisis. One third of respondents did art in addition to another, financially more stable, occupation, and were thus able to mitigate the negative financial impact of the crisis. The second group, a little under one fifth of those surveyed, managed to secure alternative sources of income during the crisis caused by the pandemic. At the same time, the third group considered permanently changing their line of work and leaving the artistic profession, while respondents in the fourth group had an even more radical response to the pandemic, which involved intending to leave the country.

As part of this study we also set out to find out whether during this period there were state mechanisms in place for helping cultural workers and entrepreneurs, and what they consisted of. According to our respondents' replies, these mechanisms included one-off financial assistance for artists and other cultural workers (which was the most frequent aid mechanism, especially in Croatia, Slovenia, North Macedonia and Serbia). Mechanisms also involved the disbursement of funds for all approved projects, with permission to realize them once this was possible (especially prominent in North Macedonia and Croatia). A frequent government-assistance measure in Croatia involved the extension of deadlines for realizing approved projects. Launching new open calls, for projects to be realized once the pandemic was over, was applied in Montenegro to a greater extent than in other countries in the region, whereas in Montenegro and Croatia new calls were also launched for projects to be realized online. Cultural workers in Slovenia were afforded the right to government assistance and unemployment benefits for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic, whereas a loan moratorium was a particularly frequent practice in Croatia and Montenegro during the pandemic. Slovenia offered the possibility of a deferral or exemption on fees and taxes for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic, whereas Croatia, more frequently than the other countries in the South-East European region, applied the measure of reducing workspace rents during the pandemic.

Table 38 – Forms of support for cultural workers in South-East European countries

Type of support		RS	B&H	CRO	MKD	MNG	SLO	Total
One-off financial assistance for artists and other cultural workers	N	102	5	93	28	23	40	291
	% support	35.10%	1.70%	32.00%	9.60%	7.90%	13.70%	100%
	% country	49.04%	9.80%	84.55%	50.91%	33.33%	78.43%	
Disbursement of funds for all approved projects, with permission to realize them once this is possible	N	5	1	34	18	4	5	67
	% support	7.50%	1.50%	50.60%	26.90%	6.00%	7.50%	100%
	% country	2.40%	1.96%	30.91%	32.72%	5.80%	9.80%	
Extension of deadlines for realizing approved projects	N	20	3	64	9	12	12	120
	% support	16.70%	2.50%	53.30%	7.50%	10.00%	10.00%	100%
	% country	9.62%	5.88%	58.18%	16.36%	17.39%	23.53%	
Launching new project calls, for projects to be realized once the pandemic was over	N	7	3	9	1	12	2	34
	% support	20.60%	8.80%	26.50%	2.90%	35.30%	5.90%	100%
	% country	3.37%	5.88%	8.18%	1.96%	17.39%	3.92%	
Launching new project calls, for projects to be realized online	N	4	2	34	5	22	2	69
	% support	5.80%	2.90%	49.30%	7.20%	31.90%	2.90%	100%
	% country	1.92%	3.92%	30.91%	9.80%	31.88%	3.92%	
Right to government assistance and unemployment benefits for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic	N	7	3	20	10	8	19	67
	% support	10.40%	4.50%	29.90%	14.90%	11.90%	28.40%	100%
	% country	3.37%	5.88%	18.18%	18.18%	11.59%	37.25%	
Loan moratorium for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic	N	41	6	38	15	25	11	136
	% support	30.10%	4.40%	27.90%	11.00%	18.40%	8.20%	100%
	% country	19.71%	11.76%	34.55%	27.27%	36.23%	21.57%	
Taxes and fees exemption for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic	N	11	1	9	4	3	16	44
	% support	25.00%	2.30%	20.40%	9.10%	6.80%	36.40%	100%
	% country	5.29%	1.96%	8.18%	7.27%	4.35%	31.37%	
Taxes and fees deferral for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic	N	28	1	19	6	2	28	84
	% support	33.30%	1.30%	22.60%	7.10%	2.40%	33.30%	100%
	% country	13.46%	1.96%	17.27%	10.91%	2.90%	54.90%	
Lowering workspace rents for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic	N	1	3	13	3	3	3	26
	% support	3.84%	11.54%	50.00%	11.54%	11.54%	11.54%	100%

Reactions of government institutions in Serbia to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic were for the most part delayed, partial, and some only exacerbated the already difficult position of workers in Serbia. The first reaction by the Government of the Republic of Serbia didn't come until June 2020, four months after the start of the crisis. Assistance in the amount of RSD 90,000 (around €760) was provided to 2,353 cultural workers with independent artist status, and another RSD 60,000 (around €500) in June 2021. There was no assistance whatsoever for a large number of those who contribute significantly to cultural life in Serbia yet do not hold this status (independent cultural experts, curators, cultural managers, artists, technicians, models, background actors).

The most deleterious measure during this period was the decision made in 2020 by the City of Belgrade Secretariat of Culture to cancel the annual competition for the financing and co-financing of projects in culture, since the state of emergency meant that "it was not possible to hold it," and instead reallocate the funds to aiding 309 part-time associates at cultural institutions in Belgrade. It wasn't long before the insufficiency of the measure of one-time financial assistance applied during the crisis became evident. This further demonstrated the necessity of continued financial support for the duration of the health crisis, whether in the form of government assistance for a much broader range of beneficiaries or a universal basic income that would, during this time, replace other forms of government assistance and pensions.

On the other hand, the situation in the cultural field showed that cultural policy – where all budget resources are spent exclusively on maintaining the system of cultural institutions (staff salaries and material costs), while their programs and all the other agents in the cultural field are left with crumbs – made no sense. Namely, what the analysis of the budget for 2020 showed is that, in a cultural policy not focused on cultural production, maintaining the system of cultural institutions costs just as much when they are doing nothing.

During this period, the terrible precariousness of the position of cultural workers with the status of independents artists, self-employed and those working in the civil sector in culture was most obvious. The majority attitude seemed to be that the state and society at large had no responsibility toward them.

On the other hand, the pandemic clearly demonstrated the importance of professional solidarity[45]. In the long term, this could raise awareness of common interests and result in the forming of broad coalitions that could, through joint action, improve the situation in the cultural field in this region.

The pandemic brought into even sharper relief the significance of reproductive labor. The philosopher and poet Maja Solar wrote a text on reproductive work during the pandemic, titled *Behind Corona's Back: Labor, The Home, and Time (Iza leđa korone: rad, kuća i vrijeme*, 2020). In this paper, the author explains that, in the context of the pandemic, a space suddenly opened up for free time, which

45 In Serbia, five artistic associations - the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia (ULUS), Association of Fine Artists of Vojvodina (SULUV), Association of Art Critics (AICA) Serbia, Station – Service for Contemporary Dance, BAZAART and Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia (NKSS) formed the Cultural Workers' Solidarity Fund of Serbia. With the help of international donors, €38,000 was raised, as well as another RSD 763,577 (cca. €6,500) through a crowdfunding campaign, which made it possible to provide assistance to 175 cultural workers to the amount of RSD 30,000 each. There were similar initiatives in other countries in the region as well.

capitalism normally tries to keep to a minimum. However, she argues, during the pandemic this time was tied to the space of the home, where reproductive labor is necessary. Additionally, reproductive work also goes on in public institutions (such as hospitals and schools), where it is paid. However, since social care is practically suspended during a pandemic or other crises, this burden typically falls on women. If we take into account the number of crises and public sector devastation over the last three decades, it becomes clear that this is an ever-increasing burden. In the case of the cultural sector, as discussed earlier, the crisis brought to the surface and deepened all problems, especially in cases of precarious employment.

A particularly relevant study where the experience of young women during the coronavirus pandemic is concerned is the 2021 one conducted by the Belgrade Center for Women's Studies and Association for Culture and Art CRVENA from Bosnia and Herzegovina, examining the different ways in which the pandemic affected the everyday demands on young women in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of housework and caregiving to others. This study confirmed the "unequal distribution of housework, as well as an increase in its size during the pandemic, the reasons for which can be found in the intersection of the demands of capitalism and patriarchal expectations." This project is particularly relevant because the results of the study were illustrated by young women comics creators from the region[46], and went on to be part of an exhibition dedicated to the life and work of women comics creators during the coronavirus pandemic, produced in 2022 by the FEMIX Young Women's Collective in collaboration with the Cultural Centre of Belgrade. In the absence of gender-sensitive measures, the authors argue, the coronavirus pandemic deepened the existing gender inequalities, while systemic inequalities were also reflected in women's increased burden in the context of paid work, as well as in more frequent loss of paid jobs or a reduced amount of paid work (p. 81).

Our study was realized between spring and late autumn of 2021, which meant that questions about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on participants' life and work were inevitable. We asked our interviewees how the pandemic had influenced their professional lives, and whether work was organized differently during that period in their company/ organization. With those working in institutions/ organizations, we wanted to know whether their duties had increased or decreased during this period, while we asked entrepreneurs and freelancers whether they had had more or less work during the pandemic. Of

46 Bobičić, N. (ed.) (n.d.) *Vratiti svoje vr(ij)eme: Istraživanje o raspod(j)eli kućnog rada među milenijalkama i zedovkama (Reclaiming One's Time: A Study on the Division of Housework among Women Millennials and Gen Zs).* Belgrade: Center for Women's Studies.

course, we also asked them about the influence of the coronavirus pandemic on their private lives.

Some of the divisions already identified by earlier studies were also present in our results. Impact was highly dependent on the type of art they practiced – while those in the performing arts were completely hindered in their activities, visual artists spoke of having gained additional time for their work. There were also enormous differences depending on whether the participants were cultural institution employees, entrepreneurs, NGO activists or freelancers.

Theatre, dance and music bore the brunt of the impact, in part due to the virus itself, but also due to the health measures suspending gatherings. Nevertheless, public institutions and their employees continued to receive budget funds for salaries and activities, so they were not threatened existentially.

> *It had a strong impact. The theatre is a place, to put it figuratively, where people spit on the stage and where people gather, so all the things we were not supposed to do for a while. It was also stressful. During the last season our shows would start say at eight in the evening, which is normal, and then it was at seven, at six, at four. We even had a premiere that started at noon because we had to be done by 3 PM. And changes, all the time. I was terribly afraid, and still am, because this is far from being over, about how this was going to affect the audience in the long term. For now, we haven't had issues with this, but I do think it's going to have consequences in the longer run. And then there are the show cancellations, those moments when someone falls ill [...] Before COVID, there wasn't a single illness you would cancel a show for. The worst thing that can happen in the theatre is cancelling a performance. And now we're at a point where I can go to my closest coworkers and be like "Hey, the actor has a fever, cancel it," and we cancel a show in two minutes like it's nothing. We've become so well-versed in it that it's awful really. Who's letting the cast know, who's letting the media know, who's letting the ticket office know – we cancel a performance like that! It's really terrible for the theatre, but then again those are the circumstances we're all in.* (**Interviewee no. 29, theatre general manager, about 30 years old**).

> *In 2020 it did, it had a major impact. We couldn't make any of the, uhm, events happen, since they were mostly events organized for larger numbers of people. And the summer ones as well, they weren't held. 2020 was simply like that. We couldn't do anything [...] To be honest, the first month felt great, I have to say. I welcomed that month of lockdowns, because I finally had time off and I could spend some time at home. I enjoyed that month, but after that it was impossible. And in 2021 during the pandemic,*

we tried to do everything while following the restrictions, so we managed to hold all our events. (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, cultural institution director, about 50 years old**)

Those working in the non-governmental sector also share some similar experiences. Nearly all events and activities were cancelled in the first months of the pandemic, but international donors mostly allowed, wherever possible, realizing projects online or postponing them until such time as they can be realized.

[It affected us] considerably. Considerably, seeing as how the work I do calls for events to be happening, mostly in person, not everything can be done online. All the activities related to the project, to the current projects, we moved all this online and worked that way, because it was the only possibility. There was no coming into the office, etc. We all worked from home. Basically it had a considerable impact. Whether we were the worst-hit sector I don't know [...] Maybe. I believe there were people who had it worse. It was great that we had projects we could change in relation to the situation, because the donor was, we were just given permission to shift some activities, to suspend them, etc. So basically it did, but I can't complain as if everything had ground to a halt for me. (**Interviewee no. 3, PR and marketing manager, NGO, 27 years old**)

The situation was completely different for entrepreneurs. What the pandemic demonstrated was that there was no safety net for them whatsoever, no government mechanism that might offer them a chance of survival. Even those who were extremely successful at their jobs were thinking about shutting down their operation and leaving the business, where this was not the consequence of some business misstep, but of a catastrophe impacting the entire society. This complete transfer of risk onto entrepreneurs is yet another clear drawback in the concept of creative industries.

What did affect is was the fact our shop was closed for two months. For two months we had no income whatsoever, we only had outgoings. It was a really tricky situation, but we did the math and saw we could manage it, like we'll be okay. Once you can envisage you're not going to starve to death, we were like OK, we can do this for a little while. We simply put everything on ice. Before COVID we got this new space and much more worrying had gone into that, the what and how of it [...] Maybe we had an easier time of the beginning of the pandemic because we were so busy with the new space. We had an agenda, what are we gonna do, how are we gonna do it, find a handyman. What's interesting is that construction

work continued non-stop, including during lockdowns [...] (**Interviewee no. 28, entrepreneur, 40 years old**)

I had that year, 2020, fully planned. The business plan was already being implemented, we were acquiring new machines, a bigger space, hiring more workers. [...] It had all been planned when all of a sudden everything comes to a complete stop. Even that flight, the plane ticket that had been prepared way before, it all stopped. Interestingly, I wasn't affected by it in the sense of despairing. I'd already had experiences which taught me that you shouldn't allow things you can't change affect you, break you [...] It's the fact that there's no more money, because my business is like that – I make money when I'm working, when I'm not working I only have outgoings. And that reality check of what now [...] And I have to admit it wasn't easy for me to give up the space I had designed personally, down to the smallest detail, invested a fortune. And that whole identity, the spirit of that place and everything I was familiar with. I found it really hard to make the decision, but it was inevitable, I couldn't keep up any longer. I even made the decision, since I was renting an apartment, to make some more sustainable arrangements there. [...] I kind of thought, don't stop, don't go into hibernation or shut up shop, keep it afloat somehow. But looking back from this vantage point, perhaps I should have done that, because there haven't been any major changes since then, except in my efforts, by hook or by crook, to get a project so I can work. (**Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, about 35 years old**)

Freelancers found themselves in a similar position. As already mentioned, those with the status of independent artists only received assistance from the government four months after the start of the pandemic. For those who did not have this status, there was no work or assistance, except that of their colleagues.

To the extent, it extended my leave above all else, the pandemic significantly extended my maternity leave. So, on the one hand, I spent time with my child, which was good, because my child got to be with his mommy a little longer. And in terms of work, instead of September, we started the first show in April. The theatre wasn't in operation, for all intents and purposes, or it was with very reduced capacity. In terms of that impact, I wasn't directly hit financially, but my friends who aren't permanent employees were extremely hit. We were looking for some ways for them to work. I have these friends who literally make a living from doing performances and these workshops and nothing else, so they did TV work. They got this small income by recording something, working side-jobs, so they were able to survive and they also got this like assistance for

two months I think. Those of us in the ensemble made money collections for our part-time associate colleagues. So during that month or two they got a symbolic amount, but at least they [...] got as much as they would, had they done their performances during those months. There were some people who had it really bad. (**Interviewee no. 15, actor, 40 years old**)

It's particularly tough for women hired on a copyright contract. They found themselves in an even greater predicament than me, for example, as I have a permanent contract. It's harder for them. They can't know, for example, if a pandemic's going to hit and then there won't be any rehearsals, not of dance studios, not of folk dancing, nor of the tambura orchestra, and they won't be able to work. (**Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

The coronavirus brought about more than just financial difficulty, however. For some, isolation was the biggest issue, while for others it was the illness of family members and children, and the myriad attendant duties.

I spend the majority of my freelancing working hours in the apartment and that's physically demanding. It really isn't pleasant to sit in front of a glaring computer screen, in various positions, for any extended period of time. [...] It's very hard when you do everything in the apartment, and that became especially evident during the lockdown. And I'm someone who likes to stay indoors, who can't be bothered dealing with people and going out. So as my friends say, if I've had it up to here, I can only imagine how hard it's been for other people. (**Interviewee no. 19, illustrator, PhD candidate, about 25 years old**)

Yes and no. We have an equal division of labor in our house, so in that sense it's not like all the cooking during the day or all the other things you do in the house fall completely on me, we actually share it. But there are days when I wish for it to be nighttime already so I can go to bed, which would have been unthinkable to me before. If our son is ill, then it's exhausting, because we now don't have the possibility of getting anyone else to take care of him. We have elderly parents, my sister also has a baby, so we're left to our own devices. So it can get really exhausting. Ups and downs, there are beautiful moments but there are also moments when it's really, really exhausting. (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, 40 years old**)

Of course, all of this unfolded against a background of entirely rational fears for one's own health, but also for that of one's children, family members and friends.

The uncertainty that characterized the first period of the pandemic, the panic spreading through social networks, the contradictory moves by the government, isolation, as well as a powerful anti-vaccination movement, all resulted in health problems and psychological issues – stress, uncertainty and anxiety.

> *During all this each of us had, we first faced an existential fear, or fears right [...] Even if we're not so prone to fearing for ourselves, still, even in the bravest among us, there is this trepidation that we are going to fall ill, how that's going to, what it's, what direction that illness will take. But even if some of us don't have that, still, how shall I put it, each one of us has people around them that they love, their kith and kin. And I think that this fear for people close to us, for our context that's under serious threat, our parents, our children, this time it's a deep, justified fear. So, it's not what we now call unfounded fears, so we can say we have these fears and we're going to overcome them - no. This now is a justified fear, because everywhere around us we already have the situation that in every family someone's already been ill, that many of the people we know, many of our friends so to speak have had a death in the family. In the past year, two of my very good friends died, and of course that's something that means my life can no longer be the same.* (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, 56 years old, cultural institution and NGO**).

When there were positive experiences during this period, these were mostly related to spending more time with their family and children. For some of them, it was only the experience of the pandemic that brought into sharp relief just how little time they are able to spend with their family.

> *On the one hand, it was all so dreadful, I think we're only going to feel the aftermath of it all after a while. It wasn't at all easy or trouble-free. Still I say, I enjoyed the time with my family. For me, it was just lovely to [...] I mean, we also had corona, I had to work while sick, and I'd also had pneumonia before corona as well [...] Like literally a week later. My father was ill, in hospital in [name of town], my mother in quarantine. Like total madness, but ok, we pulled through. You adapt, unfortunately.* (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

> *So when you ask our daughter, it's the best period of her life. And we really did have a nice time, it's like the three of us had been missing each other. So it really felt good for us*. **(Interviewee no. 28, entrepreneur, 40 years old**)

For others, the pandemic was a call to action and the impetus to creativity. For one children's books author, her thoughts first went to children and the problems they would be facing during this time. This in turn proved a salvation for the artists themselves, because, focused on helping others, they "didn't have the time to keep up with the pandemic."

> *When they announced the lockdown, that same moment I got my sister on the phone, who's a painter, and was like let's do something for the kids. I just thought: "My God, cooped-up children, what's that going to look like?" So we had a ten-minute show on YouTube, [name of show], every day, literally from the first until the last day of lockdown. And I got my household involved, my husband edited it. So then all sorts of people wanted to do it, friends and strangers, so that period – it feels funny saying it now – was a joyful one. We even collaborated, which I don't think would have happened under normal circumstances, with this group, a husband and wife from Rome, who work and are very famous, since our daughter used to live in Italy and can speak Italian. She got in touch with them and we collaborated, and everyone was blown away and they did it all for free. In normal circumstances we wouldn't even have been able to get in touch with them. We wrote to them, explaining what we did, what the goal was, what we'd want them to film at their house, and they recorded it and it was glorious [...] And we had thousands [...] of views. And it's always interactive and we get both the children and the parents involved, and then they write, they send in their work [...] And we heard back from many of them, saying we'd helped them a lot, but really we helped ourselves the most. I was the one who profited from this, not so much financially but mentally, because I didn't have the time to keep up with the pandemic.* (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

On the most general level, the crisis caused by the pandemic demonstrated the catastrophic consequences of the privatization of non-economic sectors brought about by the neoliberal conception of social development (the healthcare system most obviously, but also education and culture). It became crystal clear that there are some social fields where profit must not be the primary objective, and where government or public funding is necessary for normal functioning.

Burnout

As a rule, organizations spend the resources they have at their disposal. In the sphere of culture, under conditions of insufficient financial resources and outdated equipment, the burden tends to fall on the people working in these organizations and institutions. Of course, this "consuming" of people is most prevalent in the case of freelancers, who have no one to rely on except their own mettle and, conceivably, the help of their partner, family and friends.

Although it does not specifically address women cultural workers but the so-called third (non-governmental) sector, the comparative study conducted by Monika Stec and associates, *Burn-out Aid: Social Study Results on Burnout in Polish, Croatian and Slovenian NGOs (Burn-out Aid: Rezultati društvenog istraživanja sindroma sagorijevanja u nevladinim organizacijama u Poljskoj, Hrvatskoj i Sloveniji*, 2020b), provides numerous interesting insights into the topic of burnout. The study was based on interviews where participants were not presented with a set definition of burnout. The respondents themselves instead provided their own definitions, based on which the study's authors extracted several characteristics of this phenomenon. The group of respondents who had experienced this syndrome point out inability to rest, depression and other disorders, as well as the two-fold nature of burnout – on the one hand, a reluctance to work and loss of motivation, and, on the other, an excessive commitment to work and a feeling of being irreplaceable. Additionally, both groups of respondents cite: fatigue (physical and mental), stress and a sense of meaninglessness of work (Stec, 2020b, p. 11).

The conclusions of this study are summarized in several key points. First, it is argued that the fact that work in non-governmental organizations is conducive to burnout has more to do with the organizational and socio-political context in which these organizations operate than the type of recipients they work with. Next, NGO work provides less security compared to work in the private or public sector. Third, burnout is considered a complex problem, and its source is recognized primarily on the organizational and social levels. Fourth, leaders who have experiences burnout themselves have better understanding of the syndrome and are better equipped to prevent it. This is related to the fifth thesis of this study, namely that, when burnout prevention is concerned, lack of opportunity and motivation is a bigger problem for organization leaders than lacking knowledge of how to go about it. The sixth conclusion is that burnout is a process that takes time to develop, although it is not necessarily a function of seniority. Seven, the pressure to meet work goals is not only external, but is also internalized by those working in this sector (Stec 2020b, pp. 16–33).

In the interviews we conducted in the course of our study, we also heard truly harrowing testimonies about the extent to which work in the creative sector, especially where freelancers and entrepreneurs are concerned, can be devastating to private lives.

> *Yes, I had serious health problems. That was a year before I got pregnant and then it went on for several years. Even today they've yet to name this condition, but it was awful, painful, it lasted for a long time, spreading all over my body, starting from eyesight, joint pain. I worked the whole time through the pain, because I wasn't covered at all to not work, but it felt terrible working, because I didn't know how long it would last. I thought I wouldn't be able to walk... No one could figure out what it was, finally these alternative methods saved me, and after pregnancy it was like I came to. It was probably this break, the time off that did it. It wasn't just working too much, but also the psyche, not just mine, but this like artistic psyche that gives itself up completely. Now, when that gets exploited to the maximum, you get spent. And that has to do with how much we give of ourselves. If you keep giving, always and to the hilt, you're likely to exhaust your resources.* **(Interviewee no. 15, actor, 40 years old**)

> *I keep having these serious health scares. It was exactly because of things like that happening that I've hit the brakes. Inner peace is so important to me, which of course means seeing a psychotherapist. I couldn't do it on my own. She said this wonderful thing to me: "You can't be a superhero on all fronts." [...] I've been struggling with a hormone imbalance. It's all the result of stress, I've gained weight, because I can't eat when I'm supposed to, when my body needs it, it's all slapdash. I exercise when I have the time to exercise, right, because my work's more important to me. The only promise I've made to myself and have kept, thank God, is that I don't work on Sundays. At least on Sundays. I don't work Saturdays either, except when I have clients in from other towns and that's the only time that works for them, then I also work Saturdays. But Sunday's completely off limits. I have a rule to completely turn off my work phone after eight in the evening. I don't look at messages, I'm not on Facebook anymore... Among other things, it's also a consequence of a dynamic lifestyle, and I really have no need for this information overload, which is everywhere now. Everyone has an opinion about everything these days.* **(Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, 30-40 years old)**

The underside of working in the creative sector, and the illusion of flexibility involved, are perfectly evident to many who actually work in these conditions. As mentioned earlier in the text, in situations when you are working on several projects simultaneously, which need to be completed to meet relatively short deadlines, the lack of fixed working hours does not mean you get to choose when you work but that you work non-stop, even nights and weekends.

I haven't had any major health issues, but here, currently I have eczema on my arms, which my doctor has said was due to stress. And a classic symptom of a master of procrastination, where you have too many things on your plate today so you simply do none of them. This only started happening to me relatively recently, maybe in the last two, three years, as a consequence of too many commitments. When freelancing hours are concerned, everyone's always like "wow, that's so great, you get to set your hours." But it's not really that great, because flexible working hours don't mean you work when you want to, it means you work when you have to. And it's the case very often that I keep working the whole day, even though I hadn't planned to do so, even if there's no time, but that's the situation, I have to cram everything into one, working late into the night. It's no fun at all working in this way. (**Interviewee no. 19, illustrator, PhD candidate, about 25 years old**)

Yes, yes, I have, I have. And it always happens to me around the same time. It's the campaign we run for the festival, and that's simply my, I'm the only one of the staff who gets sick, so I think it tells a lot about the way I deal with stress. Typically, while a project's running, I like totally tense up. Once it's already a dead heat, it all catches up to me once it's all over. So then, uhm, I often get sick because of it. But again, I think it's more of a me issue where, I don't know how to release stress slowly, and I accumulate it instead so then once everything's done… (**Interviewee no. 3, PR and marketing manager, NGO, 27 years old**)

Well basically yes, I have, but it has more to do with [...] When I have multiple things going on, when I'm working on several projects, then often [...] And my situation (laughter) sort of tends to be that it's often, often, often the case that things are happening all at the same time [...] So basically, it's true, we can suffer from burnout. (**Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer and research assistant at university, around 40 years of age**)

That's what my day looks like, and there's none of that division of time into workdays and the weekend, because weekends are my workdays, right, uhm, so then I try, when it's normal operation, when it's gigs, when we have gigs, I then try to clear up the overflow, whatever I can get to, yeah, I go in that direction, let's clear some of this away, it's what we talked about just now, like I don't need to accept everything, but when you're in the position of struggling to be financially stable, then these lines get blurred. I'm not sure what I'm, what I can say no to, because maybe this is going to bring in something [...] You get it [...] that's why you get burnout, among other things [...] You don't even make out what you're snowed under with, and it takes a lot of your time and brings in very little in return, right? **(Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, music teacher, band musician, 36 years old**)

For many of our interviewees, entering a mature stage of their career also coincided with the "discovery" that there was more to life besides work. That often entailed refusing to work weekends, introducing breaks in between projects, making time for their private life, for family, children and partners.

Before, I was actually in this system, practically from when I graduated from university up until now, where I was completely focused on work alone. I had no other focus, and actually this idea of always being available, of always, whenever someone calls, whatever it is, I can do it, I want to do it, etc., it simply became unworkable in this system where there was now also a partner. And I had to become aware of this somehow. I think that it's actually not healthy, that it's fundamentally not healthy. Not just because there's a partner, but in general, even if there wasn't one. So that's changed a bit, and I have to say I'm glad and I'm proud of that (laughter). That I've rectified this so that my job doesn't always come first and shouldn't come first. (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, 35 years old**)

One thing that's important to me in every sense, that I'm not constantly chasing my own tail, [...] I think that most NGOs that support themselves through projects and not structurally, they are actually constantly chasing their own tails, and an awful lot of people burn out along the way, including myself, in this mild but long-term burnout process. You can't work at this pace for too long. That's why it's a shame that for most NGOs there are no structural funds to help these organizations get their bearings and focus on what they know best or focus on becoming much better at doing what they do. (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, 40 years old**)

Now it's great. It took me a while to realize that social life, that is my private life, was just as important as my work life. For a long while I was in this driven mindset where it was okay for me to work from seven in the morning until eleven at night and that that's great, but then after a while I realized maybe it wasn't that great. That my private life was equally important, so now I'm very good at balancing the two. My weekends are always free, that's like sacrosanct, my me time where I can do nothing, or can do whatever I feel like doing. So by now I've already become good at how I divide up my time, where I realize I don't need to be working all the time, that it's not necessary, and that no one expects me to. So that now I have a great balance, between work and my private life. (**Interviewee no. 3, PR and marketing manager, NGO, 27 years old**)

It is not only family and children that might feel neglected because of the large number of commitments of those working in culture. Their social life is another common casualty. Nevertheless, we have also come across examples where, despite the myriad of commitments, they succeed in maintaining their relationships both with their partner and with their family and friends, emphasizing that this required great effort on their part.

I think it's my social life that suffers the most. I do my best so my absences don't affect my family too much. My younger son is a teenager now, he's 12 and a half, my eldest is already at university, he's his own man, that's a whole other kettle of fish. But precisely because my younger son is a teenager, I try to spend more time with him and to support him, especially where school's concerned. Now, if I didn't have support at home, I definitely wouldn't be able to do that. But it seems to me that my absences aren't so noticeable, because I use every single free moment I have and that I spend at home with maximum efficiency, whether it's, let's say, talking with my child or housework or whatever [...] The thing that suffers most in this entire situation is my social life. So my girlfriends are always on standby. My friends have to, I ask them to be understanding. I get criticized from time to time, so there [...] **(Interviewee no. 16, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

We've all managed to deal with all this swimmingly. I did my best so my parents, friends and partner wouldn't be shortchanged for my time, since it was divided in such a specific manner. The most intense period was the master studies, when I literally had to go out in the morning and be back around midnight. I used to travel to Belgrade for lectures four times per week. As a matter of fact, I'd go out during my working hours and go to

Belgrade, and then the next day I'd be back at work at eight and then again to the university. But I used the weekends for all the people dear to me. And of course I never have so little time I can't pick up the phone and give a call to someone I know needs to hear my voice or I theirs, or to send a message of encouragement or support if I know friend is going through something. **(Interviewee no. 30, curator, about 40 years old**)

Summary

Across a number of aspects, the professional experiences of women workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia are similar to those identified in studies in the South-East European region, Western Europe and North America. Even though they tend to live in middle-class or upper-middle class households, their work experiences are extremely precarious. For a large number of them, there is no difference between their working hours and free time, their work commitments take up their entire day and they are typically paid poorly.

Entrepreneurs and freelancers note that their careers are defined by a constant uncertainty as to whether and when they will be working. Consequently, they are not in the position to refuse any work they are offered, and have to dedicate a considerable portion of their time to nurturing relationships with those awarding jobs. At the same time, what keeps them in their line of work is the love they have for it. This combination of structurally unfavorable working conditions and workers' passionate dedication to their job is highly conducive to relations of exploitation and self-exploitation, and very damaging to employee health and wellbeing.

Something that those working in cultural institutions in Serbia face is the interference of political parties in their work. In nearly all cultural institutions, key personnel decisions are made by the ruling political parties – from the appointment of directors to the hiring of staff. This influence also takes the form of a high degree of informal censorship and self-censorship; thus, cultural institutions tend to avoid programs with potentially controversial topics, which over time results in employees' enthusiasm fading and lack of interest on the part of the public. The specific character of working in the cultural field in Serbia also stems from the fact it is highly centralized. Over 70% of creative industries are located in Belgrade, as is the case with all media with national coverage, over half of all traditional cultural institutions (except libraries) and nearly all production and distribution companies. For a certain portion of cultural workers this means they need to live in Belgrade in order to be able to work in the

first place, while for others it means they are competing in a rigged game for government and available international funds; for a third portion of workers, it entails travel issues in order to be able to keep in touch with their parent institutions and everything going on in the world of culture.

All these issues became even more visible during the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic laid bare the radical vulnerability of all workers and entrepreneurs who were not part of the cultural institutions system, as well as a complete lack of government mechanisms that would give them a chance of survival. Moreover, it also indirectly demonstrated that there are social fields where profit must not be the primary goal (most obviously in the case of the healthcare system, but the same applies for education and culture), and where government or public funding – however, not of cultural institutions exclusively – is necessary for normal functioning.

Certainly, all of these problems affect workers' health, and during the interviews we heard truly harrowing testimonies about the extent to which working in the creative sector, especially for freelancers and entrepreneurs, had negatively impacted their lives.

Work-life balance

The third principal topic of this study revolved around how respondents maintained a balance between private and professional life. We asked them about the attitude of their partners and families toward their work, whether they were supportive and what this support consisted of; whether they split household chores with their partners and in what way. For respondents with children, we wanted to know whether their decision to have children and the timing of their pregnancy were affected by their career and professional commitments, how they balanced childcare with work – do they share parenting duties with their partner, do they have additional help and from whom; do their children go to the nursery and do they pay someone to look after their children; do they have paid household help, and is there anyone else they must care for (e.g. ill parents or relatives). At the end of this segment, we asked the respondents whether they were able to secure some free time and, if so, how they used it, whether they could afford to go on vacation and where to usually.

In today's environment, where typically both partners work, and often also work overtime, balancing family and professional commitments presents a major challenge. This leads to two types of conflict – depending on whether work is disturbing family life (work-family conflict) or family life is negatively impacting on one's ability to work (family-work conflict) (Frone, Russell and Cooper, 1992).

As we could see in the previous chapter, the majority of our interviewees – workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia – were working in extremely precarious conditions, with undefined working hours that frequently last all day, inadequate and often uncertain pay, and, for the most part, with employers who disregard their other commitments, childcare in particular. Therefore, the issues of balancing private and professional commitments, the sharing of unpaid household chores and the support (not) afforded them by their partner and family are ever more significant.

Even though the majority of both men and women state that family comes before their work, conservative social patterns impose different duties and expectations on them, respectively, when it comes to care work within the private sphere. According to such gender-unequal views, men are supposed to be the providers and to spend more time at work, while it is more important for women to spend time at home, doing housework and taking care of children.

In the now-classic book *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*, Hochschild and Machung distinguish three types of ideologies defining roles in marriage/ common-law marriage: traditional, transitional and egalitarian. They define which sphere a person should identify with (family or work) and how much power they desire in the marriage/ common-law marriage (more than, less than, or the same as their partner).

The traditional ideology on gender prescribes that women identify with family and the role of wife and mother while men identify with work, and that women hold less power in this relation. A pure egalitarian relationship means that the wife and husband identify with the same sphere (be it work or family), and that they hold an equal amount of power. In between the two, according to Hochschild, are various forms of transitional ideologies on gender relations. In contrast to traditional ideology, women who adopt the transitional type wish to identify both with family and with work, however (in contrast to egalitarian ideology), believe their husbands should identify with work more. Similarly, men adopting transitional ideology are fully supportive of their wives working, yet they still expect that they will also be principally responsible for housework.

According to Bolzendahl and Myers (2004), there are two groups of reasons why people adopt and accept various ideologies on gender relations – interest-based and exposure-based factors. In the first group, personal goals and interests shape one's ideology on gender relations. If they benefit from gender inequality, people are likely to be accepting of the traditional ideology. On this view, men will embrace unequal division of labor regarding housework when it benefits them – fewer chores and more free time. Hochschild puts forward a controversial hypothesis, namely that women accept unequal distribution of housework when they are afraid divorce would put them in an even less favorable position (due to a lower standard of living and even more commitments, should they become single).

The second group of factors comprises exposure to various influences while growing up in a family, as well as exposure to broader societal influences, including education, media, one's job, as well as other identity differentiators. These also affect adoption of different gender relations ideologies.

In addition to this personal level, there are also a number of factors on the macrolevel which contribute to the embracing of traditional or egalitarian ideologies of gender relations. Different types of social policy affect this significantly. Conservative social policy involves a minimal role of the state when it comes to family care and support for the preservation of traditional family roles and norms. Social-democratic social policy creates the preconditions for

women's broader participation in the labor market and a more equal division of household chores, whereas liberal social policy is positioned between these two extremes, including limited support from the state and the expectation that families themselves should secure the support they require for housework or childcare in the market.

Italian feminist scholars from the 1970s rooted in the Marxist tradition were responsible for articulating a critique of the gender labor division in the private sphere and for broaching the subject of the recognition of domestic labor. One of the pioneering studies from this corpus is the book *The Work of Love: Unpaid Housework, Poverty and Sexual Violence at the Dawn of the 21st Century* by Giovanna Franca Dalla Costa [1978]. She directly links the preservation and interests of the capitalist system with the division of household labor and, in the parlance of the time, masculine violence. The labor predominantly performed by women in the home is the "work of the production and reproduction of labor power, the primary site where this work is performed is the household, and the primary unit within which it unfolds – the family" (Dalla Costa [1978] 2019, pp. 7–8).

Although it is now an indispensable part of feminist knowledge, and increasingly part of widespread usage, at the time when Dalla Costa's book came out, the idea of domestic labor as labor was a relatively new concept that was only then taking shape theoretically and becoming operationalized for activism in the fight against gender inequality. This is similar to the critique of the idea of romantic love as a construct masking women's unequal position within the family, because she is expected to perform all this unpaid work of providing care and looking after others for free, "out of love," labor on which not only the family, but the entire capitalist system is dependent for its functioning. Similarly, artistic work from the last two hundred-some years is mythologized as the work of genius and work done "out of love." So why should it be paid, then?

Dalla Costa further elaborates her analysis on at least another level, exposing the organization of the family in capitalism as one that suits capitalist interests. Capitalism relies on unpaid work done by women in families, which it additionally codifies through the marriage contract. This unequal relationship generates conditions for violence against women. That is why the capitalist state has failed time after time to solve the problem of this type of violence through its corrective methods, because, Dalla Costa argues, that is simply not in its interest.

We might ask a similar question regarding the cultural sector. What principle was the current system based on, if gender inequality presents the rule there, rather than the exception? And how might the lack of resources in this area, its

accelerated neoliberalization and the attempt to usher in the dominance of the corporate model, impact the position of women cultural workers? Can we expect a system founded on the exploitation and devaluation of artistic work in general to be a system that will improve the position of those already underprivileged? The answer is clear. If everyone in the cultural sector is having a difficult time, then women cultural workers can only expect to have it twice as difficult.

Silvia Federici is arguably the best-known feminist from the movement demanding wages for housework. Her book *Wages Against Housework* [1974] summarized the key ideas of Italian and international groups of its era: "They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work." The demand for receiving wages for housework was a strategic one, intended to demystify and undermine the role that the enslavement of women in the private sphere plays in the capitalist society. The feminists of the time recognized the radical perspective of this demand, aimed at revolutionizing women's lives and their social power. Hence the somewhat confusing, at least at first glance, "against" instead of the expected "for" in the book's title. Demanding wages for work in the private sphere – which, up until that moment wasn't recognized, in the most literal sense of the term, and was therefore also unpaid, despite its tremendous material value – was, and remains to this date, a radical revolutionary demand. Demanding the value of a type of work to be acknowledged entails acknowledging its social significance and role. Applying this thinking to the cultural sector begs the question: how much is the work of women cultural workers worth? How much of their work is paid, and how much is unpaid? Finally, what social structures have it in their interests for the difference between these two to favor the latter as much as possible, in order to claim that difference for themselves?

Half a century has passed since the initiative for wages against housework, many actions have been launched, and the theory behind it has continued to develop, primarily in the direction of understanding that there isn't only one type of heterosexual monogamous Western family from the working or middle classes. This systemic analysis required further elaboration in the direction of a broader conception of reproductive work, as well as expansion so as to take into account other levels of social inequality as well.

What hasn't changed, however, is the fact that women around the world still perform unpaid care work more than men (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2018; Sayer, 2005). The International Labour Organization estimates, based on data regarding time use in sixty-four countries, and were such services to be valued on the basis of an hourly minimum wage, that care work would amount to 9% of global GDP, or US$11 trillion (ILO 2018, 3). Contemporary theory of social reproduction defines reproductive work as all activities contributing to the

nurturing of the future workforce, the regeneration of the current workforce, as well as caring for those unable to work. This definition has been considerably expanded compared to the initial idea of housework.

For the most part, reproductive work remains invisible and unpaid, and is therefore at least partly comparable to the perception of cultural work, which is also done "out of love" and is "priceless." Katja Praznik writes about the similarities and differences between these two types of labor in her book *Art Work: Invisible Labour and the Legacy of Yugoslav Socialism* (2021). Although this publication pertains to the visual arts, its overall conclusions are applicable, almost to the letter, to other artistic domains as well.

The study by Katja Praznik explores artistic practices in the context of institutionalized art in the West from the eighteenth century until today. Such precise temporal and spatial delimitation is important because these practices are not universal, and because other contexts have different conceptions of art work. The author includes the following among such European practices: "production and subsequent installation, publication, performance, or realization of an artwork; artistic collaboration; research; securing and administrating funding; copyright permissions; legal and tax administration; public presentation and promotion; and many other tasks" (Praznik 2021, p. 18).

Praznik investigates the ways in which a kind of paradox in relation to artistic work, which is not recognized as labor, is reproduced through the idea of the autonomy of art as the opposite of the concept of art work. Her research is diachronic, tracing the history of art work in the West, from its discursive formulation as autonomous during the 18th century, followed by its institutionalization in the 19th century and avant-garde challenge during the 20th century. The eighteenth-century idea of art being priceless contributed to the mystification of artistic work. Paradoxically, in the context of capitalism, this idea gets translated into the thesis that artists don't need to be paid, since their work cannot be priced or tangibly materially valued. Praznik argues that the flip side of conceiving of the autonomy of art as a bourgeois concept was what in fact contributed to the erasure of work from art, and the institutionalization of art as invisible labor. This, she concludes, "disavows the economy and neutralizes the class dimension of art production" (Praznik 2021, p. 18).

Following on from this idea, Praznik next introduces the feminist perspective of gendered work in order to answer the question why and in what ways artistic work is not recognized as labor as well. To analyze invisible and unpaid artistic work, the author adopts a method used by feminists to demonstrate that women's work in the private sphere is invisible and unrecognized as labor. In

her comparative efforts, the author focuses on two feminist contributions to understanding housework. The first idea relates to the structural component of the invisibility of labor, based on the division between the public and private spheres in capitalism. Although value is created in the private sphere, on the one hand, and exploitation occurs there as well, this sphere is excluded from the economy. Second, certain types of labor and skills are essentialized, which leads to their economic and/or cultural and social devaluation. If the first of these methods helps us understand how treating art as non-labor in capitalism contributes to its exclusion and exploitation, then the second enables us to understand the operating logic behind this process, Praznik explains (Praznik 2021, pp. 37–38).

Unpaid housework is necessary for the reproduction of the workforce, whereas artistic work is not in such an obviously direct relation with social reproduction, but, this author argues, it is essential in the sense of ideological reproduction of the bourgeois society. She provides an analogy between the essentialization of women's labor in the home and the ideas of artistic genius and creativity, a key mechanism rendering labor in art invisible as a form of labor. Consequently, Praznik continues, demystifying creativity and its relation with the ideology of the artistic genius is deeply connected to the possibility of recognizing artistic labor.

In addition to the similarities between housework and art work, the author also lists the differences between them, as the comparison between the two only holds up to a certain degree. It is precisely the source of the essentializing rhetoric that she recognizes as the most substantial difference between them. Housework is essentialized based on the idea of a "sexual" difference, according to which it is the role of women to contribute to and serve the community by doing housework. On the other hand, the essentialization of artistic work unfolds in the direction of artistic labor being self-fulfilling (Praznik 2021, pp. 42–43).

The respondents in our study are women cultural workers, who perform both types of labor unacknowledged in capitalism – artistic work and housework – with multiple consequences for their professional lives and the degree of gender inequality they face.

In the course of our study, we also explored respondents' attitudes regarding gender relations, in the private and professional spheres. Some of the questions addressed gender relations directly. The respondents were offered twelve attitudes, in relation to which they could then express their dis/agreement, on the Likert scale, ranging from "I completely agree" (1) to "I completely disagree" (5). The table below presents the results with the arithmetic mean (AM) of the answers provided by the respondents as the measure. The lower the number,

the greater the degree of agreement (e.g., with the opinion that women are as capable of leadership as men), and conversely, the higher the number, the greater the disagreement with the statements given (for example, that men are more capable of exceptional artistic achievements than women, or that women should tolerate unwanted advances and comments for the sake of career advancement).

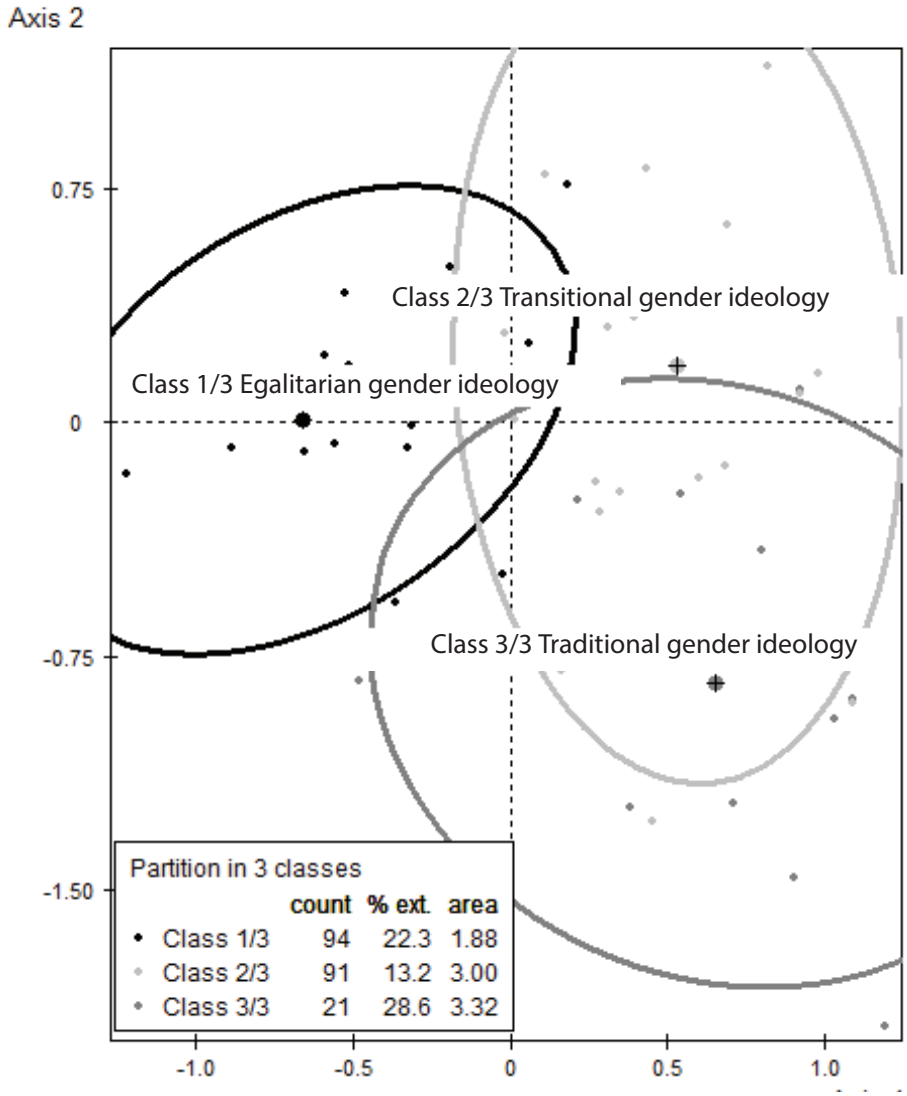
Table 39 – Attitudes toward gender relations in the professional and private spheres

Statements	**A.M.**
Women are equally capable leaders as men.	1.25
Men and women should enjoy the same sexual freedoms.	1.30
If I knew a transgender person, I would encourage them to come out and undergo gender reassignment in accordance with their wishes.	1.55
It is perfectly fine for a woman to prioritize her career.	1.60
In principle, fathers are as capable of taking care of young children as mothers.	1.66
Women are naturally better at caring for others	2.85
Men should stay strong despite life's difficulties.	3.18
In culture and art, gay people wield too much power and influence.	3.20
Men are more professional coworkers than women.	3.59
Important financial decisions should still be left to men.	3.70
Men are more capable of exceptional artistic achievements than women.	3.73
A woman should tolerate unwanted advances and comments for the sake of career advancement.	3.78

In the following step, we extracted from the pool of statements those most clearly expressing an ideology on gender relations ("It is perfectly fine for a woman to prioritize her career," "In principle, fathers are as capable of taking care of young children as mothers," and "Women are naturally better at caring for others"),

and, using hierarchical cluster analysis, obtained a clear differentiation of results into three clusters expressive of the viewpoints of egalitarian, transitional and traditional ideology, respectively.

Figure 4 – Different types of gender-relation ideologies among respondents



The majority of respondents in the sample adopt an egalitarian ideology on gender relations (94). They agree completely with the statement that it is fine for a woman to prioritize her career, or that fathers are in principle as capable of taking care of young children as mothers, and completely disagree with the statement that women are the naturally better caregivers. Generation-wise, most of them fall into the 36-45 years age group, followed by the youngest group, aged 18 to 35. In terms of professions, most proponents of the egalitarian gender-relations ideology are in the group with multiple occupations, and among producers, managers and coordinators, and, where employment status is concerned, most are freelancers. Almost 60% of them live in Belgrade and most have no children. It emerged that personal income does not influence espousing the egalitarian gender-relations ideology as much as average income per household member does. The higher the income per household member, the higher the probability of respondents adopting egalitarian gender-roles attitudes.

Those that subscribe to a transitional gender-relations ideology mostly agree with statements regarding women's careers and the ability of fathers to take care of young children, and mostly disagree that women are naturally more capable of taking care of others. Most in this group are from the 45-60 years age group, while in terms of profession most work in education or in cultural institutions (curators, librarians and archivists). They are most prevalent among those in permanent full-time employment. Over half of these respondents have children; regarding place of residence, they are equally represented in all regions, and they are most prevalent in families with mid-level income per household member.

A relatively small number of respondents adopt a traditional gender-relations ideology (21). In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, they are very similar to those in the previous group – most prevalent in the 45-60 age group, equally distributed across all regions, over half of them have children and they mostly live in families with a mid-level income per household member. Interestingly, they are most prevalent among artists, specifically freelance artists.

Nearly all 21st-century studies available to us demonstrate a clear trend of agreement between partners that family commitments should be equally distributed. In practice, however, women still do twice or even three times more work in the home than men, even when working full time, which we have mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

In a review study examining these issues, titled *Husbands and Wives in Dual-Earner Marriages: Decision-Making, Gender Role Attitudes, Division of Household Labor and Equity* (2005), Bartley, Blanton and Gilliard identify an important distinction

between low-control and high-control household tasks. Tasks that allow for very little personal control include routine work that is performed daily and mostly at a specific time. At the same time, other family members crucially depend on these tasks in order to meet their basic needs (such as cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry, ironing, etc.). They are usually treated as "female jobs." On the other side, we find high-control tasks, which do not have to be completed at a specific time, are performed occasionally, and do not directly affect other household members' basic daily needs (car maintenance, repairs around the house, taking out the garbage, yard work, and so on). These are usually defined as "male jobs." Studies have shown that feelings of equity or inequity regarding the division of household labor are closely tied to the distribution of low-control tasks. Thus, it is not only about the number of hours one spends doing household work; instead, it is crucial how the low-control tasks are divided between the partners. In our survey study, we listed twenty usual household chores, and asked the respondents to state who typically performed these chores in their household: they, their partner, paid staff, or someone else (their parents, their partner's parents, a relative, friend or neighbor).

What Table 40 shows is that, even in the households of the successful women in the cultural sphere comprising our survey sample, a gendered division of labor still persists. They are mostly the ones who perform household tasks such as doing the laundry, cooking, ironing, cleaning the windows, or deep-cleaning the house. There is a somewhat more equitable division of labor regarding doing the shopping, getting groceries, vacuuming and doing the dishes.

Table 40 – Division of household chores

Division of household chores	Ispitanica	Partner	Paid staff	Someone else
Doing the laundry	107 (87.0%)	40 (32.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.8%)
Cooking	102 (82.9%)	62 (50.4%)	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.3%)
Deep-cleaning the house	100 (81.3%)	59 (48.0%)	13 (10.6%)	3 (2.4%)
Window cleaning	89 (72.4%)	29 (23.6%)	13 (10.6%)	2 (1.6%)
Ironing	84 (68.3%)	19 (15.4%)	3 (2.4%)	4 (3.3%)
Doing the dishes	95 (77.2%)	71 (57.7%)	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.3%)
Grocery shopping	102 (82.9%)	90 (72.2%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)
Vacuuming	80 (65.0%)	73 (59.3%)	7 (5.7%)	2 (1.6%)
Pet care	50 (40.7%)	61 (49.6%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.4%)

Parenting and talking with children about their problems	66 (53.7%)	51 (41.5%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (6.5%)
Taking care of elderly household members	36 (29.3%)	28 (22.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.4%)
Helping children with studying and homework	42 (28.2%)	25 (20.6%)	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.3%)
Taking children to kindergarten/ school	42 (34.1%)	44 (35.8%)	1 (0.8%)	5 (4.1%)
Taking children outside to play	49 (39.8%)	44 (35.8%)	1 (0.8%)	6 (4.9%)
Taking children to extracurricular activities (foreign language lessons, music school, sports practice, etc.)	41 (33.3%)	37 (30.1%)	1 (0.8%)	5 (4.1%)
Washing the car	22 (17.9%)	76 (61.8%)	24 (19.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Painting	22 (17.9%)	47 (38.2%)	51 (41.5%)	2 (1.6%)
Home appliance repair	9 (7.3%)	62 (50.4%)	48 (39.0%)	3 (2.4%)
Plumbing repairs	7 (8.7%)	58 (43.9%)	43 (35.0%)	1 (0.8%)
Car maintenance	4 (3.3%)	54 (27.7%)	67 (32.5%)	1 (0.5%)

The main step forward is a more equitable distribution of childcare duties (taking children to kindergarten/ school, helping children with studying and homework, taking children outside to play and to extracurricular activities (foreign language lessons, music school, sports practice, etc.). It is similar with taking care of elderly household members and pet care duties as well. What is interesting is that, in the case of so-called "male jobs" (painting, appliance repair, plumbing repairs around the home and car maintenance), a large number of those are performed by paid workers.

When we "crossed" subscribing to a certain type of ideology on gender roles with who performed low-control tasks in a household, we found, albeit with no statistical significance, that, in the case of respondents adopting an egalitarian gender ideology, they actually performed less low-control work, expressed as a percentage, than the respondents adopting a transitional or traditional gender-

role ideology. That is, although they were still the ones performing the majority of these tasks in the household, the percentage of tasks performed by their partners was higher than in the case of the other two groups. It should also be noted that, in certain cases, those following a transitional gender ideology in practice performed more such tasks than those adopting a traditional distribution of gender roles. Thus, our study also found that gender-relations ideologies influence gender practices.

Table 41 – Gender-relation ideologies and division of household labor

	Egalitarian ideology		**Transitional ideology**		**Traditional ideology**	
Division of household labor	**Respond-ent**	**Partner**	**Respond-ent**	**Partner**	**Respond-ent**	**Partner**
Doing the laundry	73 (77.7%)	22 (23.4%)	77 (84.6%)	19 (20.9%)	18 (85.7%)	2 (9.5%)
Cooking	73 (77.7%)	31 (33.0%)	72 (79.1%)	29 (31.9%)	14 (66.7%)	5 (23.8%)
Deep-cleaning the house	73 (77.7%)	36 (38.3%)	72 (79.1%)	21 (23.1%)	18 (85.7%)	4 (19.0%)
Window cleaning	61 (64.9%)	15 (16.0%)	67 (73.6%)	14 (15.4%)	12 (57.1%)	2 (9.5%)
Ironing	58 (61.7%)	10 (10.6%)	66 (72.5%)	10 (11.0%)	11 (52.4%)	2 (9.5%)
Doing the dishes	69 (73.4%)	37 (39.4%)	75 (82.4%)	29 (31.9%)	16 (76.2%)	7 (33.3%)
Grocery shopping	74 (78.7%)	48 (51.1%)	77 (84.6%)	37 (40.7%)	18 (85.7%)	9 (42.9%)
Vacuuming	58 (61.7%)	38 (40.4%)	67 (73.6%)	30 (33.0%)	15 (71.4%)	8 (38.1%)
Pet care	44 (46.8%)	32 (34.0%)	40 (44.0%)	25 (27.5%)	9 (42.9%)	7 (33.3%)
Parenting and talking to children about their problems	32 (34.0%)	23 (24.5%)	46 (50.5%)	25 (27.5%)	8 (38.1%)	4 (19.0%)

Helping children with studying and homework	20 (21.3%)	16 (17.0%)	33 (36.3%)	8 (8.8%)	5 (23.8%)	2 (9.5%)
Taking children to kindergarten/ school	19 (20.2%)	21 (22.3%)	31 (34.1%)	19 (20.9%)	7 (33.3%)	5 (23.8%)
Taking children outside the house to play	26 (27.7%)	19 (20.2%)	32 (35.2%)	21 (23.1%)	7 (33.3%)	5 (23.8%)
Taking children to extracurricular activities	23 (24.5%)	16 (17.0%)	28 (30.8%)	19 (20.9%)	4 (19.0%)	3 (14.3%)

The interviews provided us with more detailed insight into the division of household labor, the way respondents balanced professional and private commitments, whether they shared household chores with someone, the extent of support they received from their partner and family, and what that support entailed.

Labor division in the household

A portion of the interviewees fully identified with the professional sphere in the interviews, insisting on the importance that professional life holds for them and rejecting the conventional roles of wife, mother and daughter. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, identifying with one's profession and the blurring of boundaries between the private and professional spheres is a typical situation for women cultural workers, especially those working in the creative industries. Thus, in the statements that follow, there is a clear difference between the interviewee working in the non-governmental sector, who emphasizes that both her professional and personal lives were guided by the same values and the readiness for social engagement, and, on the other side, the interviewee from creative industries, who is resigned to the uncertainty characteristic of the careers of movie and television videographers, and to the attendant fact that, when there's work, it needs to take priority over everything else.

I've never had any issues with this balance, because for me my professional life is also my private life. I can't separate what I do from my value orientations and systems, and my engagement is simultaneously my profession and my private life. And I never had a problem reconciling these two things. I didn't have limiting, conventional familial relations. I think my family realized on time they weren't going to get that from me, they would get big support and love, but they would not get that conventional response. No one's asked that of me and I don't have that type of problem. (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**).

Yes… my family have accepted that that's how it is. Though, I'm not married yet, I don't have any children, so family to me is my parents and some extended family. They've accepted that this is how it is. So like, they've come to terms with the fact, say, that it just might happen that I can't be home for Christmas or that I'm unable to come to [name of town] for three months. Or that, I don't know, it could be that, since these are elderly people after all, that I might not be able to help them if anything happened to one of them. So I'm leaving to make some money, and we have two options: some God-forbid-tragedy happens and my presence is necessary, or I'm just not there. So that's that. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

Other interviewees, however, emphasized their childcare commitments, equating the time when they worked on their art with free time. The following example is illustrative of a primary identification with the family sphere and childcare in particular, whereas the speaker's professional vocation comes second.

I call the time when I work my free time, because that to me is something I love and that feels great. It's good when I have the time to do it, because usually I'm busy with the kids. And my way of balancing is by fainting, only last week, so I've been spending lots of time at the doctor's (laughter). So I'm bad at balancing. [...] the kids, now there's always something to do there. Of course, it also has to do with how much each of us as an individual wants to dedicate [...] I mean, it's never enough. (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 35 years old**)

Discussing this further, however, made it clear that identifying with the private sphere was primarily a result of her circumstances – namely, that her income was considerably lower than that of her husband.

I can't honestly say, my husband really helps me out, but, in order for our family to survive in this financial sense, he has to put it many more working hours than I'm able to. That was just the choice we made, the deal we have. When the children were younger, I thought I had a role to play sort of, and naturally I myself wanted to, and found it more fulfilling to spend more time at home with the kids, while he would be the one earning more and financially contributing in that way. [...] And now I maybe don't like it so much, in the sense that I would, it would have been really nice if I had been able, like him, to work in my profession.

If I hadn't had to, personally I was managing to do very little work, what I'm doing now, that's all been over the last four, maybe five years. That I've been more engaged, say, and that I've been able to enroll in the doctoral program in the first place. Until then it wasn't possible at all. They were too small. There were getting sick all the time. It's like, they go to the nursery, and since they have large groups there, lots of kids, there's always viruses going round, of course, their immune system's weak [...] So one of them was sick every other Friday. And then of course that always meant I had to stay at home for at least seven days until they recover so they can go back to the nursery and so on [...] So there really wasn't any room there for work of any kind, at least none that I'd've been comfortable with. It wasn't like I could have left them with a babysitter when they're sick and running a high fever. Nor did it feel right being at work doing something productive and wondering how they were doing [...] Like, how are they doing now, someone needs to pick them up, take them to the doctor's [...] And it would have been absurd for my husband to take sick leave, for example, because his sick leave amounts to my entire salary when you (laughter) [...] allow for the sick days (laughter), so [...] So that's simply how it worked with us. (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 35 years old**)

Notwithstanding the explanation that this was economically "rational" and that her role as a mother was the "more natural" one, it became evident during the conversation that she actually did nearly all the housework herself. And that she was not happy with such an arrangement, despite the fact she had agreed to this "arrangement."

Above all my husband [...] we (laughter) find it very difficult to organize things because he's also very busy himself. He's a manager at this IT company, with lots of people working under him, and he has all this responsibility and whatever [...] So we find it very difficult to organize things [...] But everything I do is like, I count on him to, once he gets home

from work, to jump in and take them to school, make them something to eat and such.

At the same time, the most frequent answer we would get was that it was impossible to separate professional and family lives as if they were distinct spheres; instead, these activities tend to take place in parallel – especially in the case of those not working in cultural institutions and with fixed working hours.

Ever since we've shifted to working from home, everything's literally jumbled up. I have no family and professional life whatsoever. My computer is literally on during the entire day and I'm available, but I'm also available to the kids. And it's all this hodge-podge, really messy unfortunately [...] Prior to that I was at this college and I was doing some projects that didn't require me to leave the house, but at the time they were going to nursery and we had the daycare. But now my son couldn't go to daycare because both my husband and I work from home, so it's like someone can take care of him. That's what this past year's been like, this token going to school for just two hours, no sooner do you finally start working on something it's already time to go pick up your child. Then you need to make lunch, to check what they have for homework [...] It's all taken for granted, but it takes up your energy and then I really feel like I've spread myself too thin. I'm neither present enough to help out with homework and talk about things, nor am I present enough to write my project, or whatever else it is I'm supposed to be working on. Multitasking, in other words, no task gets done in a focused and thorough way. **(Interviewee no. 20, actor and NGO, 35 years old**)

Support from spouse/ partner

Regarding the support they received from their partners, most of our interviewees stated that they enjoyed significant support from partners in relation to their professional commitments.

I work, yes... I work a lot, I work from home as well, I also work nights, overtime, weekends, and all this thanks to my husband (laughter). Who's undergone a transformation from a rock'n'roll legend into this Serbian, typical Serbian housewife and who writes about this in his books (laughter). While not being frustrated by this. He rejoices in it (laughter). Aaah yes. Only thanks to him. I mean, also our parents of course; mine, his; but if it weren't for him, none of this would be possible. (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

I keep saying, one reward for everything I've been through is also my partner who's very understanding and who has taken on so much, things that have nothing to do with him, just to make it easier for me. [...] We couldn't be more different, but he is one of the biggest supports I've ever experienced. It's all he can do not to learn how to sew, to literally sit at a sewing machine and start sewing. That's how willing he is to help me. I'm so lucky. **(Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, 35 years old**)

A portion of the interviewees explained this support and understanding as a function of their partner's similar working conditions or similar occupations.

Yes, I do. My husband is an actor as well, so that's made things easier in a way. Although I'm a different type of actor and different personality type compared to him, I do my job in a different way, still we both know very well the kind of life this is. I don't live with someone who works until three and expects me to be there in the evenings. He's in his own mayhem, so I have his support. **(Interviewee no. 15, actress, 40 years old**)

In other cases, despite the uncertainty of a career in the arts, working in the cultural field was made possible by the partner's high income, with all the drawbacks that tend to accompany such a relationship.

Perhaps I was fortunate to marry someone working in a profession that currently provides for our family financially. Yet on the other hand, I was unfortunate in that I don't want to feel "kept," I want to work myself and build my own thing, find myself. And I think society also interprets this as "well, it's easy for her," "these women can afford to play because they are supported" [...] Actually, that's not happiness. I also want things, I too have an education, I too have my worth, and I too want to have the opportunity to work and earn money. And not because I know somebody or have to join a political party, but because my values have been recognized and everything I'm capable of. (**Interviewee no. 20, actor, about 35 years old**)

In the interviews, we also came across negative examples of a lack of understanding for our respondents' professional commitments and partners' total unwillingness to help.

So you see, for instance, he knew this was, this was what I did [...] That I have, that I work when I'm at work. The children were very young then, but for example, I get home and the kids haven't had any dinner. He can't feed them and he hasn't given them something to eat. For example, they

wouldn't eat lunch or what have you, so they'd be there on the fence, waiting for me so they'd eat [...] So then it's all clear to me. It's like they give up. I had support in the sense of me going into work, doing my job while he keeps an eye on the children. But it really was just keeping an eye on them. That's not the same [...] Maybe that's just how he is, my husband. Maybe other husbands were better. He didn't really have (laughter) the knack for it, at all. It annoyed him. It annoyed him that, when I got home, my phone kept ringing. It annoys me, too, but he just can't understand that, even when you're home, this, in culture, like, it's really, really tough [...] When you get home, as a cultural worker, for example, your phone number's there for info about a production [...] **(Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

I think it affects a marriage. It interferes with a marriage, when your partner doesn't understand what you do. I understand, up to a point, because it was really difficult when you have two babies, very little difference between them, two years, and a partner who is completely inept when it comes to that, and who can't seem to understand that you have each program in the evening. Except children's programs. But really, every, every theatre visiting from Belgrade, they do an eight o'clock show. They're not going to do one at six in the afternoon. Who's going to be there that's working the afternoon shift. And the cast are there, it's the done thing after such a major, beautiful production, to have them sit down, have a coffee, a juice, a brandy, whatever they want, to relax a bit [...] It's part of your job. And someone looks down on that work [...] **(Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

Other interviewees also noted that the all-day working hours introduced tension into their relationships with their partner or spouse.

And not only based on personal experience. So, I'm also saying this based on the experience of my other female coworkers, because I know a lot of women who are in this position. Especially in culture, managers of public institutions. I do, I have these examples, so then when we talk, we sometimes jokingly say, "My man's going to leave me." Like, why would he leave you, so she goes, I'm never there. Okay, is your family affected, in the sense of do they not have clean clothes, ironed clothes, is there no cooked food for them [...] No no, she says, look, I manage to do all of that, but he says I'm never home (laughter). Now, that's the problem. (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

Partner collaboration regarding childcare

Partners' collaboration regarding childcare is crucial. We discussed with the interviewees how they balanced childcare with work; whether they shared parenting duties with someone and with who; whether their children attended a nursery or whether they were paying someone to babysit for them while they were at work.

As we could see from the survey results, it seems as if there is a growing trend of cultural workers' partners accepting an equal role in child-rearing.

> *My husband and I share it. Then again, since this is children's literature, they frequently took part in the workshops, so instead of leaving them home I'd bring them with me. So I think that's also had quite a formative influence on them. [...] I've never had paid time off in my life, because we're freelancers, so we've always had to make do, my husband and I. And we really saw eye to eye when it came to raising our children, and equally at that.* **(Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

> *Mostly only my partner. Recently my niece, who's already 14, has also been helping us out with that from time to time, when the two of us want to go out someplace. My parents, but also my partner's, they're always there, but like I already said, they're getting on and are ill [...] From their part, I've had more of a moral support, and from my partner and my sister and her family this organizational support.* (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, 40 years old**)

A number of single mothers view the father's presence in the child's life as significant, regardless of the fact that they did most of the daily chores themselves.

> *I have an arrangement with my ex, I mean, dad's figure is also present, but in this like, how shall I put it, in terms of this daily rhythm I'm very very… It sounds nicer if I say independent (laughter), right, it's like this strong… But essentially I feel very alone in all this. In this daily …* (**Interviewee no. 11, 36 years old, ethnomusicologist, band musician, music teacher**)

A portion of interviewees stressed that jointly taking care of their children had improved their relationship and the quality of their partnership.

She started nursery then, so we'd have those four hours while she was there that we could both devote to working, and then afterward one of us would be with her. And it's the same even now. The one who's working isn't at home. Like a see-saw. But I think it's done our partnership a lot of good. It's not that typical story, where daddy's at work and no one ever gets to see him, and mommy's only spending time with the child. We've somehow managed to find a good balance there [...] Because it's exhausting working and living with your partner and being a parent with your partner, these three main functions that we do together and we rely on one another completely. So then we have to come up with models that suit us, so that it would still work for us. It takes a lot of affective work. (**Interviewee no. 28, entrepreneur, 40 years old)**

For single mothers or those who, for a period of time (due to illness, injury or specific character of their partner's job), can't rely on their partner and family, childcare alongside professional commitments amounts to an almost impossible task.

I have three young children, the youngest of whom, the girl, has autism. She had already been diagnosed at time and everything. And to be honest both my husband and I were finding it very hard to manage all of it. Someone always had to be home, and somehow it always fell to me, it's in the nature of things [...] Starting with my husband, who's now my ex, we've been divorced for a year now. Unfortunately, it wasn't for lack of love or understanding [...] we were at breaking point, with the organization and everything. And I just couldn't take any more of it, and couldn't put up with having four children instead of three. (**Interviewee no. 23, pianist/ pedagogue, about 40 years old**)

Difficult, because I don't have any help with my child. My husband was injured, for a while he was on crutches, so I practically had to do everything myself. My mom works, everyone works, I have nobody that could take my child off my hands for a little bit, I always rely on babysitters or nurseries. We struggled a bit with the nursery, because she's still very young and she was always getting sick. But I'm very persistent, and she still goes, on and off. Especially when I was doing the play, I had to get a nanny, a girl to take care of her, because she was half a year younger then. Then she went to nursery for three days, and then someone had to take care of her for three weeks. I had to work and it was really hard to arrange something [...] And you have to pay for all of this with this small salary you have. I literally have no one that would jump in and say "I'm here if you need someone to watch her." Especially when my husband got injured, we had

to get through it somehow, that summer and that whole period [...] with me working and her being little and sick and him in that state [...] And with me working. We made it through somehow, but it really wasn't easy. (**Interviewee no. 15, 40 years old, actress**)

The harshness of working in the arts

These examples indirectly show the "harshness" of careers in the arts in relation to the demands of motherhood. Two recent studies on the position of women cultural workers in Serbia also explore the topic of cultural workers' experience of motherhood, namely the publication *Women in Public Cultural Institutions (Žene u javnim ustanovama kulture)* by Milanović, Subašić and Opačić (2017), and, in Croatia, *How Women Artists Live (Kako žive umjetnice)* by Banich and Gojić (2018). One of the respondents in the Rijeka study notes, among other things, the hypocrisy of the government and media who keep bringing up the declining birthrate, at the same time as women workers are being blackmailed by some companies to sign contract clauses declaring they will not get pregnant for a certain number of years, or are at risk of losing their jobs if they get pregnant, instead of their labor rights being recognized (Banich and Gojić, 2018, p. 27).

Respondents in our study also testify to the manifold hypocrisy when it comes to women's choice to have children or not to have children, the number of children they have and at what age, accompanied, on the other hand, by a lack of systemic support for care work and violation of workers' rights.

So, for example, I was performing concerts when my son was born, my eldest. I'd already had a concert scheduled earlier in Kolarac, which I had to cancel once. And then I realized it was very [...] because of the pregnancies, the miscarriages and all of that [...] It's very thankless, this has become a very harsh job. It was probably such before as well, I haven't thought about it, for example, from the perspective of Clara Schumann, what it must have been like for her. But probably similar as me, now that I think about it. Because once you cancel a major hall, no one's going to invite you back again. Because you get a reputation of being unreliable, of not being able to cope with all the demands. So then I didn't want to cancel that concert. I did it, my son was four months old, I was still breastfeeding him. It was awful, right, all I could think about was what am I going to do if I start leaking milk. I remember, it was all due to prolactin, so during intervals I'd go, I had this little pump, and I'd express my breasts. And that's really harsh. (**Interviewee no. 23, pianist/pedagogue, about 40 years old**)

Especially after I'd had three children, people really looked at me as if to say I was crazy and all those stereotypes. In fact, someone actually asked me, out loud, not to themselves but so I would hear it: What do you need so many children for? Unbelievable! And this from people who are part of the academia. (**Interviewee no. 23, pianist/pedagogue, about 40 years old**)

Working in culture is also specific in that it frequently calls for working all day, and working in the evenings in particular, which is when most cultural programs take place.

Now that's hard in culture, and that's one segment that could be studied in relation to women, because you have all your programs in the evening. And as you know, babies go to bed at half past seven, seven [...] It's very hard to reconcile motherhood with working in culture. (**Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

Across numerous interviews, we heard women speak about often having no other choice but to bring their children into work and to have their children with them as they are holding classes or having rehearsals.

For the most part, the children always came with me. So that's staff meetings, that's schools as well, during lessons, where I'd leave them in the teachers' lounge to wait for me to finish [...] I mean there, that's it. In a nutshell. I wouldn't like to… It might sound like a sob story, but it's, that's it also. I know it can be done and I'm not going to let myself, say, refuse a school because I don't have someone to entrust my children to, so then you make do. What's doable for me at that moment, that's what I do. Basically [...] For example I also bring my children to rehearsals. (**Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, band musician, music teacher, 36 years old**)

But I've had coworkers, for example, whose husbands weren't very understanding, so they had to bring their children into rehearsal. They had their children stay with them for as long as the rehearsal takes, because this child will not go to sleep unless she is there. And she is the only one, for example, leading our art ensemble. So there was this child, one or two years old, who was with her non-stop, who had never gone to sleep next to her husband, who would be there waiting for mommy to finish rehearsal [...] That's terrible. And you don't have anyone that could sub for you and do the job to the same standard, after this year of maternity leave. (**Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

Giving up on starting a family and parenthood

All this plays a part in a certain number of women artists, entrepreneurs and cultural workers, when faced with the demands of their profession, low pay and/or lack of support from their partners, deciding not to start a family or have a baby.

> *Now if I didn't have a husband, if I had kids or if his salary was anything like mine, I really don't know how we would be able to live on 50,000 dinars, pay the rent and everything else we need [...] For example, out of the five of us from my class, only two of us work in conservation, the other three are in completely different lines of work. Of that, only the two of us have had children, the other girls haven't married, they just don't have families. Of course, one of the reasons is also the fact that, I dunno, one of them is in the field non-stop and simply doesn't have a permanent place of residence or a stable income, anything really.* (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 35 years old**)

> *I don't have any children and that's, I think, really, really hard. It is my opinion more focus is needed on motherhood in the arts and in arts careers, because that sort of includes a lot of these unstable positions where women have a hard time deciding on having children and do so rarely, or they believe it will limit them somehow and hinder their further development.* **(Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer and research assistant at university, about 40 years old**)

Especially in the case of entrepreneurs, whose turnover vitally depends on them, it is not financially feasible for them to stop working at any point – whether during pregnancy or after having the baby. Nor are there any social mechanisms of support in place that would allow them to do so.

> *That's where a distinct problem arises. Now why don't I open with that, which is that, when the day comes that I'm supposed to become a mother, I will have a problem regarding this element of stability in relation to my work. Now that's a much-discussed burning issue. It's something that infuriates me, frustrates me to no end, because I regularly pay my insurance, my taxes and everything else I need to, yet I have no options if one day I want to take time off and be a mom and be supported in that sense. That may be the only problem I'll probably encounter.* (**Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, 35 years old**)

Also, for those working in the private sector who are not employed on a permanent contract, there are next to no protections of their worker rights, so pregnancies often result in dismissal.

> *Based on the experience of other mothers I'm close with, who have worked in the private sector, it usually doesn't end well when a woman gets pregnant. These pregnancy leaves tend to end in the woman being dismissed. For some jobs there is the requirement that you work for a year and don't get pregnant. But I don't know how that's even possible, since we're mostly all employed on three- or six-month contracts, and it's impossible to get permanent employment. And I think it's a problematic situation on the whole. (***Interviewee no. 19, illustrator, PhD candidate, about 25 years old**)

External forms of assistance

Where "external" forms of assistance are concerned, according to our interviewees, nurseries play an important part. However, a number of them are not eligible to have their children attend nursery. Paradoxically, this is most often the case with freelancer couples, because, ostensibly, both parents are at home and are able to take care of the children. Additionally, since young children tend to get sick quite frequently attending nurseries, this form of assistance cannot be continuous.

> *Of course, my children had to go to nursery. Every day to the nursery. And they'd go in when I left for work, early in the morning they'd go to nursery. And then later, once I'm done with work, I'd come pick them up, and they'd often be in this final little group, where all the kids are put into this one group. It's just something you can't avoid working in culture.* **(Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, around 50 years old**)

> *But I was lucky in that I was writing my doctoral thesis when my children were still in nursery, because they'd be there for six, seven, eight hours at a time, and then once they started school there was progressively less time, because they'd spend less time at school. So, if I had to write a thesis now, that would be impossible. I kind of picked out the ideal time for it. But yes, I do feel, I know what I was missing while I was writing my doctoral thesis, it was that continuity [...] The children would get sick often [...] And I know how men write their doctoral theses, they completely [...] extract*

themselves from family life, they move to a different apartment or they lock themselves in their room. It's absolutely a given among the people I know who have PhDs. In my case that would have been impossible, but I still managed to steal some time to write the thesis. (**Interviewee no. 21, music pedagogue/theorist, about 40 years old**)

Those who were able to afford one or who simply had no other choice would hire a babysitter to mind the children while they were at work, but this form of assistance was mostly temporary.

So we then paid this woman to come by, but okay, like it's four hours, it's no big deal. And then I'd be expressing milk at the university (laughter). I'd bring those little bottles and everything. So in that sense I'm like sorry I didn't get to have like a peaceful period around labor, where I would have been fully focused on my babies. Instead I was running around all the time, so I was neither getting my sleep, neither fully there nor at home. But again, had the hours been longer, I probably would have given up and said I couldn't do it, but the way it was was alright, three days, four hours, I could just about manage it somehow … (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 35 years**)

In some cases, parents and family provided crucial support regarding childcare, especially in cases of relationship breakdown, divorce or single parenthood.

My parents, I was living in [name of country] at the time, and my parents were living in [name of town]. When my son and I left there, and my first marriage broke down and the divorce. When he was four years old and the two of us left, my mom and dad were this enormous help and this absolute, unconditional support. But until he turned four, this life in [name of town], yes, it was hard for me [...] I felt like I had to do most things to do with him myself. I was also working two jobs at the time, and there were moments where it was all pretty traumatic and out of reach. Out of reach in terms of energy. It seemed to me sometimes I was very, very tired, and had no understanding from the people around me, but then I left that place with my son and things changed completely. (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**)

Those who have no external assistance whatsoever, even if they split childcare duties with their partner, are faced with the difficulty of balancing family and professional commitments.

But we as a family don't have this like outside support or help. Our grandmas only retired last year, so in that sense until recently we didn't have anyone to babysit for us, now if I also had to pay for that on top of everything else (laughter), then what's the point really. So maybe now the conditions will improve. Until now it was little, really little, because you actually have to make money so you can feed your family and also do this research work that's demanding as well. So if someone has a family but doesn't have this sort of help in the form of childcare, that is a little difficult. (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 35 years old**)

Caring for the elderly and ill

In addition to childcare, a portion of respondents were also taking care of their ageing parents, especially if they were ill. All this care work directed at various groups who require help is typically gendered, i.e. organized in such a way that it falls into the corpus of unpaid work mostly performed by women.

*Especially where our parents' health is at risk, I'm the one who is more flexible time-wise, so I'm the one giving them my full attention. At least in terms of the physical stuff, taking things to and fro, check this, call so-and-so [...] It's advantageous that one of the benefits of what I do is that my surname, my fashion brand, is now recognized even by some people important to me now, such as doctors. So that has opened some doors without me having to explain much. (***Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, around 35 years old**)

[...] My mom is still independent, but she requires [...] She lives in [part of town on the outskirts]. Any bulk shopping, psychological support [...] My thinking is, when they're satisfied, when you afford them these little joys, they tend to get sick less and they require less. I'm always coming up with ideas and taking her someplace. She took this painting class for pensioners, they had the exhibition yesterday, and then we all went there [...] So then all the money from the works that sell goes to charity, so we bought her work. I think that fulfills her and then she's content. And then she has fewer health problems. And worry [...] so I have three grandchildren from my son. And for me it's always been family first, then work. If I have to choose, it's always family first. (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

Free time

At the end of this study segment, we asked the interviewees whether they had free time and how they used it, as well as whether they could afford to go on vacation, and where and how they vacationed.

Based on everything said up to now, it is clear that free time is a valuable commodity for women workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia. For a large number of them, there is no free time. What little they are able to secure some of them use to communicate with their friends and social network engagement, while others use their free time to work on their art unrelated to their professional commitments.

> *My free time is my work. I can't separate the two. Free time... for reading, for communicating on social networks. Of course, I'm aware social networks can produce hate speech and can be harmful and can produce a skewed or different perception in people, but I think that, paradoxically, they do have their own very good effects. I think they're important. I like exchanging opinions with my virtual or real friends. The fact I can communicate with them is precious to me, and that's how I prefer to spend my free time.* (**Interviewee no. 24, literary author, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**)

> *I don't know, I basically feel like, with me, it's all blurred, right, this boundary between free time and work, because a bunch of activities I do are actually supplemental activities, unrelated to the specific job I'm doing. So it can be exhibition-related activities, various sorts of commitments I have as an artist in my practice, and then I have the feeling I'm constantly working. But if you love what you do you sort of don't feel… Especially now, in this situation.* (**Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer and research assistant at university, around 40 years old**)

For some of our interviewees, free time was time for socializing, an opportunity to meet with friends, while others used yoga and reading as an outlet from the constant pressures at work.

> *I have no free time. It doesn't exist. When I make some for myself, when I say this is a slot for socializing or this slot is to meet up with someone who brings me joy. I have so much going on, homework, reading books for some future projects and designing that project. I sometimes have an hour or two when my husband is with our child, when I don't know what to tackle first.* (**Interviewee no. 15, actress, 40 years old**)

Free time is mostly related to children. I read and go to yoga. Those are my outlets. I mostly try to educate myself and learn, and I often take part in some programs and workshops. (**Interviewee no. 20, actress and NGO, 35 years old**)

As we could see in the previous chapter, the initial enthusiasm related to work is later often followed by the necessity to make time for other activities. For some of our interviewees, the way to achieve this is by introducing activities that are not related to one's work, while for others it is a refusal to work outside one's working hours.

More often than not I have no free time, and I've sort of figured out that, unless I make it for myself, I'm never going to have any. [...] we're living in this system where we keep telling ourselves, just as soon as I'm done with this, then it's, after I'm done with that, and that way I'm never going to live to see all that needs to be done be done, so I can finally do some things I want to do. So then I realized I had to generate this time myself. Sometimes it's less of a success, sometimes more, but I think that, I've kind of figured out that maybe I need a creative outlet that has nothing to do with my profession or the people I work with [...] So now, in my free time, for example, my partner and I have this band. That's one thing that's been a creative outlet for me over the past few years, something that has nothing to do with my profession yet has to do with a certain sensibility. (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, 30-40 years old**)

For example, I used to work a few hours at the weekend. Not I don't want to do this at all. Now, if I see I have a business email, only if it's absolutely urgent will I do it, otherwise no. I think I'm a little spent after 10 years of non-stop dedication, and I've decided to give myself a break in that regard [...] There was this situation, before I was removed from the director position, which was intense. It wasn't typical burnout, but still it was stress, I had certain days when I'd be overcome by insomnia or these other problems that weren't so longlasting as to be seen as health issues. It may have been about two months of being displaced from my comfort zone, and it showed in my body. (**Interviewee no. 30, curator, around 40 years old**)

Among those working in creative industries, we found periods of intensive activity alternating frequently with periods with no work whatsoever.

Sometimes there's too much free time (laughter). That can be a bit of a challenge, as in a mental challenge, because you have this period where you're working like crazy. You're literally working all day, you only work and sleep, and then there's the period where you're not doing anything and you have a lot of free time. So I try to dedicate that free time to my friends and family and partner, if I have one at the time, because, once I'm working, it's only one or two days off. So if those people don't get to see me then, when I do have free time I really make an effort for them. So number one is this free time spent with people, and then I also think, as a creative, how I can best use that free period, perhaps precisely for either some original work of my own or some sort of education for producing authored works. [...] I might go on vacation and whatever [...] I mean, if it's a good year, if there have been enough projects, it could be a really nice [...] But I always try to go on vacation. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

Among our interviewees, going on vacation was not a given. For those with young children, even such travel often wasn't restful.

*Rarely, to be honest. Especially now during the pandemic. Before we used to go, as if under compulsion, while I was still with my husband. But honestly, during that time it was a burden to me personally, these vacations, travelling with young children [...] My friend says, when you go to the seaside with small children, you're not at all at the seaside, you're doing everything you normally do, except in a different place. But lately, as the children have been growing up, my children are [...] the eldest is about to turn 12, the middle one will be 10 in the spring, and my daughter's 8. And already it's different. So for example this summer we spent more than seven days at my festival in [name of town]. They followed all my activities, concerts, the boys helped me with their sister. So now we're getting ready for [...] festivals in [names of the countries]. I received an invitation for [name of country], to give concerts there, and my colleagues know my situation with the children, and they know, where I go, they all go. And they've really never made an issue of that. And it's an opportunity for my children to see the world a bit and travel around with me. And we're beginning to have more and more fun. (***Interviewee no. 23, pianist/ pedagogue, about 40 years old***)

With some entrepreneurs, the demands of their job, the responsibility for client satisfaction, and constant worrying whether there will be enough work in the future prevented them from going on vacation, even when doing so was financially achievable.

So then I started investing this money. And of course, every following investment was bigger than the last, but it involved many sacrifices. Over the last 11 years I literally only went on a summer vacation once, for 6 days. Not to mention winter holidays, there has been none of those. Because my relationship to my work is obsessive to the extent that each client has to be accommodated [...] It's more from a perspective of fear, like oh am I going to have that money tomorrow when I need to pay the rent for my space, the taxes, the contributions. And it's a constant worry that's always with me, and it's because of this that I haven't really dared to travel much. Even if it's absolutely doable when you put everything in black and white, and financially bearable. Once you get into this loop with these responsibilities, your brain can't relax. (**Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, 35 years old**)

On the other hand, precisely given all the challenges that accompany entrepreneurial work, others took a different tack – deciding that at least a short vacation outside their place of residence was a necessity.

Something we've had from the start, something my husband and I had no doubts about – we're going to go on vacation, however modest. So after our first year in the business, which was a very weak one, we were like, we're going somewhere for 7 days, just for the sake of going, just so we're not here and not affected by the work. So, yes, we go each year. Sometimes we also manage to take a few days off during the winter, around the holidays in January. At the very beginning I had no free time, and to be honest I didn't want any. Because I wanted to weave all my time into this and sort of raise it, because it happened sort of simultaneously, bringing up our child and building our company. It was like having two children. So when my real child had already started to walk, when we opened, this child had to catch up with the rhythm of the first child. So I didn't really have the need for some time of my own, I was absolutely content being at home, with my family, where I know I'm leaving every last part of my being for some greater good, in the sense of getting this off the ground. (**Interviewee no. 28, entrepreneur, 40 years old**).

Arguably the only advantage freelancers have, especially those not required to be in a certain place, is that they can afford to travel for longer periods of time, during which they often work, but also have time for themselves and for their family.

My husband inherited some property from his grandparents, an old house in [name of island] and we always go there. We love it so much there. The whole family gets together, the children come, the grandchildren, it gets very busy. It's not your typical vacation. I've never done the, I go there, I make the payment, the all-inclusive, I don't know what that's like. But this I love, we have a yard, a garden, and to me that's great. I often also write, but then again we spend a month or two there. So, that's also specific, it's not like... and again it's all intertwined. And my only free time is when I'm with my grandchildren. Then I don't answer emails or take calls, when I'm with them I'm with them, and I see this as my free time. (**Interviewee no. 25, literary author, freelancer, 62 years old**)

Summary

Our study also showed the difficulty of balancing family commitments with artistic careers, and with jobs in the cultural sphere in general. Work in the cultural sphere almost as a rule tends to take up the entire day – whether these are employees in cultural institutions, the civil sector or creative industries. Results of the survey study have demonstrated that our respondents still do most of the household work, especially those chores over which little control can be exerted – routine chores performed daily and mostly in precisely defined parts of the day, and on which other household members crucially depend (such as cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry, ironing …). Thus, working "the second shift" is a daily commitment, even for the very successful women who were part of our sample. There has been some progress, in that their partners at least tend to be more willing to take on childcare duties (taking children to nursery/ kindergarten/ school, help with study and homework, taking children outside the home to play and taking them to extracurricular activities), which are then distributed more evenly.

In accordance with the findings of earlier studies, a portion of our interviewees identified with the professional sphere, insisting on the importance professional life holds for them and rejecting the conventional roles of wife, mother and daughter. A much larger number of them – in line with transitional gender ideologies – identify both with the family and with the professional spheres, and try to reconcile the role of mother (in particular) with their artistic work or work in the cultural sphere. That, in their own words, results in an almost unbearable burden, which often leads to serious negative consequences to their health and to "no task being completed thoroughly and with focus." Similarly to the survey, in the interviews, too, we most often came across the situation

where their partners accepted an equal division of childcare; what is more, this significantly improved the quality of their relationship. Nevertheless, there were also examples of a complete lack of understanding on the part of the partner and a complete absence of participation. Just as in some cases there was a discrepancy between rejecting the division of chores into "women's" and "men's" and nominally accepting that housework ought to be split by partners equally, which is never translated into practice. The excuses often provided for this were being too busy at work, earning much more compared to their partner, or feigning incompetence.

The study has also noted the harsh reality of a career in the arts, where cancelling and quitting is not tolerated, and where being unable to meet one's duties due to family commitments is unacceptable. In the absence of institutional support, women artists and cultural workers take their young children to their concerts and plays, to rehearsals, staff meetings and lessons. Entrepreneurs, those employed in private companies and freelancers face particularly unfavorable conditions. More often than not, their children are not eligible for nursery, and these women are not in the position to stop working, even after giving birth, or they are not entitled to maternity leave, and if they get pregnant, this frequently results in dismissal. Consequently, a number of them decide not to start a family and/or have children.

It becomes apparent that systemic support in the form of childcare provided in nurseries and kindergartens is extremely important, yet it is available to few. At the same time, poorly paid artistic occupations or work in cultural institutions prevent one from hiring nannies, which would enable them to do their work undisturbed at least during one portion of the day. The only remaining avenue, then, is the support of one's parents, provided they are young and healthy enough to be able to provide it. However, for those who also have to care for their parents, the working day effectively never ends.

This is also evident from the fact that the majority of interviewees stated they had almost no free time. The little time they are able to secure for themselves is typically spent socializing with their friends in person or on social networks, doing recreational activities like yoga and reading, or engaging in some activity unrelated with their job.

In addition, regular holidaymakers were few and far between, partly due to work-related anxiety, partly due to unaffordability. However, there were also those who – precisely because they were aware of the nature of their work – realized that it was necessary for them to ensure they get some respite, both during times of work activity and away from their place of residence, during the summer and winter months, whatever the cost.

Discrimination against women in the workplace in the cultural sector

The final topic of this study, which in many ways combines the structural levels of gender inequality in culture analyzed earlier, was discrimination against women in the professional context in the cultural scene in Serbia. Namely, in culture, as in all other spheres, we can trace three different levels on which gender-based violence is reproduced: the broadest social level, the level of distinct communities, and the most specific level of interpersonal relationships.

This tripartite approach to violence, inspired, on the one hand, by Johan Galtung's thesis of the three levels of violence (direct, structural and cultural), and, on the other, by the theory of social reproduction, was first formulated in this way through the one-year collaboration of sixteen women from the post-Yugoslav region, which resulted in the publication *(Non)Violence and Responsibility: Between Structure and Culture ((Ne)nasilje i odgovornost: između strukture i kulture*; eds. Nađa Bobičić and Marijana Stojčić, 2020). This approach has enabled us to take into account the broader social causes that, by reproducing gender inequality in the public sphere in the neoliberal context (in our case specifically, that of a European semi-periphery), create the preconditions for violence within different types of communities. At the end of this chain, violence manifests as concrete acts of interpersonal violence and internalized injuries, as in the case of the experience of burnout, discussed above.

Applying this method to an analysis of the cultural sector, at the broadest level we find an already insufficient amount of resources, diminishing every year, accompanied by competitive models of funding (whether in NGOs or in the commercial sphere), and unstable working conditions. In this context, at the level of the specific institution or organization, we find a gendered division of duties and decision-making positions, which are still predominantly occupied by men. Alternatively, in the case of total precarity, women cultural workers become their own boss, often stricter than any other boss would have been, out of a sense of duty and responsibility to survive. These conditions of uncertainty in the professional environment are combined with gender inequality in the private sphere, discussed in the previous chapter. This creates "favorable" conditions for relations of gender inequality, which, in their most direct form, at

the level of the body, manifest as acts of direct and indirect violence and various types of discrimination.

Karolina Hrga and Maja Solar, writing in *Gendered Violence as the Unbroken Thread of Capitalism (Orodnjeno nasilje kao neraskidiva nit kapitalizma*), in the afore-mentioned compendium, summarize this problem thus:

> "Violence, mobbing and sexual harassment in the workplace reinforce the position of women as secondary labor force at best, dependent on the male power of bosses, professors, doctors, entrepreneurs, judges, police officers... As women's work and professional opportunities are hindered through a whole gamut of coercions and aggressions, women are reminded, with the help of violence in the workplace, that their place is first and foremost at home and with children. State and legal violence, which discourages women from reporting violence, minimizes penalties for perpetrators of violence, and engages in victim-blaming, also reinforces systemic gendered violence. It makes it even more difficult for women to escape the cycle of violence that takes place at home. Ideological violence, which legitimizes the different shades of gender-based violence, mystifying them as love and passion, also binds women to the roles of reproductive workers inside the home. The violences sometimes perpetrated in organizations and groups supposedly guided by principles of emancipation also discourage and depoliticize women, ultimately returning women to where they belong, the home and the site of reproductive labor" (Hrga and Solar 2020, pp. 27–28).

According to a recent study by Hristina Mikić, the proportion of women employed in the institutional segment of the cultural sector is one and a half times the average for the cultural sector overall, and twice the average labor force participation rate for women in general. On the other hand, women only comprise a third of the labor force in creative industries. At the same time, when working in the creative industries in Serbia, they typically make below-average earnings for Serbia. The biggest gender pay gap is in the publishing segment, whereas there have been multiple increases in the segment of audio-visual activity in recent years. Among major issues, women entrepreneurs and workers in the creative industries cite initial investment, insufficient demand, financial restrictions to international sales, as well as the unfavorable position of small enterprises in the market (Mikić, 2020).

Discussing audiovisual activities, an area multiple studies identify as the most problematic, Bogojević analyzes the movie sector in the ex-Yugoslav region as predominantly male throughout the entire second half of the 20th century, both

in terms of directing and in terms of film criticism, with rare exceptions of women occupying central authorship positions and without much effort toward better representation and inclusion of women directors (Bogojević, 2013), while recent data for Croatian film and cultural scenes confirm similar trends have persisted (Štimac Radin, 2009; Uzelac, Lovrinić and Franić, 2019). Furthermore, according to Josephine Caust, extensive data from different artistic areas indicate that women continue to be discriminated against in the arts sector despite frequently constituting the majority of visitors and users, while female leadership in culture and the arts remains a topical challenge in the 21st century (Caust, 2020).

This study segment therefore collected experiences related to the impact (positive or negative) of gender on respondents' professional career. Do women's physical appearance and age have an influence on their career; is there a division of labor into "men's" and "women's" tasks in their organization/ team, and is there a difference between men and women in terms of how responsibilities are distributed. Where freelancers and entrepreneurs were concerned, we wanted to know if their clients treated them differently because they were women, and what this entailed.

As shown in Table 42, more than four fifths of respondents were of the opinion that women are discriminated against absolutely or to a certain extent in the sector of culture, art and creative industries in Serbia, while two thirds of them had felt personally discriminated against as women in the cultural scene.

Table 42 – Workplace discrimination against women in the cultural sector

Have you ever felt discriminated against in a professional context because you are a woman?			**On the whole, do you think women are discriminated against in the sector of culture, the arts and creative industries in our society:**		
Absolutely yes	32	15.5%	Absolutely yes	48	23.3%
Yes, to an extent	107	51.9%	Yes, to an extent	121	58.7%
No	50	24.3%	No	34	16.5%
Absolutely not	16	7.8%	Absolutely not	2	1.0%
No response	1	0.5%	No response	1	0.5%
Total	206	100%	Total	200	100%

Based on earlier studies, we know that the prestige of some cultural practices is founded on the exclusion of women, and that we can trace a link between the status and repute of cultural practices or institutions and the gender discrimination and segregation deeply ingrained therein and being justified precisely by tradition or appeal. A recent study demonstrated deeply embedded elements of gender discrimination in the field of the arts using the example of the Oxford collegiate choral scene (Einarsdottir, 2022). It identifies limited opportunities for choral training and performance, stricter criteria and assessment faced by women, as well as a lack of motivating factors that would encourage women to join this scene in the first place.

Through over 30 interviews conducted as part of this study, we were able to map forms of discriminatory behavior toward women in the cultural and artistic scene in Serbia; however, this is often subtle sexism, which is even more difficult to fight, or structural inequalities, which it is hard both to articulate and to eradicate. The rest of this chapter presents respondents' experiences, which may be distressing in certain segments.

> *I think discrimination happens all the time in the cultural sector, but it is quiet and tacit and we are all complicit in it. I have never worked in institutions where it was more visible, as the selection of people in charge tends to conclude in men's favor. If anyone were to ask me outright, in principle I'd say I have [experienced gender discrimination], but I'd find it hard to list examples, because it's this systemic violence over and neglect of women, which we ourselves unconsciously support in many situations, especially when I was younger. At least by non-reacting, if not by direct involvement.* (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, 40 years old**)

> *Women, just like, I dunno, members of the LGBT population, as well as members of other vulnerable groups, it doesn't always have to be violence... Sometimes this targeted, biased invisibility is in fact a sophisticated form of psychological violence.* **(Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, 56 years old, cultural institution and NGO**)

Some interviewees, however, did speak about examples of obvious discrimination, mind games, sexual innuendo, and behaviors aimed as a display of power.

> *I must admit there is this point, especially where people in a position of power are concerned, in leadership or government positions, where they like to be sort of, now I'm going to play with you a little […] I must admit I was horrified by the fact I actually succumbed to it a few times... that I'd*

felt uncomfortable and so powerless because of it, it made me feel so bad. And I have definitely experienced this first-hand, that you can capitulate in this mind game... but then you remember, wait, hold on, now I'm going to get you back in kind…. (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

This unpleasant situation was actually unbelievable, because I, having just been appointed as general manager, decided to pay a visit to all my colleagues in [name of town], and to propose collaboration with [name of institution] in the way they saw fit for their institution to collaborate with ours. So I went to see this colleague who was running [name of institution] at the time, and he had this original view on how women get into leadership positions. So during this conversation he says it's completely clear to him how this all unfolds with politicians. Namely, if a woman happens to be attractive, then they have a certain attitude toward her, but if she isn't, then they pay each other a certain amount of money to seduce her and win her over for their political ideology. And then she finds herself in a leadership position […] That was the first situation where I didn't know how to react, I completely froze and couldn't say anything. It was just the two of us in this meeting, in his office (…) The very fact I remember it all and that entire conversation... because I try to suppress unpleasant things and not think about them, but this was something that completely stupefied me. (**Interviewee no. 30, curator, around 40 years old**)

Frequently and continuously, respondents were also faced with *doubt over their competences, expertise, merits and capacity* for doing a certain job, even when they had the requisite education or experience, or were solely responsible for a particular project or initiative. One in three respondents in our survey (34.5%) experienced being perceived as incompetent or less competent than their male colleagues in a professional setting due to the fact they are women.

In my main job, when we're talking about architectural design, I had some experiences with construction workers on sites. Where someone would just assume in advance I didn't know something, and would go, call that colleague, he's sure to know this – because he's a man. When no one had asked me if I did or did not in fact know this thing, but assumed from the get-go it wasn't a topic for me, but for a guy. (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, around 35 years old**)

It's these stereotypes people have in our society when it comes to successful women, that someone must have pulled some strings, must have helped. Not that she got there based on her ability, based on what

she knows, based on having been appreciated as a student, and perhaps recommended by a professor… Instead they're going to imply precisely that, you know… The minute you get a bit of success, it's like, who must she be with to have got here. They won't say this about a man. They'll say he's cute, he's so good-looking, his coat's amazing, but when it's a woman it's like who put her there… They're not going to go, look, what a beautiful woman, and then write something positive… I'm specifically thinking of the media now. (**Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

Such stereotypes are encouraged and to a great extent reproduced by local *media and media professionals*, judged by women cultural workers to be the second most important group for improving the state of gender equality, more on which will be said in the recommendations chapter.

There's definitely a certain dose of disrespect in relation to us, and this connotation that we are weaker, less intelligent, less capable [...] I think that's the case whatever job you're in. We recently had a conference at the Academy of Sciences, I was wearing something like a dress, high heels, whatever, and I hear a journalist who was there to report on it say, she must be lost. Whatever could I, especially dressed the way I was dressed, ever want at the Academy of Sciences… (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 30 years old**)

Doubts over one's abilities and competences and, even worse, discriminatory behavior, are often intertwined with *prejudice concerning physical appearance, age, sexuality or expected role of women in the family*. Over one in three survey respondents (35.4%) answered that their age had affected their professional career, while just a slightly smaller percentage (28.6%) stated that their physical appearance had affected their career.

That requires, to a significant extent, *additional mental and emotional labor* on the part of women so that they could identify and/or deal with such behavior and treatment in the best way possible, without jeopardizing the project or goal of collaboration. Current studies from other countries speak to the fact that women in music professions, among others, are not taken seriously, that they have their importance and contributions diminished, noting "the effort it takes to shrug that off and keep your sanity and vision clear," which can ultimately lead to women retreating from the music scene (Gross, 2022, p. 169).

Already at the level of these comments like "this girlie" or "missy" [...] We're in a situation where we have young women professors who look very young [...] Nobody takes them seriously. [...] Or say we have a teaching assistant, a guy, and a woman professor, and the two of them go to some context outside the faculty, a meeting or something, everyone thinks he is the professor and she is his assistant. (**Interviewee no. 5, architect, university lecturer and NGO, about 35 years old**)

I went into these two job interviews, and I remember the employer asking me the same question in both, "How many children do you have and are you planning on having more?" I found that devastating. It was the first time I'd heard that question asked in a job interview, so I was sickened (smile). (**Interviewee no. 6, conservation architect, cultural institution, about 60 years old**)

It's really hard for a young woman to comprehend this, because you get to the academy at 20, pure, with these enormous expectations of life, of art, of realizing your potential [...] And then you start running into these things, it hurts so much, it's a really rude awakening. It's inevitable. There are exceptions, we have coworkers who may not be these extraordinary beauties but who are such extraordinary actresses [...] Although they, too, have suffered, someone throws a spanner in the works and then all of a sudden they're just gone, nowhere to be seen, this amazing talent [...] Perhaps everything I've said doesn't hold true for them. But the ones who are beautiful and smart usually go through hell. (**Interviewee no. 15, actress, 40 years old**)

The words our interlocutors use to describe how they felt or how they experienced being treated in this way include, among others "horrified," "sickened," "I froze," "it hurts so much, it's a really rude awakening," and they perceive it as "psychological violence" and "mind games." Moreover, double standards are still visible when it comes to expectations of men as opposed to women regarding interpersonal and emotional relationships, appearance, sexual behavior, as well as family status.

A young woman who used to work on the crew was being hassled by her boss, who is the chief of some sector, because she'd got together with whoever. He kept tormenting her, like, there, she's not doing her job, she came here to flirt. Which in fact probably couldn't have been further from the truth, but who knows what was behind that whole story [...] It's weird. It's like the way they see you is either, they can make comments like, you're there to chat up guys, you're not there to work, and it's always directed

more at us women, not men [...] And there's always that, man, he's such a player, he managed, I dunno, to set up the lights and to chat up that gorgeous makeup artist, way to go, and she [...] instead of working, she's fooling around. (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

Such double standards also have repercussions in leadership, which we discuss later in this chapter.

I really have these examples, specifically in conservation, of women in the highest positions, who are really great at their jobs, but who maybe have had to prove themselves more or to have some typically male characteristics. So they're called butch, bitchy [...] Unfeminine, like, a little bit too assertive in communication, that this is then how they managed to get these jobs in the first place [...] And if a woman is feminine and like beautiful and, I dunno, gentle in communicating, and doesn't have those like skills, that's typically viewed with condescension or as if she is less capable… Yes, yes, that's what everyone really says about these women who are like bosses in our profession, like you know what, she's a bitch (laughter). Many other men who behave in that same manner, there are no negative comments about them, it's like he's just the boss and that's normal, that's how he has to behave. (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, conservationist, about 30 years old**)

International literature has discussed specific nicknames given historically to powerful women heading cultural institutions, linked to, among other things, their physical appearance, such as the "Ugly Duchess" (given to Juliana Force, director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1929) (Schwarzer, 2010, p. 16), or gendered discourse of women as "demanding" (Caust, 2020, p. 45), underscoring the inadequacy and unbelonging of women in leadership positions.

Some of the obstacles also include *informal power relations and extra-institutional and untransparent decision-making*, which often take place in spaces where women are not welcome, invited or expected, or, if they are, the behavior expected of them there is not in accordance with the professional code of behavior, nor is it often acceptable to them in the least.

Men certainly have it much easier. It doesn't have to mean it's easy for them, but here it's basically an unwritten rule that deals are made in the restaurant (kafana), to which I'm going to add, deals are made during a bender in the kafana [...] A woman, I'm sure, wouldn't go as far as that. So, a normal lunch at a restaurant is just fine, but without everything

that normally accompanies business meetings organized by men alone – a spree, with dancing girls, dancers on top [...] Women are much, much more serious interlocutors and much more serious business partners, precisely for the reason that they are focused exclusively on the topic of a meeting, and are aware that, if they show a lack of seriousness for just a second, if they lower their guard, everything can go sideways. That's why I think it's harder for women. (**Interviewee no. 16, about 50 years old, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution**).

Of course, executive boards don't make the decisions regarding key posts. It's always going to be politicians making those decisions, who are mostly men, and these deals are usually made in places that are not formal decision-making sites, such as city administrations or assemblies, but informal sites, such as the kafana. Apropos of that, I might as well mention the road I took. I didn't just go into offices in the city assembly house [...] I also had to accept invitations that meant we would meet in bar in some yard or in other establishments in [name of town]. I suppose women tend to steer clear of that. (**Interviewee no. 30, curator, about 40 years old**)

A longitudinal quantitative study of a large sample of the Hollywood movie industry unequivocally showed obstacles to women's professional advancement in more homogeneous and cohesive networks and social circles (Lutter, 2015). Additionally, analyses of the significance of informal relationships and networking for the music scene in Hungary, and of the additional obstacles this poses for women in the music industry, argue that "friendliness in these spaces of networking, such as pubs and night clubs, is more difficult to perform for them as they feel it is inseparable from being sexually available" (Barna, 2022, pp. 118–119). Our respondents make similar declarations.

Networking, building contacts and self-promotion in general are increasingly important elements of work in the fields of art and creative industries. Social networks, as well as events and informal gatherings where one can develop a network of potential collaborators, clients or buyers, or promote one's work, present a special dimension in this for women artists and entrepreneurs. In such contexts, women tend to experience additional anxiety, stress or hassle, and they consequently hesitate to take part, avoiding such situations; however, since such activities, and extrovert behavior in general, are presented as necessary for a career in the arts, they then judge themselves to be insufficiently competent or inadequate (Nikolić, 2020; Gross, 2022, pp. 166–167).

It is nevertheless important to emphasize that not all our interviewees stated they had experienced discrimination in the cultural sector, but that some of them had always been treated as equal to their male colleagues.

> *Never, never. I never had the feeling that I was undervalued in that sense. Really. Which doesn't mean that, that, that… Of course, that doesn't mean that this is the rule. I haven't had that experience. So in all my professional, in all the collaborations I've done, I was always an absolutely equal colleague, and professional partner so to speak, to the people I collaborated with. I've never had that kind of gender-based disdain or, yes, I haven't had any, except one, I don't know, again that was politically motivated, a few of these politically motivated incidents which I was well equipped to respond to, but apart from that, I've never had the feeling of being disqualified in some way because I was a woman.* (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**)

For some, it was important to emphasize they had not achieved their professional successes "thanks to" being a woman, but *based on their talent, expertise and hard work*.

> *It was never... whether I'd get to where I am because I'm a man or a woman but because I did what I did. So I really think it didn't have any impact whatsoever.* (**Interviewee no. 17, sociologist, NGO creative industries, about 30 years old**)

This is relevant in the context of the discourse of talent as a key factor for success in the artistic domain (Brook, O´Brien, Taylor, 2019, among others), as well as in the context of discourses according to which *women are in fact the more advantaged group*, who, due to their characteristics, physical appearance or similar, are actually afforded privileges in some situations, and have an easier time achieving success, not always "on the basis of hard work and merit" (Scharff, 2022).

> *I've never had that experience, personally. Of course, I know of some women in my surroundings, better or worse due to their willingness to use their physical characteristics toward some "business objectives." Where they simply gained or lost privileges in relation to their willingness to also be active at work in this way. And that's not at all unheard of in the educational domain, although what tends to come into people's minds first in relation to this is the popular music scene and such, as we could well see from the situation in Petnica. Such things also happen in primary and secondary schools, since I have experience working in such schools, and*

I also have a lot of friends from that circle of people, and it's not at all a rare thing. (**Interviewee no. 21, music pedagogue/ theorist, government sector – education, about 40 years old**)

When interpreting such statements, it is important to understand that the discourse of women as advantaged in this context is instrumentalized to, among other things, conceal or *obscure the widespread sexual harassment and abuses*, which are further discussed later in this chapter.

In the interviews conducted in Serbia, we did not find, to any significant extent, the discursive elements articulated by the literature, both in the region and abroad, which relate to individualizing rhetoric, according to which, even when one recognizes social inequality in the broader context, there is still a refusal to link this to one's own life and professional experiences, or it is attributed to personal factors or a host of other circumstances (e.g. Scharff, 2022, discussing the classical music scene in Great Britain).

On the other hand, some of our interviewees did use the *discourse of progress* – with optimism triggered when one identifies improvements in the state of the scene, which are, however, seen as natural and spontaneous.

Gendered division of tasks and responsibilities

In the cultural sector, a gendered division of tasks is not official and formal, but is often *subtle and implied*. It primarily entails the distribution of authorship, visibility and the attendant power (Caust, 2020).

A division of tasks into male and female: Not officially... But there's always a tacit system, of a man always leading, and women being auxiliary workers. (**Interviewee no. 15, actress, 40 years old**)

According to Milanović, Subašić and Opačić (2017), for tasks that require more physical strength, it is expected that men will perform them.

There certainly are. So for example, for years now we've had a woman make-up artist, we have two seamstresses, two women wardrobe supervisors. So those are the jobs where it's assumed they're done by women. On the other hand, I do remember stories of this old tailor, a man, I remember stories of the old wigs and make-up artist, also a man, who used to work in the late 90s. So it's not something set in stone. The technical sector – the decorators are men, but I'm not even sure women could do this physically.

Everyone technical are men, only the makeup artist is a woman, and the two seamstresses and two wardrobe supervisors. […] I mean, we never look for a male cleaner, always a cleaning lady. (**Interviewee no. 29, theatre general manager, about 30 years old**).

However, even this rule is not without exceptions. Given the working conditions in the cultural sector, the frequent staff shortages and lack of other resources, it is not unheard of for women workers to take on the jobs and tasks not perceived as traditionally female, to show initiative and themselves solve a problem that would conventionally be seen as a male responsibility.

There is no division into male and female tasks, except perhaps when it comes to some harder manual labor. For example, we have our own heating system, wood-based, and all the work around bringing in those logs is done exclusively by men. I'm certainly not about to make a woman haul a wheelbarrow and stack wood or to bring the wood to, to, uhm, the furnace. But I do have women tell me: "Director, could you get the cement so we can patch up this pothole outside the art workshop, because our fellas here won't lift a finger." So then we say: "No problem, how much cement do you need?," and these two women come to me at the weekend and tell me "Come look at what we did." And I say "Well done" (laughter). So there, I have some women who are like that. So, we don't divide work into male and female, except when women are physically not strong enough to carry something, but I mean, even then, if they have to, they have to. **(Interviewee no. 16, about 50 years old, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution**)

Traditionally, labor division in organizations means that women are assigned *administrative and bureaucratic tasks, as well as tasks related to the household, caregiving, organization and coordination of other team members.* Such tasks are ultimately less valued, as they do not entail authorship, key decision-making or much visibility. In the theatre sector in Great Britain and Ireland, the percentage of women in authorship positions is considerably lower, compared to their much higher share in the general sector and in administrative work (Caust, 2020, p. 51). Over 30% of respondents in our study cited the large amount of bureaucratic duties during project realization as one of the principal problems they encountered while working (more precisely, the sixth out of 20 most relevant problems).

A study of the film sector in former Yugoslavia from a gender perspective notes that "women were confined to either acting star roles (as objects of fetishistic gaze) or to background, equally important, film work, which was less 'visible' but

that demanded great meticulousness, accuracy and responsibility (all qualities expected to be fulfilled by female gender stereotypes), such as (montage) editing" (Bogojević, 2013, p. 173). With the exception of director Soja Jovanović, who was also the first in former Yugoslavia to direct a color film, the modernization and emancipation of the socialist society of the time wasn't accompanied by gender equality in the domain of film art. For example, the generation of *new film* was a "complete male phenomenon" (p. 237). Also, in her approach toward and work on classic comedies from the region, Jovanović tried to distance herself from the present and from gender relations and topics (p. 354).

The interviews in this study yielded similar insights, with one statement that stood out in particular for its profound understanding of subtle yet systemic mechanisms.

> *It's like, we want to work on stuff, but we're inundated, we get inundated with the everyday, everything we used to see as trifles when we were rebellious teenagers. But then, as a woman, you end up inundated with trifles and minutiae, and you can't work on your stuff, you can't be, I don't know, an artist […] And to fight to position yourself, because, y'know, you're busy with trifles… Trifles, yet they take up so much time each day…* (**Interviewee no. 11, ethnomusicologist, band musician, music teacher, 36 years old**)

Studying Hungary's music scene, Emilia Barna also identified experiences of invisible, unpaid and unappreciated labor performed by women, leading to slowed-down or halted professional advancement and recognition.

"[R]ecognition and prestige […] are predominantly tied to work that is visible. As a result, those performing a large amount of invisible labor are more likely to remain in disadvantaged positions" (Barna, 2022, p. 125). According to our survey research, more than one in five respondents experienced credit for joint work or authorship being ascribed to their male colleague(s) (22.8%), while nearly a quarter of them were paid less than their male coworkers for the same job, role or position.

The interviews in our study show the same pattern to an extent.

> *When I was working as an assistant to a fashion designer, because I was so young then, hungry for everything, including proving myself, I used to do so many things that perhaps weren't asked of me. And of course that benefited the company. That was the first time I felt this discrimination, because a male coworker who was working considerably less than me*

earned a lot more. And I'd get comments like "he has a family to feed," because he was also older than me, and why was I complaining when no one had even asked me to do what I was doing […] And I was working […] all hours. (**Interviewee no. 18, fashion designer, creative industries, about 35 years old**)

Another respondent also shared her experience of being passed for promotion, and this opportunity was given to a male colleague instead, because "he had a family to provide for." Nevertheless, it appeared as if she did not hold this against her company or her coworker, as she was in principle in favor of the idea of family and spouses who supported each other in order to ensure better conditions for pregnancy and childrearing, which was the case here.

However, when women do not have a traditional family by the age they are expected to do so, whatever the reason, even if it is precisely of a financial and material nature, or for reasons of career advancement, "something's wrong with them." This is where existing double standards once again come to the fore.

They seem more interested, like, since I'm 35, like wait, how come you don't have a family, you don't like have a husband, children and so on, and I even get these questions at work. Something that I find extra uncomfortable, because I'm now supposed to explain my private life to someone I work with, and who may not be my friend but a colleague and an acquaintance […] And I doubt they would ask my male colleague, who's the same age as me, like, hey wait, how come you're not married yet, is there something wrong with you […] (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

Women in the creative industries, especially those at the start of their careers, often experience self-inflicted burnout and exhaustion as they try to prove their worth at work or contribute to the "higher cause" promoted as their organization's or company's vision. Since people are often drawn to careers in the arts and the creative sector out of passion, love or a sense of "purpose," it is that much more difficult to separate one's achievements and results at work from one's personal identity and private life.

The statements above are also relevant in the context of defining work in the arts and culture, which, while it is work, is also very specific in more ways than one, frequently poorly paid, with a focus on personal authorship, expression, creativity, and with no fixed working hours. Additionally, work in the arts and culture is frequently done using personal means and resources, in one's private living space.

Even when women are not initially or officially assigned a post considered "female" according to convention, they often still do those tasks as well, or the tasks will get reformulated so that they fit in better with gender expectations. The following example was especially illustrative.

> *There was this great situation in an office where I used to work, there were 4 men and myself in that office, I was the last one to join. So I got my employment contract, which I signed, and then, later on, for some reason I needed the M form, for a visa or some such. These M forms, they were kept in a bookcase, so I opened it to find my file and I find my M form where it said university level of education (VII), I already had my master's degree by then, and it said: "assigned to secretarial duties." So of course, I then raised hell because of it, and it ended up getting corrected. But at that moment I was the person with the highest educational level in that organization, yet I got that "title" – which had not been included in the employment contract.* (**Interviewee no. 8, cultural manager and translator, NGO, 40 years old**)

Some of the interviewees in the study, especially those in *engineering or technical* jobs in the creative industries, encountered skepticism regarding their knowledge, skills and competences because of their sex, and had to invest additional energy to prove their expertise when collaborating with new male colleagues.

> *They always assume, because I'm a woman, that I don't know much. Especially when it comes to the technical stuff, not when creative or artistic elements are concerned – they're not interested in that, "women are more creative anyway" and such and they deal with these "unimportant minutiae of life." But as far as technical things are concerned, because it just so happens I used to work the technical aspect of production, so I know a lot, I picked it up along the way.*
>
> *Now, that's precisely where I often have a problem, because I'm not very tolerant when it comes to this. That I supposedly don't know, a priori, just because I'm a woman […] And very frequently, in over 50% of these conversations to do with the technical aspect of things, the men, the new coworkers, until we get to know each other or until I've convinced them, they try to convince me of something that simply isn't true. Which is that I don't know this and that this can't be done. The first response is, "it can't be done," because I'm a woman and I won't know whether it can be done or not... Trifles, yes, but I notice this major difference there. So the technical collaboration with men is poor, because this really annoys me,*

and that's the only communication problem in my job. Not counting the local community, that [too] is a big problem. (**Interviewee no. 22, creative industries, about 40 years old**)

Limitations and experiences with career advancement

An important topic regarding gender discrimination are the limitations women experience in career advancement, the so-called *"glass ceiling."* Although there are increasing numbers of women in leadership positions in the international artistic scene, the road to these positions is still full of obstacles, especially for those harboring ambitions of working in positions of arts leadership or in major institutions. Women are frequently decision-makers in smaller organizations, local institutions, non-governmental organizations, while they are significantly less present in national institutions, artistic director positions or in the creative industries sector, which have bigger budgets (Caust, 2020, p. 56).

Extensive literature on gender and leadership in various other social spheres has demonstrated distinct styles, as well as different expectations from the men and women who are nominated for or appointed to leadership positions. According to Caust, since job positions were traditionally a male domain, women in leadership positions first have to come to terms with their own personal expectations and socialization, and then also with the expectations and socialization of the women, as well as men, around them (Caust, 2020). According to the same study, in Australia in 2016, women in senior positions in the cultural sector were earning 38% less, that is, they were only making 62% of the income of their male counterparts, while the gender pay gap in society at large was significantly lower, at 18% (p. 42), which speaks to a greater disparity in the field of art compared to the average in this society.

Low pay in the museum sector is considered one of the reasons for the feminization of this field and the prevalence of women in the labor force (Schwarzer, 2010), with the exception of decision-making positions: "Despite the presence of women, men dominate museums in two key dimensions: power and money" (p. 17). The phenomenon of men acceding to senior positions directly and efficiently (while women are hired for internships and hierarchically lower positions, despite their experience, and then potentially progress through the hierarchy) is labeled the *"glass escalator."*

Women's unequal participation in leadership positions was even demonstrated in the domain of ballet and dance, despite the prevalence of girls and women,

whether students or professional dancers. Summing up the literature to date, we can distinguish the following obstacles to leadership and work in choreography, which it is important to study in order to arrive at better understanding of women's unfavorable position, even, somewhat counterintuitively, in professions where they constitute a vast majority:

- "Male dancers receive a great deal more personal attention because there are fewer of them and they therefore attract more scholarships and funding, even when they have less experience.
- Female dancers are traditionally treated as children even when they are mature adults. They are told what to do constantly, so they find it difficult to think independently.
- Female dancers in ballet companies are expected to conform and be like everyone else, so that they don't stand out.
- Female dancers in ballet companies have a greater workload, so the time available to them to think about choreography is more limited.
- Female choreographers are subject to harsher criticism because they are in such a minority and therefore stand out." (Caust, 2020, p. 50).

Although as much as 46% of our respondents held a leadership position at the time of the survey, existing data show that women are disproportionately less present in decision-making positions compared to their participation in the labor force in culture (Nikolin et al., 2021).

One in four respondents in the total sample stated they had come across unacceptance, being ignored and disregarded as the leader of an organization/ institution/ project because of being a woman, which could mean that this is the experience of more than every other woman in charge of a cultural institution, arts organization or project in the sphere of creative industries.

We also wanted to know whether our interviewees had witnessed the "glass ceiling" over the course of their career, and in what way. Next, if they occupied a leadership position, we asked them about their experiences in leadership, and whether men, or other women, had any issues with the fact they were their superiors.

In accordance with the results of the study *Women in Public Cultural Institutions* (Milanović, Subašić and Opačić, 2017), our interviewees also believed that women occupied leadership positions in culture more frequently than in other social spheres owing to *a lack of resources available to these executives, overall poor working conditions, lack of power, and lack of interest in this field on men's part* that would equal women's, probably for the reasons listed above.

The way I see it: if it's a school, there's a female principal, if it's a cultural institution, a woman director. Find me one company… (…) That's precisely it. Where there's no money, there's women. Because, uhm, "women shouldn't be given money, they can't handle it." (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

Men are probably not as interested in culture, because they're, I know when something needs to be done, it's like, who's going to come to this, there's no money here, then they're all about the stereotype "there's no money in culture." I mean, hold on, are we doing everything in life for money? Is power really all that important, to have power and to have money and to work in an area that, like, that brings in money. Isn't it nice to have a job where you can creatively express something, to show how many excellent artists and creators we have, children who are going to grow up and become these beautiful people, who are going to learn everything they need to learn through theatre, through dance, through music… (**Interviewee no. 14, associate in the domain of cultural-artistic creation, about 50 years old**)

*Men certainly dominate. Perhaps less so than in some other areas, but they definitely dominate. It's like, you'll sooner find a woman who is in charge of a cultural institution than a woman running the electrical company or some public company... (***Interviewee no. 29, general manager of a cultural institution, about 35 years old**).

Nevertheless, in this field also, *men are in leadership positions disproportionately frequently* compared to their participation in the overall number of employees and in the labor force in the cultural sector in general.

Those in positions of power are almost always men. My boss is a man, our general manager is a man, and it's mostly the same people. And it's just like that, you can't change it.

I was surprised when those same people told me they would like me to be department chair. I was taken aback, because there were more men in that department. But I guess there have to also be those moments when competences decide, not gender. So that's how I also came to hold that function in the organization. But otherwise I think I wouldn't have stood a chance... not that I would want to. **(Interviewee no. 21, music pedagogue/ theorist, public sector – education, about 40 years old**)

In the experience of this interviewee, she was able to be appointed to this leadership position *exclusively owing to the support of men* who wielded a certain amount of power in that context. In a different situation, she would not have been interested in that position, which accords with the results from the 2017 study, stating that as many as three quarters of women would decline a leadership position in public cultural institutions in Serbia if it were offered to them (Milanović, Subašić and Opačić, 2017, p. 98). The reasons for this can be seen in the following statements.

Some interviewees, who have had the opportunity to manage projects, organizations or institutions, testify to *belittling, mistrust and unprofessional communication* with which they were forced to face time and again.

> *They simply always have this attitude, if you're a woman and in a leadership position at that, then it's viewed with condescension. It's definitely present, not being taken seriously by anyone, like – uh-huh, so what, so you want to be a leader… And making these really stupid remarks. No filter, people literally saying the first thing that comes to their head, like "how can you be so-and-so when you're a woman"… Or when I go someplace with my professor and he says, for example, "I'm only here as a consultant, as an advisor, my associate will be conducting this project with the students." So basically, "ignore me," and then the people in charge of the venue still keep talking to him (laughter)…* (**Interviewee no. 13, university teaching associate, about 30 years old**)

Young women may experience special treatment when in leadership positions in Serbia, given the *double prejudice* regarding their age and their gender.

> *I think I was already general manager at 30, and it was such a surprise when I'd come in to a meeting, they'd go "so young, and already a director." Which I found sort of funny, because I thought you could only hear something like that in our culture. Precisely due to the fact I have friends living far, I realized that in Germany, where a close friend of mine works, that was never an issue. She is a very successful manager of a music festival, and she's never had anyone say to her, "so young, and already a general manager."* (**Interviewee no. 30, curator, about 40 years old**)

The personal experiences of executives in cultural institutions also confirm the *different relations between employees and the men who were previously general managers*, when compared to women, in the sense of a different communicative style, tone and vocabulary. The two examples below illustrate interesting situations where our interviewees were appointed to leadership positions from

the relevant institutions and from the profession, whereas the previous directors (men) came from outside the institution and/or profession.

> *It's an undeniable fact that the people who had come from elsewhere, whom we didn't know, who came from outside the organization, that they were men. Still, none of my coworkers ever stood to attention like that when they were talking to me. It's probably also because we'd been working together for such a long time after all, but let's also consider the fact that I'm a woman. It's like, come on [name], don't be… But when a [male general manager] arrives from someplace else, they all stand to attention almost, and go about it differently, and it's all "yes, yes"… And I also believe I was never addressed, or introduced, or when we were talking – not once did anyone from the organization address me as "General Manager," they'd always use my name. But when anyone else came, any man, he was always "General Manager." (***Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old***)*

> *The previous general manager wasn't in the trade, he was an economist, but also a bit of a libertine and with a bawdy sense of humor, so I came to the conclusion, after meeting him, that my female coworkers were happier with me in that position. He'd make these typical male jokes. I'd be really uncomfortable when he'd drop by to have coffee, and tell these jokes glorifying men and demeaning women, and in an organization that is female, where there was not a single man at that moment. But the women probably had an easier time of it with me than with him.* (**Interviewee no. 30, curator, about 40 years old**)

Finally, in multiple interviews, some of which have already been quoted, it was emphasized that who will be appointed to a decision-making position in culture in the public sector in Serbia and in general wield power in the cultural scene depends most on *political suitability,* which was also noted in the results of the study on the position of women in cultural institutions in Serbia (Milanović, Subašić, and Opačić, 2017, p. 96), as well as in previous chapters of this study (Table 15 – Problems encountered by women workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia in the course of their work, in the chapter: *Mechanisms generating gender inequalities in the cultural field in Serbia; chapter: Political dominance in the cultural field in Serbia).*

> *On the one hand, we have this nominal narrative of gender inequality, we have this really unbelievable situation with the women members of the current government, we have this situation with women in charge of cultural institutions, but in cultural institutions there are actually all these*

women who are very well educated, who are very professional and who are very neglected and therefore demotivated.

Because, unless they are politically suitable or on the party frontlines, then all their professionalism will be neglected, and then their resulting lack of motivation will simply have to influence something, even their most intimate life, because they will feel they are in a way invisible in the public arena. (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, 56 years old, cultural institution and NGO**)

Sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace

According to Quigg (2011), instruments of mistreatment, mobbing and abuse in the professional context include intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying and blaming; abuse of children or other people; abuse of (male) privileges; economic abuse; threats or coercion.

These means can be applied as forms of mistreatment in the professional context, such as intimidation through looks, gestures, via digital communication or behavior; persistent humiliation, name-calling, unwanted jokes, mind games; controlling contact with coworkers, limiting access to important information, justification of one's actions by feigned support or concern; denial of abuse as untrue, shifting responsibility onto the target, and counter-accusations; promoting feelings of guilt in relation to clients or coworkers, undermining personal achievements, threatening to remove important roles or responsibilities; promoting powerlessness, removing decision-making responsibilities, assigning menial tasks, redefining one's job description; emphasizing job dependency, barring promotion, denying legitimate awards or rewards; threats, unjustified punishments, loss of status or loss of employment, false accusations, ensuring complicity in dubious activities (Quigg, 2011, p. 18).

Where sexual violence is concerned, after it occurs, the persons who were or are still being subjected to it are further stigmatized, which has been written about by contributors to the afore-mentioned publication *(Non)Violence and Responsibility: Between Structure and Culture* (Group of authors RLS, 2020). Stigmatization, they argue, is achieved through strategies of responsibility avoidance within the community where the violence occurred, even if that community normally espouses ideas of non-violence, at least in principle. They distinguish between the following strategies: literal (factual) denial, denial of the interpretation and denial of injury, as well as denial of implications, which

has multiple levels. For example, the community may ask the person who has experienced violence why they have come to them in particular, as well as questioning within whose purview it is to react. Alternatively, they may invoke economic or other, "higher," factors, justifying violence by the perpetrator's or community's economic vulnerability. Another strategy used is that of denying that there is a victim (Group of authors RLS, 2020, pp. 82–89). All of these strategies can also be applied to situations of violence within the cultural sphere, as well as educational sphere, something we have touched upon in the chapter on respondents' choice of an arts education.

Based on the above, and bearing in mind existing relevant data on sexual harassment in other social, geographic and professional contexts, it was, unfortunately, inevitable in the present study to collect knowledge and experiences related to sexual harassment and abuse in the field of art, culture and creative industries in Serbia.

We asked whether respondents felt safe in the workplace and in public spaces, whether they had ever been subjected to a form of sexual harassment or abuse during their professional engagements, and what this entailed. We also inquired if they had witnessed a form of sexual harassment and abuse happen to someone else, and whether there was a reaction in their organization.

Table 43 – Forms of sexual and other harassment in the workplace

In your professional work, have you ever been subjected to:	**Yes**	**No**	**n.r.**	**total**
a) Lewd speech and inappropriate comments	144 (69.9%)	59 (28.6%)	3 (1.5%)	206 (100%)
b) Unwanted touching	51 (26.2%)	146 (70.9%)	6 (2.9%)	206 (100%)
c) Sexual assault/ violence	11 (5.3%)	188 (91.3%)	7 (3.4%)	206 (100%)
d) Sexual blackmail	16 (7.8%)	183 (88.8%)	7 (3.4%)	206 (100%)
e) Harassment due to sexual orientation	2 (1%)	191 (92.7%)	13 (6.3%)	206 (100%)
f) Exclusion due to disability	4 (1.9%)	186 (90.3%)	16 (7.8%)	206 (100%)

In the course of their work, eleven respondents encountered physical sexual violence, while sixteen experienced sexual blackmail, which jointly comprises nearly 15% of the sample. *More than one in four had experienced unwanted touching* in a professional context, while *nearly 70% of respondents experienced verbal sexual harassment* in the workplace.

These results show that practices of verbal sexual harassment in particular, but also of physical sexual harassment, figure quite prominently in the domestic cultural scene, and that immediate regulation is needed regarding professional behavior, communication and speech directed toward women in the cultural sector, since more than two thirds of women in this domain had experienced lewd speech and inappropriate comments.

In some jobs in the arts and creative industries, sexual harassment has been practically normalized and is almost expected, because that's how it's "always" been.

> *They say it's always been like this, that they've always done this, for example, for actors to cop a feel when make-up artists and wardrobe assistants are getting them ready for a scene or in the dressing room. And I know some makeup artists who were like, fuck, he's like this old, famous actor, and the man's all over me, I'm putting on his make-up, he's groping me …*
>
> *It can just so happen that someone's coming on to you, and now you're seeing him 12 hours a day for 3 months, so how do you act so as not to get into conflict, to stay on this project and earn your money, but at the same time distance yourself from this person so that he'll leave you alone. You have to get very creative. But, unfortunately, if it's someone very important and depraved enough not to register that you are trying to distance yourself from him, now you have a problem…* (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

The recent study of the music scene in Hungary, discussed above, provides an in-depth analysis of just this dimension, of the work, energy, time and thought women expend to navigate between the politeness expected of women and unwanted (male) attention, as well as the rejection of this attention precisely so as not to jeopardize one's career and damage one's position. The insights pertaining to this topic in the Hungarian scene accord with the interviews we obtained in our study, and its author, Emilia Barna, articulates clearly this dimension of "emotional and relational labor" of women in the music industry and in the creative industries more broadly. It is especially important to note the

effort required not to reinforce their subordinated status, despite occasionally tolerating, out of necessity – and in a performance of "emotional neutrality," the abuse and objectification by their coworkers and clients, and the fuzziness of boundaries (Barna, 2022, str. 118—121). Some of our interviewees underscored exactly this.

> *There were these uncomfortable situations later on, which I used to solve by playing dumb, like I didn't get he was coming on to me. That was my tactic, I'm like so either stupid or absent, like so into my work, that I don't get that you're coming on to me, that you're flirting, but I'm ignoring you…* (**Interviewee no. 2, videographer and photographer, freelancer, 35 years old**)

> *I feel safe because I'm very plucky, so I don't have the feeling that someone could harass me much sexually and go unpunished (laughter). I never felt vulnerable in that sense, I mean I just wouldn't, I don't like being in the role of a victim and I wouldn't put up with something like that happening to me.* (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, 56 years old, cultural institution and NGO**)

> *I mean, I'm not easily affected by those... I mean, it bothers me and annoys me, but I can block out these so-called "sexy jokes" and this showering with compliments, which are actually terribly crude or vulgar, inappropriate (…) And in certain situations it's not okay, but as I said, I wouldn't make a huge deal out of it. I don't think you should excuse it, and you shouldn't tolerate it, especially when it's in poor taste, and I was known to either walk away or to snap, and it stops people in their tracks. But I don't think it was directed at me personally, it's just this awfully vulgar and stupid way of communicating, which some people picked up ages ago and they don't get it that, that the world's changed, that some things aren't nice, that it's a no-no (laughter)...* (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

The approaches that women artists, cultural workers and experts come up with, and the ways in which they position themselves so as to defend themselves as efficiently as possible include, among others: *ignoring, tolerating, pretending not to have noticed, that they are focused on work or "absent," playing "dumb," appealing to the person's reputation, as well as confrontation and pluck*. Some of them told us that they "try to suppress the discomfort and not think about these situations." Other cultural workers present such behavior to themselves as a characteristic of this person who is violent, and discuss them as outdated, arrogant, brazen, or maladjusted, which is how they try to discredit them to themselves, taking away their agency and significance.

Multiple respondents spoke of their "skill" when it comes to overcoming uncomfortable situations, condescension, and the unprofessional and inadequate behavior they came across in their professional environment.

Already during their schooling, and then also during professional engagements, women develop a set of strategies, both behavioral and psychological, to remedy the effects of sexism on their mental health, but also their career, relationships in their organization or their private life.

> *It's only happened to me a few times, I nip this in the bud. Somehow, I knew how to handle myself. Specifically, I literally slapped a coworker in front of others, and everyone pretended they didn't see it, that nothing happened. And it never happened again. It's also happened to me with people much older than me, our esteemed academics, for example. There, too, I was able to... I literally stopped it with a single sentence, I said: "Academic, this doesn't become you." And it stopped.* (**Interviewee no. 23, pianist/ pedagogue, public sector – education, about 40 years old**)

If they don't always manage to prevail over the insults, humiliations, additional commitments or disrespect with sufficient ease, some of them view this as *their own lack of capacity* at that moment or as an exceptional case they were not prepared for. *Resilience* to systemic inequalities, subtle sexism and discrimination, as well as continued microaggressions, becomes a key capacity.

> "Resilience therefore becomes the other side of sustainability, and the very stuff of action in the neoliberal age: structural pressure, including oppression, is expected to be responded to with individual elasticity, landing on one's feet and adapting" (Pureber (Ed.), 2022, p. 95).

The mechanisms of abuse in the professional context are listed in the literature as follows:

- "isolation: the bully selects the target and acts to set them apart from colleagues, via unfair criticism, unwanted jokes, complaints, etc.;
- monopolization of perception: the bully works to eliminate the target's focus on anything other than the bully's requirements, via unreasonable demands and misinformation;
- mental exhaustion: the bully uses tension, fear and controlling tactics to pressurize the target until they are debilitated;
- threats: the bully warns of and sometimes demonstrates the consequences of non-compliance;
- occasional indulgences: the bully uses period gestures of kindness or

feigned concern to pretend camaraderie, causing confusion in the target;
- demonstrating omnipotence: the bully creates dependency in the target, promoting a state of powerlessness;
- degradation: the bully stimulates feelings of shame and lack of self-respect in the target, via additional constant fault-finding and unfair criticism;
- enforcing trivial demands: the bully humiliates the target, often in front of colleagues" (Quigg, 201, p. 107).

Physical sexual harassment and abuse is considered more prevalent in those domains of the artistic scene involving bigger budgets and more money, which means there is more power and status at play there.

> *The truth is that in the arts market, which I'm not so much a part of, there is a huge amount of harassment, because men still hold the positions of power, and where there's money, the risk of harassment is greater. So, in places where there are these positions, and backed with money, I'm sure there's huge amounts of harassment…* (**Interviewee no. 4, multimedia artist, freelancer and research assistant at university, about 40 years old**)

In our study, sexual harassment was most often linked to the domain of theatre, television and film, as illustrated by some of the statements above. For artists who get selected and singled out for abuse by their colleagues in positions of power and decision-making, this can have a major impact on their career, as well as their private life and mental health.

> *There's serious manipulations there, this quid pro quo, like "the part's yours if you stick with me." They blackmail you, and you're in this position where you need the part, and you basically don't know how to position yourself so as not to lose the job but also to protect yourself. You sort of learn this as you go through life, you either lose everything or you learn how to... It takes some wisdom to make it.*
>
> *It's best if you have an amicable relationship, you can work and get jobs from friendly relations.*
>
> *I'm very removed from all that now. But when I was younger I'd find myself in these situations, and, especially when you're young, you don't know how to handle some of these propositions. They're not even love propositions, but yes, someone falls in love... Most often, because it really tends to go along the lines of liking, fancying, being attracted, and it's most often – someone likes you and they hire you for this part. You may not be an amazing actress, but he likes you. And now that you've got the*

part, he starts demanding things or starts making a move on you, because he's already got you cornered. And these are things I had to learn about, to overcome, to understand this is how it works. To learn never to find myself in that situation again. Maybe that's another reason why I'm not in these upper echelons. (**Interviewee no. 15, actress, 40 years old**)

Opinions, social and professional engagement regarding gender equality

This chapter presents study and interview segments which pertain to respondents' opinions and their social and professional engagement with regard to gender equality, both in the cultural sector, and in society at large.

We wanted to know how important it was to them to contribute actively to the promotion of gender equality, and in what manner, whether they were informed about the relevant legislation and institutional mechanisms for achieving gender equality, as well as whether their institution/ organization had implemented any measures aimed at enhancing gender equality, and what they comprised. We also wanted to know whether, in their work to date, they had participated in any form of activism aimed at enhancing the position of women and what this engagement consisted of, and we described examples of such relevant activism in the chapter on recommendations and examples of best practice.

Part of women cultural workers don't see how the position of women in the art scene in Serbia could be improved, and are *skeptical that any real change is possible*.

I don't see how the position of women in the arts in Serbia could be improved. Especially in my trade, acting, because it runs so deep... this system where men are in charge and they are the ones who make the choices at their discretion, based on their preferences... it's a line of work where choices are more-less made based on preference. I just can't see how this could be fixed at all, how it could be different. (**Interviewee no. 15, actress, 40 years old**)

However, some interviewees think that the current *gender quotas as a measure are not only necessary but also insufficient,* considering that women constitute the social majority.

There are women, I'm not saying there are not, but what's the percentage… Something else that drives me crazy; who are they to decide on a minimal number of women councilors in the city council, the minimal number of female MPs in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. So, if we're 50/50 here, that is, there's actually more women than men, why are we talking about 30% or even 20%… (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

Other interviewees emphasized the importance of *education, from an early age, on gender equality.* They characterized our society as "awfully immature and unready," especially in rural and small-town communities, and they linked the state of the cultural sector with economic inequality, poor access to the labor market and other resources, as well as unequal representation in major positions of power.

I think there are a lot of women in culture, a lot of very successful women in culture, there are very successful women artists, creators, directors, managers and that's uplifting… It's really, really uplifting. I mean, that again speaks to the fact that this is possible and not necessarily a factor of being a man or a woman. On the other hand, I think it's still a very sensitive issue, and I really think that, as a society, we lack education, schooling, sensibilization on all possible levels, from a very young age. So from nursery onward, throughout schooling, and unfortunately, all these systems of formal education have really dropped the ball on this one... Also that we are awfully immature and unready as a society. We're just so far from… If you go deeper into society, if you go deeper into the small communities, into villages, into socially different environments, then you realize we basically have a very long road ahead… And that it's all a matter of this upbringing and that that's what we're missing. (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

It's a bitter, long-term struggle, unfortunately, and I'm not sure we'll ever be able to reach some acceptable equality, acceptable primarily in the context of socio-economic evenness. Not to mention statistics, how many women own, say, apartments, how many women own real estate, cars, etc, etc. So this is where focus is needed, likewise women's education. How come women are so dominant in universities, on all educational levels, from elementary school to university, women are the better students, the better pupils, they're hardworking, diligent… What's lost between the moment they complete their schooling until employment, how come, all of a sudden, from these great students we don't then have great general

managers, we don't get great presidents, we don't get great members of the Academy of the Sciences. (**Interviewee no. 16, literary author, general manager of a cultural institution, about 50 years old**)

There were contrasting opinions with regard to gender-sensitive language, especially with one interviewee who was a linguist-philologist by training, which is in accordance with the dominant attitude of this profession and its relevant institutions in Serbia; however, it also speaks to the strong conservative character of the linguistic training offered by these institutions over the past several decades. This interviewee considered gender-sensitive language a final, and not first, step, something a society should address after solving "bigger" problems, such as discrimination against women in the job market, lack of protections for mothers and motherhood, as well as domestic violence.

On the other hand, some interviewees shared their *experiences of introducing procedures and regulations in institutions* where they were in leadership positions, including the difficulties in their implementation.

I'd heard some institutions had them [codes, regulations], and we didn't. I was interested to know what sorts of things they regulated, so I asked some colleagues to explain to me what this was about, so that we could introduce something that would accord with our professional duties. I didn't like it that there was no document regulating alcohol in the workplace, there was nothing regulating persecution, which I thought a colleague was being subjected to by a male colleague. So at some point we did introduce this as a document.

I have to admit I wasn't very successful implementing it, I wasn't able to find a solution that would stand in our legal reality, but I did have people in for a conversation based on this, for violations of these rules, related to various things. Those were the only measures I could take, a sort of a caution. **(Interviewee no. 30, curator, about 40 years old**)

While interviewees for this study were not selected based on any previous links to the issue of gender inequality, but with the aim of a diverse inclusion of the entire scene in terms of cities and towns, age, disciplines and domain of cultural activity, as well as affiliation with the public, civil or private sector in culture and creative industries, they did not consider the topic of gender inequality outdated, unimportant or solved in the scene in Serbia and in Serbian society, i.e., they did not use the discourse of postfeminism.

A similar trend of growing awareness and understanding of the impact of structural inequality on the lives of women in the creative industries has also been found by other studies conducted over the past decade, such as Scharff (2022) and Gross (2022) for Great Britain, using the example of the music scene, and Brook, O'Brien & Taylor (2019) for the field of creative industries as a whole in the same region. Even when the identity of the cultural worker outweighed their gender identity, there were still social obstacles to full equality encountered by women in the broader context, which was then also reflected in the artistic scene and the microcontext of work in cultural institutions, organizations and companies. Still, more work is needed on raising awareness in women cultural workers themselves, as our survey shows: gender awareness-raising among women artists was seen as an important path toward solving this problem, while 33% of respondents viewed women artists, cultural workers and creative industries workers themselves as key agents for improving gender equality in culture in Serbia.

Unfortunately, some respondents also identify the *manipulation and abuse* of gender quotas and affirmative action measures in institutions by political structures in Serbia, to the detriment of actual progress toward a more gender equal system of cultural policy and cultural life.

> *Where gender equality is concerned, it's simulated very skillfully. We have this situation where in the current government there are all these women, then we have the situation where we have women directors of cultural institutions, and women in leadership positions in province-level administration. But they're there because of political suitability, which is not the same as gender equality. It's all a simulation, just as there's façade democracy, this is façade gender equality, it's not true, it isn't real. Because we're dealing with political suitability, and not a changed or transformed system of values.* (**Interviewee no. 1, culturologist, cultural institution and NGO, 56 years old**)

In other, more developed creative industries as well, there can be occasional superficial focus on topics of diversity, inclusivity and equality, and the involvement of inadequate, insufficiently expert or insufficiently representative people in important debates so as to present the situation as being better than it actually is (Gross, 2022, p.170).

> *I think that what's essentially at the root of everything is politics alone. I think it's in fact just another game, the fact that there are also a lot of women in our profession, and that there are all these women public functionaries nowadays, that it's in fact just a box-ticking exercise, without getting to the bottom of things.*

It's like, great, you're a woman, even better, we get to tick a box for some EU-integration requirement… (**Interviewee no. 12, museum advisor, art historian, 48 years old**)

We hope that the results of this study will help in reaching a better, more comprehensive understanding of the problem of gender inequality in the sector of culture, art and creative industries in Serbia, and facilitate the design and implementation of more adequate and efficient measures for a more gender equal scene, both locally and nationally in Serbia.

Consequently, the next step would be to gather insights on the opinions and understanding of male colleagues and decision-makers in culture and cultural policy regarding matters of gender (in)equality in the sector (such as compiled for Great Britain in the study by Brook, O`Brien & Taylor, 2019), so that we could throw into sharp relief the mechanisms that support discrimination in spite of formal efforts and regulations to the contrary, and explore more efficient ways of mitigating and eradicating discrimination.

Summary

What the survey and interviews in this section have demonstrated is that the cultural sector in Serbia is broadly perceived as discriminatory and unfair toward women, as well as that most respondents have experienced some form of discrimination in the workplace. Women working in artistic and cultural production in Serbia face skepticism toward their competences and capacities, regardless of their education, credits to date or achievements. Through implicit or structural factors, they are forced to engage in additional mental and affective labor in order to cope with sexist and unfair treatment, which is often subtle, elusive and difficult to fight on one's own.

Similarly to the findings of existing studies, gender division of labor is reflected in the distribution of positions of power, where women tend to be assigned, or they themselves tend to take on by happenstance, administrative and bureaucratic tasks, as well as organization and coordination, and caregiving tasks in their organizations or projects. When authorship and credit are assigned, more than one in five respondents have experienced the credit for a joint task or authorship being attributed to a male colleague or colleagues, whereas nearly a quarter have been paid less than their male counterparts for the same job, role or function, i.e. the study has also identified the so-called gender pay gap in the cultural scene in Serbia.

When it comes to career advancement and leadership positions, nearly half of our respondents were in a leadership position at the time of the survey; however, one in two among them met with unacceptance, being ignored or disregarded because they were a woman in this position.

The data show that practices of sexual harassment, verbal but also physical, are very much present in the cultural scene in Serbia, as over two thirds of women in this field had experienced lewd speech and inappropriate comments in the workplace. Respondents spoke about their "skill" in coping with uncomfortable situations, belittlement, unprofessional and inappropriate behavior they came across in their professional environment, developing a whole host of strategies in order to mitigate the effects of sexism on their mental health, as well as their career, interpersonal relations in the workplace or private life. When they were unable to overcome these issues with relative ease, some of them interpreted this as their own lack of capacity.

Finally, a portion of women cultural workers could see no way in which the position of women in the arts scene in Serbia could be improved, and were skeptical of the possibility for any substantial change. Some viewed quotas and affirmative action as not only necessary but also insufficient measures, while others spoke of their experiences of the manipulation and abuse of these instruments meant for improving gender equality by political structures. They also emphasized the responsibility of the media for enhancing gender equality in society at large, as well as of educational institutions and programs whose duty it is to provide education on these topics from a young age.

Expert focus group

As already mentioned, the final segment of fieldwork conducted as part of this study was the focus group. It was organized during December 2021, with nine participants who have been active for years in improving gender equality in the cultural field in Serbia. If the primary objective of the survey and semi-structured interviews was to establish the position of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in the cultural field in Serbia and identify the problems they faced, the key goal of the focus group was finding the answer to the question: what comes after a thorough analysis of these problems? What are some examples of best practice that might inspire potential interventions in the short, medium or long term? The nine participants in the discussion (listed in alphabetical order) were: Jana Adamović, Olga Boškov, Ksenija Đurović, Iva Nenić, Marija Peternel, Jovana Stošić and Jelena Višnjić, as well as two experts who preferred to stay anonymous. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the participants' statements, the quoted excerpts are signed using an ordinal number assigned to each expert and unrelated to the alphabetical order just provided.

Participants were selected so as to ensure different perspectives were included with regard to multiple categories: domain of activity in culture, media and academia, employment status in the independent or public sector, type of work experience, place of residence. Most have had many years of experience, and are founders of organizations, networks and initiatives. As a rule, over the course of their work they have all performed multiple roles and were connected with activism in some way. They have also participated in numerous campaigns aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women's voices in culture and related areas. In this regard, they stressed the importance of remembering and disseminating knowledge of feminist history, both inside feminist circles and in society as a whole.

And although they have been working tirelessly and contributing to the cultural profession for decades, as well as being feminist activists in an extremely misogynistic and hostile environment, founders of initiatives and initiators of systemic changes in ways of organizing and the treatment of the issue of gender equality in culture, some of the participants in the focus group still felt the need to downplay their own expertise.

Integrating their diverse viewpoints has enabled us to shed light on problems of gender inequality in culture from different angles, since these problems tend to manifest differently in different subgroups of cultural workers, while their effects multiply in combination with class, geographical and other inequalities. Furthermore, the experts' collective analysis of the issues enabled us to add to and build on the recommendations of the research team.

The focus group took place against the backdrop of another wave of coronavirus-related restrictions on movement and gatherings, which is why it was scheduled in an online format. That very context already gave us direct insight into how women cultural workers spend their working days, or at least one afternoon, which they dedicated to participating in the expert group at the expense of their free time. In the background of the conversation, their private lives unfolded – a sudden business trip one of them had to go on, another one being late due to looking for a parking space while her child was sleeping next to her, a third who had managed to grab a moment for herself while her husband took their son to school.

The key objective of the focus group was the need to answer the question: what comes after we have analyzed these problems in depth? What are some examples of best practice that might inspire potential interventions in the short, medium or long term?

During this group interview, the focus was on the question of how women cultural workers were to find the models that would help them improve their position in the first place, bearing in mind, on the one hand, the marked gender inequalities in society, attested to both by government statistics and by numerous independent studies presented in the chapter *Continuity of gender and feminist analyses in Serbia and the region*, and, on the other hand, structurally poor conditions for the cultural scene as a whole, identified by our previous studies (Cvetičanin 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2020; Cvetičanin & Milankov, 2011; Cvetičanin & Dinić, 2020) and the 2021 ULUS study. Key questions posed as part of the focus group included: What are some examples of best practice in the manner of formulating demands? What are some examples of best practice in improving legislative solutions? What ought to be some key activities in terms of solidary association? How to organize cultural work in a gender-sensitive manner? Emphasis was on distinct suggestions for interventions in the field of culture in the short, medium and long term.

The value and pricing of labor in culture

When it comes to evaluating and pricing work in art, experts cite several levels of this problem. First of all, they wonder how it is possible to establish the price of a working engagement in the first place when artistic work is still treated as not being work, which renders these questions virtually "improper."[47] Next, as argued by Expert 2, when this topic is broached, the next logical question is how does one get paid for one's work, especially in the case of younger workers who are just entering the field of cultural work. This then opens up a host of other problems, all of which affect the overall quality of life and work of women cultural workers:

> *Getting compensated in general is really hard. Again, that also has to do with this tax administration system, where clients very frequently avoid people with the status of independent artist, because they're not clear as to what they need to do in terms of paperwork, especially those from abroad. So in fact they're pushing us to either work through agencies or to operate under the counter, to ask if we can get paid through acquaintances who have agencies, and, I dunno, I'll pay you one half in cash and the other through the contract. Also, people are not at all well-informed regarding their authorship rights. They can't read a contract at all. We need courses to achieve [literacy]… Real ones. So that's what I've noticed in practice people having no clue about, and I think it should be introduced, say, as a subject in art departments. This basic media and legal education. So that when you graduate from university you are actually able to go into business.* (**Expert 2**)

The experience cited first-hand by Expert 2, on the lack of regulation regarding workers' rights, especially internationally, which then results in informal economy, also accords with the findings of the ULUS study (2021, pp. 59–60).

In addition to the suggestion to introduce *education on worker rights in universities and cultural institutions*, participants also stressed the importance of *this type of education in the independent sector* as well:

> *This training is not only for women cultural workers in institutions, but also those in the independent scene. So there we also see a similar level of how informed they are about their rights, women's rights, and how sensibilized they are in terms of gender equality and this topic in general. So, a rights*

47 Katja Praznik (2021) discusses the background of this prejudice regarding unpaid artistic labor, as discussed in a previous chapter; cf. also Lazzarato (1996).

training. All women cultural workers ought to know what their rights are and what the relevant legal framework is. So, things they can react to, in what way, the procedures available. (**Expert 6**)

In terms of getting paid for and pricing one's work, during the focus group an example of good practices from neighboring Croatia was noted. It concerned the creation of a price list for artistic work. In Croatia there is currently an initiative for designing a price list pertaining to workers in the performing arts, initiated by the Croatian Screenwriters and Playwrights Guild (SPID).

These are all things that have to do with working conditions. Now, whether it's a coincidence or not I don't know, but most people who worked on that price list were women. I think it's precisely due to their position, inflamed by the pandemic and these just catastrophic conditions for those with independent status and freelancers, that it became something that had to happen then and there. I think we are now seeing this wave of the standardization of labor, instead of something where art is perceived as this beautiful thing, as something that's going to ennoble our lives, create this utopia, etc. No, it's that art is work, too, and this work is very tangible, and it needs to be adequately compensated. (**Expert 1**)

Tying in with these recommendations is the experience of one expert currently living and working abroad. She notes that that country makes considerably greater structural investments where culture and the arts are concerned. As a particularly positive practice, very dissimilar from that in Serbia, she singled out the fact that budgets for cultural projects are formed so as to correspond with the actual price of an author's labor, and only then is the overall budget projection prepared. This means that the rights of those who are to do the work are taken into account first, instead of being neglected in favor of (self)exploitation and overburdening with activities, as in the Serbian context:

I mean, it's very interesting because we don't have this principle, and I think it would be interesting to calculate how much women's hourly earnings are. We'd get one euro. And that's great for the campaign. [...] No, but seriously; I really think it's time we shifted this rhetoric, that we can work for very little money, or that we can do five activities for very little money. I think there's this awful hyperproduction there, that is, this capitalist trap, folks. It's this thing we've burdened ourselves with, as if it's something we have to do, because that's why we then go into it, while it's all dictated. If we flip the game and say – no, my activities are a thousand euros apiece, then we're changing the reality, then things inevitably have to change.

This excerpt deconstructs the vicious circle of sorts in which women cultural workers, due to poor working conditions, are continually pressured into working for less, at the same time as not valuing their own work as much as it is worth, underestimating it instead.

Demands for decision-makers in the field of culture

One of the key problems identified by experts in the focus group is the grave situation in the systemically dismantled institutions. Nevertheless, as one of them argues, there have been enormous efforts to lobby for reform of institutions, mechanisms and laws, which is why they should not be given up on completely:

> *At the moment there are no institutions. We know all about it. They've been completely dismantled, but we also know how hard we fought to get to these institutional mechanisms, to different institutions, to any legislature, to any of the decisions determining our position in any domain, and we know what then happened with all of that… But giving up is not an option. Unless we participate in building institutions, how are we going to achieve a better position and better working conditions. Or anything for that matter. Any change in public policy, for any institution, for any of our rights. So, this collaboration is still necessary. It's definitely necessary, because there hasn't been any progress. The problem is, the majority of women cultural workers in institutions, our colleagues, are completely unaware of their own position, and of the fact that, in many cases, we are just a kind of subcontractor for our male colleagues who make the decisions, who get to decide the work plan, who are on various councils, juries, committees…*
>
> *So, the Law on Gender Equality notwithstanding... We know all too well how difficult it was to reach even this draft of the Law on Gender Equality, for how long this Law was worked on, how many flaws, how many times it was tabled only to then be released for consideration again… So what now, who's going to control the implementation of the Law, when will all the bylaws get passed so that it can start to be applied, and how will it be implemented, and, just like (Expert 1's name) said, who's going to oversee the implementation of all these new laws we've been fighting for for so long… But giving up is not an option. We have to keep building these institutions, for sure, and making our demands, and, uhm, I don't see another way out. That's what we've been doing all along.* (**Expert 6**)

Following on from this conclusion, Expert 7 stated that the letter of the law is one thing, but that something altogether different occurs in practice:

> *I actually think that a broad legal framework in itself can be the subject of various revisions and amendments, but that calls for really serious engagement and truly fierce dialogue in our field, [...] but also the institutions themselves, when they adopt these internal regulations, it really begs the question, first of all, what these regulations are like, and secondly, whether this institution's practices uphold this or not.* (**Expert 7**)

Adoption of regulations and procedures is recommended within institutions, but also beyond, in other influential structures, such as festivals:

> *It's important to push for procedures, regulations, to push for them as white papers for a start, even if they're not followed. It would also be important for existing papers to be revised, to be made more comprehensive, so that some of the reactions are shifted onto systems, mechanisms. Not on whether someone has reported something, and that then, then they have to continue working on this, but to have these comprehensive systems in place providing support and overseeing what's going on. Then again, on the other hand, that depends on how functional the institution is. It's the same then as having overall non-functional institutions, if that's the case, of course that those mechanisms won't be functional either, just as nothing else is functional in those institutions, but it is, uhm, it still matters. To have this paper and to insist on some mechanisms that'll ensure those papers are upheld.* (**Expert 8**)

Discussing important procedures, Expert 8 cites, among others, *gender-responsive budgeting*, explaining this with the fact that women do not enjoy equal support and equal opportunities as their male counterparts, which is why they require additional support regarding accessing money. The first two stages of our study, both the surveys and interviewee testimonies, provide ample support for this argument.

Expert 8 also notes that the mechanism of *gender quotas* isn't inconsequential when it comes to achieving gender equality; however, she stresses that she doesn't take it to include only the most literal level of meeting numerical criteria. Just as we ought to fight for women to get better access to money, they should also get access to festivals, institutions and other public spaces where cultural work unfolds. The demand she suggests be placed in front of decision-makers also concerns ensuring women's equal access, not only on paper but also in practice:

I see these as short-term to medium-term measures, because long-term measures have to do with the society as a whole, opinions, patriarchal culture, the position of women, trusting women, etc. (**Expert 8**)

Regarding long-term change in attitudes toward women and gender-mainstreaming in laws, one of the more controversial topics in recent years has been the *issue of gender-sensitive language*. Seemingly, this topic pertains to the symbolic level; however, as one of the discussion participants argued, the question of language runs much deeper than it appears at first glance:

I mean the passing of the Law on Gender Equality. There's been enough scrimmaging about and debating gender-sensitive language. I see we're not practicing it nearly enough, and it wouldn't be such a bad idea to revisit it at some point. These guidelines for [male] artists or open calls for [male] artists alone, and even entire structures in artistic branches are still being pushed in the masculine gender. I really think this ought to change a bit, and we ought to insist on it, because we're aware it's also an economic issue. I mean, language, too, is an economic matter. (**Expert 3**)

The adoption of regulations and procedures, as well as regular monitoring of their application, is the first of, loosely speaking, two broad-brush types of recommendations that could be distinguished in this focus group. The second type includes recommendations on maintaining good relations with allies among agents not recognized as decision-makers in culture.

For this second type of recommendations – *collaboration with firm allies*, one of the examples cited was that of the engagement of Leila Ruždić Trifunović, who, as an MP in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia following the 2000 regime change, has contributed to the criminalization of domestic violence:

We have to find an ally each; if only in the media, if only in a single institution, if only amongst each other. (**Expert 4**)

Other participants in the focus group share this opinion, proposing broadening the circle to include other agents with whom an alliance would be advisable:

So I agree with (Expert 4's name) that we need to identify allies – whether they're in the independent scene, or in institutions, whether they're decision-makers or in any type of institutional mechanisms, boards for culture and information, a ministry, etc. On all decision-making levels to do with culture, and media in particular. To also remember to go into trade unions a bit, which don't really exist, but to identify some individuals with

the initiative to create trade unions. I believe, not that I've seen any signs of it happening but I keep hoping, someone's going to start working on that as well. (**Expert 6**)

This segment of the conversation on different decision-makers logically led to mentioning the role of the media, seen as twofold. On the one hand, Experts 5 and 9 noted the problem facing women cultural workers in the media treatment of their word, due to a general lack of media literacy. The image of women cultural workers in the media is frequently formed based on different misogynistic stereotypes – from the way women artists are portrayed, through their work often being ignored, to a conservative approach to topics they work on, especially when they are socially engaged and feminist ones.

On the other hand, Expert 5 also believed that loyal allies in the media can prove very helpful when it comes to strengthening one's position in the fight for gender equality. She therefore recommended it would be useful to *identify examples of best practice of media coverage*. These could then be presented as models to other organizations, which may not be at the same level of gender-sensibilization regarding reporting on one's work, but are well-intentioned even if not knowledgeable enough.

Association in the cultural field

Insufficient investment in culture, violations of workers' rights, the underestimation and (un-)chargeability of work, difficulty exercising the right to maternity leave in the case of independent artists, and pensions that are not sufficient enough to ensure a life of dignity are all problems that are, in the case of women cultural workers, further reinforced by gender inequality in the distribution of resources, power and visibility. That is why the issue of *association with the aim of safeguarding and enhancing workers' rights*, in various forms, kept surfacing as one of the key topics throughout the focus group.

A case from abroad emerged as a good example of the efficiency of associating, when done consistently and systematically:

I want to say, the economy of time, the economy of qualifications and education expended on something we want to change in relation to the documents we have coming up, perhaps we ought to be more brutal, if you ask me, because I believe we've become quite cocooned in that respect. Also, we have these comfortable little narratives that are going to escalate

and we won't have even that left. If we can flip this, so that, now that we have nothing we start punching way above our weight, maybe they won't be expecting us to do that, but I think perhaps we have to change out mind game as well… Because, seriously, I see here [name of country] they value their work, their efforts so much. If there's any funny business going on, they associate into groups so they can react, change things, and the like, but they don't back down on their prices. [...]

But then again, the people here have fought for that. It wasn't just given to them. I mean, they fought collectively, the way we've been talking about now, and I think we need to flip this game. (**Expert 3**)

The need for *a platform for lobbying for, safeguarding and reacting to violations of labor rights* is also detected in the present context:

So, when discrimination occurs, when there's no solidarity among our female colleagues, associates, our male colleagues, when, when there's no gender budget, when none of it is implemented – we have to react! So we should also now demand and create a platform concerning women cultural workers and really, I said it at the start and I'll say it again, to voice our demands also to these opposition parties that are planning on running, to say to all those candidates what our expectations are. (**Expert 6**)

In addition to the form of collectives, associations, and representative bodies, *allyship* can also manifest *on the intergenerational level*, with more experienced colleagues supporting younger ones, helping them to better orient themselves in their artistic work:

I am now in a position where I too can give support to someone, just as I once was [...] I can give you specific examples. So I go to [name of event], and I meet three other girls there, they're seventeen, twenty and twenty-three, and then I invite them [...] They ought to be given some support, and ought to be reminded and empowered, to do what they're doing with even more courage, and that it's totally okay. And at the same time, that they should keep their comfort zone and do their own thing. (**Expert 9**)

A cooperative model was mentioned as another example of best practices:

I think it would be ideal to form these cooperatives. So, not associations, but some other ways in which we'd, I don't know, to have fifteen women producers or three producers establish a cooperative, through which they'll be able to work. But, as I'm saying this, I'm not even sure what it means… I don't know if that format, if that even exists… But, it's like, there

are agricultural cooperatives, I don't see why there couldn't be cultural cooperatives as well. (**Expert 1**)

Supplementing this idea from a historical perspective, Expert 7 proposed it would be interesting to draw on experiences from Yugoslav socialism, when service centers were established in small towns and villages, which could potentially provide relevant models for contemporary association. In addition to this, she also mentioned research conducted by a colleague in the domain of music, which explored women's singing groups of self-organized women in rural areas, active during the socialist period. Besides examples from the past, Expert 3 also noted the co-op Edukativa as a good example, a group initiated by women foreign language teachers.

Based on their experience and knowledge as experts, the nine interviewees were able to complement each other in developing suggestions and recommendations regarding the evaluation and pricing of one's own work, relations with and demands for decision-makers, as well as identifying allies among agents of importance for the cultural scene. Finally, they also proposed various models of association, with the aim of safeguarding and progressing workers' rights, such as platforms, cooperatives and service centers inspired by local socialist practices.

Many of the suggestions they made provided the foundation for the recommendations presented in the following chapter.

Recommendations and examples of good practices

Based on the afore-presented results of the survey study, semi-structured interviews and the focus-group interview with experts who have been working on gender equality in the cultural sector in Serbia for years, as well as the conclusions of previous studies and analyses carried out in this area in Serbia and the region over the past several decades, we have compiled a list of recommendations for improving gender equality in Serbia.

As demonstrated earlier in this book, more than four fifths of participants in this study estimate that there is discrimination against women in the sector of culture, art and creative industries in Serbia, while as many as two thirds of them have personally experienced discrimination.

We also asked respondents for their opinion on possible ways of overcoming the problems they faced. The potential solutions, as seen by them, could be grouped into three factors. On the one hand, there are those according to which *gender awareness-raising* ought to play a primary role, not only among women cultural workers and entrepreneurs, but also in their male colleagues and superiors in the workplace; additionally, they also called for gender awareness-raising among workers in the media and stricter penalties for sexism in the media. The second group of answers sought a solution *in the activity of women cultural workers themselves, their networking and capacity-building*. The third cluster of answers allocated responsibility to *institutional activity and legislative solutions* ("gender-responsive budgeting in culture at all levels, and more substantial funding of feminine creation; "changes to the Law on Culture in order to affirm, through various instruments, the principle of gender equality in the sector of culture and the arts"; and "stricter legal penalties for all forms of sexual and gender-based harassment").

Table 44 – Possible routes for overcoming problems[48]

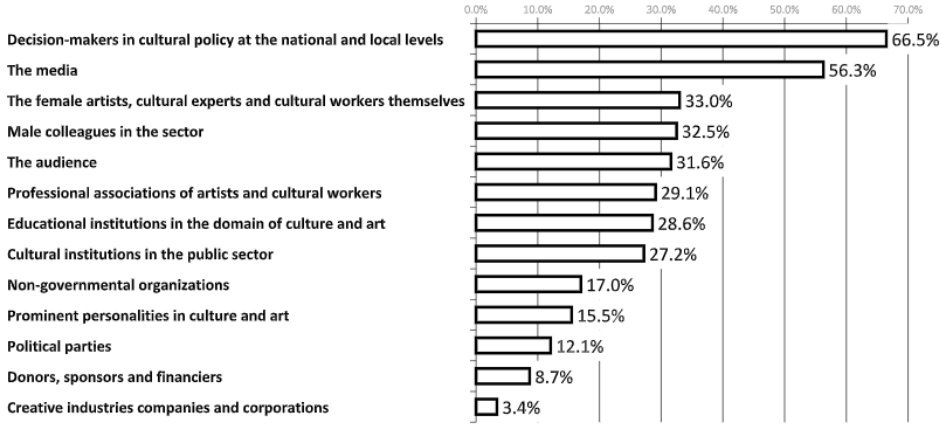
	Components/factors		
	1	**2**	**3**
Gender awareness-raising among coworkers and superiors in the workplace	**.727**		
Gender awareness-raising among media workers and stricter penalties for sexism in the media	**.607**		
Gender awareness-raising among cultural workers and entrepreneurs in culture	**.589**		
Changing the overall social climate, currently characterized by a reinforcement of conservative ideas on gender roles	**.533**	-.383	
The networking of women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in culture		**.743**	
Capacity-building among women cultural workers and entrepreneurs in culture (education with the aim of acquiring new knowledge and training for acquiring new skills)		**.623**	
Affirmation of feminine cultural creation in the media	.351	**.612**	
Gender-responsive budgeting in culture on all levels, and more substantial funding for feminine creation			**.627**
Amending the Law on Culture so as to include various instruments for affirmation of the principle of gender equality in the sector of culture and the arts			**.612**
Affirmation of the equal engagement of men and women in parenthood and housework	.474		-.564
Stricter legal penalties for all forms of sexual and gender-based harassment	.341		**.407**
Changes to legislature so as to improve the conditions and position of pregnant workers in culture and art, as well as of employed and temporarily employed mothers			

48 As in the case of previous tables presenting the results of factorial analysis, the most salient factorial "charges" that help define the meanings of factors in the table are given in bold, while empty table cells signify there were no statistically significant results.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

Our survey study included a question regarding who the respondents saw as key agents for enhancing gender equality in the cultural scene in Serbia. As shown in Graph 7, the decisive role in this process, according to them, is that of decision-makers in cultural policy at the national and local levels, as well as the media, cited by over half of the respondents.

Graph 7 – Key agents for enhancing gender equality in the cultural scene in Serbia (according to survey respondents)



According to them, a significant part is also played by the women artists, cultural experts and cultural workers themselves, their male colleagues in the cultural sector, audiences, professional associations of artists and cultural workers, educational institutions and cultural institutions in the public sector. About a third of the respondents noted their importance. Our respondents ascribed somewhat less significance or somewhat less power to non-governmental organizations, prominent personalities in culture and art, political parties, donors, sponsors and financiers, as well as companies and corporations in the creative industries.

Improving equality in the creative industries will only be possible once there is better understanding of the current extent of inequality in this area, which makes awareness-raising and better informedness the unequivocal first step. However, this is not enough, and, unless we move beyond mere shift in discourse, we face

new risks and perhaps even impediment to changing the situation. An important change factor is recognizing privilege and questioning what we take as given and consider normal (Scharff, 2022).

With all of the above in mind, we have formulated the following recommendations that can contribute to improving the current state. They have been grouped according to the institutions and agents responsible for the application of specific solutions and for implementing the changes proposed.[49]

1. Companies and corporations in creative industries

Private actors in the field of creative industries have not been recognized as a particularly important actor in the domestic scene. While there are some larger companies within domestic creative industries with substantial resources, there are few such actors in the domestic scene, given the size of the domestic creative market and the fact that most companies are micro or small enterprises, which is probably part of the reason why expectations from them are not that high. However, even in the case of private companies, it is still necessary to maintain some sort of balance between profit and gender justice. We should also bear in mind that our respondents (nearly one out of two!) cited the impact of undefined working hours on their private life, marriage, partnership or parenthood as one of the most significant gender-specific problems they encountered in their work. In that context, it is incumbent upon employers, particularly those in the private and civil sector in culture, to consider specific ways in which they can, in accordance with their activity, enable their employees to maintain a better work-life balance. Additionally, they should introduce measures of support for those employees who require greater flexibility or greater predictability, structure, a different work format and the like, in order for them to fulfill their work potential, and at the same time preserve their health and maintain a good quality of life.

Actors within creative industries should also understand their responsibility for the effects of their activity on the domestic scene and beyond the boundaries of their own company, and consequently implement a gender-responsive financial, program and human-resources management[50]. In particular, this means that

49 With a few additions, the structure of responses regarding key actors provided in the survey follows the structure previously used in the study on gender equality in the alternative music scene (Nikolić, 2016, pp. 164-173).

50 A seminal study when it comes to analyzing the situation in this sector is Na šta mislimo kada kažemo … *Nove kulturne politike (What We Mean When We Say… New Cultural Policies) by Nina Mihaljinac (2021).*

violations of workers' rights, not signing of contracts and similar practices push cultural workers into the domain of the so-called "grey" economy, which has an adverse effect both on their social rights and their security. Linking these findings with gender inequality in the cultural field, the logical conclusion is that women cultural workers are even more vulnerable than their male colleagues. Thus, as in other areas of work, what is needed first and foremost is a continual improvement of gender equality, through adopting and monitoring gender-balanced procedures, a proactive approach and appropriate reaction to the problem of gender-based violence in organizations, gender-responsive budgeting, and so on.

In addition, marketing teams should adhere to the highest standards and should continually enhance them in the direction of promoting their activity in a gender-inclusive and equal manner. They should have a zero tolerance policy for conventional, sexist, traditional, discriminatory, and sensationalistic promotional discourses, even when these are expected to give positive sales and marketing results.

Whether a man or a woman occupies a position of power is not the only thing that matters; however, it's not irrelevant, either. The Guerilla Girls exhibition *Is it even worse in Europe?*, held in London in 2016, was arranged following their field research into gender equality in museums. The research provided clear confirmation of the correlation between the number of women in leadership positions and the number of works authored by women in a museum, with the situation in Poland ranking best on both criteria at the time (in Caust, 2020). However, this tendency clearly wasn't long-lived or sustainable, given the changes in the position of women in this country over the recent years.

On the other hand, the issue of gender and leadership is a complex one, and it ought to be addressed with due attention when developing organizational structures and cultures. Women in leadership positions are faced with two-fold difficulty – on the one hand, leadership is traditionally conceived through "masculine" characteristics, so it is rarely possible for one to be a feminine leader; on the other hand, those women who try to exhibit traditionally masculine behaviors are frequently rejected by their environment. Some of our interviewees spoke to this very clearly in interviews. Therefore, what is necessary for women's success and survival in leadership positions in the creative sector is transparent discussion, redefinition and deconstruction of the gender dimensions and expectations of leadership (Caust, 2020).

2. Donors, sponsors and financiers

This is a group rarely taken into account when discussing the responsibilities and potentials for improving gender equality in culture, art and creative industries, which the results of our survey attest to as well. Still, they are indisputably among the principal actors and responsible parties (Caust, 2020, p. 166). In a situation where, according to a 2019 study by the Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia and Center for Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe, Serbia's culture expenditure was lowest in the South-East European region, both as a percentage and per capita, the influence of donors, sponsors and financiers should not be neglected.

Financiers like donors and sponsors play an important role, as they can decide, relatively independently, which organizations, institutions and individuals they are going to fund, the types of open calls they will launch, what will be given priority, what funds will be allocated to whom and with what expectations, which is why they are also recognized in the literature as important actors and responsible parties (Caust, 2020, p. 166).

In that context, we hereby invite foundations, donor institutions, embassies and other relevant actors in the field of art to announce over the forthcoming period thematic competitions and open calls that will support initiatives for improving gender equality, but also to ensure that the committees deciding on allocating these funds comprise women and men with understanding of the relevant field and the ability to make informed, objective and appropriate decisions.

Even when there are no thematic open calls that address the issue of gender in art, it is still important for projects contributing toward equality to be valued and awarded additional points, and to focus attention on building the capacity of institutions and organizations funded to address issues of discrimination internally and to solve problems and incidents as they occur.

3. Political parties

As discussed in previous chapters, the interference of political parties into the activity of cultural institutions in Serbia is the rule rather than the exception. There are almost no cultural institutions where key personnel decisions aren't made in the political parties in power – from the appointing of general managers to the hiring of staff. This leads to a high degree of censorship and self-censorship, which also has an impact on cultural institutions' programs, employee enthusiasm, and poor communication with their audiences. Furthermore, as noted by our interviewees, such circumstances also result in the abuse of principles such as

gender quotas and other affirmative action, precisely on the part of political parties. The survey demonstrated that, of the ten answers provided, political party-based appointment of leaders in public cultural institutions was in second place, as it was seen as a priority issue by almost half of all respondents, while the fourth biggest issue in cultural work was party-based hiring and nepotism in the hiring process (35%). While the majority of women artists and cultural workers may not ascribe direct responsibility for improving gender equality to political parties (12%), they still recognize their influence on the overall functioning of the cultural sector, as shown both by the survey and by the interviews. This is the result of political parties performing their function predominantly via decision-making in culture at the national and local levels, which is the priority field of power and responsibility, as demonstrated by the survey.

Recommendations for improving such a poor current state of affairs certainly have to start from decisive action in order to radically reduce and eventually eliminate the inappropriate influence of political parties on the cultural sector, by adopting transparent mechanisms of work, from the lowest- to the highest-level institutions, from local cultural centers to the Ministry of Culture, as well as through setting up independent committees and revisions. Or, as eloquently put by Rudolf Rocker: “Where the influence of political power on the creative forces in society is reduced to a minimum, there culture thrives the best, for political rulership always strives for uniformity and tends to subject every aspect of social life to its guardianship” (from Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism, chapter Ideology of Anarchism, 1949; in: Mihaljinac, 2021).

As noted by one of the experts in the focus-group interview, besides the incumbent political parties, opposition parties also bear responsibility for improving the status of culture. We therefore also invite them to advocate for better and gender-sensitive budgeting and decision-making. Where these topics are concerned, potential alliances are primarily to be found with parties on the left portion of the political spectrum, which typically advocate respecting and improving workers’ rights. However, in this case, too, alliances must be founded on principles of autonomy and horizontality of work in culture, as well as on principles of cultural democracy, discussed by Nina Mihaljinac (2021, p. 5).

4. Prominent personalities in culture and art

Fifteen percent of women cultural workers in our sample believe that, given their position and visibility, some of our colleagues in the cultural sector bear greater responsibility and potential for improving gender equality in the cultural sector. These are prominent personalities, award laureates, popular artists, successful and visible entrepreneurs or leaders in creative industries, implicitly or explicitly highly positioned with regard to decision-making in the cultural field, unlike their colleagues, and they are in the position more frequently and more easily to demand that certain standards are followed when they are invited to participate – they are able to ask questions, and to refuse to take part or work below certain standards of gender equality.

When participating in festivals, media programs and public events, they have more leeway than others to focus on this issue or on specific female colleagues and their achievements, or, alternatively, to condemn discriminatory behavior by colleagues or actions of institutions. It is necessary that they use, at least to a certain extent, the media space available to them, such as interviews, to point out (other) female coworkers and the high quality of work they do in the field. Considering the fact that this group frequently have a team working for them, it is necessary that they ensure dignified income not only for themselves but also for others in their team. By questioning their own practices of the exploitation of others (for their own interests) and by providing a fair and proper treatment of others, they would also provide a model for others in the scene to emulate. We trust that we can all recognize that success is most often achieved through teamwork rather than individual genius; it is therefore necessary to keep track of who, within a team, does disproportionately more work, and to give credit and visibility accordingly in case this is so.

One of the paths to improving the situation is to hire women to prominent, well-paid and dignified positions, highlighting examples of women's successes and quality contributions wherever possible, while paying attention to the narratives being employed, not reducing women to a stereotypical and conservative image, but illustrating the full gamut of their capacities and achievements.

Finally, one should question one's own privilege and factors that have contributed to one's own success, and, where this is possible, reject these privileges and share power and visibility with others. Although these narratives have surrounded us since a very young age, it is important to understand that success is often not a factor of individual genius or luck, but the structural conditions of education, life and work, or, alternatively, exploitation practices, even though we may not necessarily be aware of them.

5. Non-governmental organizations

Seventeen percent of respondents recognize the responsibility of non-governmental organizations. Currently, the civil sector in culture has much less resources at its disposal than many other actors, and it is therefore important to underscore here that it doesn't necessarily bear the greatest responsibility for solving these problems, nor does it have such a significant potential for doing so. On the other hand, the independent scene is frequently where important expertise is, based, among other things, on lengthy, even decades-long work on this issue, as well as on continuous and intensive international collaboration and communication, and insight into existing best practices abroad which could be used as a role model.[51]

Non-governmental organizations in general, including those active in culture, most often perform the function of a corrective in relation to the public and private sectors. Their funding tends to be project-based and unstable, and their working conditions extremely precarious, which leads to the problem of burnout and declining mental health, which has also been covered in a recent study titled *Can You Hear? Can You Feel? (Da li čuješ? Da li osećaš?*; Barzut (ed.), 2022).

Most of the recommendations from that study are also applicable when it comes to improving working conditions in culture – namely, by eliminating overtime, increasing satisfaction levels regarding monthly income, opening the possibility of financial advancement, fair and equal access to work, clear structuring of work, and applying the principles of transparency in work. Overall improvement of conditions in the non-governmental sector would also significantly contribute to improving the position of gender-underprivileged workers; consequently, these recommendations can also be applied as a model to work in culture.

Furthermore, despite possessing significantly less resources compared to public institutions, the civil sector is the one with the ability to introduce a different organizational culture and thus potentially model different relationships, practices and standards. "Orienting one's own organizational culture toward collective action becomes a political decision, that is, resistance against the dominant individualistic paradigm of cultural work" (Pureber, 2022, p. 59).

As noted in a recent study edited by Stojčić and Bobičić with a group of authors (2021), "progressive organizations aren't excepted from society, so it would be unrealistic to expect them not to reproduce certain social patterns of inequality and patriarchal violence… 'feminist topics' such as, especially

51 For more on this, see the chapter *Continuity Of Gender And Feminist Analyses In Art And Culture In The Region.*

but not exclusively, the issue of gender-based violence are mostly dealt with by women in organizations; there are informal decision-making spaces; the majority of affective labor always falls to women; it is more often men that tend to be prepared to speak out, while organizations do not integrate mechanisms through which this dynamic can be changed" (p. 56). Some of these dimensions could be mitigated or corrected through a "feministization of organizations – actively disputing the gender and other hierarchies within an organization or community, as well as awareness of social oppression and social inequalities, and a vision for a possible alternative and a just society" (p. 57). The civil sector could then implement a range of educational programs and initiatives, such as, among others, the series of training programs run as part of this project by the Association Independent Culture Scene, Femix Young Women's Collective, young literary critics' collective Rebel Readers (Pobunjene čitateljke), the association Kulturanova and CESK, which garnered a great amount of interest[52], and which was inspired by, among others, a program by the SERVIS Association in Ljubljana (Pureber, 2022, p.79).

6. Cultural institutions in the public sector

Public cultural institutions, as budget spending units, have access to public resources, which confers on them part of the responsibility for improving the state of affairs in this and other areas of social engagement and justice (Tanurovska Kjulavkovski, 2021). The results of our study suggest that, in these organizations, inequality comprises, among other things, the manner in which work is delegated, and the way in which credit, visibility and privileges are accorded.[53]

For example, the afore-mentioned study by Caust (2020) includes testimonies by women conductors on the importance of blind auditions behind screens for greater representation of women in orchestras (pp. 46—47). This is only one example and an incentive for devising seemingly unusual, yet effective, measures for mitigating the effects of prejudice and stereotypes on decision-making. Using the example of organizing a musical concert, existing literature has already described a whole host of steps and measures that can be taken in order to make this professional context more equal, accessible, just and comfortable for women (Nikolić and Mitić, 2023). By the same token, it would

52 With over 170 women applying for a training that could accommodate 25 participants.

53 See the chapter Discrimination Against Women In The Workplace In The Cultural Sector.

be possible to rethink other formats of work in culture and art, as well as in other artistic disciplines.

Although salaries in the public sector are defined by procedures and salary bands, so the expectation would be that there is no income inequality between men and women (the so-called *gender pay gap*), it is present here as well, however subtle and elusive (one in four respondents!), and it needs to be reckoned with, bearing in mind the complexity of gender inequality present in the society as a whole.

The onus is also on institutions to prepare procedures for sanctioning incidents in cases of sexist and discriminatory practices, as well as to prevent repeat discriminatory behavior or the advancement and rewarding of colleagues who engage in such behaviors.

The basic list for self-assessment of an institution's status in the context of bullying in art looks as follows:

1. "The organization has a policy, which disapproves of bullying, and internal rules and procedures to deal with it;
2. There is no policy on bullying; however, the organization would give consideration to a complaint and does not condone this type of behavior;
3. The organization does not condone bullying, but has not given any direct consideration to policy;
4. The organization is not persuaded that there is a problem with bullying and has not addressed the issue;
5. The organization does not recognize that some terms and conditions are detrimental to employees and are equivalent to corporate bullying" (Quigg, 2011, p. 128).

A similar classification is also possible for the issue of sexual harassment in the cultural sector, where institutions would be invited to conduct a self-assessment, and then work on improving their position on this scale.

In the case of cultural institutions, possible measures for improving gender equality can be found especially in the programs that are conceived, organized and promoted, the selection of artists for collaboration, the themes included in the repertoire, the events hosted and so on. It is possible to take into account whether, and to what extent, they contribute to gender equality, and to what extent they reinforce existing patriarchal prejudices or relations.

7. Educational institutions in the domain of culture and art

The greatest responsibility, when considering educational institutions in the sector of art and culture, rests with the content of the curricula offered to students, which need to reflect to a much higher degree the contribution of women in cultural history, as well as highlighting the obstacles women face(d) in accessing artistic production. Results of the study speak to the need for providing young people with role models and support, so that they would feel encouraged to pursue their artistic interests and practice despite the obstacles in their way, and the curriculum is one of the ways for young people to get inspiration and motivation. This group of actors also includes art pedagogues employed in educational art institutions.

On the other hand, art institutions are expected to provide their students and employees, male or female, additional education to enhance their understanding of the causes and forms of gender inequality, and equip them with the skills and tools to face them. We expect art pedagogues to attend such trainings, even to seek such programs themselves and educate themselves, until such time as their institutions introduce these practices.

In art schools and departments, it is particularly important to establish, as soon as possible, all requisite procedures in cases of incidents such as sexual harassment, sexism and any type of discrimination, so that such behaviors could be sanctioned based on legal and disciplinary mechanisms. The percentage of experiences of verbal and physical sexual harassment presented earlier in the book speak to the urgency of such measures.

Finally, many specializations in the field of arts education still have a preponderance of either male or female students. Where male students outnumber female students, measures should be taken to encourage female students to enroll, to sensibilize the admission committee not to present female students with additional obstacles, but also to make the program itself such that the female students, once enrolled, feel welcome. Where female students significantly outnumber male students, this should not be ignored either, as it begs the question why there is no male interest in a particular field, which could have to do either with the perception of a certain profession as more suited to women, or with low income in this profession, or a low level of power and status associated with those employed in this position (Schwarzer, 2010).

8. Professional associations of artists and cultural workers

Nearly 30% of female workers see professional associations in culture as important for improving gender equality in the domestic cultural scene. Associations are in the position to represent individual women artists when problems of gender inequality are discussed, so that they do not have to engage in confrontation and exposure personally, using their own name and voice. Representative associations, as well as networks of arts organizations, play an especially important part in this, as they should engage in dialogue with their members on this topic, and rethink their own practices that are explicitly or implicitly gender-discriminatory. They are also to take measures of proactive support for the women among their members or of encouraging new female members to join. The issue of leadership in associations and association networks shouldn't be disregarded, since women are predominantly in leadership positions in the independent scene (Caust, 2020, among others), which unfortunately indirectly attests to the extent of resources available therein.

As discussed in the previous chapter, on the conclusions reached by the expert focus group, strengthening professional associations, organizations and other models of unionization provides excellent results with respect to maintaining a fair price of labor, and safeguarding the labor and social rights of cultural workers. Consequently, gender mainstreaming of policies and structures in this type of organizing is of extreme importance, in order for the specific needs of women cultural workers to be recognized.

9. Audiences

A little over 30% of interviewees believe that audiences play a vital role when it comes to gender equality in the domain of art. Audiences are more than merely a passive group of attendees at an event, users of a particular service, or buyers of a certain art product.[54] Through their behavior, choices, attendance, feedback, greater or lesser engagement, they, too, can influence decision-making in the sector or art and culture, whether these are program-related, personnel-related, financial, organizational, marketing, or other decisions. There is increasing discussion about the "ability to vote" of attendees and buyers, which entails, among other things, financial decisions, but also the choice of whether or not to attend a certain event, whether or not to visit a certain institution, to convey

54 Cf: Edmond, 2022.

one's impressions publicly, or to create certain content as part of the broader program or project.

The audience is free to use any of these paths to show support to improving gender equality, or to direct criticism at a certain institution, organization, artist or event, in case they engage in practices characterized by gender inequality or any other kind of discrimination.

10. Male coworkers in the sector

A third of the respondents (32.5%) see their colleagues in the cultural field as one of the key actors for improving gender equality in the domestic cultural scene. The first and foremost demand and expectation from our colleagues – artists, experts, authors, entrepreneurs in cultural industries – pertains to questioning one's own privileges, listening to women colleagues when they are discussing inequality, and educating oneself regarding these topics. In certain situations, colleagues should recognize when they are occupying a position of power that they could yield to competent female colleagues around them, and ensure they have more room and more substantial resources for working and having an impact (Scharff, 2022). In other situations, we expect colleagues to amplify our voice when it is being silenced or marginalized, to refer others to women colleagues for collaboration, and to hire them themselves when they are able to do so.

In situations of violence or injustice, we expect all those more powerful than us, including our male colleagues, to provide protection, take responsibility, and take over the burden of the "fight against inequality." Inequality is not a "women's issue" that is up to women to solve, but is also the responsibility of colleagues who, in this case, are in a position of privilege. We therefore expect our colleagues' engagement in this task, even if it means facing one's own accountability, uncomfortable topics, sexism, violence and abuses.

11. The women artists, cultural experts and cultural workers themselves

This group is also a key actor for one in three respondents. The interviews we conducted demonstrate that the women artists, experts, authors, cultural sector employees, students and cultural industries entrepreneurs should themselves practice solidarity toward other women more often in various ways.

Women colleagues could mentor one another, and serve as role models in personal development, empowerment, collaboration and exchange. This solidarity could also come in the form of sharing different resources and hiring other women whenever there is the possibility of collaboration. Solidarity among women colleagues would also entail refraining from or distancing oneself from comparison and competition, and highlighting that we are "different" or better than others.

Another important component is the recognition that not all women cultural workers are in the same position, and that some face additional obstacles and challenging circumstances in their education or at work. For example, the position and working conditions of women cultural workers outside Belgrade and Novi Sad are different and more difficult; consequently, additional efforts and resources need to be invested, and measures put in place, in order to remove these obstacles, avert additional costs incurred by associates from other towns when participating in joint projects, increase their visibility, ensure their fuller integration in processes of decision-making and exchange, facilitate mobility between towns and local scenes in general, and so on.

One important segment of solidarity and mutual support also consists of supporting existing initiatives by women in the scene, picking up where our predecessors left off, and not insisting on launching initiatives anew where it is possible to link in, build on and develop.

According to literature to date, it is not enough to charge for invisible and unpaid reproductive labor, or to merely increase the number of women, as this will not change the system – what is necessary is the strengthening of communities and practicing care and solidarity, which will ensure that both work and recognition are distributed more equally (Barna, 2022, p. 125).

12. The media

Women working in culture and the creative sector in Serbia rank exceptionally high, in the second place, regarding responsibility for improving gender equality. The interviews show that this primarily has to do with the role of the media in society in a broader sense, and only then with the media covering the cultural scene. Finally, the importance of the media, as well as their dual character, was also acknowledged within the expert focus group.

The media have a responsibility, first and foremost, for the discourses they produce, contribute to and reinforce in society. As noted in the conclusions of

the study *Reclaiming One's Time: A Study on the Division of Housework among Women Millennials and Gen Zs (Vratiti svoje vr(ij)eme: istraživanje o raspod(j)eli kućnog rada među milenijalkama i zedovkama*), it is necessary that the media promote a shift in the mindset that sees household chores and care work as primarily "women's work" (Bobičić, n.d.).

Part of the responsibility also lies in which interviewees they select, for what topics, and how frequently, the amount and type of broadcast time they are given, as well as how their statements are illustrated by overlay, video material and other accompanying content. Media contribute to maintaining stereotypical positions through the topics they prioritize, for example, in relation to housework and care work, which are persistently depicted as "women's work" in the media (Bobičić, n.d.), as well as in terms of opportunities they provide to various social groups for expressing their view on these issues. Finally, it is also extremely important in the media who is behind the camera, who sits in editorial, who edits content, as well as who decides on program content, staff and priorities, and what their goals are in doing so.

A feminist approach to media has been developing in Serbia for decades, and it already includes a broad corpus of analysis of sexism in the media, as well as recommendations for developing the media in the direction of gender-sensitive broadcasting. That literature includes the text by Svenka Savić titled *The woman hidden by media language: A code for non-sexist language use (Žena skrivena jezikom medija: kodeks neseksističke upotrebe jezika;* 1998), as well as *The Media Handbook (Priručnik za medije)*, edited by Lidija Vasiljević and Violeta Anđelković (2009) and *Guide to a gender-sensitive approach to media in Serbia – recommendations and practice to date (Vodič za rodno osetljiv pristup medijima u Srbiji – preporuke i dosadašnja praksa)*, by Jelena Filipović and Ana Kuzmanović Jovanović (2012).

Even though the latter study was published over a decade ago, the eighteen question groups for media self-assessment, formulated by Jelena Filipović in the section *A guide to a gender-sensitive approach to media*, remain a very useful and appropriate tool for promoting gender equality in media companies. Since many women cultural workers work or actively collaborate with the media, these guidelines are very useful to media companies, but also beyond that, to public institutions and independent cultural organizations. Additionally, the journalistic profession, just as cultural work, is a feminized profession, with higher numbers of female employees, although they tend to occupy lesser positions, be paid less, and are unequally represented in decision-making bodies.

The first set of questions concerns gender-sensitive policy in media companies, that is, the guidelines, codes and documents concerning gender equality. Mapping and assessing how gender-sensitive policies function in media organizations is the second set of questions, and it includes questions about percentages, distribution of tasks and level of positions occupied by men and women, respectively, in a given media organization. This also relates to the next three groups of questions, on the (non-)existence of affirmative action policies, and hiring practices and selection of media personnel. The sixth and seventh sets pertain to promoting a gender-sensitive environment, and providing assistance when it comes to organizing employees' family life. Questions on encouraging women to undertake atypical topics and so-called traditionally male professions, as well as women's occupational safety, are included in the eighth group of questions, titled Experiences in the Workplace. This is followed by questions on continued staff education and development.

Question groups eleven through sixteen address issues of the representation of gender in the media: gender in the news and reports, the treatment of a gender perspective in media products, the language, image, advertising in media products, and "Packaging." The penultimate group of questions addresses the gender structure of media organizations and practices of gender mainstreaming. The guide closes with questions on the government sector, which are diverse and concern the implementation of action plans for promoting gender equality, the degree of policy gender mainstreaming and the availability of media content to women outside of urban environments.

The organization BeFem published *The Virus of Media Misogyny – A Brief Guide to Resistance Strategies 2.0* (2019), the expanded edition of an earlier publication by the same title. It starts by analyzing the current situation in the media, which is far from gender justice, which is followed with specific recommendations for the media on how to be allies on the path to gender equality. Some of the particularly illustrative data in this publication include the finding that only 21% of texts in printed media in Serbia have a woman as the principal topic or actor of the text, the subject of information or active interviewee, or that women are represented in photographs three times less than men and three times less compared to the actual number of women in society. What the BeFem study shows is that the topic of gender equality has been completely erased from media discourse, except as part of the topic of gender-based violence or population policy. Furthermore, it shows that printed media texts fail to problematize class differences or to address other personal characteristics of women, such as race, sexual orientation or disability affirmatively (Višnjić and Wassholm, 2019).

Resistance strategies, i.e. recommendations put forward as a result of this study, can also be applied where reporting on cultural content is concerned. The BeFem team have come up with eight recommendations for the media: 1) Analyze your own content!, 2) Set a goal for yourselves!, 3) Seek help!, 4) Improve your knowledge!, 5) Build alternative networks!, 6) Create a diversity calendar!, 7) What's news depends on those who make the news, 8) Food for thought: A person is more than just one of their identities!

In addition to these recommendations, the BeFem team developed a very useful service, the "Bureau of Equality," which is a list of women experts from a multitude of areas, whom the media can call upon when they are in search of interviewees in order to promote greater participation of women in the public arena and shift the practice of men overwhelmingly being those speaking from the position of expert. One of the eighteen lists of the "Bureau of Equality" pertains to the cultural sector, and includes the names of women cultural workers and experts who could be of relevance to the media as interlocutors on various matters concerning cultural heritage, art, creative industries, etc.

13. Decision-makers in cultural policy on the national and local levels

According to our data, this is the group perceived by women workers in culture and the creative sector in Serbia as the most responsible for improving the situation and solving the problem of gender inequality in the domain of culture, which is why we will be focusing on it here.

Firstly, gender inequality in the cultural sector can and should have a place in the Law on Culture, much more clearly and explicitly than is the case in the current version of the Law. In spite of the opportunity that presented itself during the public debate process on the occasion of Draft amendments to the Law in February 2019[55] and the suggestions put forward to that end by women's expert teams, the legislator dismissed the amendment suggestions that were put forward, so this opportunity was lost (Nikolić and Mitić, 2023). Later, in 2021, the Law on Culture was amended once again in order to harmonize with the new Gender Equality Act, whereby the quotas for the National Council for Culture and for boards of directors and supervisory boards in public institutions were raised to 40%.

55 Call for participation in the public debate on Draft amendments to the Law on Culture, February 16, 2019. https://arhiva.femix.info/femix-news/p/542/

Besides the overarching Law on Culture, numerous other laws that pertain to specific and individual activities, institutions or dimensions of work in culture fail to sufficiently gender mainstream existing gender inequalities, or to proactively propose measures for their mitigation or removal.

The Strategy for the development of culture has not been adopted definitively in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, but it has been adopted in a 2019 Government session; this was followed by the adoption of Strategic priorities as an abridged, more succinct document with a similar objective. That 13-page document, which relates to the period 2021-2025, does not mention gender equality even once (Nikolić and Mitić, 2023). All of this matters, because cultural policy is pursued through discourse, among other things (Cazes, Pyykkonen, 2019; Belfiore, 2021).

On the other hand, cultural policy can be implemented based on action plans, which do not exist for the domain of culture as public practical policies in Serbia, since even the relevant strategy has not yet been adopted. These documents could, however, provide an additional opportunity and space for proposing and fleshing out measures for improving the position of women and overcoming gender inequality in the domestic scene using a series of measures and activities. At the same time, it bears emphasizing here that there has been a gradual introduction of gender responsive budgeting in Serbia for a number of years, and that, according to Article 5 of the new Gender Equality Act ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia," no. 52/2021), "public authorities shall perform gender-responsive budget analysis, and plan revenues and expenditures with the aim of promoting gender equality in accordance with the law governing the budget system and the principle of gender equality in the budget procedure."

The experts have already prepared excellent guidelines for gender-responsive budgeting in the cultural sector on the local level (program 13), recommending, among other things:

- "Formulating a Cultural Development Plan, making sure it also includes a gender aspect;
- Requiring all budget beneficiaries in the program to submit a plan of activities for promoting gender equality, as part of cultural institutions' annual plans;
- Promoting local women artists, and increasing their visibility in the community;
- Ensuring all data collected is analyzed according to gender;
- In all open calls through which culture and media programs are funded, supporting projects that promote gender equality." (Baćanović et al., 2021, pp. 141—146)

It is especially important that, during times of crisis, such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, austerity measures are not directed at those groups of creators and audiences in the domain of culture and art who are already members of vulnerable groups.

"From the perspective of gender equality and human rights, one important criterion that ought to hold in case of budget revisions during crises is that there should be no cuts when it comes to support for groups at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination" (Nikolin et al., 2021, p. 40).

Other cultural policy instruments, both on the local and on the provincial and national levels, which could be gender-sensibilized and implemented so as to promote gender equality in the domain of art and culture, include national pensions for deserving artists, purchases, forming committees for selecting projects to be funded from the budget, as well as the procedures for selecting public institution directors. When making decisions, in all of the instances above, it is important to ensure a gender-responsive distribution of pensions, purchase resources, male and female committee members, as well as male and female institution directors, which are already widespread practices in countries like Germany, Austria, Spain, France and Italy.

Also, it is important to ensure that those who have previously expressed sexist views or engaged in sexist behaviors are denied access to committees, boards of directors and other leadership positions in the cultural sector. Despite formally meeting the requirements and having good references "on paper," a relevant higher education, professional experience or awards for one's artistic work, those colleagues, male or female, who have previously contributed to an atmosphere of gender inequality or engaged in discriminatory behavior against other colleagues (regardless of whether or not there was an official complaint and investigation), are not going to contribute to creating a gender-equal artistic or cultural scene, and manage the institution in a manner that fosters gender equality and principles of non-discrimination.

It is clear that no effective, long-term solutions are possible without collaboration and coordination with other bodies regarding all inter-sector and multi-sector issues; consequently, what is needed to start with is stronger liaising, communication and exchange with institutions and bodies responsible for the issue of gender equality, participation in developing and implementing strategic and action plans and other documents in this domain, as well as following and coordinating with the work of these actors. One of the key departments is that of labor and workers' rights, where "an erosion of workers' rights, precarization of jobs, and an overall unfavorable Labor Act" which is missing a

gender perspective, make it even more difficult for women to achieve a work-life balance, which especially impacts women cultural workers. Another particularly significant domain is that of social policy and childcare, where a multitude of measures and services are necessary in order to promote a different distribution of household reproductive labor and family-member care work (Bobičić, n.d.).

Some other European countries have introduced inspiring systemic or institutional solutions for a better work-life balance or for mitigating the adverse impact of undefined working hours and specific forms of work on the private lives of women artists and cultural workers. For a start, Serbia needs to meet the demands of the coalition "Mame su zakon" (Moms Rule) regarding amendments to the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, in order to standardize the status of mothers employed according to entrepreneurial, independent or work-for-hire agreements in exercising their right to pregnancy or maternity leave, or paternity leave. The debt incurred due to oversight on the part of local self-governments in relation to paying the contributions toward health, retirement and social security insurance for independent artists and cultural experts must be dealt with as a matter of urgency in order for them to be able to exercise their rights.

Finally, making any decisions concerning the promotion of gender equality and the position of women, as well as that of other marginalized groups, requires planned, continuous and transparent collaboration with women experts, activists and feminists, and with women, specifically those groups of women and organizations that have been working on these issues for some time now, as well as with representatives of other marginalized groups when introducing policies that affect them, which all policies do. [56]

56 Thus, for example, women experts, artists, activists and colleagues, who can and should be important interlocutors to decision-makers as well, were invited to take part in the expert focus group conducted as part of the project Gender Equality for Cultural Diversity.

Based on the overall results of the study, we have also formulated a number of recommendations specific to the segments studied.

1.EDUCATION

Study results have shown that family support, or lack thereof, plays a significant part when selecting an arts education, but also that educational workers in elementary and high school also have a strong influence. Among obstacles to the choice of a career in the arts, our respondents noted not only class barriers but also gender barriers – attitudes that such professions are not for girls.

Our interviewees also noted a lack of gender content in the curriculum. Not one stated that they had attended a study program where a gender perspective was systematically present, not even in those cases where the teaching faculty consisted of women almost exclusively.

Nearly two thirds of survey respondents stated that they had been subjected to lewd speech and inappropriate comments during schooling, while one third had been subjected to unwanted touching and 10% to sexual violence. Fourteen respondents (6.8%) faced sexual blackmail during education, while there were also examples of harassment due to one's sexual orientation and social exclusion due to disability.

The necessary measures in this domain include, among others:

- Introducing new content into the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary art education in order to provide better insights into the contribution of women to cultural history and production, provide role models for future generations, and improve the competences and sensibility of all students;
- Ensuring more even representation of women and men in future hiring of personnel in educational art institutions;
- Encouraging girls to participate in those educational programs where they are in a substantial minority, and questioning the reasons for their less frequent enrollment to date.

2. THE DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD CHORES

What our study has shown is that, even in the households of very successful women in the cultural sphere, a gender-based division of work persists. Household chores, like doing the laundry, preparing food, ironing, cleaning the windows and deep-cleaning the home, are done by women in over 80% of cases.

The biggest progress is to be found in a more equitable distribution of childcare duties (taking the children to kindergarten/school, help with studying/ homework, taking children outside the home to play or to extracurricular activities – foreign language lessons, music school, sports practice, etc.). When it comes to so-called "men's jobs" (painting, appliance repairs, plumbing repairs or working on the car), a large number of these are in fact performed by paid tradespeople.

The study also evidenced the harshness of artistic professions, where cancelling and quitting are unacceptable, as is any occasional failure to meet one's tasks smoothly due to family commitments. In the absence of institutional support, women artists and cultural workers either give up on parenthood or are forced to bring their young children along to their concerts and plays, to rehearsals, staff meetings and classes.

Interventions that could effect improvement include:

- Employers in culture ensuring that women cultural workers have some leeway to balance their private and professional commitments, such as measures in support of motherhood and providing childcare within institutions and organizations in the cultural scene, at the same time as supporting paternity leave for the purpose of caring for the child and, overall, a more substantial participation of men in housework and care work;
- Creating and supporting sustainable and appropriate, safe and non-commercial spaces for working, such as studios and ateliers for women independent cultural workers, with the goal of separating private and professional space and time, for those women who need this type of support.

3. PRECARIOUS WORKING CONDITIONS, UNDERPAYMENT AND BURNOUT

Entrepreneurs, freelancers and independent artists note that their careers are defined by a constant uncertainty as to whether and when they will be working, which results in them being unable to refuse any work they are offered, as well as having to dedicate a significant portion of their time to cultivating relationships with those who award jobs, even when this is uncomfortable for them or occurs in a context that doesn't suit them. They emphasize, however, that what keeps them in their line of work is the love they have for it.

A large number of women cultural workers work across several domains of culture (21.4% of those in our study), and even follow multiple occupations (20.4%). Over 50% of the respondents in our survey were hired on short-term employment contracts and work-for-hire agreements. One in five respondents have experienced credit for a job completed jointly or joint authorship being attributed to a male colleague or colleagues (22.8%), while one out of four experienced being paid less than their male counterpart for the same job, role or position.

This combination of structurally unfavorable working conditions and a passionate dedication to one's work is very conducive to relations of exploitation and self-exploitation, while being deleterious to the health and well-being of women cultural workers. In the absence of sensitive support measures, the undefined working hours, just one of the factors of working in art and culture, had a negative impact on the private life of one in two cultural workers taking part in our study (48.1%).

On the other hand, those working in cultural institutions in Serbia face the interference of political parties in their work. There are almost no cultural institutions where key personnel decisions are not made in ruling political parties – from appointing executives to hiring staff.

The necessary changes that ought to be introduced include:

- Arranging and paying out a dignified and appropriate salary, fee or other payment to women artists and cultural workers, with understanding and respect for their work, as well as non-reliance on self-exploitation, modesty and lack of negotiating practice in women when setting the payment amount and working conditions;

- Supporting the autonomous operation of cultural institutions, and of companies and organizations in the independent and private sectors, independent of the influence of political parties.

4. DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Over 80% of our interviewees were of the opinion that women are discriminated against in the sector of culture, art and creative industries in our society, whereas nearly 70% had felt personally discriminated against in a professional setting because they were women.

More than one in three respondents (34.5%) had been considered incompetent or less competent in their professional work than their male colleagues due to being a woman. 28.6% experienced physical appearance as a factor affecting professional career. One in two respondents in leadership positions in our sample had come across unacceptance, being ignored and disregarded because they were women.

Eleven respondents (5.3%) had come across physical sexual violence in their professional work, while sixteen (7.8%) had experienced sexual blackmail. More than one in four (26.2%) had experienced unwanted touching in a professional context, while nearly 70% of respondents had encountered verbal sexual harassment in the course of their work.

Consequently, the following actions need to take place in this area:

- Conducting education of women and men in the sector of culture, art and creative industries on equality, rights and mechanisms of protection from sexism and harassment;
- Introducing rulebooks and codes for preventing gender discrimination and gender-based violence into cultural institutions, educational art institutions and creative sector companies;
- Casting light on, investigating and penalizing gender discrimination, sexual harassment and sexism in the sector of culture, art and creative industries, regardless of the perpetrators' talent, artistic contributions, integrity to date or popularity.

Important initiatives already in place for promoting gender equality in culture

At the very end, we are going to present some important events, programs and projects that are already in place and that promote gender equality in the domestic cultural scene through various forms of cultural and artistic production, research, networking programs, promotion, advocacy and education.

"Rebel Readers" have had a lot of success with monitoring literary production and interventions in the domain of literature and literary criticism, including the recently established regional award for contemporary women's literary production, "Štefica Cvek."[57]

The associating of women in creative industries is an important objective of the Women's Architectural Society ŽAD, founded as an association for women architectural engineers, who have already carried out several valuable initiatives aimed toward highlighting the significant contributions of women architectural engineers in Serbia and other countries in the ex-Yugoslav region.[58]

The work of the journalistic duo behind the radio show "Žene u kutiji" ("Women in a Box") broadcast on Radio Television Vojvodina, has greatly contributed to the visibility of local contemporary women's output in various areas.[59] This is the only show on the air (and not online-only) that has been dealing with topics such as the position of women, gender equality and feminism in the domestic scene for a number of years now. This same duo also launched and so far organized two iterations of a festival dedicated to women's creative output in Serbia, the Autonomous Women's Festival AFŽ in Novi Sad.[60]

A number of organizations and projects work on knowledge dissemination and awareness raising, including Off Novi Sad,[61] as well as "Irida," also based

57 http://bookvica.net/

58 https://www.zad.rs/

59 https://media.rtv.rs/sr_lat/zena-u-kutiji/80436

60 https://www.facebook.com/AutonomniFestivalZena

61 https://offns.rs/

in Novi Sad.[62] These organizations implement programs and activities with the aim of educating and providing information on the contribution of, among others, female directors to the domestic movie scene, organize workshops and various educational meetings with young people, internet and social network campaigns, all the way to film festivals and writing film criticism.

Preserving the memory of women from cultural history is the focus of initiatives such as that in the domain of history of literature, led by Professor Biljana Dojčinović at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, and titled "Književnstvo[63]", or the platform in the format of a women's digital archive of the city of Novi Sad, "ŽeNSki muzej," implemented by the Association of Feminist Organizations of Novi Sad "Rekonekcija" and run by Dr Vera Kopicl.[64]

Through participation in the international project Feminist futures, Station Service for Contemporary Dance has in recent years strived in particular to affirm and promote a gender perspective in contemporary dance and performing arts. Earlier, close associates of the Station Service for Contemporary Dance even tried to establish separate structures dedicated to the promotion of gender equality specifically in the performing arts (first "Brina," and then "Stereovizija"). In addition, as part of the afore-mentioned project, choreographer Ana Dubljević recently published a monograph focused on feminist choreographic practice in contemporary dance. The slogan of the 2022 Festival of Contemporary Dance and Performance KONDENZ, in its jubilee 15th iteration, was "Radical Vulnerability," which is also one of feminist and women's principles and themes.[65]

Women's residency spaces are yet another important tool in enhancing the position of women in the artistic scene, and securing the resources and support necessary for their work. A good example of this is the Feminist Art Colony in Sićevo, independently organized for a number of years by the Center for Girls in Niš, and the only such initiative in the domestic scene. [66]

62 irida.rs

63 http://knjizenstvo.etf.bg.ac.rs/en

64 https://zenskimuzejns.org.rs/

65 https://dancestation.org/kondenz/kondenz-2022/

66 http://www.centarzadevojke.org.rs/index.php/sr/aktivnosti/feministicka-likovna-kolonija

Since 2010, the Young Women's Collective FEMIX has been working, in various ways and through a whole host of projects of diverse formats, on capacity-building in young women in the sector of culture, art and creative industries[67]. These include the project Rock Camp for Girls, first organized in Serbia in 2016. [68]

Finally, it is important to emphasize that creativity and art can also be viewed as instruments of women's and feminist fight for a gender-equal society, something that the Feminist Cultural Center BeFem has contributed to with its excellent decade-long operation[69]. Furthermore, one of the tasks and objectives of the Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia, within the Group for Culture and the Media, is the affirmation of the cultural field within the women's movement[70].

67 https://femix.info/

68 https://rokkampzadevojcice.com/

69 Befem.org

70 https://genderhub.org.rs/zenska-platforma-srbije/

Concluding remarks

Within the project *Gender Equality for Cultural Diversity,* this study was envisioned as one of its pillars, providing a thorough insight into the experience of women cultural workers, artists and entrepreneurs in the creative sector in Serbia at the start of the third decade of the 21st century. Such a broad analysis of the structural conditions that result in gender inequality in culture is a necessary step in order to identify the needs of women workers and entrepreneurs, and to offer mechanisms for improving the current state of affairs, based not on assumptions but on data and insights obtained from the cultural workers themselves.

This was a *multidisciplinary* study, created through a dialogue between sociology, cultural policy, cultural management and gender studies. The diverse structure of the research team, not only in terms of academic discipline and university affiliation, but also in terms of other identity markers, also had its advantages. Through intergenerational exchange, we were able to ensure continuity of decades' worth of knowledge on the state of culture and issues of gender equality. Furthermore, this kind of research-team structure was what enabled us to carefully elaborate, from a multi-generational perspective, the very premise of the research problem, as well as the survey questionnaire and questions for interviews and the expert focus group. Other project collaborators also provided assistance in formulating research tools, which further contributed to sensitivizing the issue in relation to different levels of gender and other inequalities (members of the Association Independent Culture Scene, Rebel Readers, Center for the Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe, FEMIX Young Women's Collective, MillenniuM, Kulturanova, Elektrika and Studio 6). Moreover, the research team was not only able to develop inter-generational dialogue, but also to reinforce gender solidarity between the researchers. Matters of gender equality are not an issue only for underprivileged genders, but should be an issue of interest for all those who wish the field of culture, and society overall, to make progress and be based on principles of justice and equality.

Due to the structure of our team, as well as the topic that is the focus of this study, it was designed to combine *quantitative and qualitative methods*. That is, its multidisciplinary framing was reflected in the choice of different methods – the survey, semi-structured interviews, focus group – with the help of which we intended to gain insights into the mechanisms currently generating gender

inequality in the cultural field in Serbia. The decision to have the study feature this combination of methods turned out to be very productive in the process of "coloring" the numerical results obtained in the survey with the cultural workers' lived experiences, finally rounded off with commentary and recommendations from the experts.

Simultaneously, the format of the study, using three methods and across *three spheres* - the sphere of education, the respondents' private and professional lives – created the opportunity to shed light on a single phenomenon from multiple angles, complementing each other, their insights often coinciding. Using the survey, we obtained broad-brush insight into what many women cultural workers consider relevant when it comes to a specific problem (e.g. the issue of burnout or being doubly burdened with reproductive labor), or the influence of a particular actor (e.g. the double role of the media, interference of political parties into the operation of cultural institutions). The sample of 206 women showed a significant degree of variability for identifying the current state of gender equality in culture, namely according to criteria of geographic distribution, age, type of institution/ organization/ company they worked in, as well as the type of employment contract they held. Next, the interviewees commented on those same problems most specifically, using personal examples or examples they were familiar with through their practice. Finally, the experts noted similar limitations in cultural policies, offering recommendations and possible examples of best practice for overcoming them.

The starting premises of this study were proven correct, as the materials collected provided a foundation for confirming the hypothesis on the structural link between gender, class and other inequalities, which mutually support and reinforce each other in the cultural field as well. This study is the result of the intertwining of two approaches. The *intersectional* approach enabled us to avoid generalizing one type of experience as generally applicable, among other things, by including respondents from various social groups and cultural spheres. A decentralized approach, along with an awareness of the necessity of questioning the relationship between the center and the margin, whatever the level of analysis, geographic, generational, in relation to the symbolic capital and status of a certain profession in culture, or with some other focus, was yet another tool of intersectionality which proved very useful.

Nevertheless, had we stopped at the mere enumeration of identified levels of problems extracted from the multitude, we would not have been able to explain how the system in culture distributes relations of power, or how it reproduces gender inequality. And we wouldn't have been able to demonstrate how culture merely replicates the broader social patterns of neoliberal capitalism, which

manifest through, among other things, processes of underestimation and lack of recognition for cultural work. The intersectional approach was therefore complemented with a structural analysis of the construction of gender and work in the current capitalist cultural environment, providing us with the tools to account for the causes of women in culture being doubly burdened – both in their professional and in their personal life, as well as the conditions that promote discrimination and gender-based violence in the cultural field.

Written from a *critical perspective*, this study was aimed at detecting those practices with a negative impact on the current, unenviable state in the cultural field in terms of gender equality. The critical apparatus looked at problematic levels, be they mechanisms of the broadest impact, or those seemingly insubstantial and short-lived. Our respondents and interviewees had a critical tone, just as the survey showed that cultural workers are aware of their position and the numerous challenges they face in their professional and private life. The results of the study can therefore be used as a tool for advocacy before government institutions in culture and cultural policy, the media, educational institutions, professional and other associations in culture, actors from creative industries, festivals, publishers, etc., but also as irrefutable arguments in favor of the necessity of associating and reacting against gender-unjust distribution in the cultural field.

However, the idea behind the study was not only to critically map out the problems, but also to devise *recommendations* and ideas for how we could and have to do better, including specific examples of best practice from other countries or from the past. That is why the recommendations are addressed specifically to various actors, based on the survey respondents' assessment of the extent of their influence on culture. Some of the recommendations are very easily applicable, yielding good results without calling for major investment or systemic changes. Still, they are only some of the possible tools on the path toward complete gender equality in culture, something that, after all, will require systemic changes toward transparency in work and procedures, autonomy from party pressures, compliance with affirmative measures, and a gender-sensitive reform at all levels of arts education and of the social organization of reproductive work. As suggested in the expert group, associating in order to safeguard and promote cultural workers' rights may stimulate precisely the kinds of changes necessary when the causes of inequality are also profound, which this study has unequivocally demonstrated is the case.

The present study builds on a comprehensive corpus of *domestic and regional literature* from diverse disciplines, interwoven herein in a specific manner. We relied on the knowledge and insights of our predecessors regarding women's

participation in and contribution to specific areas of art or cultural history, cultural policy, the state of workers' rights in the arts, gender (in)equality in society, the challenges of working in the independent sector, political influence on cultural institutions, and many others. That is why this publication opens with a literature review confirming the continuity of feminist analyses in culture and the arts in Serbia and the region.

We were, however, interested in having the analysis of gender (in)equality in culture as the central thread of this study. Namely, the studies to date which investigated the cultural field without limiting their scope to individual branches of art tended to include gender as only one of their analytical aspects. One exception is the study by the Institute for Cultural Development Research, titled *Women in Public Cultural Institutions (Žene u javnim ustanovama kulture*, 2017), but it, too, was limited to women from a single sector of work, the public one. Or, on the other hand, we find the opposite in feminist studies, where culture was one segment of a much broader area of interest. Our study was therefore conceived so as to analyze both aspects, as broadly and as in-depth as possible, resulting in an analysis of the cultural field in Serbia from a gender perspective, including all its organizational and operational formats, as well as the diversity of identities of cultural workers.

In addition to being in dialogue with regional literature, this study is in active dialogue and in accord with *contemporary international research trends.* The very support this project received from UNESCO in the 2020 open call by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity signaled that this was a topic that transcends local interest and is relevant to international cultural flows. Using the comparative method, the results of this study were linked to various examples, mostly from the European context but also beyond. Possible avenues of future research could include further comparative analysis of present results, taking into account both European and other cultural practices and policies. Just as foreign sources were used here in the process of analyzing the current state and mapping possible recommendations for the domestic context, one of the intentions of this study was to have this translation into English give back to the international community by sharing our insights, in the hope that the findings of this study might also prove useful in other contexts.

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Tables, graphs and figures

Tables

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