

AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE INTERACTION OF GLOBAL NETWORKS WITH LOCAL ACTIVISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

The international women's movement has always focused on discrimination against women, but only in the past few decades have activists paid special attention to domestic violence. In post-communist Europe, it took even longer but the Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and Slovene governments eventually reacted to domestic and global pressure and established new definitions and norms dealing with domestic violence. Analyzing the process of norm development on domestic violence in Central Europe can direct us toward determining to what extent political and economic processes and decisions in Europe are driving globalization, or are being driven by globalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

“If he beats you, he loves you.” This traditional Russian proverb reflects an attitude that is unfortunately too common across the world. Traditionally,

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partner violence against women has been accepted, occasionally even glorified, and relegated to the realm of private affairs. The women's movement has, since its inception, focused on various forms of discrimination against women, but only relatively recently have activists paid attention to domestic violence and managed to develop successful campaigns against bodily harm and emotional abuse (Jefferson, 2003; Renzetti, Jeffrey, & Bergen, 2001). By creating a space that is beyond public or private, activists opened up a global arena in which human rights and dignity, and not national custom and laws, prevail.

In post-communist Central Europe, the process of acknowledging domestic violence has been, and continues to be, especially challenging. The difficulties lie partially in the region's very recent integration into many global trends, such as democratization and respect for human rights. In addition, the communist systems left a highly ambiguous heritage regarding gender equality (Fodor, 2003; Gal & Kligman, 2000a, 2000b). On the one hand, the previous political system emancipated women from direct subordination to men and provided broad social welfare assistance to balance women's work and family responsibilities. On the other hand, the communist system repressed political expression and various individual freedoms. It generally maintained the traditional gendered division of labor, providing for women's needs mostly rhetorically and when it served its ideologically determined economic needs. During this regime, domestic violence was taboo, without a name and with no acknowledgment of its existence and severity. In this difficult political terrain, how did domestic violence become a central topic of debate from the early 1990s among Central European general publics, governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)? I argue that globalization and its increasing power of dispersing the norms of democratization and human rights allowed for the discussion on domestic violence to step on stage. However, these norms were not to appear in their full (ideal) form, but would become muddled in international and domestic give-and-take and adapted to the specific needs of local environments and international trends.

This essay investigates to what extent globalization is driving the processes and decisions regarding domestic violence in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia, and to what extent they are driving globalization. To answer this question, we need to learn what kind of global forces have affected the emerging public policy debates on defining and trying to eliminate violence in intimate relationships in these five recent European Union (EU) accession countries. The manner in which international

organizations (such as the EU and UN), international law (e.g., the UN's CEDAW Convention), and emerging international norms (i.e., democratization, respect for human rights) impact the deliberations on domestic violence are of special concern in this region which has become more open (and vulnerable) to global forces during its many transformations in the past decade.

1.1. Where are we? Central Europe as a political category

Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia lie in close proximity to one another in Central Europe and have all been affiliated (to various degrees) with decades of communism whose collapse in 1989 also signaled the region's "return" to Europe. To crown the process of reintegration to capitalism and to mark the development of democracy, these five countries became members of the EU in May 2004. The changing laws about and changing attitudes toward domestic violence in Central Europe can serve as a litmus test to measure the effect of both political and economic integration into Europe and the international system. These increasing and interwoven processes of political, economic, and cultural integration amount to globalization (Pieterse, 2004). These processes, seemingly unstoppable, are spilling further over to many fields both abstractly via the dispersion of human rights norms and more concretely to previously less-affected geographic areas, such as Central Europe (Risse, Stephen, & Sikink, 1999; Soysal, 1994).

The first part of this essay will locate, contextually define and connect to Central Europe the concepts of globalization and domestic violence that serve here as both descriptive and explanatory tools. These two concepts are each deeply contentious everywhere in the world but they are especially and acutely controversial in contemporary post-communist Central Europe. Because globalization seems to have profoundly contributed to the establishment of the environment where a discussion about domestic violence can take place, the attitudes of Central European activists, governments, and general publics about domestic violence reveal these actors' relationship to globalization. The second part of the essay will describe the various global networks that have engaged with Central European actors on domestic violence. The emphasis will be on the power of norms, such as democratization and human rights, for reasons of parsimony and also limitations of length. While the power of the many international actors and norms over Central Europe is no doubt formidable, exchange between these locations is not entirely one-directional. The final section will demonstrate that while

seemingly universal in their message and method, the human rights on domestic violence adapted to local conditions by taking a more gender-neutral approach. The debates and solutions regarding domestic violence in Central Europe aptly demonstrate that an exchange has taken place, albeit the interaction also portrays that the parties have been rather unequal in their effect of influencing one another. This feedback mechanism within the microcosm of domestic violence policy reveals that globalization greatly impacts Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia, while the extent and the main carriers of globalization are also affected by these countries' responses.

The public debate on domestic violence in Central Europe exemplifies, in a manner deeply significant in the field of political science, the extent of transformation from communism to democracy. Furthermore, this comparative study addresses one of gender studies' most problematic and heatedly debated topics: gender equality and its application to public policies (Charlton, Jana, & Staudt, 1989; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Sainsbury, 1999). The gender-specific nature of domestic violence became a major point of contention on the nature of domestic violence in Central Europe. Are women mostly, or nearly exclusively, the victims of domestic violence as most feminist scholarships show (Hanmer & Itzin, 2000; Schechter, 1982), or is intimate violence more complex than this monolithic, legal approach, as both revisionist feminist (Mills, 2003) and conservative thinkers and politicians attest? Some Central European politicians and activists claim that the communist experience made this region different from the West in this respect as well. Many public figures in Central Europe feel the need to be "balanced," namely to include both genders equally in public policies. In addition, as an obligatory dismissive remark toward communism, populist politicians assert that "here, women beat men" (Interviews, Hungarian Parliament, July 2003 and Slovenian Parliament, October 2004). Third, similarly to worldwide debates (Penn & Nardos, 2003; Stychin, 2003; Warrior, 1976, pp. 20–21), the efficiency of legal (criminal) approaches to eliminate domestic violence has been often questioned in Central Europe, again evoking there the now resented omnipotence of the state to interfere in private life. All of these three policy debates: the extent of democratization, gender neutrality, and the supremacy of the rule of law reflect on how Central Europe incorporates its most recent political past into its contemporary international relations with powerful allies such as the EU, the UN, and the USA, as well as how it develops some fundamental value orientations integral to a meaningful (or ideal) liberal democracy, such as respect for human rights and individual political empowerment.

The geographic subject matter of this inquiry – Central Europe – is rather difficult to define. In spite of appearances to the contrary, the term Central Europe is a political delineation rather than a geographic demarcation. Different historical periods defined the borders of this region quite differently. It is a frontier region, physically part of Europe, but on the edge of it and not fully integrated with it. The region's name (Central? East-Central? Eastern?), what and whom it encompasses, and its physical and social geography have all been fundamentally influenced by global politics.¹ In this essay, the term Central Europe refers to the post-communist European countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia. These countries joined the EU in May 2004 along with the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus. What holds Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia together as a group is not merely their shared history of frequent and relentless foreign domination when they were often ruled by the same power-center, let it be the Habsburgs between 16th and 19th centuries or the Soviet Union after 1945 until the late 1980s. This region is also held together geographically by their common border with the EU and by their common identification as a political-economic coordination group, the so-called Visegrad countries.² Both this physical and the cognitive self-identifying aspects separate this set of countries from the other 2004 EU accession countries which have not experienced communism after World War II (such as Malta and Cyprus) or were annexed by the Soviet Union, such as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The closeness (in these broad geographic and political terms) of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia provides the basis for pursuing the “most similar” research design in methodology (Dogan & Pelassy, 1990, p. 19).

1.2. Applied Methodologies

One of the major challenges in this research project has been its explicitly interdisciplinary nature that calls for various types of research methodologies. It is particularly difficult to combine quantitative data and qualitative, ethnographic information about phenomena, which has only sporadically been recorded in police records, where victims were shunned and blamed for what happened to them, and where international donors do not want to be portrayed as forces behind local NGO efforts. Although official statistics are sparse and unreliable in this regard, hotlines and shelters record an ever-increasing number of requests for help. Accounts in the media also indicate that domestic violence seems to be on the rise in Central Europe. The

increased number of domestic violence cases in Central Europe raises the need to pose the familiar question: is more of this type of crime occurring in the region because of changes in the political and, consequently, gender regime, or is the increase attributable to the victims' feeling more secure in asking for state (police) protection and that they are more aware that these crimes amount to a violation of their basic rights. (On the notion of gender regime, see Adams & Padamsee, 2001; Mazur, 2001.)³

Tracing the inner logic of contemporary political negotiations between governments and various social movements (human rights, shelters, and the women's movement) requires both textual (qualitative) and public policy (quantitative) analysis, and within these traditions, multiple research strategies. To gain quantitative data, I collected academic and police reports, policy papers, and social movement campaign materials to establish and analyze trends of crime statistics and corresponding policy responses, such as money spent on training of police, jurors, and psychologists. The effect of international agencies is also measured by money spent on projects related to domestic violence in Central Europe. Explaining how social movement strategies became successful requires qualitative analysis. In order to obtain qualitative data, I interviewed various past and present NGO representatives, academics, administrators at the governments' Women's Policy Office or Equal Opportunity Office (if such existed), various members of the respective national Parliaments, many local social welfare agencies, and spokespersons for the police. In the summer of 2003, I conducted a field study of activist networks in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. In the fall of 2004, I returned to these sites and Slovenia. In addition, I took part in the international gathering of the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) network, which consists of European NGOs providing services to victims of domestic violence. WAVE held its first conference after a seven-year hiatus in Vienna on October 14–17, 2004. The WAVE network serves as the headquarters of coordination for the European Info Centre Against Violence (see <http://www.wave-network.org>). Thematically coding relations with international and government agencies both interviews and printed media, for main themes, such as gender equality, I apply qualitative research methods to unearth the hidden chronological and structural elements of social movement activism and the corresponding government actions. The broad archival research of printed media on domestic violence charts a history that is otherwise unknown and may not have been recorded in major newspapers and popular media. Events that appear in local media, such as protests about reported child abuse or information on bills submitted to Parliament, rarely make the

headlines beyond national news and are infrequently accessible by internet-based information networks. If the national media did not report some events, data from interviews with local activists and government officials fill in the gaps. Combining participant observation, qualitative and quantitative data led to the conclusions of this chapter, which shows the interconnected nature of globalization and changes in domestic violence laws and attitudes in Central Europe.

2. THE TWO INTERLINKED CONCEPTS: GLOBALIZATION AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2.1. Globalization

Although the noun “globalization” entered US dictionaries first only in 1961 (Webster, 1961), the concept spread quickly because it described newly emerging phenomena that scholars and lay people alike still struggle to define. Just as English philosopher–social thinker Jeremy Bentham’s coining of the term “international” in the 18th century and its capturing the emerging notion of an increased number of nation-states and the growing transactions between them, the wildfire-like popularity of the term “globalization” denotes a new characterization in the past few decades of what we still call “international” relations. However, just as the overlap here between the meaning of globalization and internationalization suggests, there is significant fuzziness around the edges of these often-used terms. What is the difference, if any, between internationalization and globalization? To establish the difference, I first need to clarify how the term globalization is applied in this essay.

The literature on globalization has ballooned to the point that it has changed the contours of scholarly inquiry and, eventually, publishing (for an excellent overview regarding publishing on globalization in economics, see Dougherty, 2004). Partially, as a result of the steady parade of writings on the subject, the meaning of globalization is becoming overly broad, occasionally even unruly and pervasive. However, diverse tendencies in world order are just as much the reason for the debates on definition than the different ideological and professional homes of the various authors. The debates about globalization’s effects are oftentimes angry, especially because authors do not share the same (professional) language. Instead of establishing a common denominator for inquiry, the different kinds of knowledge on globalization have been raising more questions than they answered.

Notwithstanding, the accompanying intellectual ferment also brought numerous instances of innovation, especially as authors reach across disciplines and national boundaries. With some difficulty, the majority of the various conceptualizations can be arranged in major categories (for various typologies see Beck, 2000; Giddens, 2000; Mittelman, 2002).

It is difficult not to be impressed by the broad and deep impact globalization has exerted (although to various degrees) all over the world. These versatile impacts form the basis of five competing major groups of conceptualizations of globalization, seen as deterritorialization, internationalization, liberalization, universalization, modernization, and Americanization. Globalization as deterritorialization (coined by Scholte, 2000) captures the uniqueness of the contemporary phenomenon featuring the increased intensification of various sorts of material and abstract (i.e., norm or value) exchanges. This conceptualization goes beyond the well-established notion of internationalization, which since the 18th century refers to the increased cross-border relations between countries. Similarly, globalization as deterritorialization incorporates and adds to the notion of liberalization, which implies the reduction or abolition of government-imposed restrictions between countries, peoples, and ideas. While globalization as deterritorialization recognizes that there are elements of universalization in contemporary processes, it sees some cultures as more privileged in the so-called synthesis of cultures and recognizes the predominance of Western values in the move toward “global humanism.” Globalization as deterritorialization also acknowledges that modernization is associated with the spread of (Western) social structures, i.e., rationality, capitalism, etc., and sees that “Americanization” could be construed as one special contemporary subset of modernization. Seeing globalization as deterritorialization reflectively adds that there is a mutual (albeit not fully reciprocal) interchange between global actors and spaces, which modifies the otherwise monochromatic image of modernizing (Western) and/or Americanizing influence as well. However, giving the general description to globalization as deterritorialization in this study does not imply that there is a unified, homogeneous global order. Instead, defining globalization as deterritorialization carries the message that the modalities of exchange and the resulting discourses combine in a complex way and enact multiple scripts. This global system does not always act in agreement with all its parts, and these inner conflicts lead to “conflicting claims and empowerment” (Sewell, 1992, p. 17). The interaction between global forces, Central European governments, and social movement activists reflects this complexity in the microcosm of recognizing and dealing with domestic violence.

From the many definitions of globalization that are used in the social sciences and popular literature, globalization will be presented here as deterritorialization. Globalization as deterritorialization focuses on the spread of supraterritoriality, which is a reconfiguration of geography, a transformation that changes spatial organization of social relations and associations. Seeing globalization as deterritorialization provides the most useful lens of understanding how human rights norms about domestic violence have started to change Central Europe's laws and public opinion. (For a much broader interpretation on the power of human rights norms contributing to the fall of the communist system, see Thomas, 2001). Placing deterritorialization in the center of inquiry emphasizes that the territorial state is increasingly facing pressures both from "above" – particularly from the power of markets (Friedman, 1999) and international organizations such as the EU – and from "below," in the form of social movements and civil society (Falk, 2003; Smith & Johnston, 2002). Indeed, there is a growth industry debating the role of civil society, social capital, and civic engagement in shaping both local and global polity (Paxton, 2002; Putnam, 1993, 2000).

The Central European region's many historical separations and its most recent reentry to Europe and capitalism reignited intense feelings of resentment and attraction toward the West. The collapse of Soviet-style communism in Europe also signaled the end of the last ideologically, materially, and militarily formidable bastion outside of capitalist and globalizing trends. The effects of globalization are especially intense in this recently reintegrated part of the world. Depending on one's political value orientation, globalization is welcome and its effect of bringing up human rights norms defined in universal terms may be liberating. On the other hand, globalization can also be seen as an intervention force that twists, distorts, or otherwise unfavorably changes previous cultural and political norms. This latter sentiment is one major reason why global forces often refrain from openly identifying themselves as financial or ideological supporters of NGOs working for the criminalization of domestic violence in Central Europe.

The debate on the nature of domestic violence and the solutions to eliminate it in Central Europe show how the borders of states became not only more permeable (as internationalization would suggest) but the characteristics of the state and many of the policy actors fundamentally changed their features due to the multiple levels of interactions between citizens, social movements, and their many organizations of both state and non-state origin. The circulation of people, goods, norms, social movements, with their

especially influential US-influenced rights discourses and cultural influence (see Grewal, 2004) has created transnational subjects that are dynamic, produced and transformed both within and beyond national boundaries.

The changing and increasingly interconnected nature of actors who engage with domestic violence policy underlines the characterization of globalization as deterritorialization. This conceptualization does not negate the influence of states and their agencies, but highlights how their *modus operandi* have altered and it adds multi-centricity to the state-centered international perspective (Ferguson & Rosenau, 2003). Today, this “polymorphous world” (Mittelman, 2004, p. 221) conditions what kind of norms can travel. The emerging global norms of engagement include respect for human rights and these expectations have lifted the preconceived conceptual filter of ignorance regarding domestic violence. However, as the new powerful global material and ideological infrastructures, such as funding agencies, think tanks, professional associations, journals and various sorts of media have started to focus on this topic, they also toned down the original feminist and counter-hegemonic (see Gramsci, 1971, 2000) message in exchange of dealing with the problem – even if in a less transformative manner. Why did this trade-in take place? What is so disturbing about domestic violence that the premises of the activists are most often questioned and modified? Taking up this issue shakes up and challenges the “informal and intersubjective processes” of power, morals, and civilization (Cox with Schecter, 2002).

2.2. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a worldwide problem, the political, social, and psychological costs of which are only now beginning to be discovered (Walby, 2004; Heise, Pitanguy, & Germain, 1994). The division between public and private spheres has long shielded this particular type of crime. It is one of the major achievements of the feminist movement that this division became questioned (Peterson & Runyan, 1999; Sassoon, 1987). When feminist scholarship pointed out how liberalism carried and naturalized this division, they also observed that it relegated many (especially and most likely) women to the private realm and excluded them from full personhood and political participation (Pateman, 1988; Phillips, 1991). While several feminists argue that women cannot rely on liberal politics (Brown, 1995; Elshtain, 1995; MacKinnon, 1989), women used liberal ideology, and especially its descendant human rights framework, to address some aspects of male domination in revealing them as causing inequality and exploitation (Mahoney, 1994; Marcus, 1994).

The transnational activist networks of the feminist movement successfully used the universal claims of the human rights framework to explicitly include women's rights in it (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). In an effort to avoid the many culturally different interpretations of women's rights, activists focused on one relatively common platform: the sanctity of bodily integrity. Violence against women has emerged as one of the most powerful cases pointing out the untenability of the division between public and private spheres when the private sphere has served as the one powerful excuse to cover up crimes that otherwise would be considered torture, harassment, intimidation, stealing, rape, beating, and often, homicide. Domestic violence formed an important part of the tragically broad violence against women in the eyes of the mostly feminist groups that first brought attention to this issue. With the spread of liberal democracy, feminist movements struggled to gain women's place in the *body politique* and slowly (and still partially) managed to convince governments and international organizations to produce more gender-sensitive laws and policies that included protective orders, domestic violence courts, shelters, and trained jurors, police, health professionals, and social workers to recognize and sensitively assist victims.

Campaigns against domestic violence and the roots of the shelter movement originated in the UK, where, in 1971, Erin Pizzey established what is considered to be the first battered women's shelter. They were established in the USA in the 1970s, and were soon transplanted to Western Europe (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Tierney, 1982). The international women's movement has established a complex (and still contentious) definition of domestic violence and has developed many methods to decrease its occurrence. Since the early 1980s, considerable work has been done internationally on violence against women and much research exists (see, e.g., Buzawa, 2002; Weldon, 2002; Marcus, 1994, forthcoming). The international women's movement established that violence in the home is not an individual or cultural problem, but is a violation of human rights for which the individual states and the United Nations should be held responsible. In this instance, many feminist theorists', postmodern writers', and anti-feminists' objections to grouping all women together notwithstanding of differences in class, ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual preference (Riley, 1988; Young, 1995) were put aside to confer a common identity of potential victimhood and in favor of universal human rights.

With the fall of the communist system, these policy frameworks traveled to Central Europe. Transnational norms and international actors exerted pressure, most often indirectly, on this region to deal with this newly named but pervasive problem. The degree to which post-communist

countries were willing to respond to the challenge posed by the social movements regarding domestic violence can be used to measure their desire to honor (at least in principle) their integration into the community of democratic nations.

Recognizing the universality of gender inequality is a major aspect of dealing with domestic violence. The Western-inspired shelter movement has long claimed that women are most often the victims of crimes in the home. That domestic violence is even becoming a publicly discussed topic in Central Europe testifies to the skill and the strength of the international women's movement that wants to address abuse and exploitation.

However, in contrast to this universal claim stand the many Central European cases of official foot-dragging and denial that may point to a historically and culturally different nature of political and gender socialization. These resistances may demand an acknowledgment of the limitations of universal applicability, whether these are about the assumption of women's victimhood, the heavy criminalization of domestic violence, or the use of perpetrator programs. The communist past made contemporary Central Europe acutely sensitive to human rights violations. Integrating this knowledge into current diplomacy, these countries recently chose to be in the forefront of international organizations pursuing the human rights agenda (McMahon, 2005). In this noble pursuit, these countries may have rhetorically trapped themselves on the side of universality and might not be able to continue to deny the gender-specific nature of domestic violence. But in the meantime, by trying to harmonize universal claims with regional, cultural, and historical specificity when creating domestic violence policies, Central European countries continue their long history of negotiation between forces of various Eastern and Western legal and cultural traditions.

Probably nobody would have denied that domestic violence existed previously as well in Central Europe, but it was clear that such events went systematically unrecognized and suppressed in an ideological context where it was possible for the state to apply pressure to each individual and easily intervene in family problems if necessary (see Johnson, 2003). Under socialism, the state's supervision in private matters was so pervasive that it was less likely to tolerate individual transgressions. Also, public housing was much more widely available, making a victim's life easier to arrange in case the person was forced to leave the family home. As the political roles altered in 1989, one would have expected that a (gender) regime system change would take place concerning this problem as well. However, the direction of change ushered in a more unfavorable gender regime. The

ideal of the autonomous family has been strengthened in the post-communist period and the previous possibility of direct state intervention in family affairs became viewed as an encroachment on privacy according to the liberal pretence of new democracies. The increasing dominance of the private would be hard to miss in post-communist countries, especially with the backdrop of the Europe-wide erosion of social democratic regimes that are moving toward more market-oriented modes of risk management.

The concept of domestic violence stretches across various countries and continents but it has remained rather fuzzy at the edges. Opponents of feminist groups have intensively scrutinized this conceptual vagueness in post-communist Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia. How to name a previously anonymous issue?

In each language, the problem was labeled with many different terms. Nearly all of the terms used in Western discourse have been tried from “wife beating” and “wife abuse,” to “spousal violence” and “partner abuse,” until eventually the less-relationally focused term of “domestic violence” emerged victorious. Similar battles raged in each country about the implied meaning of violence among intimate partners. Tracing the course of these debates carries more of a message than a simple chronology of events. The analysis of the reasons to why raising the issue and naming domestic violence causes heated debates also shines light on the underlying causes of lawmakers’ objections and popular resistances against altering the previous arrangement of authority. How had the recognition of domestic violence started to take place? To start with, a name had to be coined. In naming, the enmeshed condition of culture/traditions of “how we do things” and new norms collide. But only after finding at least an operational name can individual and state responsibilities be separated in a domestic violence policy to the extent that law enforcement could deal with implementation. Naming “domestic violence” in an inclusive but not confrontational manner was a crucial, but difficult, task, hampered by quite a few challenges.

First, identifying the hurt party became problematic because each term borrowed from the West employs different emphasis on who the vulnerable parties are. If the general term becomes “violence against women” (which has been the usage in feminist-inspired international discourse), this implies that exclusively women can be the victims. This terminology was quite unpalatable to Central European decision-makers and consequently, many social movement activists decided to shift the language to engage them. Most politicians and scholars in the Central European region habitually note that if a policy framework accepts the term as violence against women,

then abuse against the elderly, children, and men would be omitted from the notion of violence in the home. Feminists wish to retort that much of the violence against children, elderly, and even young men springs from women's oppression, because men often try to earn leverage on women's behavior by hurting other family members. Their voices rarely reach mainstream media and mostly a lone feminist legal scholar (such as Krisztina Morvai in Hungary) or activist (such as Ursula Nowakowska in Poland) becomes the often ostracized emblem of raising this theme. This debate continues to evolve if anyone, regardless of sex, age, or marital status, can become a victim of violence in the family, or if there is a need to emphasize that gender-based violence as a manifestation of the prevailing patriarchic order and separate it from the other types of crimes.

Second, the specification of location in the term "violence in the home/family" turned out to be similarly challenging because both the "home" and the "family" are conspicuously vague. The image of violence in the family offended and politically distanced many social conservatives who wished to envision the family and their domicile as a homogeneous and harmonious entity.

Third, should only violence in marital relations be subject to the scrutiny of public view as the term "wife abuse" suggests? With cohabiting and divorce rates in Central Europe reaching record highs, the traditional approach of limiting domestic violence to married partners living at the same address was not tenable. However, the alternative to "wife abuse" would have been "partner violence" but it can also infer homosexual relationships. Legitimizing homosexual partnerships even in such a backhanded way would be an overly heavy burden to most politicians in Central Europe.

The end result (for the time being) for the terminological quandary was "domestic violence." Violence was extricated from male power as "domestic" violence gained heightened visibility. The difficulty of finding a consensual (even if still obscure) answer to these testy questions of terminology demonstrates the standing power of previous cultural arrangements, especially gender relations. In spite of the profound social changes during communism between the sexes and the many political transformations since 1989, this aspect of power imbalance between men and women until now has escaped the scrutiny of the state and the public. What is so deeply challenging about naming and dealing with violence among intimate partners?

Considering domestic violence as a crime challenges the legitimate role of power, both within intimate relationships and also in the context of the state

and its law-enforcement. In recognizing domestic violence as a crime and by calling for due collective resistance to unjust authority, basic social patterns of behavior, such as traditional gender roles, perception of appropriate behavior, individuals' rights, and the state's responsibility are challenged. In the post-communist European societies where social transformation has been especially rapid, the last vestiges of what feels like stability in intimate relations may be especially hard to deal with.⁴ Feminist movements to shelter women from abuse dramatically revealed the gap between the presumption and the reality of security and welfare.

Even with the most toned-down and least confrontational term, that is, "domestic violence" there are still many problems, as some anti-feminist scholars and policy-makers are eager to point out. Fundamental features of balancing gender equality and difference, as well as equality before the law, and the usual methods of evidence gathering at a crime scene are questioned in the case of violence in the home. For example, the type of admissible evidence between intimate partners grew to be a sticky question to grapple with in the new rule of law-based judicial systems where neophyte advocacy of clearly transparent and corroborated evidence was yet one more piece of proof to reject the show trials of communism. How could evidence be sought in cases of emotional abuse? Should only physical violence be considered a target of criminalization? Even if the effects of beating can be more clearly demonstrated, physical violence is most frequently the result of often long-standing emotional and psychological mal-treatment. But emotions do not seem to fit squarely in the legal categories, because testimonies of domestic violence survivors who point out the inadequacies of state protection rarely receive a sympathetic ear. It is peculiar why exactly women's testimonials are dismissively scrutinized and then systematically disregarded, while ample attention is offered to battered men who have not yet mounted any sort of campaign.

Many of these concerns are familiar from the international literature but in the presence of a strong constituency supporting feminist and shelter movements, the conceptual fuzziness of domestic violence has not undermined the hard-won capacity to deal with this problem in Western democracies (see for a review, Deanham & Gillespie, 1999). The short discussion above on terminology and the related various conceptual problems regarding domestic violence in post-communist Central Europe have already indicated some of the effects of global actors and norms over the definitions and deliberation. Who were these global actors that exerted the most influence on Central Europe regarding domestic violence policies and how did they accomplish this task?

3. CENTRAL EUROPE: A CASE STUDY ON THE INTERSECTION OF GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL NORM DEVELOPMENT ABOUT ELIMINATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

From a problem whose real nature and social prevalence was for a long time absent from general public discourse or was largely misconceived, domestic violence has become an issue with an identifiable extent and character in Central Europe. Even more importantly, the sustained presence of the issue in public discourse has facilitated political discussions that have resulted in legislative and policy changes to prevent and prosecute cases of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a fledgling legal definition in Central European countries that not only share a similar political past and similar gender regimes, they are also facing nearly identical problems related to gender equity as new members of the EU. Domestic violence was hidden during communism in Central Europe and it could easily have remained a taboo. Raising the profile of this issue is the interminable task of maverick social movement organizations that choose to hear feminist arguments from the West. These trailblazer individuals and their originally mostly informal organizations have brought this issue up from the collective unconscious. Acting in unison with global social movement trends and responding to a narrowing reception of their claims, activists in Central Europe have become increasingly issue-oriented in contrast to pursuing broad, often welfare-related themes. The emerging social movement activism related to domestic violence and their (albeit limited) success demonstrates the interconnectedness of Central European domestic politics and global actors and trends.

There are many significant changes in the empirical landscape of domestic violence in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia (see appendix for details, and for an alternative conceptualization Johnson & Brunell, 2007). This series of empirical evidence also demonstrates that in addition to the broad similarities there are also plenty of variations in incorporation regimes. What explains the significant differences of public attitudes and governmental policy responses in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia?

While transformation is evident regarding the legal recognition of domestic violence, the picture of these changes is quite diverse as the Central European countries wrestle with the heritage of the past and try to balance

the pressures from many domestic and international expectations. Starting from small-scale and NGO-sponsored, wildcat-like sticker-mounting efforts to publicize emerging hotline numbers in the middle of the 1990s, all five Central European countries took part in recent national campaigns to raise awareness against domestic violence. However, just to mention the two most extreme cases, 2003 was the first such attempt in Hungary and the fourth in Poland.⁵ Emerging from an identical legal system in the old Czechoslovakia, Slovakia enacted a bill criminalizing domestic violence in 2002, but there is no sign of such a legislative action in the Czech Republic. Slovenia has amended the Criminal Procedure Act in 1998 and the Penal Code in 1999 that reflect the recognition of domestic violence. Poland and Hungary have been making incremental legal changes, often reversing the direction of movement when new governments are swept into office (Regulska, 2003).

In all of these countries, both before and even after legal changes were enacted and campaigns reached out to inform on domestic violence, the publics and many decision-makers questioned the feminist gender-specific definition of domestic violence and remained highly skeptical about the use of law in “private” matters. It is noteworthy that the ferment of public debates and consequent legal changes took place in a very short span of time (beginning in 1992) and practically in tandem across the whole Central European region. How could a previously unnoted phenomenon gain attention to this degree? Increasing global interactions at least partially answer this otherwise cryptic puzzle.

4. THE SOURCES OF GLOBAL INFLUENCE ON DEFINING AND ELIMINATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Over the last decade, the full denial of and widespread skepticism toward domestic violence has been at least partially transformed in Central Europe. All these changes developed due to the efforts of an internationally engaged set of activists. These advocates against domestic violence deconstructed the previously existing framework (of denial and neglect) and applied the international human rights framework with various degrees of success. The best evidence of this transformation is that all over the Central European region, domestic violence has been given a name and it is becoming part of the everyday vocabulary. Domestic violence crisis centers of various kinds (religious/conservative, feminist-oriented, and local government-run) have emerged all around the region. In each of the five Central European

countries studied here, activists produced legislative proposals to prevent and deter violence in intimate relationships. The policies around domestic violence became embroiled in public debates, not least because of the interconnectedness of social movement activists, international organizations and state governments.

An important component in the relationship between NGOs, international organizations, and national governments is that it increasingly takes place on a global (deterritorialized) level. The main international influences on Central European policies on domestic violence can be roughly divided into (1) intangibles, such as norms and (2) tangible forms of pressure exerted through personal, financial, and organizational means. Without the pretense of being encompassing, the most notable forms of influence are

- (1) Intangibles: norms, such as democratization and the corresponding respect for human rights, women's rights and the broad solidarity-based norms of the European social democratic model.
- (2) Tangible/Concrete actors:
 - A International Organizations (IOs)
 - (i) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), both formal and informal groups of the feminist movement, such as the East–West Women's Network, and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, and international funding agencies such as the Soros Foundation-financed Open Society Institute.
 - (ii) Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs), such as the EU, the UN, the Council of Europe.
 - B Individual state governments, most evidently the US, Sweden, Holland, Austria.
 - C Transnational Corporations (TNCs), such as Phillip Morris and Johnson & Johnson.
 - D Professional organizations, such as the American Bar Association.

The next section will describe the effects of these global influences in more detail, with special emphasis on the symbolic order of international norms, such as democratization, human rights, and women's rights. The focus on norms is primary to the other institutional aspects because many of the international actors refer to these norms as the reasoning behind their actions. Also, data on the effect of international agencies were rather hard to verify because most of them were reluctant to disclose their direct effect on and financial contributions to influence public policy. The reason for such unease and secrecy may be previous bad publicity about their involvement

in public policy. For example, Phillip Morris, the transnational cigarette manufacturer has been trying to erase the effect of a disastrous report it published in 2001 that touted the positive effects of smoking on national budgets.⁶ The pursuant international outrage is just one sign that globalization is not any more exclusively about the interconnectedness of money-above-all markets but also about the globalization of human rights. It was the long third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991) after World War II that brought these rights and norms globally more within reach (see, e.g., Langley, 1991; Lockwood & Ferguson, 1998).

5. IMPACT OF NORMS IN CENTRAL EUROPE: DEMOCRATIZATION, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

5.1. Democratization: Women's Social Movements as a Measure for the Quality of Democracy

In addition to the more traditional explanations citing internal economic collapse and external military pressure as the main causes of the collapse of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe (Kotkin, 2001; Roskin, 2002), other explanations pointing to the effect of emerging international norms of democracy and human rights have been steadily gaining attention and credence (Thomas, 2001). These norms, in their many permutations, became some of the strongest vehicles to influence attitudes toward and laws on domestic violence in Central Europe.

The idea of democracy encouraged Central and Eastern European citizens to engage in political activism to bring down the communist system but upon achieving this goal, social movements experienced a difficult time maintaining momentum (see Howard, 2003). Women's social movements faced additional obstacles in organizing and making their policy networks heard because the communist regimes had claimed to have achieved gender equality and also because the popular perception was that communist governments gave special privileges to women in employment and politics (Aslanbegui, 1994; Funk & Mueller, 1993; Gal & Kligman, 2000a, b). In the euphoria of establishing a democratic framework after communism, feminist activists faced nearly insurmountable difficulties when they claimed that the new governments needed to assist victims of domestic violence (mostly women) and further gender equality when the female victim image and enforced gender equality (in select areas) were some of the deplored

hallmarks of the communist system. To overcome these difficulties, norms such as democratization and human rights provided then-unquestionable moral foundations to address abuse and exploitation. Western feminist organizations were in an excellent position to provide inspiration and also on occasion, financial support to Central European activists to form their own associations assisting victims of domestic violence. Moving away from difficult-to-gauge broad social issues such as female unemployment, decreasing family benefits, and raising the retirement age where women's groups proved not even a match for governments and international financial institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank supporting welfare cuts, some activists eagerly switched focus to a more specific issue, such as domestic violence that promised to make a significant difference in many people's lives.

It took a decade in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia to develop the first activist networks capable of pressuring their respective governments into addressing the long-neglected issue of domestic violence. In each of these countries, local women's NGOs initiated and maintained the campaign to recognize domestic violence and to develop public policies that could deal with this problem. While the previous Yugoslavia and particularly Slovenia display an early start of social movement activism compared to its then communist neighbors (Fink-Hafner, 1993), even its strong women's networks were not able to create sustained progress regarding the recognition of domestic violence (Jalusic, 2002). It was the impending membership in the European Union that brought the strategic possibility for the NGOs working with domestic violence victims to pressure their respective governments to substantively deal with this issue in the name of democracy and human rights.

Despite numerous difficulties in legitimizing their focus, many NGOs in Central Europe devised strategies to bring attention to domestic violence, create a public discourse, establish services for victims, and start to bring about legislative action. The Central European NGOs dealing with domestic violence developed a culturally and politically fitting, complex set of arguments to reflect the lessons learned from the gender politics of the communist past and the trends in international human rights and feminist discourse. Although political processes are increasingly globally interdependent, they are still in large part articulated through the processes of domestic politics (Smith, Charles, & Pagnuccio, 1997), where citizenship is still a powerful political weapon in the fight against women's subordination (Lister, 1998).

The NGOs used many creative street-shock techniques rooted in their home environments and they borrowed ideas or arguments from abroad.

First of all, the informal groups rather quickly formalized in Central Europe, because only by institutionalizing their structures could they apply for foreign and state funding. Second, NGOs in all Central European countries mounted public awareness campaigns to raise attention to their claims and to gather constituency. Some campaigns started out very humbly, with volunteers placing stickers of the hotline number on public vehicles (as NANE in Hungary [Szász, 2001]). The stickers were scrupulously removed each day by cleaning crews and then ‘miraculously’ reappeared overnight. Others in Slovenia plastered the stairs of busy intersections with the usual excuses of “falling of the stairs,” reminding people not to close their eyes to such obvious lies aimed at covering up physical abuse in the home. The public awareness-raising campaigns brilliantly applied popular folks songs (“What happened to you little girl?” in Slovenia) and juxtaposed it with the beaten image of a woman. The traveling expositions of the life-size cut-out images of “Silent Witnesses” (of women murdered by their husbands or partners, see <http://www.silentwitness.net>) and the “Clothesline Project” (also commemorating victims of domestic abuse, see <http://www.clothesline-project.org>) traveled seamlessly from the United States and Western Europe to many parts of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia. Due to mobilizations by letter writing and occasional popular protests, the NGOs working on domestic violence have managed to challenge the holy image of the nuclear family and reverse some of the trends of no-interference in the private sphere. They could achieve this feat by helping themselves to international connections as leverage points and feminist arguments that they adjusted to local surroundings. These NGOs constantly invited the media to their activities, used testimonies of survivors in town meetings and scientific conferences, wrote many open letters to national and local legislators and bureaucrats, and frequently and repeatedly cited the statistics of callers to their hotlines (because no other victim statistics were available). Due to the relentless activities of NGOs assisting domestic violence victims, the problem of domestic violence has shed its anonymity and has become an issue for public debate.

While the NGOs invoked feminist reasoning to draw attention to the gendered nature of domestic violence and supported their claims by citing international treaties (such as CEDAW, see appendix for dates) signed by each of these countries and referred to the norms of human rights, many groups were willing to work with gender-neutral terminology and a more traditional and child-centered image of the family, if that brought more allies and government cooperation as a result. Instead of a feminist-inspired women-specific focus as many NGOs intended, they could not dent the

media and policy focused on abuse of children, even if most data implied that women are the most frequent victims of domestic abuse. The bills and police directives were drafted in a gender-blind manner. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty that these Central European countries became signatories to with their 2004 membership in the EU, curiously and counter-intuitively also added to the pressure to promote gender-neutrality in policy if the NGOs wanted to be successful in the legislative arena.

The numerous and heated conflicts about the naming of domestic violence (see above) and the pursuant debate on policy reveal that this issue touches on a raw nerve of unsettled gender issues and belongs to the list of long-neglected social problems affecting a large segment of the population. Democracy supposedly should not leave such large groups voiceless. However, one may agree with Arundhati Roy, stating that “We know of course there’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless.’ There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard” (Roy, 2004). It was the international women’s movement that first pointed out the devastation and injustice created by violence in the home and they stated that this violence disproportionately targets women and girls. The women’s movement worldwide argued rather successfully that human rights are also women’s rights.

5.2. Human Rights: Women’s Rights as Human Rights

The diffusion of human rights norms both geographically and abstractly emerged as a consequence of global waves of democratization. Many scholars connect the emergence of and the pursuing debate on domestic violence to the achieved degree of democratization (Friedman, 1995; Kaplan, 2001). The debate on domestic violence can serve as a litmus test of the depth and maturity of democracy in Central Europe. How did the women’s movement break out of this silence and manage to frame domestic violence as part of the human rights agenda?

International trends in women’s human rights have inspired changes in state policies (Kerr & Sweetman, 2003; Lockwood & Ferguson, 1998). Since the 1970s, the international women’s movement has increasingly created public forums to denounce violations of women’s human rights. In the Beijing 1995 UN conference, defining human rights as women’s rights bridged the gaps between various national agendas. From orderly UN conferences to dramatic uninvited invasions of women wearing pink slips in the 2004 US Republican National Convention meeting in New York City, activists forced delegates to recognize violence against women in all its forms (for more examples, see Mertus & Goldberg, 1994).

The notion of human rights has become a pervasive element of contemporary international relations. Eventually incorporated into the laws of many countries (including those of Central Europe), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, started to contest the exclusive model of politics and rights that were anchored in national sovereignty. Invocation of human rights established and advanced universal claims as it legitimated claims for rights both within and outside of national borders. However, these pieces of international law were mere vehicles without much power until the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet system, the notion of human rights strengthened and expanded. It is evoked today with increased frequency and in an ever-widening circle of domestic and international issues, including the right to a clean environment, the right to marry, and also protection from domestic violence.

Until the 1990s, human rights used to be focused on torture, genocide, and similar extreme forms of abuse. In the past 15 years, the international women's movement (among others) broadened the meaning of human rights to include not just the most extreme and brutal, and often state-sponsored atrocities, but also to reveal and prosecute human rights violations that were hidden in the private sphere, including various sorts of specifically women's human rights.

Framing women's deprivations as a violation of human rights is not merely a shift in rhetoric, but a fundamental, legally oriented trend in social movement activism that has been taking place worldwide, possibly due to a global effect of American legal traditions which moved most social movement activities into the legal arena (see, e.g., on the peace movement Dewar, Abdul, Sol, & Ruete, 1986; on abortion Hull, William, & Hoffer, 2004; about hate crimes Jenness & Grattet, 2001; and on animal rights Silverstein, 1996 and Trägårdh, 2004). Groups providing for victims of domestic violence extended the meaning of human rights to relations in the private sphere. The NGOs pointed to the connection between a victim's survival and gender-sensitive state institutions, such as state-sponsored crisis intervention centers, domestic violence courts, and specially trained police officers who investigate rape and abuse charges. Without such provisions, they claim, the state is in flagrant violation of its duty to protect its citizens from abuse. Following the logic of the Tracy Thurman case in Torrington, CT after which US police were more inclined to intervene in domestic violence cases for fear of heavy fines after they were successfully sued for failing to protect a woman from battering despite many warnings from an estranged

partner,⁷ Central European NGOs contemplated law suits using the same argument against their own governments to be submitted to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France (Interviews 2003 and 2004).

Encouraged by international activism and increased attention to women's right to physical safety, Central European NGOs incorporated various elements of the international women's and shelter movements into their arguments to convince the public, their governments, and the international community of the value of their claims. Citing international statistics and emerging evidence from their home countries (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2001; Morvai, 1998; Tóth, 1998), Central European NGOs dealing with domestic violence claimed that one in five women are battered. They launched a regional media campaign with the financial backing of the Open Society Institute (based on New York and Budapest) to shake up the public to recognize the severity of the issue by citing this dramatic number and using human rights as a general framework to back up their claims with.

The NGOs working to criminalize domestic violence linked their agenda with the broader international human rights agenda and they reached out to the West for material, intellectual, and ideological support. However, due to the process of global (quasi-deterritorialized) interchange of norms, the Central European NGOs developed rather differently than their predecessors in the West and they ended up rather dependent on both their foreign donors and the state. Such unintended consequences will likely influence their activities and, in the long run, the quality of democracy built.

5.3. Unintended Consequences: The Relationship of Central European Shelter NGOs with International Organizations and the State

The weakness of civil society traditions in Central Europe pressed the emerging NGOs dealing with domestic violence victims to rely on state and/or international donors for survival. The "third sector" (as the broad array of NGOs are also called to distinguish it from state or private production) adjusted to the accounting requirements of the international and domestic founders, but this caused many unintended consequences. First of all, civil society, and within it the shelter groups, never became autonomous. Instead of relying on volunteers, the survival method among Central European associations was to be registered as an NGO, and to become quickly institutionalized and professionalized. Because they could not rely on their own resources, the NGOs immediately turned to outside funding sources, which also forced NGOs to employ professional staff, first for grant writing and upon its success, to contract social workers to lead or to replace volunteers.⁸

Second, the NGOs' foci came to reflect external funding expectations. To avoid competing for funds among one another, the main groups often informally divided up the roles of taking care of domestic violence victims, as happened between the three main provider organizations in Slovenia (Interviews, Association for Non-Violent Communication, Ljubljana, October 2004). Many NGOs also streamlined their operations and became more (single) issue-oriented and often professionalized.

The NGOs in the Central European post-communist countries, and especially the associations working with domestic violence victims, emerged rather differently from the trajectory of the similarly aimed Western European and North American groups. In Western Europe and North America, these groups originally organized largely on a volunteer basis, strictly following non-governmental and non-familial logic to shelter women battered by husbands and boyfriends. While the Western European and North American shelter NGOs emerged as an unaffiliated sphere between state, market, and family to protect women and only later, and even then only partially, accepted state funding, the Central European NGOs became immediately dependent on international donors and state funding. In the case of Russian shelter groups, this support reached a level of near full reliance on one major foreign financial supporter, the Ford Foundation (see Hemment, 2004; Henderson, 2000).

International support for NGOs has undoubtedly been crucial to promote democracy but dependence on foreign funding questions the quality and type of democracy built (Diamond, 1999, pp. 252–255). In the fight for institutional survival, especially when international donors move on to other parts of the world, NGOs also often turn to local and national governments for funding and become (partial) replacements for state social service providers.

Shelter NGOs all over the world have a rather contradictory relationship with the state. Just like its many Western counterparts, the Central European shelter movement struggles to shift responsibility for domestic violence victims to the state because they consider a person's basic safety as a basic human right and a (mostly unacknowledged) primary welfare right. Also, on a more practical level, they observe every day that battered persons need a wide array of public provisions and this frequent contact would also push the NGOs to establish a close connection with state representatives and service providers.

Over-reliance on state funding can easily compromise women's autonomy. Also, upon contracting the state or local government for supplying services for battered persons, NGOs offer an avenue to "offload public

provisions” (Banaszak, Beckwith, & Rucht, 2003, p. 7). By outsourcing services, states do not need to give an assurance that these services will be continued long term if the targeted population grows, or when conditions of austerity strike. These are gendered ramifications of neo-liberal “dumping” of responsibility on individuals, many of them women (Fraser, 1989).

Leapfrogging the independent stage in the development of shelter NGOs has become a liability for many Central European groups. Their close nexus with either the state or foreign donors created many unintended consequences. Some scholar-activists claim that “where feminists cannot create options beyond those three sites [of state, market, and family], women’s welfare, safety, and equality are profoundly compromised” (Brush, 2002, p. 169).

Another unintended consequence of the transparency and accountability requirements of state and foreign funding of social movement organizations in post-communist Europe is that the focus of women’s organizations moved from broad demands for more ephemeral goals, such as justice and gender equality, to much more narrowly defined themes. As these organizations began to institutionalize⁹ in the form of NGOs, the ones that managed to survive and become successful most often became single issue-focused and professionalized. In contrast, the beginnings of the Western European and North American shelter organizations were organizationally and politically very different. The early shelter movement prided itself in not requiring official documentation from the women looking for a place to stay and emphasized awareness raising and community building as political education. While many former victims became shelter workers in the West, this step was largely left out in Central Europe because financial sponsors gave preference to professionally accredited service organizations whom they considered more trustworthy (and potentially less controversial).

5.4. The Feedback from Central Europe

What sort of effect, if any, did Central Europe exert on the various global forces about domestic violence policy? Is there any feedback mechanism toward global norms and international actors?

The various resistances toward gender-specific terminology and policy from Central Europe did not originally create, but may have strengthened, a move toward a gender-neutral and child-focused interpretation of domestic violence. NGOs in Central Europe found that by moving to a gender-neutral territory of interpretation at least they were more likely to be accepted in governmental-level deliberations about policy. The international shelter

movement, especially its feminist branch has found this accommodation unacceptably reinforcing women's traditional roles rather than raising gender consciousness (Geske & Bourque, 2001, p. 259; Itzin, 2000). Also, based on the CEDAW convention, such neutrality should have no legitimacy (Landsberg-Lewis, 1998, p. 3). However, some authors claim that when activists relinquished their most radical inclinations, then (West European and North American) states became less explicitly patriarchal (Elman, 2003).

With international norms and actors not forming one seamlessly coherent ideological or institutional whole, there is a lot of space for interpretation and adjustment to local conditions. With the United States experiencing a considerable conservative upsurge, feminist interpretations became less frequently supported on the governmental level than in the 1990s. Almost at the same time, the European Union also passed measures to establish gender mainstreaming which required both genders to be considered in the process of any decision- and policy-making (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2000; Rossilli, 2000). While ideologically quite differently rooted, the impact of these changes in the international scene was quite similar in toning down the explicitly gender-specific feminist claims of the shelter movement in general and in Central Europe in particular.

In addition to the international effects, the marginalization of feminist scholarship and practice on domestic violence is attributable to intense anti-feminist resistance in Central Europe (Acsády, 2004; Goven, 1993). The resistance to incorporating feminist perspectives into the terminology and policies on domestic violence is only surprising insofar as it prospers despite a generally broad conceptualization of welfare in Central Europe. The resistances emerging from the communist past and the re-emergent patriarchic values in post-communist Central Europe pushed the definition and the policies related to domestic violence toward a gender-neutral manner. Instead of recognizing women as the party most likely to be hurt by violence in intimate relations, politicians and policies in Central Europe exert extreme care in making 'balanced' statements where men and women are equally depicted as potential victims and in need of services to ameliorate their plight (For further examples, see Herczog, 2004; Sáfrány, 2003). To avoid slipping into the contested (gender) territories, a focus on children emerged as a solution, similarly to trends noted elsewhere (for the United Kingdom, see McGee, 2000).

On the one hand, the increasing frequency of exchange between citizens, their NGOs, respective governments, and international governmental and non-governmental organizations both feeds into and is facilitated by

globalization. Globalization affects Central Europe in multiple ways and forms. On the other, the post-communist Central European experience also affects the international norms and the organizations, but this reverse affect takes place often indirectly and covertly, if and when it meets already existing international trends.

To convincingly apply the emerging global norms of democratization and human rights to Central Europe regarding the terminology of and policies about domestic violence required that both the domestic and the international actors incorporate some of each other's arguments and account for this region's history, politics, and culture. After all, Central Europe did not have to 'fall into line' with the other countries. However, it had relatively little maneuvering ground in the face of globalization, which allowed for the human rights and women's rights networks to emerge and connect internationally. These rights frameworks provided a powerful set of arguments that was hard to totally neglect, and consequently, it propelled the discussion on domestic violence into the public arena of all of these Central European countries. Based on the assumption of universality of human rights, there is the possibility of a common, even if culturally modified and contested, gender equality element in need of adjudication. Domestic NGOs, most often with a feminist dedication, grasped this opportunity and provided evidence that domestic violence has been just as much a pandemic in Central Europe as it is in the West. After local NGOs established their definition of domestic violence and made some preliminary policy recommendations, they followed up in quick succession by framing domestic violence as a human rights violation and on this basis have demanded legal changes and pushed for a broader set of services to provide for these vulnerable (battered) segments of the population. These local NGOs dealing with domestic violence applied a mix of global and national signifiers (i.e., symbols), values, and arguments to further their case before parliaments and broader publics. As these shelter NGOs find a niche in the political environment to voice their claims, they continue to vigorously apply both domestic and global pressures to secure a receptive audience.

6. CONCLUSION

Only after the regime changes of 1989 could women's rights NGOs emerge in Central Europe and draw attention to violence against women in the private sphere. They largely deconstructed the previous denial of domestic violence: their arguments undermined the notion that such events are

nonexistent or extremely rare, and they attempted to rebuild the concept of domestic violence based on gender inequality. Their effort to change public perception amounted to a political-cultural shift in the understanding of violence among intimate partners. In the past few years, domestic violence has emerged as a central issue that parliamentarians, police, judges, social workers, and activists are beginning to debate. What has changed in the domestic and the international environment that allowed this policy change?

The movements across Central Europe on domestic violence have been interconnected both regionally and internationally in their aims and methods. The most active Central European NGOs have been fundamentally influenced by exposure to feminist interpretations and the international human rights agenda. The NGOs skilfully maneuvered around their own national state apparatus to find a leverage point by raising the image (even if not else) of international expectations, thereby applying a threat of a boomerang effect (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).¹⁰ These efforts affected and opened public space and made visible what was the otherwise invisible phenomenon of domestic violence.

The emerging network of communication and coordination among the activists dealing with domestic violence testifies how culture (note here the traveling concepts and methods of mobilization), power, and public space are increasingly interconnected and becoming transnational in the process (Guidry, Kennedy, & Zald, 2000). Without the globalization of human rights issues, the spread of corresponding legal concepts, increasing personal connections and information networks, the mobilization of activists on domestic violence would not have taken place merely after a decade of the 1989 revolutions in Central Europe (see Colás, 2002; Keck & Sikkink, 1998 for explanations of the emerging transnational networks of civil society).

The new traveling nature of human rights reflects a different logic and praxis of the international system. Rights previously defined as national (in Western liberal frameworks) are becoming entitlements, globally legitimized on the basis of personhood. The normative framework for, and the legitimacy of, this model derive from transnational discourse and structures that choose to raise human rights as a world-level organizing principle. The expansion of political discourse beyond national closure establishes a “de-territorialized” (Scholte, 2000), or “post-national” (Soysal, 1994) polity. The global system shapes the parameters of membership: aspects that have been crucial in Central Europe’s reintegration to the European (EU), transatlantic (NATO) and global (UN, etc.) political, cultural, and economic currents through at least nominal democratization and the incorporation of human rights.

Even though a positive parliamentary decision recognizing domestic violence emerged under ambivalent circumstances in Hungary and Slovakia, the Hungarian government has not yet acted on this mandate as of February 2005, and in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia legal changes that would directly address domestic violence seem distant. In sum, the results of mobilizations to recognize the severity of domestic violence remain rather diverse as of 2004. The tedious contestations of how to define, prevent, and deal with domestic violence prove that the political discourse is only partially, and only under duress, willing to show a readiness for integrating voices that challenge the status quo of existing gender hierarchies. From the viewpoints of activists and victims of domestic violence, the political aim of accession to the European Union and the image of returning to the community of democratic nations that observe human rights have been proven at least partially helpful in their image because it enabled social movement activists to challenge dominant discourses more successfully.

The contested nature of dealing with domestic violence in Central Europe, and especially the fact that shelter NGOs have unequivocally encountered major opposition in their plight, demonstrate how low intensity is the current state of democracy particularly regarding women's issues and gender equality. Its general requirements can be qualified as establishing the common denominator in the form of regular electoral competition and it is exceedingly difficult to nudge publics and political representatives beyond this threshold. Social movements, most often taking the institutional form of NGOs (domestically and internationally) counter this "low-intensity" democracy to forge democracy from below. The social movements via various NGOs have implicitly developed a "high-intensity" version of democracy that provides a much broader alternative to the minimalist form by inviting a higher number of people to a more intense exchange of views and actions. Social movements accomplish this feat by connecting the domestic policy scene to other locations worldwide. The debates around the definition and policy of domestic violence present not just one more case study where the depth of democratization can be measured, they also provide us with evidence of the transformative power of global interactions.

The discourse about domestic violence in five neighboring post-communist Central European countries portrays globalization in a complex manner. Accounting for the many and often powerful international norms and institutions that influence Central European countries to confront domestic violence one could conclude that globalization could be conceptualized as deterritorialization, as Jan Art Scholte (2000) suggested. However, at least

two observations emerging from this study on domestic violence caution against an exclusive endorsement of this conceptualization of globalization. First, when we distinguish between global inputs and their outputs, the input of the diverse global influences about domestic violence in Central Europe may indeed correspond to the concept of deterritorialization, but the output recalls the image of globalization as modernization that implies the replication of the Western European and especially American (US) value orientations in this part of the world. Modernization as an effect of globalization can be traced in quite a few venues concerning how Central European countries have decided to deal with the new concept of domestic violence. For example, the emergence of the shelter movement in Central Europe has responded to and shaped itself according to Western foundations' and governmental institutions' criteria of concrete and achievable projects by leaving behind broad welfare calls and instead focus on single-item themes with a mostly professional staff. The US litigation-based social movement model has been unexpectedly effective in influencing policies regarding domestic violence in Central Europe, in spite of its uncomfortable fit with the legal and cultural practices of the region (Smolens, 2001). Second, there is a telling disequilibrium between the strong transformative power of global effects and the relatively weak and conditional regional feedback to these global norms and institutions. The global forces exert a much stronger influence in Central Europe regarding domestic violence (e.g., even prompting the 'discovery' of this issue!) than forces from this region can impact upon international norms and institutions. The interpretations and policies regarding domestic violence resemble so much of Western, especially American conceptualizations that it amounts to a hierarchy between global impacts, undermining the relatively mutual interference implied by the term deterritorialization.

The interactions between the Central European governments, domestic NGOs, and international organizations demonstrate that activist networks in the region could integrate their claims into the more established traditional political channels of parliament, law, and police. It is also important to note, however, that this success is only partial because recognition of domestic violence is still limited in the laws and barely implemented in jurisprudence and in the practice of the police. Institutionalization of the procedures recommended by NGOs' claims has hardly begun. This study can assist in discovering where the blockages to democratization lie when the social problem at hand is long neglected as domestic violence is, even though it impacts a large, and currently still largely silenced segment of the population.

NOTES

1. See White, Batt, and Lewis (1998, 2003) as a particularly demonstrative example of the changing regional segregation. The narrowest definition of the region consists of Austria, Moravia, and Bohemia (the latter two form today's Czech Republic), while the broadest conception includes all the countries between the western- and southernmost countries of Europe and Russia. The term Central and Eastern Europe as consisting of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia was developed here by navigating between these two extreme definitions and by basing it on recent political and economic processes, such as EU accession.

2. After the fall of communism, Poland, Hungary, and the then Czechoslovakia created the Visegrad countries based on some medieval tradition to inform each other and to coordinate their relations with the EU and NATO. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992, Slovakia did not participate in these regular gatherings of prime ministers. A change of government eventually allowed Slovakia to start expedited negotiations with the EU and they were invited to rejoin the Visegrad group. Slovenia was also requested to join this group in spite of this country's stronger affiliation with the now (mostly) independent republics of the former Yugoslavia. See also Dangerfield, 2001.

3. Regimes are coherent systems through which people signify and contest meanings. The rules of the regime establish political subject location and allow for a calculation of costs and benefits for individual and collective action. Policy regimes "are patterns across a number of areas of policy" (O'Connor, Orloff, & Shaver, 1999, p. 12) and in the context of social provision regimes, they connote a system of policy interventions and regulation. A regime is differentiated from a belief system by its adherents commanding sufficient resources to reward and punish, for example by law, moral arguments, military, or money. Besides the rather limiting economic interest-based calculations, the rhetoric and the symbolism of regimes and regime changes are also recently gaining attention (see Schimmelfennig, 2003; Adams & Padamsee, 2002).

4. The idealization of the home as the one reliably safe place in life supposedly created more of an alliance between men and women as they faced the state as a tyrant intruder during times of oppression in communism. This resistance was coined the "politics of anti-politics" (Kondrád, 1984). The deepest moral shocks about the depth of the state's infiltration emerged in the previous DDR and Romania where secret service documents showed that family members also (were forced to) spy against one another (Childs & Popplewell, 1996; Deletant, 1995).

5. With the exception of Slovenia, the 2003 national campaigns were funded by the Women's Network of the New York based Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute.

6. In 2001, Philip Morris officials in the Czech Republic distributed an economic analysis concluding that cigarette consumption was helping the country's budget, in part because smokers' early deaths help offset medical expenses (<http://www.mindfully.org/Industry/Philip-Morris-Czech-Study.htm>). A firestorm of controversy erupted over the report and Phillip Morris was forced to apologize. (http://www.cancer.org/docroot/NWS/content/update/NWS_1_1xU_Philip_Morris_Touts_Dying_Smokers_As_Savings_Benefit.asp)

7. In *Thurman v. City of Torrington*, 595 F. Supp. 1521 (D. Conn. 1984), police protection was found differentially withheld from women victims assaulted by male intimates, denying such women equal protection of the laws on the basis of gender. In 1984, municipal governments across the USA took notice when Torrington, CT was ordered to pay \$2.3 million to Tracy Thurman (*Thurman*, 595 F. Supp., at 1528 n. 1.). The 1994 passage of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA), 108 Stat. 1796 (1994), was a sign of legislatively acknowledging violence such as rape and domestic battering as sex-based discrimination and considered serious enough to be granted federal jurisdiction. The 1994 VAWA represented a major achievement as the criminal justice system abdicated women to the extent that a new legal remedy in their own hands was systemically required. If existing criminal laws had protected victims of crime equally, this new provision, like so many civil rights laws passed by US Congresses before it, would not have been necessary. However, as Janet Reno's memo later showed, even the Attorney General remained unconvinced about the need to pursue domestic violence cases. This prosecutorial apathy toward gender-specific legislation already signaled a dwindling enthusiasm for supporting explicitly feminist causes at home, and especially, with US foreign policy and aid.

8. In the process of professionalization, NGOs may lose their connection to social movements. Shelters may become like state social service agencies, excluding most women from participation (Morgan, 1981). Similar tensions emerged between the broad issue-based grassroots organizations and NGOs in Latin America, where NGOs' international engagement has exacerbated the gap between those with skills in international diplomacy and the average activist population (see Geske & Bourque, 2001).

9. Meyer and Tarrow (1998) define institutionalization as a process that can "allow dissidents to lodge claims and permit states to manage dissent without stifling it" (p. 21).

10. Keck and Sikkink demonstrate that local activist networks can exert pressure on their own governments via their international connections. Local NGOs, when blocked by authoritarian rule or other obstacles to reach their own governments, contact their counterparts abroad, who in return enter into dialogue with their government. This foreign government then can exert direct leverage onto the original country's leadership in return, thereby finishing the return of the "boomerang."

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APPENDIX

AREAS OF CHANGE BY DATE AND COUNTRY

	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Slovakia	Poland	Hungary
Police/legal Professional Training	2002 ¹	1999 ⁵ 2001 ⁶	2000 ³	2000 ⁴	1994 ⁴ 2002 ²
Hotline/shelters	2000 ²	1989 ¹ 1996 ⁴	1992 ⁶	1995 ² 1999 ⁴ 2000 ⁴	2002 ²
Government \$ support of NGOs	2002 ³				
Government-sponsored public awareness campaigns	1998 ⁴ 2001 ⁵	1993 ³		1995 ² 1999 ⁴	
Creation of specific government offices for women's rights		1992 ²	1991 ¹ 1995/1996 ²	1986 ¹	
Bills, laws	July 1997 ⁶ December 2003 ⁹	1993 ⁸	April 2002 ⁵	April 1997 ³	1997 ³
Social movements	1998 ⁷	1994 ⁷ 1999 ⁶	2001 ⁷	1999 ⁴	1994 ⁴
TV/media awareness campaign	2000 ¹	1992 ⁷ 1996 ⁶ 1998 ⁷	2001 ⁷	1998 ⁵	1994 ⁴
Lobbying parliament for domestic violence laws	2002 ⁸		2000 ⁴	2000 ⁶	1994 ⁴ 1997 ³ 2002 ¹
Ratifies UN's CEDAW ^a	February 1987	July 1992	May 1993	May 1980	June 1980
Ratifies CEDAW's optional protocol	2001 ¹⁰	2004	2000	2003	2000

^aAll dates provided by UN CEDAW. Available: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm>.

Czech Republic Footnotes

¹The Code of Criminal Procedure Act 265, regulating prosecution for domestic violence cases, was distributed to police. The Government initiated plans for a special training course for police on how to deal with victims of domestic violence. "Committee Experts Applaud Czech Republic's political will to implement Convention on elimination of discrimination against women." UN Press Release. August 9, 2002. Lexis-Nexis.

²The WCS and Czech TV produced a half-hour documentary about domestic violence. *Source*: <http://www.bkb.cz>. Referring to NGOs, the US State Department cited 107 state-supported shelters located in most major cities and towns that took in women who were victims of rape or abuse in 2003. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. 2004. *2003 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* February 25. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27833.htm>.

³NGOs (shelters) received government subsidies. UN CEDAW Report: Brief Comments on the Czech Republic. 1998. *Source*: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/18report.pdf>.

⁴Press Notes – "Committee Experts Applaud Czech Republic's political will to implement

Convention on elimination of discrimination against women.” UN Press Release. August 2002.

⁵UN CEDAW Report: Brief Comments on the Czech Republic. 1998. *Source:* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/18report.pdf>.

⁶Description of Program: White Circle of Safety. International Victimology Website. *Source:* <http://www.victimology.nl/onlpub/national/cz-basic.doc>.

⁷Championed by the White Circle of Safety. *Source:* <http://www.victimology.nl/onlpub/national/cz-basic.doc>.

⁸*ProFem*, NGO. “Group pushes for Domestic Violence Law.” *The Prague Post*. 6 November, 2002. *Source:* <http://www.praguepost.com>.

⁹On December 11, Parliament amended the Criminal Code to recognize domestic violence as a distinct crime, punishable by up to 8 years in prison. The bill goes into effect on June 1, 2004. Prior to the amendment, the law did not specifically address spousal abuse; however, the Criminal Code covered other forms of domestic violence. An attack was considered criminal if the victim’s condition warranted medical treatment for 7 days or more and caused the victim to miss work. If medical treatment was necessary for less than 7 days, the attack was classified as a misdemeanor and punished by a fine of not more than approximately \$109 (3,000 crowns), an amount roughly equivalent to a quarter of the average monthly wage. Repeated misdemeanor attacks did not result in stricter sanctions against the abuser. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. 2004. *2003 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* February 25. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27833.htm>.

¹⁰*Committee Experts Applaud Czech Republic’s Political Will to Implement Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women*. Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women 573rd And 574th Meetings (Am & Pm). Press Release Wom/1354, 08/08/2002. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2002/wom1354.doc.htm>.

Slovenia Footnotes

¹*Source:* SOS Help-line Online: <http://www.drustvo-sos.si/english/background.htm>.

²*Source:* SOS Help-line Online: <http://www.drustvo-sos.si/english/programs.htm>.

³*Source:* IRAW Country Report: <http://iwrap.igc.org/publications/countries/slovenia.html>.

⁴*Source:* Women’s Policy Office: <http://www.uem-rs.si/eng/violence/>.

⁵*Source:* SOS Help-line Online: <http://www.drustvo-sos.si/english/programs.htm>.

⁶*Source:* Women’s Policy Office: <http://www.uem-rs.si/eng/violence/>.

⁷*Source:* Women’s Policy Office: <http://www.uem-rs.si/eng/violence/>.

⁸Debate on proposed legislation, though unsure if bills became law. *Source:* Women’s Policy Office: <http://www.uem-rs.si/eng/violence/>.

Slovakia Footnotes

¹Government organization known as *The Governmental Committee for Women and the Family*. *Source:* “The National Action Plan for Women of Slovakia.” An official response by the government of Slovakia. September 1997. *Source:* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>.

²Government organization known as *Coordinating Committee for Women’s Affairs*. *Source:* “Country Profile: Slovakia.” A Report by IRAW. <http://iwrap.igc.org/publicrelations/countries/slovakia.html>.

³*Source:* “Slovakia: Taking Domestic Violence out of the Closet.” Article by Ed Holt of the Inter Press Services. May 7, 2002.

⁴*Source:* “Slovakia Report Women 2000.” A report by the International Helsinki Federation

for Human Rights. Published 2000.

⁵Source: "Slovakia: Taking Domestic Violence out of the Closet." Article by Ed Holt of the Inter Press Services. May 7, 2002.

⁶*The Bratislava International Centre for Family Studies*. Source: <http://www.bicfs.sk>.

⁷NGO: *Initiative Fifth Women*. Source: <http://www.osi.hu/vaw/propbycount.php?count=slovakia>.

Poland Footnotes

¹*Governmental Plenipotentiary for Family*. Source: "A Perspective on the Status of Women in Poland." Women's Rights Center, Warsaw. April 2000.

²*The Blue Line*. Source: "A Perspective on the Status of Women in Poland." Women's Rights Center, Warsaw. April 2000.

³"A Perspective on the Status of Women in Poland." Women's Rights Center, Warsaw. April 2000.

⁴"Government Plenipotentiary for the Family Affairs: A Report to the UN." Published November 1999. Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/poland.pdf>.

⁵*The Blue-Line Program. A Perspective on the Status of Women in Poland*. Available: <http://www.free.ngo.pl/temida/status.pdf>.

⁶*Lobbying by the Women's Rights Center for a restraining order-like bill*. Source: "Progress Report 2000: Detailed Information about the Women's Rights Center's Programs and Activities." Available: <http://www.free.ngo.pl/temida/activities.htm>.

Hungary Footnotes

¹Actions taken by the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs. Source: "UN Anti-Discrimination Committee Hears Hungary's Reports." UN Transcript. August 2002.

²A report published in this year indicates that such programs were in existence at the time of publication, though does not specifically list exactly when they came into being. Source: "UN Anti-Discrimination Committee Hears Hungary's Reports." UN Transcript. August 2002.

³This law and these lobbying efforts by unnamed Hungarian NGOs deal specifically with marital rape. Source: "Safe Haven? An Interview with Professor Krisztina Morvai on domestic violence in Hungary"—Central European Review

⁴These programs are run by NaNE! and The Feminist Network, prominent NGOs in Hungary. They have organized social movements with media coverage, educated government officials and lobbied for legal reform. Source: "Women and violence: The domestic and sexual violence project," Katalin Koncz, WIN News. Lexis-Nexis. Published fall 1994.