Visual Representations of Femininities and Masculinities – The Balkans and South Caucasus in the Digital Age

Research Article

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The Balkans and South Caucasia (Eurasia Minor) consists of countries and regions that are considered by representative investigations on the country level as some of the last strongholds of patriarchy compared to the rest of Europe, Russia not included. Astonishingly enough, comparative studies of gender relations in Eurasia Minor are rare. My study attempts to shed some fresh light on the stagnant debate on the remarkable regression in gender equality in the region in the first two decades of post-socialism and in post-Kemalism. In doing so, I believe that discussing gender relations, femininities, and masculinities in the digital era is no longer feasible without including the wide and thriving field of digital visuality. My overall conclusion is that the period of re-traditionalization in the "wild 1990s" and not so wild 2000s was a temporal one and has started to fade out in the 2010s at the latest. The conflicting antagonism of porno-chic and veiling-chic is also in a phase of fading out; this is caused by, among other things, the powerful dynamics digital visuality offers to both camps.[1]

Keywords: Eurasia Minor, digital age, visual representation, porno-chic, veiling-chic

Introduction

Alarmed by similar studies in Western countries, the UK Home Office released a high-profile report on "The Sexualisation[2] of Young People" in Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in 2010. This report stated among many other things that over 80 percent of young people used the Internet daily or weekly. Almost half of children aged 8–17 had a profile in a SNS such as Bebo, Myspace, or Facebook. SNSs allowed children and young people to create online identities. Compared to traditional advertising, the new quality was that girls reported being under increasing pressures to display themselves in their bras and knickers or bikinis online, whereas boys sought to display their bodies in a hyper-

masculine way, showing off muscles and posturing as powerful and dominant.[3] Traditional sexualized representations of female and male bodies have turned into sexualized self-representations that signal our arrival in the digital age.

Because of the lack of similar investigations, we cannot pursue this track of self-representation in SNSs in the Balkans and South Caucasus. We can only assume that similar trends to the UK are observable also in our regions, although probably not in the same form and to the same extent. However, the aforementioned investigation from the UK makes definitely clear that we cannot discuss gender relations and the social construction of femininities and masculinities any longer without including their cyber dimensions.
The Balkans and South Caucasus, or Eurasia Minor, constitute a group of 15 countries[4] stretching between the Dinaric Alps and the Caucasian Mountains, bordering the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. They are inhabited by a population of 160 million (2018), which is about the population of Russia. Turkey contributes about half of the population to this figure. 60 percent of the population are Muslims and one third is Christian Orthodox.

Except Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, the regions share a joint history of socialism characterized by the Soviet blueprint. Both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia shared a sudden death and fell apart into their constituent territorial and political units around 1990. Therefore, the 1991 political landscape of Eurasia Minor was quite different to that of 1989. Wars, de-industrialization, economic crises, destabilization, social de-cohesion, massive labor migration, and re-patriarchalization constituted formative characteristics of most of the regions' countries during the two decades of the 1990s and 2000s. Aside formal democracy, one principle has been acknowledged by almost each of the countries in the 1990s, namely free market economy.

This policy opened the doors for global economic players, for an economy based on information technology, for the arrival of the digital age, and the emergence of digital visuality. Almost no country in the world has been able to withstand the allure of the visual world, which has not only significantly impacted our everyday lives but has also changed our lives as scientists and our scientific cultures, be it in the field of medicine or in the social sciences and humanities. The linguistic turn of the 1970s has lost its comprehensive explanatory power, complemented by the ongoing pictorial or visual turn inaugurated in the 1990s. By the end of the decade most Americans were online,[5] and at the beginning of the 21st century digital technology and the digital "new media" have already penetrated the economy and everyday life in many parts of the world. Meanwhile, the idea that images participate in important ways to the social representation of relevant reality and utopia has gained widespread currency.[6]

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[3] Papadopoulos, *Sexualization*, 8.

[4] Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey.

[5] Schröter, Jens. 2015. *Das Internet und der ›Reibungslose Kapitalismus‹*, in *Media Marx: Ein Handbuch*, edited by Schröter, Jens / Schwering, Gregor and Urs Stäheli. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 337, 339, 341.

[6] Stocchetti, Matteo. 2017. Digital Visuality and Social Representation. Research Notes on the Visual Construction of Meaning. *KOME − An International Journal of Pure Communication Inquiry* 5(2), 38-56.

The social and cultural construction of femininities and masculinities, their modes of visual presentation, representation, and self-presentation as well as the practices of gender relations, is based on market forces more than ever in history.

The presentation of my paper intends to meet two challenges. The first challenge consists of the fact that I am supposed to cut down and rearrange a recently completed book manuscript of 300 pages[7] to one twentieth of the original amount. The second challenge consists of the fact that Asia Minor comprises countries and regions considered by representative investigations on the country level as some of the last strongholds of patriarchy compared to the rest of Europe, Russia not included. Astonishingly enough, comparative studies of gender relations in the Balkans and South Caucasus are rare. However, this fits to the observation of one of the most prominent feminist historians in the region, Bulgarian Krassimira Daskalova, who soberly concluded that gender studies in Eastern Europe are "far from being success stories." Compared to the situation in countries of Western Europe, the weaknesses of gender studies and feminist knowledge production in the region are obvious.[8]

My study attempts to shed some fresh light on the stagnant debate on the remarkable regression in gender equality in the Balkans and South Caucasus in the first two decades of post-socialism and in post-Kemalism. This regression is frequently labelled "re-traditionalization," "re-patriarchalization," or, as I have called it, "patriarchy after patriarchy." In doing so, I have decided to depart from the beaten track of gender studies in the region, of which the overwhelming majority are limited to the analysis of textual discourses. I believe that discussing gender relations, femininities, and masculinities in the digital era is no longer feasible without including the wide and thriving field of digital visuality. Considering that we live in a digital age and the visual has become at least as important as the textual in our lives – if not even more important – I have decided to place the visual in the foreground of my investigation, without disregarding existing sociological, demographic, and other feminist research.

The structure of my presentation includes five short chapters. I will start my elaboration with a sketch of the socialist and Kemalist inheritance and will then move on to a chapter dealing with the *realia* of ongoing patriarchy. The third chapter deals theoretically with digital visuality and the construction of femininities and masculinities. The fourth chapter presents the most important institutionalized visual constructors of femininities, namely media, producers, agencies, and transmitters; finally, chapter five presents the *utopia* of porno-chic and veiling-chic. The analytical differentiation of the two layers of an empirical whole, namely *realia* and *utopia,* is central to my research.

1 Socialist and Kemalist Inheritance
Whereas socialism intended to transform a class society into a classless society, Kemalism, named after the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Mustafa

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[7] The manuscript is entitled "Contested Femininities and Masculinities in the Digital Age. *Realia* and *Utopia* in the Balkans and South Caucasus."
[8] Daskalova, Krassimira. (ed.). 2011. *The Birth of a Field: Women's and Gender Studies in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Aspasia* 5(1), 128-203.

Kemal Pasha, intended to transform an Islamic state into a secular state. The aim of both the socialist and the Kemalist Turkish state was the establishment of a society in which religion did not matter any longer and gender relations were freed from religious constraints. At this point, however, similarities end and dissimilarities begin, because the aim of Kemalism was the enforcement of secular western femininities and masculinities, whereas the socialist state promoted the enforcement of ideal puritanical socialist men and women, completely freed of erotic allures and the improper chic of market-driven western femininities and masculinities.

Symptomatically, in Kemalist Turkey modernity was positively linked with, for instance, the western-styled female body. This kind of modernity was increasingly questioned by emerging Islamic media in the 1990s, which claimed actual modernity to be the veiled female body. After decades of suppressing Islamic culture and prioritizing secularism, in countries with prominent Islamic heritages such as Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Turkey the public space has become embattled between re-emerging Islamic femininities and masculinities and the dominating secular ones.

In the socialist hemisphere the notion of fashion was ideologically incompatible with socialist ideals, as it was considered an unwanted remnant of the decadent, bourgeois, capitalist society. Beauty was redefined as something of a radically new socialist type, as the appearance of a class-free society. Any interest of women to show their own physical appearance needed to be rationalized and reflected through the ideological lens of the Communist Party, its concept of gender equality, and femininity. It was carefully guided by "scientific" advice and expert opinions. The paternalistic party controlled women's bodies and beauty. Most women's magazines emphasized "physical beauty" rather than "physical attraction" in order to avoid a tendency towards imaginations of sexual desire.[9]

The combination of beauty and desire was proclaimed indecent and harmful. As a result of this puritan-like ethic, the nude body disappeared from paintings, décolletage from TV, and love scenes from movies. Eroticism among married couples was replaced by the glorification of the woman-mother and a socialist cult of maternity. Images of women were extremely didactic and served ideological functions.[10]

The collapse of socialism with its rigid sexual morality of the "new man" rooted in state patriarchy gave way to the abolishment of puritanical body concepts and mores overnight, which were considered by the masses as imposed on them, and to the establishment of porno-chic cultures. Simultaneously, however, instead of living according to secular principles, Islamic norms, suppressed in the public of the Republic of Turkey for decades, increasingly began to regain ground – not so much in the village, where they had continued to be strong, but notably in towns and cities and even in the metropolis of Istanbul, where a new culture of veiling

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[9] Ibroscheva, Elza. 2013. *Advertising, Sex, and Post-Socialism: Women, Media, and Femininity in the Balkans.* Lanham: Lexington Books.
[10] Băban, Adriana. 2000. *Women's Sexuality and Reproductive Behavior in Post-Ceauşescu Romania: A Psychological Approach*, in *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism*, edited by Gal, Susan and Gail Kligman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 225-55; Ibroscheva, *Advertising*, 115.

– veiling-chic culture – emerged. However, the emergence of veiling-chic and porno-chic cultures cannot be explained straightforward away. We have to consider first the *realia* of gender relations, then the broader context of digital visuality and eventually the agencies, producers, and transmitters of these new femininities and masculinities.

2 *Realia* of Patriarchy – Hegemonic Femininities and Masculinities

In the former socialist countries, a painful process of ideological and economic transition from a monopolistic state to multi-party systems and liberal market economy began in 1989-1991, and which is not yet completely concluded in countries such as Armenia or Azerbaijan. Called by feminist literature a patriarchal backlash or re-traditionalization,[11] the return to traditional (pre-socialist) gender relations was considered by many to be progressive. In Turkey an Islamic revival – not only stimulated by the Islamic Revolution in the neighborhood, namely in Shiite Iran (1979) – became visible in the 1980s. Instead of living according to secular principles, Islamic norms that were suppressed in the public of the Republic of Turkey for decades increasingly began to regain ground.

If we put all the data of internationally comparable gender equality indices together, the result is a nuanced but clear picture. We can roughly observe a European Northwest-Southeast incline with lowest gender equality and highest patriarchal sexual morality (for women) in Eurasia Minor. High patriarchal sexual morality means a high degree of control of female sexuality. Orthodox countries are very patriarchal and sexual-morally more conservative compared to Protestant-Lutheran countries in the North; Muslim countries, such as Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Kosovo are even slightly more patriarchal and sexual-morally conservative. Empirical evidence documents that this is a not new phenomenon but deeply rooted in history.

With regard to re-traditionalization of women's roles in post-socialist transformation, a study about Bosnia and Herzegovina is reflective of the three major religions in the region. In the context of Islam, re-traditionalization was mainly triggered by promoting the idea of complementarity, which privileges men, who are considered objective and capable of expressing fair judgement and making rational decisions. Nevertheless, women are proud of their apparently "natural" caregiving qualities and truly believe that they should act first as mothers and wives, and only then, if necessary or possible, take paid jobs as well. This complementarity approach is the official attitude of the Islamic Community,[12] but it is also shared, however, with the Catholic and Orthodox Christian churches.

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[11] Blagojević, Marina. 2010. *Feminist Knowledge and the Women's Movement in Serbia: A Strategic Alliance*, in *The Birth of a Field: Women's and Gender Studies in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, edited by Daskalova, Krassimira. *Aspasia* 4(1), 184-97.

[12] Bartulović, Alenka. 2015. *Islam and Gender in Post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina: Competing Discourses and Everyday Practices of Muslim Women*, in *Gender (in)Equality and Gender Politics in Southeastern Europe: A Question of Justice*, edited by Hassenstab, Christine M. and Sabrina P. Ramet. Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 274-96.

The Australian sociologist Raewyn W. Connell, who set masculinity studies (and thus indirectly femininity studies) rolling from the late 1980s to the early 1990s[13] had originally suggested idealized forms of manhood and womanhood, which she called "hegemonic masculinity" and "emphasized" or "hegemonic femininity."[14] These idealized forms are influential on the construction of other masculinities and femininities and become hegemonic when they go unnoticed in a culture. Whereas hegemonic masculinity proclaims superiority over other masculinities and women, in analogy, hegemonic femininity is nothing but a culturally idealized form of feminine character. Whatever the character of hegemonic femininity is, it is inferior to hegemonic masculinity.

Within the presuppositions of these theoretical frameworks it is not surprising that in the Balkans and South Caucasus the hegemonic opinion about femininity – of being a woman – is being a (pious) married mother, housekeeper, and submissive wife, whose sexual behavior does not leave any doubts about her chastity. Toughness, violence, emphasized tendencies to supress wives by force, a latent concept of man's superiority over women, of being strong and protective, and an inclination to a stern rejection of any form of homosexuality and unprotected sex are important ingredients of a hegemonic masculinity in the region. A general ambiguity between traditional and progressive features is hardly to discover; however, it becomes clear that higher education and urban contexts tend to produce a progressive attitude towards masculinity. Being lesbian is generally not considered a variant of the hegemonic femininity model, whereas the rejection of gays is rigid, significantly more rigid than of that of lesbians. Pre-natal sex selection at the expense of the female fetus in some countries of the region (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) underlines the dominating patriarchal attitudes in the region.[15]

The question arises whether this evidence is chiselled in stone or if there is some light at the end of the tunnel. I think there is some light, but conventional methods do not enable us to see it. We need the supportive analysis of visual discourses and an answer to the question of how digital visuality can be theoretically framed to reveal an alternative reading of the construction of femininities and masculinities.

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[13] Connell, Raewyn W. 1987. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[14] Connell, *Gender*, 26-31; Connell, Raewyn W. and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society* 19(6), 829-59; Messerschmidt, James W., and Michael A. Messner. 2018. *Hegemonic, Nonhegemonic, and 'New' Masculinities",* in *Gender Reckonings: New Social Theory and Research*, edited by Messerschmidt, James W. et al. New York: New York University Press, 35-56.

[15] Gilles, Kate and Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs. 2012. *When Technology and Tradition Collide: From Gender Bias to Sex Selection*. Policy Brief September 2012. Washington: Population Reference Bureau. Available at: www.prb.org (accessed: 13 February 2020); Guilmoto, Christophe Z. 2013. *Sex Imbalances at Birth in Armenia: Demographic Evidence and Analysis*. Yerevan: United Nations Population Fund.

3 Digital Visuality and the Construction of Femininities and Masculinities

The 2000s brought further the developments of the internet, the hallmark of which was user-generated content. This is when Wikipedia and SNSs such as Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok arose, in which individuals have profiles to which they can upload diverse media and connect their profiles with others through "friending."[16] The novelty of digital visual communication compared to its conventional analogous predecessors impacts the social construction of reality in at least four ways. First, it opens up the practice of visual communication to large parts of the population and blurs the distinction between producer, distributor, and consumer of visual objects. Second, it enhances the productive capacity of visual technology beyond reality itself, into the hyper-real, e.g. enabling the production of images that transcend the human perspective. Third, it creates a logic for the representation of reality that enhances the social value of visual communication in the sense that a message must be visual if it wants to be relevant at all.[17] Fourth, it enables and accelerates the circulation of images across material and immaterial obstacles such as borders, culture, language, status, and gender to more conventional forms of communication.[18]

These four components have impacted and will impact the visual construction of femininities and masculinities. From an historical point of view, the enabling of user-generated content on the internet constitutes one of two important turning points in the relationship between the human being and the creation, consumption, and distribution of images. In the long pre-modern history of this relationship, the consumer had to move to localities where the original images were produced, placed, or stored. The first turning point in this centuries-old relationship was the introduction of the mechanically reproducible analogous image, which began, for instance, in Latin Europe with the distribution of image prints in the late fourteenth century and was concluded with the invention of the photograph and the movie from the early middle to the end of the nineteenth century. The mechanically reproducible picture began to complement the original (artwork) and the method of mass reproduction allowed pictures to be brought to people and not vice versa – people to the pictures. The mechanically reproducible picture stimulated a visual culture of modernity around 1900, which developed into a mass phenomenon and in this way into an increasingly powerful force. Meanwhile, we have passed through the age of modern visual culture and have entered the digital age in which pictures not only come to the people, but everybody is able to create images of her- and himself and to distribute them in abundance within one's social network and beyond. We could call this phenomenon "post-modern," "hyper-modern," or "digital visual culture," constituting not only mass consumption but the transformation into an integrated whole of creation, distribution, and consumption. Never before in history did individuals independent from class affiliation, education, color, and gender have more agency in processes of the social and cultural construction of femininities and masculinities, of social realities, and of utopias.

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[16] Baym, Nancy K. 2015. *Personal Connections in the Digital Age.* Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press.
[17] Stocchetti, Matteo. 2014. Images and Power in the Digital Age. The Political Role of Digital Visuality. *Arcada Working Papers* 1/2014.
[18] Stocchetti, *Images*, 2-5.

Art theoreticians, such as one of the most prominent art scientists in Southeast Europe, Croat Krešimir Purgar, go even further and announce the end of pictorial representation. Accordingly, we are already living in a transitional period from pictorial representation to a virtual reality, into which images would immerse or even disappear. They disappear (1) because we no longer need the substantiality of paper, canvas or any other physical base for the display of pictures and (2) because the notion of representation becomes obsolete based on our possibility to be present in real events that are taking place elsewhere.[19] However, for the purpose of my paper I still speak of visual representations of femininities and masculinities as social constructions. This is because the concrete social and cultural context suggests a procedure that is significantly stronger oriented toward pictorial representation instead of departing from the disappearance of images. Visual media analyst Matteo Stocchetti views the image as simulacrum: a communicative tool used to actually hide rather than show relevant aspects of reality.[20] In other words: "Images are not considered as meaningful objects in and of themselves but as part of the process of negotiating social values. Meaning itself becomes a variable dependent on the outcome of this negotiation. Images do not *have* but *are given* meaning."[21] The epistemological implication lies in shifting our attention from the "meaning" of images to the communicative strategies that inspire the use of images by agents.[22] This points to the necessary inclusion of a previously unimaginable number of agents in processes of social and cultural construction of social realities and utopias such as femininities and masculinities.

4 Media, Producers, Agencies and Transmitters
The social construction of femininities and masculinities is strongly related to the presentation of the self on social network sites but still more powerfully related to their ideal visual representation on TV, in movies, in popular magazines and newspapers, in textbooks, in religious publications, and in all kinds of advertising, among other things. Unfortunately, as already mentioned, the modes of self-presentation cannot be included here because research on this field is still missing in the region.

Even though the old media system in most post-socialist countries was instantly replaced by a market-oriented system, this applies more to the press than the broadcasting media. For the press there were no provisions governing foreign involvement or against concentration of capital, which resulted in an unregulated privatization of the press enterprises.[23] The deregulation of the state broadcasting monopoly in the late 1980s and early 1990s in combination

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[19] Purgar, Krešimir. 2019. *Pictorial Appearing. Image Theory After Representation.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 17-25.
[20] Stocchetti, *Images*, 3; Stocchetti, *Digital Visuality*, 38.
[21] Stocchetti, *Images*, 3.
[22] Stocchetti, Matteo and Karin Kukkonen. 2011. *Introduction*, in *Images in Use*, edited by Stocchetti, Matteo and Karin Kukkonen. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1-7; Stocchetti, *Images*, 3-4.
[23] Peruško, Zrinjka and Helena Popoviç. 2008. *Media Concentration Trends in Central and Eastern Europe*, in *Finding the Right Place on the Map. Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective*, edited by Jakubowicz, Karol and Miklós Sükösd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 169-70.

with digitalization have led to a radical transformation of the whole media sector.

The main investors in the newly emerging radio, television, and press markets were and are German, Scandinavian and Swiss, but also include US-based and US-owned media groups. While US-based media groups conquered the audio-visual sector,[24] the main investors in television were various European and US media groups.[25] In many countries, the global companies are in partnership with local players in the ownership and control of licences, but the know-how and technological and program modernization, as well as the imports of program bouquets are determined by the foreign partners who provide the financial input.[26]

The extensive liberalization and commercialization of the media market had at least two significant consequences for the creation of new visual *utopia*, primarily of femininities but ultimately also of masculinities:

(1) The transformation from the socialist economic system into a capitalist free market meant a complete change of gender ideology. Many women desired now to do away with the repressive imposition of the ideologically controlled definition of femininity and to become part of the imagistic fantasy created of the visuals of Western advertising – both visually and discursively.[27]

(2) The commercialization of the media sphere included the wholesale adoption of Western genres and formats, such as reality TV, lifestyle magazines, tabloid newspapers, and a variety of soft and hard-core pornographic products. The privatized and commercially financed media not only overwhelmingly portrayed women in highly sexualized and commodified ways that were unprecedented in socialist times but in addition, emerging media culture often went beyond simply copying Western media trends and took them to new extremes in their local adaptations.[28]

Among the most successful local adaptation genres besides Turkish soap operas[29] was the tremendous commercial success of the popular combination of soft porn and folk music in the 1990s and 2000s with sexualized female stars in the center of performances, called turbo-folk[30] in Serbia and *chalga*[31] in Bulgaria.

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[24] Viacom, the Walt Disney Company, AOL Time Warner, Liberty Media, Central European Media Enterprises Ltd — CME, Scandinavian Broadcasting System SA SBS (Peruško and Popoviç 2008, 171-79).

[25] SBS (Viacom), CME (Estée Lauder), MTG (Kinnevik), RTL (Bertelsmann), LARI (Lagardère, HBO (Time Warner), UPC (Liberty Media), as well as the Canal+ group, Murdoch's News Corp, Endemol and AGB (Peruško and Popoviç, *Media Concentration*).

[26] Peruško and Popoviç, *Media Concentration*, 171-79.

[27] Ibroscheva, *Advertising*.

[28] Kaneva, Nadia and Elza Ibroscheva. 2015. Pin-Ups, Strippers, and Centerfolds: Gendered Mediation and Post-Socialist Political Culture. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 18(2), 224-41.

[29] Kaser, Karl. 2013. *Andere Blicke: Religion und Visuelle Kulturen auf dem Balkan und im Nahen Osten.* Vienna / Cologne: Böhlau; Frank, Anna. 2016. *Representations of Contemporary Turkey, the Ottoman Empire, Islam, and Gender Through the Phenomenon of Modern Pop Culture the Case of Turkish Soap Operas in the Western Balkans*, in *Islam in the Balkans. Unexpired Hope. Demolishing Mentality Which Demolishes Bridges*, edited by Kafkasyali, Muhammet S. Ankara: Tika, 43-76.

[30] The origins of this newly composed rock-, pop-, and techno-variant of Serb folk music, played on modern instruments, is in the Yugoslavia of the 1970s but the term turbo-folk came into use only in the 1990s. Infiltrated with nationalist rhetoric, the quality of music and most of its singers was low, their popularity high, especially among the young generation.

[31] Also, the idea of *chalga* is a mixture of various musical styles and traditions. The components of this fusion include Serbian, North Macedonian, Greek, Turkish popular music and various styles of

It should be emphasized that this genre, with its strong roots in indigenous culture, does not constitute a pure xerox of a western pattern. This genre was and still is not only popular in these two countries of origin, but also in most of the other Balkan countries. It popularized a very particular physical appearance of females: excessively large breasts, small waist, blonde hair, pouty lips, and glamorous make-up. Coupled with the magnetic power of the market, where this specific look sells, the formula of turbo folk became an instant success.[32]

On the other hand, Islamic media in the hands of emerging powerful Islamic media moguls, especially in Turkey, developed counter to sexualized mainstream media. In contrast to the mainstream press and broadcasting, these newspapers and movies were much more conservative and puritan about the female images, with no tolerance for nudity. Having this in mind, the final section will address the different logics behind a seemingly ever-increasing gap between porno-chic cultures and veiling-chic cultures.

5 *Utopia*: Porno-chic and Veiling-chic

This concluding section will investigate the aforementioned two emerging tendencies in the visual representation of femininities and masculinities seemingly polarizing into "porno-chic cultures" and "veiling-chic cultures." I would like to emphasize that these are only exemplary models with a full range of varieties in between. This emerging transformation of Kemalist and socialist mainstream into veiling-chic and porno-chic can be traced back to the late 1980s/early 1990s.

Porno-chic cultures were and partly still are characterized by their not unconditional western orientation in fashion, consumption, body presentation, and sexual ideals after the breakdown of socialism, as the examples of turbo folk and *chalga* prove. The term porno-chic refers to the tendency arriving from "the West" to visually present and perform body characteristics as much as possible. "Pornified" or "porno-chic" culture describes the ways in which sex as an end in itself has become more visible in contemporary western cultures, emphasized in the digital age by stressing sexuality in SNSs. Whereas "sexualization of culture" or "hyper-sexualization" refers to a wide range of cultural phenomena, "pornification" is a more specific term pointing to the increased visibility of hardcore and softcore pornography, and the blurring of boundaries between the pornographic and the mainstream. This shift of boundaries led to the pornographization of media culture. Contemporary constructions of new femininities no longer depict women as passive sex objects but as active, desiring sexual subjects who seem to participate enthusiastically in practices and forms of self-representation.[33]

Balkan Romani music and Western pop, rock, techno, and rap. At its stylistic core, *chalga* features very distinguishable rhythmic patterns also associated with "oriental" or belly-dance (Kurkela, Vesa. 2007. *Bulgarian Chalga on Video: Oriental Stereotypes, Mafia Exoticism, and Politics*, in *Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourse*, edited by Donna A. Buchanan. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 143-75; Gochev, Georgi. 2017. Poetics of the Chàlga Star. *Balkanski forum* (1), 76-85.

[32] Ibroscheva, *Advertising*, 94-95.

[33] Duits, Linda and Liesbet van Zoonen. 2006. Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the European Multicultural Society. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(2), 103-17; Ringrose, Jessica. 2013. *Are You Sexy, Flirty, or a Slut? Exploring 'Sexualization' and How Teen Girls Perform/Negotiate Digital Sexual Identity on Social Networking Sites*, in *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity,* edited by Gill, Rosalind and Christina Scharff.

It has to be emphasised that this enthusiasm for "the West" lacks any religious support references, since relevant forces in Orthodoxy have been traditionally rather sceptical of the "harmful" impacts from the non-Orthodox western world. On the contrary, veiling-chic cultures do not have any reason to refer to western models, and Muslim religious forces and activists frequently reject any "advice" from western feminists or human rights activists. The term veiling-chic indicates that veiling has departed as a powerful religious-political statement some thirty ago and has arrived as primarily global fashion business that has lost much of its original meaning.
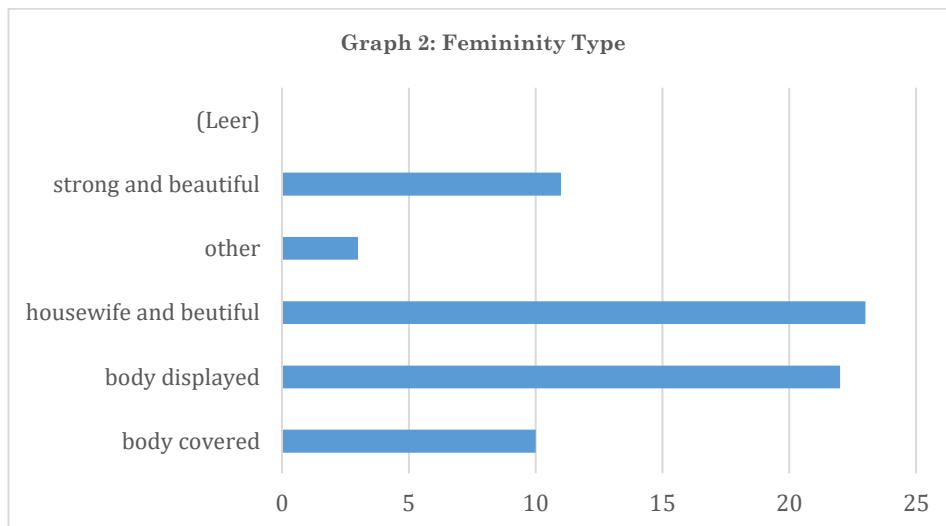
The core operation of my analytical procedure that reveals *utopia* consists of a quantitative bibliometric-analysis. The material for this analysis consists of thousands of magazine ads, hundreds of TV ads, visual representations of men and women in more than a dozen daily newspapers, and in more than one hundred textbooks. The full details of this operation cannot be described here. An important reminder is that whereas the level of *realia* reflects the status quo, the level of *utopia* reflects wishful thinking, something that is in the air but not yet mainstream.

The most important result of my investigation is the revelation of a remarkable difference between the hegemonic femininity and hegemonic masculinity of *realia* and those of *utopia*. Whereas hegemonic masculinity of *realia* has half a dozen rivals, utopian hegemonic masculinity has no nonhegemonic masculinities as potential rivals; whereas hegemonic femininity of *realia* has no rival, utopian hegemonic femininity has four nonhegemonic femininities as potential rivals.

Graph 1: Masculinity Type
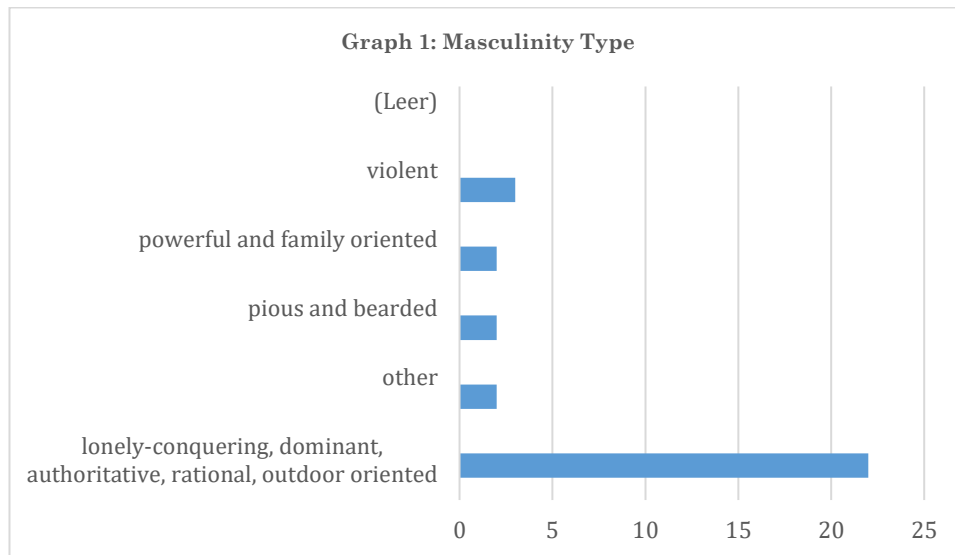
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 99-116; Jackson, Sue, and Tina Vares. 2013. *Media 'Sluts': 'Tween' Girls' Negotiations of Postfeminist Sexual Subjectivities in Popular Culture,* in *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity,* edited by Gill, Rosalind and Christina Scharff. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 134-46; Gill, Rosalind. 2014. *Supersexualize Me! Advertising and the 'Midriffs',* in *Mainstreaming Sex. The Sexualization of Western Culture*, edited by Attwood, Feona. London: I.B. Tauris, 93-109.

Graph 1 shows that the masculinity type "lonely-conquering, dominant, authoritative, rational, outdoor oriented" ("Marlboro man") is clearly hegemonic, whereas the religious type "pious and bearded," and the secular types "powerful and family oriented" and "violent" play a marginal role and are not even listed as nonhegemonic. Among the four quantitatively prevailing femininity types (graph 2) the two types "housewife and beautiful" and "body displayed" stand out with almost equal "votes." The main reason why I dare to privilege the type "housewife and beautiful" as hegemonic and downgrade the superwoman "body displayed" as nonhegemonic is that the first addresses primarily married women and the second (as well as the third) unmarried ones. In societies that with some deviances clearly prefer married women as fully integrated, and unmarried ones at a certain age with some suspicion, it is unlikely that the unmarried superwoman type can claim the status of being hegemonic. However, where the two types converge is that they indicate a clear prevalence of traditional secular visualizations of young women.

Graph 2: Femininity Type

Type	Value
(Leer)	0
strong and beautiful	11
other	3
housewife and beutiful	23
body displayed	22
body covered	10

The third type "strong and beautiful" refers most likely to the neoliberal western new femininities emerging out of discourses of sexual agency that have been seen as central to the development of new femininities as part of a broader shift in which older markers of femininity such as homemaking skills and maternal instincts have been joined by those of image creation, body work, and sexual desire.[34]

Conclusions
The results of my research are actually much more complex than presented here. (1) My overall conclusion is that the period of re-traditionalization in the "wild 1990s" and not so wild 2000s was a temporal one and has started to fade out in the 2010s at the latest. Of course, this fading-out will never end completely (not

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[34] Attwood, Feona. 2013. *Through the Looking Glass? Sexual Agency and Subjectification Online*, in *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity,* edited by Gill, Rosalind and Christina Scharff. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 203-14.

only in the Balkans and South Caucasus but worldwide); *realia* and *utopia* of femininities and masculinities seem to reverse from their seemingly one-way street into re-traditionalization to Western-like features by keeping some local/regional peculiarities. This reversal is more obvious on the *utopia* level than on the *realia* level, which is lagging behind.

(2) The conflicting antagonism of porno-chic and veiling-chic is also in a phase of fading out, caused by, among other things, the powerful dynamics digital visuality offers to both camps. Porno-chic is disappearing gradually from the street (probably not from the beach) but reappears in the blogosphere – a dynamic that is clearly visible in western countries. Veiling-chic will not disappear from the streets because veiling as fashion has become a global Muslim phenomenon. The blogosphere is here probably less used as a forum of self-presentation but rather as a sphere used by emerging small-scale producers and retailers.

(3) The most challenging task was to investigate the complex interrelation between *realia* and *utopia*, between actually practiced gender relations as they emerge from results of primarily sociological and demographical research and the visualized utopian visions of femininities and masculinities reflected in various forms of advertising and other visual drafts for the future. It has become clear that there is not a simple cause-effect relationship between *utopia* and *realia* and that the apparent differences between these two layers exist primarily as results of analysis but not in the real world. These local and regional *realia*-types of femininity and masculinity intersect with four *utopian* femininities and one hegemonic masculinity that have their origins almost exclusively in the West, which is especially true for the hegemonic masculinity type, the "Marlboro Man," and the non-hegemonic femininity type "strong and beautiful." The emergence of this later type constitutes a true surprise because this woman is strong and unmarried, making her life independently of a man's dominance, protection, and support.

If it is true that media are sensitive to new developments in society, then we can interpret the emergence of the "strong and beautiful" femininity type as a convincing indicator of a gradual change toward rebalanced gender relations. Eventually – keeping in mind that research results are not without contradiction – I dare provokingly to conclude that *utopia* will sooner become *realia* than *realia* will be become a long-lasting *utopia*.

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