ABSTRACT: In the period of post-war transition, knowledge production on gender and feminism remained the focus of individual scholars and activists who had a difficult time attempting to integrate it into the educational system, with the exception of a few gender and women studies programs that were largely supported by international donors.
Believing that knowledge should inform activism and that in return, activism can provide feedback on knowledge impact and relevance, the entire course of my scholarly and activist work was about bridging the gap between academia and civil society organizations, but also about bridging the secular–religious divide in the Balkans region.
I argue that feminist knowledge production in the Balkans semi-periphery is artificially divided between secular and religious feminist circles. Just as feminists from the center marginalize feminists in the Balkans with neocolonial approaches and cultural hegemony, secular feminists in the semi-periphery ignore religious feminism with similar fashion.
Multiple exclusion made religious feminist knowledge production invisible and unrecognized in academia and women's activism. Only in rare cases did secular feminists ally themselves with religious feminists and showed sensibility and the need to involve them equally with their own arguments in feminist knowledge production, because many believed religion to be one of the main causes of gender discrimination and irreconcilable with feminist agendas. Many religious feminists, however, were standing shoulder to shoulder with secular feminists in their struggle for gender equality.
KEY WORDS: Feminism, secular, religious, periphery, semi-periphery, and knowledge production
APSTRAKT: U periodu tranzicije, produkcija znanja o rodu i feminizmu bila je u fokusu pojedinih znanstvenika/ca i aktivista/ica koji su imali poteškoće u nastojanjima da to znanje integriraju u obrazovni sistem, izuzevši nekoliko rodnih i ženskih studijskih programa koji su u najvećoj mjeri podržavali međunarodni donatori. Smatrajući da znanje treba da informira aktivizam, ali i da aktivizam osigura povratnu informaciju o utjecaju i relevantnosti znanja, čitav moj i znanstveni i aktivistički rad je bio usmjeren na prevazilaženje jaza koji postoji između akademskog i nevladinog sektora, ali i podjele koja postoji na relaciji sekularno–religijsko na području Balkana.

Argumentiram da je feministička proizvodnja znanja na balkanskoj polu-periferiji neprirodno podijeljena na sekularne i religijske krugove. Na isti način na koji feministice iz centra marginaliziraju feministice na Balkanu svojim neokolonijalnim pristupima i kulturnom hegemonijom, sekularne feministice na polu-periferiji ignoriraju religijski feminizam. Brojna međusobna isključivanja doprinijela su tome da feministička proizvodnja znanja bude nevidljiva i nepriznata u akademskim krugovima i u ženskom aktivizmu. Samo u rijetkim slučajevima sekularne feministice se povezuju sa religijskim feministicama i pokazuju senzibilitet i potrebu da ih podjednako uključe sa njihovim argumentima u feminističkoj proizvodnji znanja, jer mnoge od njih smatraju da je religija jedan od uzroka rodne diskriminacije i da se ne može uskladiti sa feminističkim agendama djelovanja. Ipak, veliki broj religijskih feministica stajale su rame uz rame sa sekularnim feministicama u borbi za rodnu ravnopravnost.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: feminizam sekularno, religijsko periferija, polu-periferija, produkcija znanja

Introduction

The world, international politics, education and economy operate on a variety of dualisms and one the most persistent is the secular-religious divide that marked the second half of 20th century and the beginning of 21st century. According to secularization theory (Berger, 1999) religion should have been defeated and eventually vanquished during post-Enlightenment modernization and technological progress. However, Berger and other scholars left the secularization theory because it proved to be wrong. The void of spiritual vacuum made traditional religions popular, just to get back “metaphysically satisfying notions of transcendence” (Terlizzese, 2009: 110).

Many scholars today insist on the existence of a secular-religious divide characterized by irreconcilable secular and religious perspectives on gender equality. Antagonism between religion and secularism as well as between secular and religious feminists continues to put the two in opposition, but Joan W. Scott (27: 2013) finds they are discursively co-dependent. Secularization after the French revolution did not bring women into politics and make them
equal to men. Even suffrage rights, right to education, workforce and political engagement did not bring about the sought-after equality. International human rights norms and standards included more and more conventions, declarations and resolutions to support and emphasize what had already been granted by the core human rights documents. There was a wide gap however, between what was specified by legislation and results in practice, a disparity that was particularly felt in regions like the Balkans, where a unique intersection of gender, religion and nationality in the war (1991–1995) and post-war context made addressing gender equality issues in practice far less straightforward.

One of the ways to examine the interplay between secular and religious feminisms is to add Immanuel Wallerstein’s division of the world in four zones: the center or the core, semi-periphery, periphery and external arena (1984). Merely introducing this simple framework shows us that we in fact deal with very complex division tapestry that affects the knowledge production and the role of feminist knowledge and activism to a large extent. This is due to the nature of the interaction between the zones themselves, and the imbalances in power, knowledge production, and knowledge transfer.

The Balkans is a semiperiphery to the Western center, but within the Balkans semiperiphery itself, religious feminist academic and civil society discourses are the periphery. Secular feminism as a periphery of secularism shows similar behavior in its own discourse and activism to its center. In the semiperiphery of Western secularist scholarship is Western liberal feminism, which, as Chandra Mohanty points out, assumes a Western-centric viewpoint in scholarship as well as activism without considering its position relative to the cultural and geopolitical context of the region in question. (1984: 335–336) Furthermore, Western feminist scholarship often legitimatizes the liberated Western Woman vs. oppressed Third World Woman dichotomy, which has the effect of supporting existing power asymmetries that contribute to the very cycle of oppression that they are trying to eradicate.

I want to contribute to this debate of inclusion and exclusion between the center and the semiperiphery with the relations or lack of relations between secular and religious feminism. My thesis is that feminist knowledge production in the Balkans semiperiphery is artificially divided between secular and religious feminist circles. Just as feminists from the center marginalize feminists in the Balkans with neocolonial approaches and cultural hegemony, secular feminists in the semiperiphery ignore religious feminism.

It is important to note that while secular Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in many cases created a space for gender and religion to become topics of learning and discourse, (Spahić Siljak, 2013) they did not, on the other hand, make an effort to include religious feminism into academia and the mainstream struggle for gender equality. This is due to the phenomenon that Mohanty observes in her piece on colonial discourse in mainstream feminist writing, where she points out a disconnect between scholarship and practice can lead to a politicization of practice (1984: 335).
Exclusion and Inclusion of Religious Feminism in Academic and Activist Discourse

In his book, *The Geopolitics of Academic Writing*, the renowned scholar Canagarajah A. Suresh elaborates on institutional and material constraints for scholars and researches in the periphery and semiperiphery – the economically disadvantaged world. The Balkans is definitely both economically impoverished and ethnically divided and dwells on the semiperiphery of Europe. It is not actually beyond Europe's geographical borders, so it is not considered a periphery and yet due to its social, cultural and political realm it is not part of the center. As Marina Blagojević notices “It is classified as either North or South, depending on some formal criteria (EU Enlargement) and gender policies, donors, activities...” (2009: 32)

Torn by contradictory impulses from the semiperiphery and the center, gender theoretical and activist development has not been recognized in its full capacity. Most academic researchers and activists in CSOs are funded by foreign donors, who rarely acknowledge their local peculiarities and local context requirements.

With regards to gender equality, the post-war contexts of BiH and the rest of the Balkans countries that are not yet part of EU are marked with poverty, nationalism, and ethnic/religious homogenization. These countries are under pressure to purse modernization and become part of the core – the European Union and the same time to maintain its traditional, cultural and religious values. On one hand there is the Western secular paradigm that strives to assimilate all the local efforts in the semiperiphery for gender equality into that particular framework, with emphasis on civil and political rights and individual freedom. On the other hand, there is a local culture that is heavily impregnated with customs and religious norms that govern family lives and consequently women's lives and is relevant to many women today (Spahić Šiljak, 2010), both as an epistemological and a civic framework. The agendas coined in European and other western international centers very often do not resonate with the needs and the contexts in which they are intended to be applied. Top-down approach in activism and academic discourse requires local culture to comply with the requirements coined in the center.

It has to be taken into account that knowledge production goes hand in hand with capital and language hegemony that requires all the work to be published in English and written in a specific style if authors want wider dissemination, relevance and acknowledgement. In the last couple of years, knowledge production has also been influenced by religious fundamentalism visible in Catholic Churches around Europe as well as in some Muslim communities. One has to be cautious about power relations and privileges of the center if it dictates science and research trends, legitimizes epistemic frameworks and includes or excludes those from semiperiphery or periphery based on their readiness to comply with their standards.
Feminists from the Balkans semiperiphery collaborate with western feminists, but as Marina Baglojević found out, power relations dictate these relations all the way from the center (2009: 39). Many secular feminists have access to funding, resources and jobs in academia while religious feminists and their work are completely marginalized. Some religious feminists in BiH and Croatia are also persecuted, as gender ideologists who are working against family and traditional cultural and religious values by their own churches and religious communities. Jadranka Rebeka Anić is one of them. As soon as she published the book *How to Understand Gender? History of the Debate and Different Understandings in the Church*, she faced enormous pressure inside the church and started to be portrayed as gender ideologist, and someone who promoted homosexuality under the cover of gender equality.

Religiously based feminism in the Balkans started in small circles of scholars in the late 1970s. Catholic female theologians were the first in the Balkans to write about feminist theology in former Yugoslavia. Reactions to the post Second Vatican Council development first appeared in Croatia in several publications, but these women and their academic reflections were not part of the secular academic discourse in Yugoslavia. Just as secular feminism was available mostly to academic circles at universities, religious feminism was also visible only among scholars focused on liberation theology in the Catholic tradition in Croatia. In Orthodox Christianity and Islam in the Balkans, feminist theology did not exist as a notion, and not a single text originated in the socialist time that could be categorized as a work of feminist theology within these two religious traditions.

Feminist and religious identities were highly contested and “being a feminist was not acceptable, but being religious feminist was inconceivable and is still today” (Spahić Šiljak, 2013: 178). There were very few religious feminist voices that were not connected to secular feminist movement that challenged the status quo of the socialist regime, which was not interested in discussing gender issues outside the framework of the Socialist state (Benderly, 1997). Socialism did not support autonomous movements, including the feminist movement in Yugoslavia (Momčinović-Popov, 2013: 87), because it had a limited understanding of freedom. Gender equality was reduced to “woman's question” that should be resolved by the state policy (Ibid: 88). Religious feminists remained excluded and experienced triple marginalization: by the state, secular feminists and their own religious communities and churches. (Spahić Šiljak, 2013: 179).

Religion was marginalized from the public life and the socialist state did not want feminism and religion in the public light. That changed in 1990s with revival of religion, which is an important part of identity and the main demarcation line between South Slavic ethnic groups. Socialist ideology (1945–1990) was replaced by ethnonational and ethnoreligious ideology that used religion as powerful tool of mobilization in the wars (Mojzes, 1994).

When the war started in 1991, many international organizations, including feminist ones, came to the Balkans and brought along their own secular feminist agendas; some of them however, like Medica Mondaile from Germany also showed sensibility to the local context and when they established Medica Zenica
in 1993\(^2\), they included religion in the process of healing. Muslim theologians worked with wartime rape women, because majority of survivors were Muslims. This is one of rare examples of inclusion of local tradition and religion into the bigger picture of feminist activist agenda. They recognized the potential of religion in healing and religion was a strong copying mechanism to many women who found refuge in religion.

For me and other colleagues who worked in Medica Zenica feminism was born out of our grass-root activism. At that time most of us were not familiar with gender and feminism, and our work and activism informed and formed our feminism. Out of shared moments of suffering with survivors and creativity to answer their questions of deep pain feminist theology was born (Spahić Šiljak, 2013: 180). We however learned how to name it when we continued our studies and recognized that the work we did was genuine grass-root religious feminism.

Secular feminist agendas in the Balkans, which encompassed a range networks and initiatives, did not include religion as one of the important aspects of human life in this region. Very often they ignored religious feminist work and efforts in promotion of women’s rights and deconstruction of the nature/culture dichotomy that was borrowed and integrated in interpretive traditions of monotheistic religions from secular disciplines.

During the process of EU accession, many local CSOs established EU policies and norms as prerequisites for modernization while ignoring local practices, local researches and norms that also can contribute to modernization and development. In that way, they lose their culturally specific knowledge production that can better resonate with the local context than the “universal” knowledge and norm produced in the core. My own experience as one of the pioneers of Islamic feminism in Bosnia, as well as the examples of Catholic theologians and religious feminists activists from Croatia and Serbia, confirm the marginal position of religious feminism in relation to the main secular feminist discourse found in academia, CSOs and state gender equality bodies. Thus, religious feminists have been facing triple exclusion.

Firstly, the Western secular epistemological discourse exports “neutral” and “objective” scientific arguments requiring everyone from the semiperiphery to comply with these standards, shaped by specific vocabulary and writing style, that diminish all the richness of local styles and framework of argumentation. While certain feminist discourses, particularly those that are religiously based are considered backwards, obstacles to equality and freedom within the local context and are not taken into account at all. In her critique of secularism and liberalism Saba Mahmood discovers how secularism as sociocultural project imposes a liberal privatized model of religiosity with a number of presuppositions about the freedom and autonomy of an individual. The liberal conception of autonomy assumes that a person is “capable of enacting her own desire free from the force of transcendental will, tradition or custom.” (2009: 208) Furthermore, secularized conception of religiosity considers ritual and scriptures “inessential to the universal truth it symbolizes”. (Ibid.) Liberal feminists, therefore, cannot

---

\(^2\) http://medicazenica.org/
understand and accept for instance a Muslim woman, as an autonomous subject with free will to submit to God when she covers her head and practice modesty in clothing. Meanwhile, the existence of such Muslim women has been confirmed by many studies so far (Scott 2007, Ahmad 2012), but is still largely ignored by mainstream feminist discourse.

Secondly, local secular feminist CSOs initiatives often became politicized because a large amount of aid came from foreign donors (Helms, 2003), which precluded public secular CSO support of ideas like religious feminism, despite a great need in practice, particularly during the wartime, to bridge the gap between solutions offered by secular feminist scholarship and women's spiritual needs. Even today, for many international donors it is not acceptable to use the word „feminism“ in applications, and consequently religious feminism is also excluded.

Thirdly, state gender equality institutions, such as agencies and gender centers (ranging from the highest to local level), also exclude religious feminist scholarship and activism. Gender actions plans and policies adopted in the Balkans countries do not integrate religious feminist efforts and arguments into the pursuit of gender equality. Every fourth year these countries submit CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) to the CEDAW Committee, which then sends its recommendations for improvements to the implementation of CEDAW Convention. CSOs also send shadow reports, but religious perspective is included neither in these reports nor in the Committee recommendations and yet Article 5 of CEDAW Convention is all about elimination of discriminatory customary and cultural practices that support subordination of women to men. If a state want to eradicate discriminatory practices and stereotypes it should include religious feminist perspective into its gender equality policy and practice, because religious norms intertwined with cultural norms, in fact govern the lives of many women in this region.

Keeping in mind the Balkans semiperiphery context, in which ethnic divisions very often overlap with religious divisions and ethnic and religious identities mostly correspond to each other, it is crucial to enable more connections between feminist production of knowledge and feminist practice to avoid exclusion and marginalization those who do not follow the dictate of liberalism and secularized liberal religious subject.

Religious Feminism Survives on the Margins of the Semi-Periphery

Although the mainstream secular feminist agenda in the Balkans continued to ignore religion as one of the channels of support for gender equality, there are a few positive examples that serve as a beacon of resistance to both secular and religious ideologies on gender politics. The production of knowledge in the Balkans and the semiperiphery is generally lagging behind the center at the higher educational institutions due to unfavorable social and political climates in the
region. Feminist production of knowledge is flourishing in the post-war period even with all the challenges and limitations that come from the international donors and the state gender institutions. Feminism and feminist scholarship and activism very often have to be disguised into terms like “gender equality agenda” and “equality of sexes,” as feminism is one of those buzzwords that tend to terrify both men and women. My own researches reveal difficulties women face when they showcase their feminist identity, or even when they simply stand up for their beliefs or for themselves. They immediately get labeled as a feminist, or in the local language “genderuša” or “mahaluša,” pejorative terms that equate feminism with shallowness, empty talk or gossip. This is one of the ways to silence women’s voices and prevent them from playing a more important role in public life. “The tone used to call somebody “genderuša” is teasing and amused, decreasing the significance of her work and making her struggle irrelevant compared with “serious issues”. (Spahić Šiljak, 2012: 162–163). It means if someone wants to write “serious” scholarly work with “objective” scientific criteria and methods, she/he should avoid feminist approaches, methods and narratives. Similarly, if someone wants to write “serious” feminist work that will accepted in mainstream feminist circles, it should not be from a religious perspective, because liberal feminist subject can only accept a secularized feminist religious subject whose subjectivity is independent from transcendent will.

Multiple exclusions and power relations in knowledge production did not completely diminish the work of religious feminists and activists. Within the broader secular feminist movement there were few niches where pockets of religious feminism survived and even flourished from time to time.

Women’s studies Žarana Papić in Sarajevo was one of the first alternative educational programs launched in 1998 and gathered scholars and students to study, read and publish relevant feminist work. Initiators of the programs, the organization Women to Women, knew about my work in Medica during the war and they offered me to teach a module on gender and monotheistic religion. It was challenging to me, because I had to provide a comparative study of feminist theology in Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. That learning process opened small windows for the reach of feminist theology, literature and research that flourished in the West for more than 50 years. Unlike other similar women’s studies program, this one included religious perspective in its curriculum.

Interreligious peacebuilding with religious feminism islands was opened by Marko Oršolić, a Bosnian Franciscan friar who launched the International Multireligious and Intercultural Center (IMIC) Zajedno in 1991³, continued his pioneer work in dialogue after the war. From 1998, IMIC has been working on peace and reconciliation programs and provided a space for learning and activism. Part of the program was dedicated to gender and religion and feminist theology. IMIC had a network of individuals and organization in the Balkans and collaborated with Women’s Studies in Novi Sad and other organizations that promoted gender equality. IMIC also supported the research women, religion and politics, conducted by Zilka Spahić Šiljak from 2004–2007, which was the first

³ http://imic.ba/ba/
comparative study on the anthropology of a woman in monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. After that IMIC also initiated the design of the first textbook for cultural studies on religion *Monotheistic Three Voices: introduction to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2009) as a counterpart to the doctrinal teaching of religion in public school in the Balkans. The textbook was also gender inclusive with gender sensitive language. From 2016 IMIC Zajedno with TPO Foundation began a new program Ethos of gender equality in schools and one of the results is the proceedings of student essays: *When feminism and religion encounter* (Kad se sretnu fenimizam i religija) with follow up of public debates in 2018.

Women's Studies in Novi Sad are one of the rare women studies programs that included gender and religion themes in teaching and research. Feminist theology was one of the niches in the broader program of women's studies run by professor Svenka Savić. She was interested both in feminism and interreligious dialogue and has developed several regional activities where she integrated religious feminist perspective. One of the results of these programs was the international conference on feminist theology held in Novi Sad in 2008 that yielded the book *Feminist Theology* (1999), which in turn paved the way for other programs at the University of Novi Sad to integrate gender and religion modules and initiate researches on these themes. Women's Studies organized another international conference in 2008 with the topic *Gender perspective in interreligious dialogue in XXI century* and the collections of papers were printed with the same title in 2009, and edited by Svenka Savić and Jadranka Rebeka Anić.

Religious Studies and Gender Studies Programs at the University of Sarajevo were established in 2006. The same group of scholars that designed the program for the Women's Studies Žarana Papić – scholars and professors Nirman Moranjak-Bamburać, Jasna Bakšić-Muftić, Jasmina Babić Avdispahić and Marina Blagojević Hughson – were the core team that designed the graduate Gender studies program. At the same time, a graduate Religious studies program was launched in collaboration with Arizona State University and it included an individual course on gender and religion; several other courses also integrated the gender component into their contents. The course was designed to comparatively discuss gender theories and practices from Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. The added value of this course was learning how one religion affected the interpretive processes of the other two, and how secular philosophical knowledge fueled the anthropology of women and men in relation to the Bible and the Qur’an. Jadranka Rebeka Anić, Zilka Spahić Šiljak and Svenka Savić taught the course for two years.

Gender Studies integrated one module within their existing courses. However, when Gender Studies organized its first conference in Sarajevo, they did not include religion and gender as one of the conference subtopics. One of the comments from the organizers was that they wanted to organize “real” scientific conference, which means that those who worked in the field of gender and religion were not considered “real” scientists. In the same way as Western

---

4 [http://www.zenskestudije.org.rs/](http://www.zenskestudije.org.rs/)
liberal feminists demonstrated paternalistic hegemony towards feminists in the semiperiphery, secular feminists demonstrated similar power dynamic in their interactions with religious feminists. Confining feminism into elitist circles of secular scholars is not helpful for the broader feminist agenda to achieve gender equality and equity.

Women Believers and Citizens is a unique training program launched by secular CSO TPO Foundation from Sarajevo. Between 2008 and 2011 and with the support of UNIFEM (UNWOMEN), TPO Foundation designed training materials along with a companion text Women Believers and Citizens (2009). The aim was to bridge the gap between the secular-religious understanding of human rights and gender equality. CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security were the foundation for this program, alongside with religious human rights documents. “It was the first comparative study of women’s rights within feminist theological framework and is now one of the most important materials in the local languages of BiH.” (Spahić Šiljak, 2013: 185). TPO Foundation in collaboration with other NGOs published several publications that partially include religious perspective in promotion of women’s rights and peacebuilding.

From 2016 Ecumenical Women’s Initiative from Croatia began with the same training Women Believers and Citizens for women human rights activist in the Balkans region who find religion as important argument in gender equality debate and peacebuilding.

Ecumenical Women’s Initiative financially support women from the Balkans region in their peacebuilding work, including feminist research and activism.

In Croatia at Zadar University professor Inga Tomić Koludrović invited feminist theologian Rebeka Anić to teach the course “Women and Church” for the Sociology department from 2006–2008. Catholic Theology in Split also included one-semester course “Women in Church and Society” in 2010.

The Franciscan Institute for Peace in Split also included gender and religion in its work and they published Jadranka Rebeka Anić’s doctoral thesis Više od zadanoga. Žene u Crkvi i društvu u Hrv. u 20. stoljeću (More Than Given: Women in Church and Society in Croatia in the 20th Century) in 2003. They also conducted two researches: 1) First one is gender identities and gender roles in Croatian society: Muško i žensko stvori ih. Žene i muškarci u življenju i u službi Božjeg poslanja) (Male and Female He Created Them. Women And Men in the Service of God’s Mission) in 2008, and the second is 2) Nasilje nad ženama – teološko pastoralni izazov (Violence Against Women– A Theological And Pastoral Challenge in 2006.).

The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar in Croatia is state institution that organized two international conferences on related topics, and they invited female theologians to take part in these discussions. The first was

5 http://www.tpo.ba/b/PublikacijeEN.html
6 http://franjevacki-institut.hr/aktivnosti/polozaj-zene
7 http://franjevacki-institut.hr/publikacije/nasilje-nad-zenama--teološko-pastoralni-izazov/20
The International Conference “Women’s Human Rights. Development on the international and national level 30 years after UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women” (2010). The Proceedings of the papers was published with the same title in 2011. The second conference was a collaboration with the European society of women in theological research and Institute Ivo Pilar’s eighth regional conference in Split that resulted in the proceedings: *And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. A Theological Approach to the Suffering and Hopes of Women.*

Some feminist scholars at different universities in Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and other Balkans countries integrate modules of feminist and gender theories within their own courses on sociology, philosophy, law, language and cultural studies. The cultural studies undergraduate program at the University of Zenica introduced a new course on Gender and culture in 2014, and Islamic feminist scholarship is included as one of the modules. Nevertheless religious feminist scholarship is completely neglected and unknown. In that way, secular feminist scholars at public universities create small elite clubs that collaborate with state gender centers and international organizations in order to produce various studies, policies and analysis that do not in turn produce impact on broader society. Ordinary women call these feminists “saloon feminists,” or “fashion feminists,” who are detached from the social and political realm of BiH and the life of average woman. Some of these feminists are in fact “fashion feminists,” while others try to also be active in CSOs as engaged intellectuals who listen, connect and try to overcome dualisms and divisions imposed on the feminist production of knowledge. Despite the fact that many women’s CSOs began to use religion as one of the arguments in their peacebuilding work, it was limited to the inclusion of faith community representatives so they could offer the viewpoints of the mainstream teachings of religion without feminist perspective. (Spahić Šiljak, 2014).

**Conclusion**

With the exception of a few initiatives that did not last long, religious feminists were excluded from the state gender policy agenda, international organization agenda and local secular feminist agenda. Many women and men shy away from the feminist label and have established religion in their lives as some form of last refuge from ruthless capitalist exploitation and hegemony, because from their perspective, they are being asked to integrate two strictly defined and seemingly mutually exclusive ideals. In order to gain these men and women as allies for the feminist cause, they need to have their religion as point of reference as well as narratives that can channels the message of equality from their traditional legacy. Instead, any attempt to excavate gender equality narratives and bridge the gap between secular-religious divide is undermined and neglected almost by everyone, except a few secular feminists who recognized its potential for incorporation into the main framework.
Literature:


Ecumenical Women’s Initiative, Omis, Croatia, http://www.eiz.hr/


International Multireligious Intercultural Center (IMIC) Zajedno, Sarajevo, http://imic.ba/ba/


Medica Zenica http://medicazenica.org/


Savić Svenka (ed.). 1999. Feministička teologija (Feminist Theology), Novi Sad: Futura publikacije.


Spahić Šiljak, Zilka and Anić Jadranka Rebeka, (eds.). 2009. I vjernice i gradanke (Women Belivers and Citizens), TPO, CIPS of the University of Sarajevo.


Spahić Šiljak, Zilka, 2010. Women, Religion & Politics. Impact of Anlysis of Interpretive religious heritage of Judaism, Christianity and Islam on the engagement of women in public life and politics, IMIC, CIPS of the University of Sarajevo, TPO Foundation.

Spahić Šiljak, Zilka (ed.). 2012. Contesting Female, Feminist and Muslim Identities. Post-socialist Contexts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo.


Women's Studies and Researches (Ženske studije i istraživanja) Novi Sad, http://www.zenskestudije.org.rs/