Women and men entering the 2014 presidential arena

Running a campaign on social media[1]

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Abstract

Women and men entering the 2014 presidential arena. Running a campaign on social media *explores how the usage of social media in the electoral campaign supports or resists representation of conventional stereotypes of femininity/masculinity and politics (such as the public man/private woman) whether women and men candidates have addressed substantive representation of women and tried to mobilize the support of women voters through specific targeted messages. Even if at the beginning of the research my intention was to focus exclusively on women entering the arena, I chose to expand the focus and address the two most preeminent men engaging in the campaign. I explain the reasons and advantages of such an approach in the research section.*

Keywords

political representation; presidential campaign; traditional media and new/social media; stereotypes; women's interests

Women and men entering the 2014 presidential arena. Running a campaign on social media

In a previous recent article I was asking how do we draw the line when it comes to gender, politics and media and stereotypical representations. In *Gender, politics and media: stereotypical representations* (2015) I argued feminists criticize how media represent women politicians due to the fact that it either **eliminates women symbolically** (more women than men are present-

ed in media) or it **stereotypically frames women** when „journalists systematically and routinely focus on women's sex and gender – emphasizing less what they do and more what they look like"[2]. At the same time, I also noticed that according to Sarah Childs women's presence in politics „might not be normalized but, rather, rendered suspect and 'other' through gendered media representations[3].

One year later I hold close to the argument that if in traditional media, journalists create gendered spaces in politics, in new media it is actors themselves who may participate in creating gendered spaces in politics, it is candidates and politicians who assume or resist traditional gender representation.

Worldwide, less women engage as candidates in presidential elections. The 2014 year marked a difference in national elections as two women (one is the president of a new political party and the other an independent politician) were candidates for the Romanian Presidency. Due to the extension of social media, candidates and politicians (may) consider them as (important) electoral tools. During the 2014 presidential campaign, Facebook was a platform used by candidates, both women and men, to communicate specific messages, to individualize their political candidacy.

Broadly, **this study explores** how the usage of social media in the electoral campaign supports or resists representation of conventional stereotypes of femininity/masculinity and politics (such as the public man/private woman) whether women and men candidates have addressed substantive representation of women and tried to mobilize the support of women voters through specific targeted messages.

Women/gender, politics and media in Romania?

Research on gender, politics and the media in Romanian politics is not at all so extended or elaborated (as studies in the US or Britain, for instance). In 2013, an MA student conducted a research for her dissertation paper under my guidance where she interviewed 10 journalists accredited at the Parliament (Senate precisely) working in television newsrooms, press agencies, public radio, online and tabloids[4].

The findings are particularly interesting when addressing stereotypical framing of politicians and the possible role played by women politicians. Adina Mihaela Huiban concluded that the journalists' answers were quite diverse and they put the blame on journalists themselves, on the editorial policy or on women politicians.

Those blaming journalists for stereotypical framing consider that:

> „journalists publish information, images, details about women's lives to raise their rating, to sell the paper, to gain more the audience of their programme in comparison with one broadcasting a book festival".[5]
> Journalists use stereotype framing „because they are superficial or due to commercial reasons".[6]

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2 Sarah Childs, *Women and British Party Politics. Descriptive, Substantive and Symbolic Representation* (New York, Routledge, 2008), 141.
For an elaborated argument, see Băluță, Oana, 2015, „Gen, politică și mass-media: reprezentări stereotipizate. Cum tragem linia?" in *Sfera Politicii* no. 183 (2015): 105-119
3 Childs, *Women*, 141.
4 Agerpres, Mediafax, Radio România Actualități (RRA), România Tv, Realitatea Tv, Antena 3, Digi 24, Libertatea.
5 Adina Huiban, „Gen, interese specifice și reprezentare politică în cazul senatoarelor din legislatura 2012-2016" (disertation thesis, The Faculty of Journalism and Communication Science, University of Bucharest, 2014).
6 Huiban, *Gen*, (disertation thesis).

One journalist blaming both her colleagues and politicians had a very interesting remark pointing towards women's agency:

> „if journalists are told from the newsroom to film high heals and short skirts, this is what they will film. It is more sad when the person, the woman MP with short skirts and high heals is willing to get into details about the subject and to show off her legs (…) As a journalist you have to ask- are you willing to let me interview you about the way you dress? – and if the lady says yes and she is willing to give details and she also shows her wardrobe to the journalist, it is her decision"[7].

In a 2015 article addressing women/gender, politics and media, I concluded that there are some specific media framings of women politicians: *young and beautiful* (women are presented as young and beautiful 'creatures'), *the wife of* (it is the husband helping them to receive a political nomination), *under the sign of the lover* (she had an affair with a preeminent man politician, perhaps a gatekeeper of the party and he supported her candidacy). None of these framings favor women politicians[8].

As we can notice, the findings and opinions are diverse: traditional media do not seem to be such a gender neutral medium as journalists view and present women on gender based stereotypes; at the same time the topic on whether women politicians conform with these norms and 'fuel' the framings needs additional research. However it is a topic to be considered more thoroughly through interviews with women politicians and journalists.

Unlike traditional media, social media may be a potential asset. In *Digital Divas: Women, Politics and Social Network*, Alexis Gelber states that „theoretically, social media should be an asset for women politicians" and it may also be an advantage for new comers[9]. The authors of the 2013 study *Women in decision-making: The role of the new media for increased political participation* identified some **hypotheses** useful for this present study focusing on presidential candidates communication through Facebook. Thus, new media might support women to overcome barriers in political participation as they display some functions: *encourage women to enter formal politics* because they help building their confidence as public actors, *empower women and girls* as new media creates the medium to „develop public selves and exercise their abilities to argue and persuade", highly important when it comes to the above mentioned portrayal of women, new media may *deconstruct dominant media narratives* and *help women politicians to bypass mainstream media* as they connect them directly with voters, they *may raise women's interest* in regards to political thinking and action by including also issues important for women and by encouraging to create networks, and they may spread awareness on women's associations and political acts[10].

Also, women MPs interviewed in *Women in decision-making: The role of the new media for increased political participation* study concluded that new media may support the profile of marginal groups and issues, including women and

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7 Huiban, *Gen*, (disertation thesis).
8 See, Băluță, Oana, 2015, „Gen, politică și mass-media: reprezentări stereotipizate. Cum tragem linia?" in *Sfera Politicii* no. 183 (2015): 105-119
9 Gelber Alexis, „Digital Divas: Women, Politics and the Social Network" (Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy Discussion Paper Series, 2011), 14, 16.
10 *Women in decision-making: The role of the new media for increased political participation,* 2013, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C –Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs European Parliament, 103, **http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/ etudes/etudes/join/2013/493010/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2013)493010_EN.pdf**

women's rights. I consider the following paragraph comprehensive enough for the potential role of social media when it comes to gender and politics, even if lengthy, I will render it as such:

> „A woman's journey into representative politics commences at being interested in politics. It is easy to see how new media tools can help to generate and sustain such interest. The next stage in the journey is when a woman puts herself forward for selection to a party election list. For this, women need a network of supporters and time. Again, it is possible to see how new media may be used to assist at this point. Women may build networks of followers and friends which can translate into real power. Such networks may be capitalized into political support and credibility. Finally, a woman must be elected and then she must progress within the political establishment. Again, a strong network would help, for which new media tools may be useful".[11]

In traditional media[12], journalists create gendered spaces in politics, in new media[13] it is actors themselves who may participate in creating gendered spaces[14] in politics, it is candidates and politicians who assume or resist traditional gender representation. In social media, candidates have control over content and choose how to present themselves during and after electoral campaigns.

Research design

Even if at the beginning of the research my intention was to collect data and analyze exclusively women entering the Presidential arena, I chose to expand the focus and address as well the two most preeminent men engaging in the campaign. It is my strong belief that the approach may provide more comprehensive data to better understand ***differences and specificities of women and men*** running for an elected office.

Women candidates

This study explores how the usage of social media in the electoral campaign supports or resists representation of conventional stereotypes of femininity and politics (such as the public man/private woman) and of the focus on women's appearance, whether women and men candidates have addressed substantive representation of women and tried to mobilize the support of women voters through specific targeted messages; interaction between men and women candidates.

So in this part, I set out to address the following questions:

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11 *Women in decision-making: The role of the new media for increased political participation,* 2013, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C –Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs European Parliament, 13, **http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/ etudes/etudes/join/2013/493010/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2013)493010_EN.pdf**

12 It refers to media types of print and broadcast media.

13 For the purpose of the study, some wide clarifications of new media are necessary. New media represents content available through internet on a digital device, it includes active participation in an interactive community: blogs, wikis, social media (Facebook, Twitter).

14 A gendered space in media: eliminates women symbolically (more women than men are presented in media) or stereotypically frames women focusing on conventional stereotypes of femininity and politics, such as the public man/private woman, or focus on women's appearance (Norris 1997; Shvedova, 2005, Childs, 2008).

- Do women support or resist representation of **conventional stereotypes of femininity and politics[15] (such as the public man/private woman)**. The American study of Kim Fridkin and Ann Gordon, *How Women Campaign for the U.S. Senate: Substance and Strategy* (1997), emphasize that „given the pervasiveness of sex stereotypes (..) women candidates may choose to play to stereotypes by emphasizing their perceived areas of strengths in their campaigns" or may focus on policy areas close to stereotypes that assume women are knowledgeable on certain issues such as education, health care and less informed on economy, justice, foreign policy[16].

  I operationalize **public man/private woman** by looking whether women candidates place greater importance on soft/compassionate issues: education, healthcare.
- Do women candidates **address substantive representation of women**? I operationalize substantive representation in connection with four issues: violence against women, work-life balance, sexual and reproductive rights (to have an abortion), gender equality. I chose these 'women's interests+ because in Romania they have mobilized the support of citizens, media, women and feminist NGOs.
- Have women tried to **mobilize the support of women voters** through specific targeted messages? I will search for messages addressed to women citizens as potential voters for women candidates. Do they see women citizens as potential voters/supporters? Do they understand women's potential as electoral supporters taking into account that they participate less than men in the electoral process?
- Do **women candidates also criticize each other** or just the men competitors? I will analyze whether a woman candidate launches critical remarks in regards to the other woman candidate or exclusively/mostly directs them towards men competitors. I also intend to understand whether their **criticism is gendered or not**.

Men candidates

The study also clarifies whether men candidates have addressed substantive representation of women and tried to mobilize the support of women voters through specific targeted messages. The main premise is men as candidates should also address women's interests as citizens as in the end one may become the President of all citizens, both men and women.

Including men candidates in the research has also the potential to allow the researcher investigate the interraction between women and men and to understand whether the inevitable criticism (of an electoral competition) address gender stereotypes, to see whether men candidates criticize each other or also women involved in the electoral competition. So in this part, I set out to address the following questions:
- Do men support or resist representation of **conventional stereotypes of masculinity and politics[17] (such as the public man/private woman)** I operationalize

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15 W**omen's appearance** is also correlated with „conventional sterotypes of femininity and politics". When it comes to whether women chose to construct their image appealing to their attractiveness or good looking, I recommend the analysis included in Băluță, Oana, 2015, „Gen, politică și mass-media: reprezentări stereotipizate. Cum tragem linia?" in *Sfera Politicii* no. 183 (2015): 105-119

16 Kim Fridkin, Ann Gordon, „How Women Campaign for the U.S. Senate: Substance and Strategy", in Pippa Norris (editor), *Women, Media and Politics*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), 61.

17 Unlike the analysis matrix used for women's Facebook campaign, I eliminated the 'good looking' references when it comes to men as stereotypes do not portray men candidates or politicians as 'beautiful creatures'.

public man/private woman by looking whether men candidates place greater importance on (so called) 'male issues': economy/taxes, justice, defense.

- Do men candidates **address substantive representation of women**? I operationalize substantive representation in connection with four issues: violence against women, work-life balance, sexual and reproductive rights (to have an abortion), gender equality. I chose these women's interests because in Romania they have mobilized support of citizens, media, women and feminist NGOs.
- Do men try to **mobilize the support of women voters** through specific targeted messages? I will search for messages addressed to women citizens as potential voters for women candidates. Do they see women citizens as potential voters/supporters? Do they understand women's potential as electoral supporters taking into account that they participate less than men in the electoral process?
- Do men candidates only criticize each other or also the women competitors? Is their criticism gendered or not?

I consider the topics relevant as they allow us understand how men bahave in the context of an electoral campaign, one that includes women candidates as well. It is important to add that the research does not answer to the following question as (even if important) it does not fall under its scope: does a candidates' popularity on Facebook have a correlation to the electoral success[18]?

Data and methods

This reasearch employes data from the **official Facebook Pages** of the four candidates for the Romanian Presidential Office in 2014. This type of research is relatively new in the field of gender, media and politics, with sources of data that need to be utilized more in the light of the expansion of social media and of Facebook as a campaigning platform. The first round of the Presidential campaign lasted one month, between the 3rd of October and 1st of November 2014. The monitoring covers only these thirty days and not the second round as well because women did not enter the second round. The candidates daily data posted on their Facebook pages were collected according to a monitoring grid [with one topic only individualized for women (image issue)]- data were registered for each candidate to allow a comparison of the issues addressed by candidates; the method used is content analysis as it helps us not only grasp a quantitative picture of their activity, but also design and recreate a gender sensitive context for candidates. The registration unit is the phrase. The **total sample** included in the research consists of **440 messages** posted by the candidates on their Presidential Facebook pages[19].

1. Conventional stereotypes of femininity/masculinity and politics

1.1 Public man/private woman: *Education, Health Care, Economy/Taxes, Justice/Anti-Corruption, Defense*

The registration in Table 1 allows us to compare the issues included in women's and men's campaign. We notice that nor women, **nor men seem to be 'prisoners' of a conventional gender agenda.** Education was a campaigning issue more for

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18 However, quick inferences can be made.

19 One limitation of this research is correlated with the time of the monitoring process.The Facebook pages of the candidates were not daily monitored, and the research continued when the campaign ended. This poses the risk for some posts to have been deleted by the user. However, I am quite reserved that the deletion included gendered sensitive Facebook messages, thus the core of the research is not affected. Also the research is more interested in how specific messages were conveyed than in the number of the Facebook posts.

Conventional stereotypes of femininity/masculinity and politics

	Education	Health Care	Economy/ Taxes	Justice/ Anticorruption	Defense
Elena Udrea	2	4	12	3	1
Monica Macovei	3	1	2	47	1
Victor Ponta	2	1	3	4	4
Klaus Iohannis	11	2	10	7	3

Table 1. Conventional stereotypes of femininity/masculinity and politics

men than for women (Klaus Iohannis, 11 posts) while the topic of economy/taxes was addressed more by a woman candidate (Elena Udrea, 12 posts). When it comes to defense, men were more vocal, however the content of the Facebook messages reveal the defense interest is more ceremonial as it is correlated with the Day of the Army celebrated on the 25th of October (3 out of 4 posts of Victor Ponta).

Interesting enough is the issue of justice/anticorruption. Generally, this is a topic largely present on both media's and politician's agenda[20]. When it comes to this particular campaign, **one woman candidate ran under the justice/anti-corruption umbrella**, Monica Macovei. I consider it a sort of a „tribute" or a reflection of her educational, professional and political background (we should remember she held the justice ministerial portfolio). The core message of Macovei's campaign was: „choose justice and anticorruption", vote for Macovei. Moreover, her campaign supporters[21] perceived her as an almost mythical fighter for justice, one example is particularly stricking:

„Monica Macovei' s sword is not the sword cutting down the heads of the innocents in front of a television camera, it is the sword of justice that has rusted for too long. And why should laws be merciful when only thousands of people affect twenty millions?" (30th of October post)

However, what we notice under this research category is **a poor correlation between gender and conventional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity.**

2. Substantive representation of women: *Violence against women, Work-life balance, Sexual and reproductive rights (to have an abortion), Gender Equality, Women (empowerment, role models)*

On women's substantive representation (as envisaged in the research), we find only two candidates appealing to gender sensitive issues in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. A woman candidate individualizes herself on the topic as she is by far the winner with 10 posts on empowerment out of 106 (approximately 10%). One man candidate, Victor Ponta did include kindergartens on a Facebook post from the 10th of October, however as it was related with international political support for another country, I chose not to register it as such as it fell aside the topic of substantive representation.

Klaus Iohannis launched one important message naming „gender equality" as such explained further on by gender balance within decision making positions in Sibiu's Town Hall. Politicians usually mention equal opportunities or equality between women and men, not gender equality which is a much broader and complex umbrella.

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20 There have been important corruption allegations and than convictions in Romania due to corruption.
21 Public intellectuals, for instance.

Substantive representation of women

	Violence against women	Work-life balance	Sexual and reproductive rights (to have an abortion)	Gender Equality (?)	Women (empowerment, role models)
Elena Udrea	0	0	0	0	10
Monica Macovei	0	0	0	0	
Victor Ponta	0	0	0	0	
Klaus Iohannis	0	0	0	1	

Table 2. Substantive representation of women

> „As the meeting from this evening has a gender sensitive topic, I would like to address it. (…) As you may be aware of, one of the inequalities wide spread in Romania is gender inequality. However, since gender equality has deep roots in my education, this rule on gender equality has been a natural one for me. For instance, in Sibiu, we have more women occupying decision making positions than men. (…) It is not an individualized trait, but the core spirit within my education and upbringing according to whom merits should be awarded no matter one's gender".

This message had 9611 Likes and 543 shares.

Elena Udrea: one can't go both ways

Unlike the other woman entering the electoral campaign, Elena Udrea had 10 Facebook messages addressing topics that fall under *Women (empowerment, role models)* category. These Facebook posts addressing women add another distinctive trait to her controversial political character. We have already seen that she embraced the image of the „sexy schoolgirl", however her actions and messages place her under a different umbrella. When we correlate the two topics: appearance and substantive representation of women, we notice she lacks consistency. **You can't have them both, you can't appropriate two rather opposable ways of action and expect citizens to perceive you as an authentic candidate, too.**

On the 6th of October she welcomed the results of presidential elections in Brazil, where Dilma Roussef won the first round, and during the last week of campaign she greeted Roussef for being elected as President of the country. Obviously the message introduced national elections, her candidacy as a woman and future support for women entering politics. We may conclude that the communication strategy on Facebook tried to maximize opportunities brought by the international political scene.

> „I am confident that the elections on the 2nd and 16th of November will prove that Romanian society underwent progress and they will reflect a woman's victory. This could be the greatest change after 1989 and a big step ahead for the country". (the 6th of October; 1469 Likes and 84 shares)

> „(…) I am confident that I'll win the elections and offer a powerful example to women to enter politics". (the 27th of October, 960 likes and 86 shares)

She once more appeals to this „relational" way of communication when she refers to a national actress in a Facebook post; Elena Udrea only mentions how the actress was dressed and her strength, nothing said about her talent or professional skills: „It was than that I realized what a powerful woman she was". (9th of October)

In other messages she emphasized women can balance their private life and career as they are „strong and determined" (11th of October), and during the same day she uploaded one of the most empowering messages addressing women (1752 likes and 62 shares):

> „We have proved enough by now! It is high time we start doing the things that complete us, we start to be ourselves, and we let go the fact that women are only tolerated".

A second message included men as gate keepers of power within a society; it gathered 1745 likes and 93 shares.

> „Men are tolerant with women, they are 'open minded' when it comes to supporting a woman's career, but with limitations over power and control of action and decision".

Other three messages are again interesting because they address women's health in the broader context of feminized professions. During her campaign she visited a textiles factory. On the 21st of October she uploaded on the Facebook page one message emphasizing she discussed about „women's issues" and about health specific problems they have as they work in this particular industry. Two days after this post, she mentioned women working in textiles again and her commitment to support a system where women workers are fairly paid (23rd of October, 2778 likes and 164 shares). However it is worth adding that the President does not have such political powers.

After having analyzed the substantive representation and the themes under this category and if we correlate it with the image findings, we notice once again how contradictory this candidacy and political candidate were. As I am familiar with the media and political landscape, I wouldn't have expected this empowerment framing of a woman candidate.

In regards to sexual and reproductive rights (to have an abortion), we have already seen in Table 2 that no candidate addressed this topic on Facebook. However Monica Macovei did refer to the theme, but on her website under the „Ten commandments" of her political programme: „Children and women need protection against family violence. Including unborn children must be protected: I am against considering abortion common, however I consider the state should have a role in education, not prohibition".[22] There is a disturbing ambiguity in her communication when it comes to women's substantive representation. When correlating this ambiguity with previous messages, positions held within European Parliament, voting behavior, public discourses on doctors' freedom of consciousness her position comes close to a conservative one.

3. Mobilize the support of women voters

Almost no candidate tried to directly **mobilize the support of women voters** through specific targeted messages: women should participate in the elections, they should also vote for their president etc. However, Monica Macovei did address women, but women mothers: „It is no joke, your vote does count. Convince your mother, convince your boyfriend or girl friend to vote" (19th of October, 1504 likes and 12 shares)

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22 **http://macoveipresedinte.ro/program-politic/10-sa-ti-respecti-identitatea/**

In the election days, more men than women participated: 48% in comparison with 52%. When it comes to the voting preferences of women citizens, women and men had different electoral preferences:

Voting preferences

	Women	Men
Elena Udrea	49%	41%
Monica Macovei	56%	44%
Victor Ponta	48%	52%
Klaus Iohannis	45%	55%

Table 3. Voting preferences

If we look at the voting distribution, we notice that among Macovei's voters women are more numerous than men and that more men gave their vote to Klaus Iohannis. I would say that it may be the case that her justice oriented messages managed to attract women voters.

4. Criticism

Criticism

Elena Udrea			Monica Macovei			Klaus Iohannis			Victor Ponta		
Monica Macovei	Victor Ponta[23]	Klaus Iohannis	Elena Udrea	Victor Ponta	Klaus Iohannis	Monica Macovei	Elena Udrea	Victor Ponta	Klaus Iohannis	Monica Macovei	Elena Udrea
0	15	24	2	16	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

Table 4. Criticism

As both women and men joined the presidential campaign we can also analyze whether their interaction on Facebook fall under conventional communication expectations, for instance **women are expected to be less critical than men**. When it comes to men, one particular research finding is interesting and it will guide my analysis. Kathleen Dolan emphasizes that one analysis of men running against women for the U.S. House of Representatives showed that „men feel constrained in their behavior when running against women in two ways": they fear to „bully" their female opponent when using negative attacks and they alter the content of the messages to address women's issues[24].

The registration in Table 4 shows interesting data in regards to **women vs women** campaign. Only one woman candidate criticized her opponent in two messages. At the beginning of her campaign, Monica Macovei explained why her opponents cannot become president, Elena Udrea was criticized due to corruption allegations affecting people close to her and for previously criticizing an anticorruption institution. However, indirect criticism was conveyed as well since Macovei mentioned corruption allegations affecting Udrea's former husband. It is worth emphasizing her remarks about Udrea as a divorcee (ex- Cocoș); still, even if it targets the

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23 1 Victor Ponta, Prime Minister, Government
24 Kathleen Dolan, „Do women candidates play to gender stereotypes? Do men candidates play to women? Candidates sex and issues priorities on Campaign Websites", *Political Research Quarterly* 1 (2005): 32.

candidates' private life, the remark falls under the overall attacks on corruption. We should also keep in mind that Monica Macovei divorced her husband as well.

Unlike Macovei, Elena Udrea heavily criticized only her male opponents: Victor Ponta and Klaus Iohannis. When looking at the amount of critical messages, we can hardly say women candidates were soft and traditional opponents. At the same time, men were barely critical on Facebook in regards to men opponents. If we situate these findings in a larger matrix of the presidential elections we may also speculate that the 'outsider' status of women may have been a stimulus (however, this needs to be further researched).

It is true that on Facebook, Victor Ponta addressed no critical remarks against his men opponent, however outside Facebook, he made negative remarks about Iohannis ethnicity and his campaign speaker commented on his status as childless. Monica Macovei reacted on her Facebook page and criticised these attackes.

Conclusions

The **hypothesis of this paper was that** if in traditional media[25], journalists create gendered spaces in politics, in new media[26] it is actors themselves who may participate in creating gendered spaces[27] in politics, both candidates and politicians may assume or resist traditional gender representation. In social media, candidates have control over content and choose how to present themselves during and after electoral campaigns. At the same time, social media may help 'outsiders fight media blockages. During her campaign, Monica Macovei did accuse television stations of creating a blockade when it comes to her appearances and emphasized she is having difficulties to gain media access.

As data show, it does appear that women ran under the sign of *justice* and *good for*.

According to the above findings, I would not deprive Elena Udrea of agency when it comes to imae and content of messages. Udrea actively assumed a special type of image, thus I do wonder whether she can be placed in Child's paradigm of *female–politician–pretender[28].* This role rather situates the results of this research closer to those recent that suggests women politicians are not simply passive recipients of media representations and they participate in their construction[29].

Image was a public asset for Elena Udrea. I can hardly argue that Facebook was a means for Elena Udrea to *deconstruct dominant media narratives* (see *Women in decision-making: The role of the new media for increased political participation)*. It is not the case to argue either that *women candidates* included also issues important for women (see substantive interests). However, despite lacking these issues on her political agenda, we find more women than men among Monica Macovei's voters (it is trues that the overall number of votes she received was much smaller in comparison to men candidates).

We notice that nor women, **nor men seem to be prisoners of a conventional gender agenda;** the research did not show that they are more concerned with the

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25 It refers to media types of print and broadcast media.
26 For the purpose of the study, some wide clarifications of new media are necessary. New media represents content available through internet on a digital device, it includes active participation in an interactive community: blogs, wikis, social media (Facebook, Twitter).
27 A gendered space in media: eliminates women symbolically (more women than men are presented in media) or stereotypically frames women focusing on conventional stereotypes of femininity and politics, such as the public man/private woman, or focus on women's appearance (Norris 1997; Shvedova, 2005, Childs, 2008).
28 Childs, *Women*, 142.
29 Childs, *Women*, 142-143.

issues. **There is rather a poor correlation between gender and conventional stereotypes of femininity and masculinity.**

One Facebook campaign has its own rules of communication and interaction. In order to understand the broader image, content, criticism topics, we need to address communication outside this platform (see above the peculiar frame of criticism or the abortion issue). For future research I recommend analysis of user's comments on the topics to better grasp the utility of Facebook and how friendly this communication platform is for women and men. One final remark regards the registration of the messages as in online content can be erased by administrators of the Facebook page (this comes out as a limitation or a possible flow of this type of research).

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