

Book review: Andreea Paul – ‘The Economic Force of Women’

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Abstract. *This article is a review of the book “The Economic Force of Women” edited by Andreea Paul. The book appeared in 2016 at the Polirom Publishing House in the ‘EcoGrafii’ collection. It is, in a way, the sequel of the earlier book “The Political Force of Women” which was published at the same publishing house in 2010. The two books are among the very few publications in Romania which explore the gender balance in the Romanian society in politics and in the labour market respectively.*

Keywords: entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs, lifelong learning, gender, gender balance

JEL Codes: Y3

1. Introduction

The book presented here has three main parts, The appearance and development of women entrepreneurs as a social class, International public policies support for women’s entrepreneurship and Women’s entrepreneurial experiences. This last part is made up of fifty-seven narratives requested by the editor, Andreea Paul, and offered by about 10% of the women to which the request had been sent. This very small answer rate prompts Andreea Paul to suggest a new angle to continue the exploration of the still very little studied area of women’s entrepreneurship in Romania.

The present book is in a way a sequel of the book published five years ago by the same publishing house and entitled The Political Force of Women. Gender studies are still relatively exotic in the Romanian academic research field while in the public domain it is still common to meet people, of both sexes, who may consider that the subject is mainly investigated by dedicated activists and should not be part of a regular research agenda or the target of current social policies. The present book is therefore a welcome addition to the Romanian literature of women’s entrepreneurial vocation and an attempt at narrowing the gap between the types of media conversations and of the academic research themes that are being discussed internationally at present.

2. Review of chapters

Even if it presents a mosaic of various narratives and testimonies of women entrepreneurs the book is well-rounded, coherent and clearly-structured looking at both social and institutional development and at the individual histories of the 57 informants.

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The first part, *The appearance and development of women entrepreneurs as a social class*, is a much needed literature review of the few historical and sociological scholarly endeavours which studied these aspects highlighting some of the role models that women in Romania have become in time. The second section of the first part, *The emergence of women entrepreneurs as social class in Romanian capitalism*, is mainly a quantitative study of the main aspects of women entrepreneurship and brings a much needed economic perspective to a field that has been mainly studied from a sociological and anthropological angle in Romania. Scanning an impressive number of both Romanian and international sources, Andreea Paul offers integrated data about women's jobs and unemployment, their incomes and economic contribution to the country's development. She also concentrates the various issues related to gender imbalances into five paradoxes that she identifies in the Romanian society: a) Romania has the lowest number of employed women in the European Union after Italy and Malta (p.28), b) the income gap between men and women in Romania is one of the lowest in the EU, being uneven across Romania, c) officially only one of two women work in Romania because of family responsibilities and child care which are the direct result of the d) low level of children attending nursery schools or kinder gardens and e) 4 out of 10 Romanian women face the risks of poverty and social exclusion, the second highest level, after Bulgaria, in the EU.

The second part of the book offers possible solutions to the many problems identified in the first part. Through sections written by Ana-Maria Ungheanu and Vladimir Války respectively the book offers examples of support measures for women's entrepreneurship that could be used by the Romanian decision makers in order to improve the gender balance in the Romanian society.

The third part presents a fascinating collection of narratives from 57 women who decided that it is important to share publicly their entrepreneurial road, their failures, fears, concerns as well as their endurance, sacrifices and ultimately success.

This book review would not be complete without presenting the following historical women, true pioneers in their respective fields (p. 16) and examples used by Andreea Paul to underline the entrepreneurial vein of Romanian women and a tradition of women entrepreneurship that need to be researched and promoted more:

- Sarmiza Bîlcescu, the first Romanian woman lawyer, the first European woman who got her bachelor degree in laws at the University of Paris and the first woman in the world with a Ph.D. in laws.
- Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu, the first woman engineer in the world.
- Virginia Andreescu Haret, possibly the first woman architect inspector general in the world.
- Sofia Ionescu-Ogrezeanu one of the first woman neuro-surgeons in the world.
- Cecilia Cuțescu-Storck, the first woman Professor of arts in Europe.

Andreea Paul also mentions two icons of Romanian entrepreneurial success of women: the well-known, internationally acknowledged Ana Aslan, a Romanian biologist and physician, who remained in popular culture as the person who defeated old-age, and the less known, but true entrepreneur and business woman

Ecaterina D. Nicolaescu, the woman who in 1906 signed with the local town hall the first contract to build what is today the most popular Romanian Black Sea resort – Mamaia.

3. Conclusions

The Economic Force of Women, edited by Andreea Paul, is not only a necessary book for the Romanian publishing field, it is also a well-written and easy to read one, being extremely interesting and inciting.

A summary in English as well as the contents presented in English would have given the book more international visibility and possibly trigger an incentive to have it translated and, thus, accessible to a much larger audience that it has today.

The conclusions offered by the editor herself are very revealing and some worth mentioning here. Using a corpus linguistic approach to her text, Andreea Paul is able to conclude that the main drivers for women entrepreneurs in Romania are work, success and dreams (words appearing in more than 100 contexts) while change, team work, planning, achievement, power, family, children and personal development are the background for their activities (words appearing more than 50 times). Leadership and innovation appear, somehow surprisingly, less than 10 times. This is relevant for the type of values women entrepreneurship have in Romania and their need for responsible leaders and decision-makers to support Romanian capital and drive the country forward.

4. Acknowledgements

We acknowledge Dr. Andreea Paul, the editor of the book presented here, who provided the book for review. Besides research and publishing, Dr. Andreea Paul has a distinguished academic career at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, being a member of the Department of International Business and Economics, as well as a highly visible political involvement as an elected representative in the Parliament of Romania.

5. References

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