

THE FUTURE IS
FEMALE...



...AND SO IS THE
PAST

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A
MORE GENDER-BALANCED
INTERPRETATION OF CONTEMPORARY
HISTORY**



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1. INTRODUCTION

This publication is part of the project “Female perspectives on the democratic transitions of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s”.

The main motivation of the project team is to provide recognition to brave women across Europe who contributed to democratization processes in their countries, resisting political violence and opposing totalitarian and authoritarian restrictions on human rights.

With this policy recommendation, we aim to support a new, more gender-balanced interpretation of contemporary history, and of the democratic transitions in particular.

While many civil initiatives across Europe, as well as the European Commission’s Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, pave the way for improvement in the future, the past remains predominantly „male“. History is still largely told and written by men.

At the training “Female perspectives on democratization” (Sofia, Bulgaria, May 9-13, 2024), the project team invited a group of teachers and youth workers from various European countries to answer the question *“Is the interpretation of contemporary history in my country gender balanced?”*

The most common answer was *“No, it isn’t and there isn’t much done to become more balanced - I don’t think it’s even a question people generally discuss or are aware of”*.

It is evident that until recently, history has been written mostly by privileged classes that ignored the perspectives of marginalized groups (women, to name just one), making them invisible in the common historical narrative. The project team believes it is necessary to offer a different model of interpretation of contemporary history, and of the democratic transitions in particular, a model that includes women's perspectives and contributions that have been mostly ignored by historiography and formal education.

The publication is a result of the collaboration of 5 civil society organizations:

- *Documenta* – Centre for dealing with the past (Croatia)
- The Future Now Association (Bulgaria)
- Lapsus – Laboratorio di analisi storica del mondo contemporaneo (Italy)
- Zavod APIS (Slovenia)
- Asociacion Las ninas del tul (Spain)

In the next chapters, each organization presents:

- the historical context of the democratic transition in their country: the transition from socialism to democracy in Bulgaria, the breakup of Yugoslavia and the democratic transitions in Croatia and Slovenia, non-institutional democratization in Italy in the 1970s, characterized by the “strategy of tension”, and the Spanish transition to democracy after the regime of Francisco Franco
- time witnesses and women's contributions explored in the scope of the project in order to promote female perspectives on the topics
- examples of good practices that promote a more inclusive and gender-balanced understanding of history



Clay workshop “850 women for 850 women” in Zagreb, Croatia
March 2023

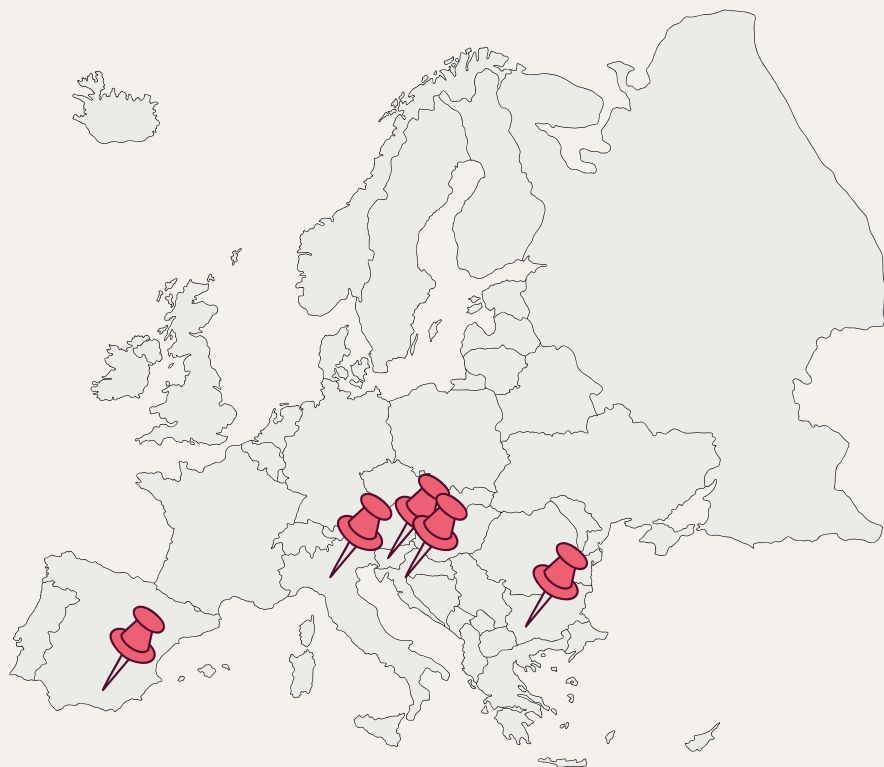
The publication also brings concrete recommendations on further actions that promote gender-balanced narratives in formal and non-formal education. This action plan for combating gender disparity in history understanding is the result of the feedback gathered during the project.

In March 2024, the partners organized 5 public debates, engaging policymakers, multipliers such as teachers, journalists, curators, etc., as well as decision-makers, and citizens. All discussions were focused on raising awareness of the underrepresentation of women, their perspectives, and their contributions in the historical narratives in Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain.

As a result of each debate, the project team collected concrete steps to improve the representation of women in history education.

Working towards a more inclusive and gender-balanced historical narrative of Europe's recent past is a long and intricate process that we want to promote and support. We hope that this policy recommendation will be useful to youth workers, teachers, and policymakers who can implement the collected suggestions for further action.

2. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION



2.1. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SLOVENIA

- **Historical context and background**

Who contributed to the peace movement and democratization process in Slovenia, and who should be included in our collective memory? At APIS Institute in Slovenia, we embarked on a quest to gather female perspectives on the post-World War II democratization process. This endeavor was crucial because many impactful events affecting civilians, including children, were overlooked in historical and contemporary debates for too long.

We produced four podcasts featuring time witnesses, each answering a fundamental question: "What experiences from your life can motivate young people in Europe?" Antonija Senčar, Spomenka Hribar, Svetlana Slapšak, and Nataša Serec shared their stories.

Our goal was to preserve direct testimonies about women, democratization, and the peace movement in Slovenia, which are largely unknown. Each witness carries a valuable message for today's youth, emphasizing peace, equality, and democracy.

We selected these witnesses to provide a chronological insight into contributions shaping the Europe we know today, spanning from World War II to modernity. Their accounts include childhood exile during the war, repression under socialism, challenges during democratization, and the creation of alternative social and cultural models in contemporary times. Through these stories, we explore the impact of individual actions on society and interpersonal relationships.

2.1. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SLOVENIA

These podcasts prompt reflection on the actions of those in power: do they foster conflict and division, or collaboration and respect? They invite listeners to consider the historical context and adopt an empathetic approach, encouraging them to step into the shoes of others and listen attentively.

Post-listening, we encourage asking additional questions to foster critical thinking among young people, promoting engaged and informed citizenship when utilized effectively.

- **Women's contributions to explore**

Are you ready to hear compelling stories of courage and resilience? Begin by meeting **Antonija (Tončka) Senčar**, born in 1935, who endured exile and Germanization during World War II as a young child. At just six years old, her name was changed and she was sent to labor camps, returning home after the war to resume her education. Senčar now shares her intimate narrative with young audiences, emphasizing the significance of family, values, and community during hardship.

Next, delve into the story of **Dr. Spomenka Hribar**, a pivotal figure in Slovenia's independence movement. Born in 1941, she made profound contributions during the country's transition to independence in the early 1990s. Dr. Hribar's influence was marked by her fearless entry into politics in 1991, challenging societal norms through her impactful essay 'Guilt and Sin'. Her insights on justice, solidarity, and equality resonate deeply, offering a thought-provoking exploration of compassion and love in contemporary society.

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Interview with Spomenka Hribar



Interview with Nataša Serec

2.1. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SLOVENIA

Explore the life of **Svetlana Slapšak**, born in 1948, an anthropologist and advocate for human rights. Despite facing police brutality in the late 1960s as a student in Belgrade, she remained steadfast in her pursuit of justice and freedom of expression. Her journey from activism in Serbia to becoming a respected scholar and peace advocate in Slovenia is a testament to her unwavering spirit and commitment.

Finally, meet **Nataša Serec**, born in 1969, a pivotal figure in the establishment of Ljubljana's Autonomous Cultural Center Metelkova Mesto in the 1990s. Her narrative centers around the transformative year of 1993, when she and hundreds of others defiantly defended Metelkova from demolition, turning it into a dynamic cultural hub. As President of KUD Mreža, she continues to nurture artistic expression and community engagement, offering a captivating glimpse into Metelkova's evolution and its enduring impact on Slovenia's cultural landscape.

These compelling narratives offer profound insights into resilience, activism, and community building, making each podcast a captivating journey through history and personal courage.

When listened to together, they provide insights into the female perspective on democratization processes in Slovenia, encompassing the transition from socialism to democracy.

2.1. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SLOVENIA

- **Good practices that promote a more inclusive and gender-balanced understanding of history**

1. Encounter with a time witness

Children and young people love meeting people and “specialists” in person. We tested this method with time witness Antonija Senčar visiting two groups of university students. A podcast could play a similar role.

At a special event, students have met Ms. Tončka Senčar (born 1935), a retired teacher, author, and witness to exile during World War II. Meeting a time witness is a unique opportunity, offering direct contact with someone who experienced something profoundly meaningful and impactful, meeting the audience at their level of understanding. Facilitation by an expert or safe space facilitator enhances the experience.

Students will hear firsthand about the often-overlooked topic of exile, with Ms. Senčar providing an intimate evaluation of the period, emphasizing family, values, and community. This encounter prompts a reevaluation of exile experiences, encouraging students to express their thoughts and emotions while learning empathy and active listening.

Educators, historians, and survivors stress the unique role of time witnesses in education. They prompt future generations to reflect on past events like war, exile, or internment, and their lasting impacts.

In conclusion, events like those with Ms. Senčar underscore the importance of personal encounters with time witnesses, fostering historical understanding and empathy among young people.

2.1. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SLOVENIA

2. Development of critical thinking

In Svetlana Slapšak's podcast, we delve into the essence of critical thinking through structured debate, posing three pivotal questions for young minds to ponder on. This method fosters a deeper understanding of democratic principles by encouraging reflection on Slapšak's narratives:

- How did historical context shape her activism?
- What personal sacrifices did she endure for her beliefs?
- How did her experiences in the past influence her views on freedom of expression?

By engaging in such debates, students not only dissect Slapšak's journey but also cultivate analytical skills, empathy, and the ability to evaluate diverse perspectives—an integral part of democratic citizenship.

This approach transcends passive learning, empowering youth to articulate informed opinions and navigate complexities in today's democratic discourse with clarity and insight.

3. Study visit

Imagine embarking on a study visit to Metelkova in Ljubljana, where you have the extraordinary opportunity to meet Nataša Serec, a key figure in its creation. As you step into this vibrant cultural enclave, guided by Ms. Serec herself, the atmosphere is electric with creativity and history. Ms. Serec, your guide, illuminates how Metelkova evolved from a military barracks into a dynamic cultural enclave, shaped by her efforts and community resilience since 1993.

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This firsthand encounter enriches young visitors profoundly. They witness the transformation of urban space through art and activism, learning from Ms. Serec's experiences about the power of grassroots initiatives. Her narrative highlights the importance of community solidarity and creative expression in fostering social change.

By engaging with Ms. Serec at Metelkova, students gain insights into cultural activism and alternative social models. They see firsthand how individuals like her can challenge norms and create inclusive, vibrant spaces that celebrate diversity.

Embarking on a study visit to Metelkova in Ljubljana offers educators a powerful opportunity to engage students in experiential learning, where they can directly explore cultural activism and community dynamics under the guidance of Nataša Serec, enriching their educational experience with practical insights and real-world applications



Study visit in Metelkova, Ljubljana (July 2023)

2.2. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SPAIN

- **Historical context and background**

Las Niñas del Tul focused on the Spanish transition to democracy, following the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975. This marked a crucial period in the country's history, particularly for the advancement of women's rights. The dictatorship imposed strict conservative norms that severely limited the rights and freedoms of people, especially discriminated groups like women. However, the transition period, from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, brought deep social, political, and cultural changes, preparing the ground for gender equality and the feminist movement in the country.

During the dictatorship, women were confined to traditional roles, with restricted access to employment, education, and political participation. The transition period, therefore, represented a significant opportunity for the transformation of society. One of the critical aspects of this era was the beginning of the feminist movement, which had a crucial role in advocating for women's rights and equality. Also, during this period, some important facts must be highlighted, like the 1978 Spanish Constitution, which opened the door to a democracy based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It recognized the equality of men and women before the law, setting a legal foundation for further advancements in women's rights. From that moment, several legal reforms took place, like the legalization of divorce (1981), the decriminalization of adultery and contraception, and the introduction of measures to protect women's labor rights. Also, some feminist groups and organizations were born during this period, such as the Women's Democratic Movement (Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres) and the Feminist Party of Spain (Partido Feminista de España). These groups were important to raise awareness and fight for legislative changes.

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The transition period also witnessed a significant increase in women's political participation. They began to have presence in the legislative process. Gender issues were included in the political agenda. Today, Spain is recognized as a role model in gender equality and feminist policies. This transformation can be traced back to the transition period. Since then, Spain has implemented progressive changes such as gender parity laws and measures against gender-based violence. When we examine this period with a gender lens we can understand better the historical context, the feminist movement's impact, and the journey towards gender equality. Spain's evolution from a repressive regime to a feminist reference serves as an inspiring example of how the transformation of society can be achieved through advocacy and legislative reforms.

- **Women's contributions to explore**

In this project, we interviewed several women who were actively involved in the struggle for rights during the transition period and afterwards. These interviews gave us valuable insights with the personal experiences they shared. They highlighted the challenges their families faced and the strategies they used to fight for gender equality.

Ana Ibáñez

She shared with us an insightful perspective on the Spanish transition. Through her personal stories, particularly about her mother's struggles, for example to access contraception, she illustrated perfectly the conservative nature of Spanish society during that time. Ana highlighted the constant fight for women's rights giving a clear picture of the obstacles faced by women. Also, her story brought the historical period to life, making it relatable and tangible for modern audiences.

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Ana's reflections on her mother's experiences and her own life connected the past and present, showing the progress Spain made regarding equality these issues. Also, her ability to include personal anecdotes generates an atmosphere of empathy and deeper comprehension of the struggles that women endured during the transition and afterwards.

Elena Sánchez

Elena, a high school teacher, brought a valuable perspective to our podcast by sharing her personal and professional insights on the Spanish transition. Elena discussed her mother's experiences during the transition period, creating a personal connection to the historical events. Her mother's stories of dealing with the challenges were really enlightening. As an educator, Elena emphasized the crucial role of education in fostering critical thinking and social awareness. She reflected on how the transition period brought the need for educational reforms to promote gender equality and empower future generations. She highlighted the importance of teaching students to think critically about history, society, and their own roles within it, explaining that education should not only be about factual knowledge but also encourage students to question and challenge the norms. By boosting a critical mindset, educators can help students to recognize issues related to gender inequality and social justice.

Marisa Viruéz

Marisa, the president of Las Niñas del Tul, was the first person we interviewed for our podcast. As a dedicated social worker, she provided a deep perspective on the era of the Spanish transition, highlighting the intersectionality of various social issues. She spoke about the repression experienced during the Franco's regime, based on her own experiences and observations.

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Her insights into the social challenges faced by women, especially those pursuing higher education and careers, were very enlightening. Also, she discussed about the social expectations and restrictions that made it difficult for women to advance professionally. Furthermore, Marisa emphasized the importance of the transition period for advancing women's rights and promoting inclusion. Also for changing oppressive norms. Some topics that were also on the table were inclusive language or the complexity of the feminist movement. Additionally, she shared her personal experience as a lesbian, detailing difficulties faced by women who did not conform to heterosexual norms. Her narrative shed light on the discrimination and social stigma that LGBTQIA+ people face, even nowadays. While listening to the podcast, we can easily see her ability to talk about repression, the significance of the transition, the importance of inclusive language, and the challenges of being a woman in a conservative society.

Yolanda Matarán and Raquel Matarán

Yolanda and Raquel, aunt and niece, gave us rich reflections about the Spanish transition. Raquel, as a researcher of Francoist mass graves, gave a deep historical perspective on the repression and violence of the era, highlighting the darker aspects of Spain's past and giving valuable information about the historical context that helps to understand this period better. Regarding Yolanda, she shared powerful personal stories of repression and the struggle for women's rights. She recounted vivid experiences, such as the legalization of the Communist Party and encounters with police violence, highlighting the intense political challenges faced by activists. Yolanda's stories highlight the courage and resilience of women during the transition, bringing to life the fight for equality and justice. Together, their combined perspectives created a comprehensive narrative of the transition period.

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Creation of the podcast “Female perspectives on democratization” in Spain

2.2. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN SPAIN

- **Good practices that promote a more inclusive and gender-balanced understanding of history**

1. Creation of informative podcasts with a gender perspective

A good practice of our project was the development of a series of informative podcasts because they helped to disseminate knowledge about the Spanish transition from a gender perspective, making the historical context accessible to a broader audience. Each episode gives many details and interesting information about women who experienced the transition, with plenty of personal stories about resistance and activism. The podcasts made the complex historical context of the Spanish Transition accessible to the audience. Also, each podcast episode provides details and interesting information about women who experienced the transition in different ways, so we can learn from this the importance of listening to the witnesses to learn to create more critical discourses about history. Plus, the personal stories shared in the podcasts were impactful with narratives that covered a wide range of experiences, from activism and political involvement to personal struggles for autonomy and freedom. By highlighting these individual stories, the podcasts made the historical period more relatable and engaging, allowing listeners to connect emotionally with the material.

2. Intergenerational dialogues

We organized a successful workshop in Íllora, bringing together more than 30 older women who lived through the Franco's era and the transition. This workshop created a unique intergenerational space for sharing experiences and learning from each other.

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The older women related their personal stories and struggles during Franco's dictatorship and the transition period after it. Their narratives provided many accounts of the social and political challenges faced by women during those times. It was a great opportunity for meaningful conversations full of empathy, understanding, and a deeper connection between generations. It highlighted the importance of preserving oral histories and using them to educate and inspire future generations. In addition to this, policymakers from the field of gender equality also came. Their presence enriched the discussions, offering perspectives on how historical experiences can inform today's policies and initiatives. This workshop contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of Spain's history and the struggle for gender equality, demonstrating the power of storytelling of older women.

3. Workshops with gender perspectives

Another valuable practice in our project was the possibility of creating diverse and critical history workshops based on the content of our podcasts. These workshops can be designed to explore various aspects of the Spanish transition with a gender lens. They can be useful for participants to think critically about historical events and social changes. Moreover, the workshops fostering critical thinking and analytical skills, empowering participants to challenge traditional narratives and explore new perspectives of the historical context. Furthermore, they can be inclusive spaces that welcomed diverse voices and experiences, encouraging participants from different backgrounds to share their thoughts. We can put the example of the workshop developed in Sofia, Bulgaria, where the recent history of Spain was explained with a focus on feminist perspectives.

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The workshop aimed to engage participants through interactive and educational activities emphasizing the relevance of gender equality and women's rights. One of the highlights of the workshop was a group activity designed as a quiz contest where participants formed teams and competed in answering questions related to significant events in Spanish history with gender perspective. This interactive format not only tested their knowledge but also encouraged teamwork and collaboration among participants. Throughout this kind of workshop, we can incorporate discussions on the challenges faced by women in Spain during different historical epochs, from the Flaco's dictatorship to the democratic transition. They can be guided by our podcast series.



Workshop on the Spanish transition (May, 2024)

2.3. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN ITALY

- **Historical context and background**

In the analysis of democratic transitions, a significant observation is that not all transitions come from formal institutional changes. Some emerge from grassroots responses to urgent demands for social and political transformation. In Italy, such a period of transformation was marked by a reaction to planned efforts aimed at undermining democratic rights, encapsulated by the term "Strategy of Tension" (1969-1974).

The year 1968 is globally synonymous with a season of protests and change, but in Italy, this momentum was part of a broader modernization process spanning from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. This period, often referred to as "the long '68", was characterized by economic and social changes, such as the Economic Miracle, the implementation of mandatory middle school education, and significant internal migration from the South to the North and from rural areas to cities. These transformations led to a shift in personal and collective behaviors, particularly among youth and women, and were reflected in new lifestyles and cultural consumption models. New organizations and demands emerged from various social sectors, expressing the frustrations and aspirations of women, students, and young people. Notably, a new wave of class struggle arose in the industrial sector, peaking during the "Hot Autumn" of 1969.

To understand the Strategy of Tension, it is essential to revisit a seemingly marginal event: the Political and Military Studies Conference held at the Hotel Parco dei Principi in Rome in 1965. The conference, which centered on the "Revolutionary War," brought together representatives from the Italian Defense Department, business personalities, journalists, academics, and right-wing terrorists like Pino Rauti, Stefano Delle Chiaie, and Mario Merlino.

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This gathering underscored a consensus on using all necessary means to combat the perceived communist threat, including methods beyond democratic legality.

The Strategy of Tension was dramatically inaugurated on December 12, 1969, with the bomb attack at the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura in Milan's Fontana Square, killing sixteen people and injuring eighty-eight. This period saw 4,584 attacks between 1969 and 1975, 83% of which were attributed to the right-wing subversive groups, resulting in 113 deaths and 351 injuries. These attacks were initially blamed on far-left groups, particularly anarchists, but subsequent investigations revealed the involvement of neo-fascist groups and their connections with state and international authorities. The investigations were often sabotaged by public institution elements to obscure these connections.

In response to this state of affairs, the 1970s witnessed a political and cultural ferment that challenged the Strategy of Tension through counter-information and counter-inquiry.

The gender perspective of the struggles

The 1960s and 1970s in Italy were also a period of significant social change driven by political and social struggles. Several factors contributed to these transformations:

- **Urbanization and Educational Advances:** Most Italians moved to urban areas, reducing the necessity for large families needed in agricultural work. Women began to receive better education, and by 1972, there were a quarter of a million female graduates. This educational advancement allowed women to pursue careers, gain financial independence, and find alternatives to traditional roles.

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- Feminist Organizations: Groups like DEMAU, Anabasi, Rivolta Femminile, Il Cerchio Spezzato, and Sottosopra emerged, bringing second-wave and radical feminist ideas to Italy.
- Legal and Social Reforms: Significant milestones included the passage of Italy's first divorce law in 1970, confirmed by a national referendum in 1974. By the late 1970s, civil marriages and non-marital cohabitation became more common.
- The establishment of Fuori!, the first Italian organization for gay rights, in 1971.
- The enactment of Law 1044/71, establishing municipal nurseries, furthered women's independence and rights.
- Contraceptive Rights: In 1971, hormonal contraception was legalized, allowing women greater autonomy over their reproductive decisions.
- Family Law Reforms: In 1975, laws were amended to promote gender equality within families, and children born out of wedlock were granted legitimacy.
- Abortion Rights: Law 194, approved in 1978 and confirmed by a referendum in 1981, regulated voluntary termination of pregnancy.
- These legal changes and the broader social shifts they reflected marked a significant secularization of Italian society, reducing the Catholic Church's influence and promoting a more egalitarian social structure.

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- **Women's contributions to explore**

To highlight the contributions of women to these transformative years, Lapsus interviewed five women whose stories offer a personal perspective on this historical period.

Claudia Pinelli

Claudia Pinelli's life is a testament to resilience and the pursuit of justice. Born in 1961, she was deeply affected by the 1969 Fontana Square bombing, which led to the wrongful arrest and death of her father, anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli. This event was pivotal in her family's fight against state-sanctioned violence and the misdirection of justice. Claudia's narrative underscores the institutional challenges faced by those seeking justice and the critical role of solidarity in confronting oppression.

In her interview, Claudia reflects on the broader implications of her family's struggle, highlighting the institutional challenges faced by those seeking justice against state-sanctioned violence. She emphasizes the extraordinary courage required to oppose official narratives and the critical role of solidarity and collective action in confronting oppression. Despite the immense challenges, Claudia Pinelli's life and her family's strong pursuit of truth and justice leave a lasting legacy. Their story is a testament to the power of resilience and the importance of standing up for justice, even when facing overwhelming odds.

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Meeting with time witness Claudia Pinell (April, 2023)

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Vicky Franzinetti

Born in Cardiff in 1953, Vicky Franzinetti became a prominent advocate for women's rights in Italy. Moving to Turin in 1968, she engaged in activism inspired by the social movements of '67-'68. Vicky played a crucial role in establishing networks for safe and accessible abortions and promoting women's health and autonomy. Her activism extended to broader issues of women's empowerment and social justice, contributing to significant legislative changes in Italy.

Through Vicky's story, we glimpse the profound transformations of the era, marked by the convergence of social, political, and cultural movements. Her strong commitment to justice and equality continues to inspire, reminding us of the power of collective action and the enduring impact of grassroots activism. Through her involvement, Vicky Franzinetti continues to inspire us with her firm determination to make a positive difference in a broader intersectional way.

Enrica Banchelli

Enrica Banchelli's life is marked by her commitment to the rights and well-being of women and children. Coming from a working-class background, she pursued a career in education, advocating for quality care and education for children despite numerous challenges.

Throughout her journey, Enrica's advocacy extended beyond the confines of her profession, encompassing broader issues of social justice and equality. By championing the rights of women and children, she demonstrated the transformative power of struggling

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for rights and collective action. Enrica's story serves as an inspiration to all who strive to create a more equitable and inclusive society, where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and fulfill their potential.

Pat Carra

Pat Carra, an Italian artist and feminist activist, used her art to explore complex social and political issues. Her involvement in the feminist movement, particularly in Milan, led to her significant role in the Women's Library, a hub for discussion and activism.

Carra's artwork and activism emphasize the importance of authenticity, courage, and the power of artistic expression in driving social change. Her ability to navigate complex emotional and political terrain through her art has made her a revered figure in both the feminist and artistic communities. In her own words, Carra's story is one of humour and the pursuit of authenticity in challenging circumstances. She highlights the significance of friendship among women and the necessity of confronting difficult truths through art, embodying the spirit of creativity as a tool for social transformation.

Barbara Di Tommaso

Barbara Di Tommaso's journey from a curious young scout to a dedicated activist underscores the importance of curiosity and engagement in creating social change. Born in 1960, her activism focused on supporting networks of women and challenging societal norms. Throughout her personal story, Barbara emphasized the importance of self-awareness and engagement with external challenges.

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Her experiences in activism and social awareness underscored a lifelong dedication to understanding the world and striving for a more equitable future. By sharing her story, Barbara inspires others to embrace curiosity, challenge societal norms, and actively participate in shaping a better tomorrow.

- **Good practices that promote a more inclusive and gender-balanced understanding of history**

During the project, Lapsus employed various methodologies to promote a more balanced gender perspective in historical representation.

1. Podcast “Voices of struggle”

The podcast’s essence lies in the stories of remarkable yet relatable women. These aren’t high-profile politicians or renowned journalists but “everyday” women – activists, curious young minds, and resilient fighters who found collective solutions to societal challenges with creativity and empathy. From June to September 2023, we engaged in in-depth interviews, adopting a life-story approach to capture the essence of each woman's journey. This method, a staple of our testimonial collection activities, ensured clarity and accessibility for a broad audience, including non-Italian speakers.

Transcribing hours of interviews posed logistical hurdles. While AI-driven tools expedited the process, ensuring accuracy required meticulous manual review, particularly regarding sensitive or nuanced content. Our goal of producing podcasts in both Italian and English led us to employ AI translation tools. However, ensuring fidelity to the original meaning and respecting privacy considerations necessitated extensive human oversight.

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Drawing from interview excerpts, we meticulously composed scripts. For the English version, we opted for a chapter-based structure, highlighting each woman's narrative. Conversely, the Italian version delved into thematic exploration, catering to a presumed audience familiarity with Italian history. Overcoming the language barrier posed a unique challenge. AI-driven voice cloning from ElevenLabs provided a solution for English narration while maintaining authenticity and respect for the interviewees' voices. Ethical considerations guided our decisions, prioritizing transparency and sensitivity.

In essence, our podcast production journey reflects a commitment to authenticity, accessibility, and ethical storytelling, ensuring that the voices of these remarkable women resonate across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

2. Urban walk through “strategy of tension” places in Milan

This urban exploration activity traces significant historical sites related to the Fontana Square terroristic attack in Milan and the subsequent events and intoxicated narration that unfolded.

It begins at the Police Headquarters where Pietro Valpreda, a falsely accused anarchist militant, was arrested after the explosion. The narrative highlights the injustice faced by Valpreda and others who were wrongfully arrested, portraying the manipulation of media and law enforcement in the aftermath of the attack. The exploration continues to various locations such as San Babila Square, where right-wing sentiments prevailed during the 1960s, and the Basilica San Carlo, where it took place the funeral of a policeman, Antonio Annarumma, who died in the clashes that broke out at a demonstration by leftist groups.

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The tour then delves into the historical context of Italy during the Cold War era and the rise of the "Strategy of Tension", which aimed to create fear and tension within the population to justify authoritarian changes. The urban walk emphasizes the significance of the Fontana Square bombing and the subsequent investigations that followed. It discusses the death of Giuseppe Pinelli, an anarchist railway worker who died in police custody, and the conflicting narratives surrounding his death.

Those controversial narratives are well explained by the two tombstones posed in the Fontana Square. In 1977, former partisans, anarchists, and leftist militants placed a plaque without official permission in memory of Giuseppe Pinelli, describing him as "an innocent man murdered in the rooms of Milan's Central Police Station on 16.12.1969." The Christian Democratic Party immediately called for its removal, as it presented a version of events not confirmed by official inquiries but supported by those involved. Despite efforts to remove it, the plaque was destroyed in 1981 and immediately replaced with an identical one. In 1994, during roadworks, a decision was made to protect it. In 2006, at 4 am, city workers secretly replaced it with a new version stating "died tragically" instead of "murdered." Three days later, anarchists relocated the original plaque to Piazza Fontana, creating a dual commemoration with contrasting narratives. In 2016, the anarchists replaced the worn plaque with a new one stating the date as December 15, 1969.

In 2019, for the 50th anniversary of the bombing, the Municipality of Milan laid a plaque in Piazza Fontana listing the names of the 17 victims and explicitly declaring the neo-fascist group Ordine Nuovo responsible for the massacre. This is the first institutional recognition of the responsibilities of the massacre.

2.3. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN ITALY

Throughout the exploration, the importance of uncovering historical truths and challenging dominant narratives is underscored. By revisiting these sites and engaging with their complex histories, participants gain insight into the socio-political dynamics of the past and their implications for contemporary society. Ultimately, the activity serves as a means of memorializing the victims of the Fontana Square bombing and shedding light on the injustices perpetrated during this tumultuous period in Italian history.



Urban exploration tour in Milan (April, 2023)

2.3. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN ITALY

3. Round table with time witnesses Claudia Pinelli and Vicky Franzinetti

During the study visit "Women and Democratization" held in Milan from April 26th to 29th, 2023, two moments of exchange took place with the time-witnesses involved in the project's interviews.

The first moment of sharing involved Claudia Pinelli, who joined us at the conclusion of the urban walk on the strategy of tension, narrating her personal experience of those events, and later participated in a roundtable discussion with international guests. During this intense exchange, participants were able to ask her questions about her life, and reflections were shared regarding the struggle for justice and the role of families - often composed mainly of women - in the lengthy legal processes to uncover the truth about cases of institutional violence.

The second exchange involved Vicky Franzinetti, who attended online, providing her testimony on the struggles of women in the 1970s in northern Italy. Her story provided the picture of the Italian normative context in which women lived at that time and led to discussions regarding the role of women in fights for rights related to abortion, reproductive health, and female self-awareness. International guests had the opportunity to delve into technical aspects of these struggles through fruitful and dialogical exchanges. Also present at the meeting was activist Carlotta Cossutta from the "Non una di meno" ("Not One Less") network, a current project advocating for women's rights. [Here's the video of the encounter.](#)

We believe it is important to promote these kinds of practices as they allow for connecting the past with the present and encourage

2.3. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN ITALY

asking new questions about how to fight for one's rights, the presence of women in the political, social, and cultural life of the countries of origin of those involved, as well as fostering an empathetic relationship for the transmission of life stories.



Carlotta Cossutta at the discussion in Milan (April, 2023)

2.4. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN BULGARIA

- **Historical context and background**

The Future Now Association focused on the Bulgarian transition from communism to democracy, which started in 1989, and sought out the female perspectives of this transition and the context around them.

Before the political transition in 1989, women in Bulgaria experienced a dual reality under the communist regime. Officially, the government promoted gender equality, and women were encouraged to participate in the workforce and public life. Organizations like the Bulgarian Women's Committee (BWC) were established to advocate for women's rights within the socialist framework. However, despite these efforts, women often remained underrepresented in higher political and decision-making positions. The regime's top-down approach meant that women's organizations had limited autonomy, and their activities were closely aligned with the party's agenda, leaving little room for independent feminist movements. In everyday life, women were expected to be bearing the majority of housework, raising and taking care of children and elderly people, in a disproportionate ratio to men, and that has left a continuous mark on expectations in society to this day.

In the end of 1989, Bulgaria embarked on journey to a significant political shift from a one-party communist system to a multi-party democratic system. This transition was largely influenced by the broader wave of democratization sweeping through Eastern Europe, catalyzed by the policies of glasnost and perestroika introduced by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. On November 10, 1989, the long-time communist leader Todor Zhivkov was ousted from power by his

2.4. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN BULGARIA

own Politburo, which marked the beginning of the end for communist rule in Bulgaria. This event was a critical turning point, as it opened the path for political reforms and the eventual establishment of a democratic government.

Following Zhivkov's removal, Bulgaria saw the formation of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), a coalition of opposition groups that pushed for rapid political reforms. The UDF, along with reformed communists who rebranded themselves as the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), played key roles in negotiating the peaceful transition to democracy. In 1990, Bulgaria held its first free multi-party elections since World War II, which resulted in a BSP victory, but under a newly adopted democratic constitution.

The transition was not without its challenges. The early 1990s in Bulgaria were characterized by economic hardship, hyperinflation, and significant social unrest. However, the commitment to democratic principles and the influence of European integration helped to stabilize the political landscape. By the late 1990s, Bulgaria had made substantial progress in consolidating its democratic institutions, joining NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007. These achievements underscored Bulgaria's transition from a Soviet-style socialist state to a member of the democratic and economically integrated European community.

Even in 2024, there are still struggles and for many the transition may still be ongoing, with people citing issues related to leftover communist-era structures, power balances which have remained, as well as extremely high levels of corruption and continuous political instability.

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Despite the comprehensive legal framework nowadays, women in Bulgaria continue to face significant challenges and discrimination in practice. Gender pay gaps persist, as well as strong stereotypes on gender roles. Additionally, women are underrepresented in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. Issues such as domestic violence remain extremely prevalent, with many cases going unreported due to social stigma and inadequate support services, and many reported cases left unpunished. Rural areas face more pronounced gender disparities, with limited access to resources and opportunities for women. Activists and NGOs work tirelessly to address these issues, but societal attitudes and structural barriers continue to impede progress towards true gender equality.

- **Women's contributions to explore**

Veselina Antonova & Detelina Kamenova speaking on the first protests against the communist regime in Bulgaria

The first significant public protest during communist times in Bulgaria occurred in the city of Ruse in 1987. This protest was primarily driven by environmental concerns. The citizens of Ruse were suffering from severe air pollution caused by a nearby Romanian chemical plant in Giurgiu, located just across the Danube River. The plant released toxic emissions, including chlorine gas, which adversely affected the health of the local population. Despite repeated complaints to the Bulgarian authorities, little was done to address the issue, prompting the residents to take action themselves.

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In November 1987, a group of women organized a public demonstration against the pollution. This protest was unprecedented in the tightly controlled communist state, where public dissent was typically met with harsh repression. The demonstration in Ruse broke the silence on environmental issues and challenged the government's ability to protect its citizens. Although the protest was small, it gained significant attention and marked the beginning of a broader environmental movement in Bulgaria. It also set the stage for subsequent public protests that eventually contributed to the fall of the communist regime in 1989. The Ruse protest is remembered as a courageous act of civil disobedience that highlighted the growing discontent with the government's policies and inefficiencies.

The historian Veselina Antonova and the journalist Detelina Kamenova, both from Ruse, have dedicated time and effort to document the organization of the protests in Ruse. The two women are authors of the documentary "Six women" which centers around the six courageous women who initiated the protest and made way for civil disobedience against the communist rule in Bulgaria. Promoting the female contributions of the time, Veselina and Detellina are also voicing their beliefs that democracy should be protected with continuous civil actions.

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Kalina Ivanova & Ana Ivanova speaking on the reality of being children of the transition in Bulgaria and their inspired artwork – Block 1989 & Apartment 2007

The term "children of the transition" refers to those born or raised during Bulgaria's transition from communism to democracy in the 1990s. This generation experienced significant social and economic upheaval, which shaped their lives in unique ways. Growing up amidst the collapse of the socialist system and the turbulent establishment of a market economy, these children witnessed widespread poverty, unemployment, and social dislocation. Educational and healthcare systems faced severe challenges, affecting their development and prospects. Despite these hardships, this generation also benefited from increased access to information, greater personal freedoms, and the opening up of Bulgaria to the world, which brought new opportunities and cultural influences.

In the present day, the "children of the transition" are now adults and play crucial roles in Bulgarian society. However, many still grapple with the legacy of their upbringing, such as enduring economic instability and a fragile social safety net. Studies indicate that this generation often feels disconnected from the political processes that have shaped their country, as their formative years were marked by a mistrust in governmental institutions and a perception of pervasive corruption. As a result, there's a complex interplay of resilience and skepticism among these individuals, reflecting the mixed outcomes of Bulgaria's post-communist transition.

"Block 1989" is an evocative art installation that features a detailed recreation of a typical panel block apartment, a common housing type in Eastern Europe.

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Through meticulous attention to period-specific details, the installation offers a glimpse into the everyday realities of Bulgarian families just before the fall of the communist regime. It highlights the uniformity and austerity of the era, juxtaposed with personal items that convey the unique stories of the inhabitants. "Block 1989" serves as a poignant reminder of the collective memory shared by many Bulgarians who lived through this period.



Art instalation "Block 1989"

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2.4. FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN BULGARIA

"Apartment 2007" continues this narrative by depicting the same space almost two decades later, showcasing the profound changes brought about by the transition to democracy and market economy. This artwork contrasts the starkness of the communist era with the eclecticism and consumerism of post-communist Bulgaria. It reflects the social and economic transformations, including the introduction of Western goods and the shift towards a more individualistic society. Together, these installations not only document the physical and cultural shifts over time but also evoke a sense of nostalgia and critical reflection on the complex legacy of Bulgaria's transition period.

Kalina Ivanova and Ana Ivanova claim their right to spark conversation about a period of time that they have not experienced directly, but that has shaped their childhood, and not only. "Block 1989" and „Apartment 2007" have become hits on social media and accommodate a new dialogue on the past, led by the children of the transition.



Kalina Ivanova and Ana Ivanova

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- **Good practices that promote a more inclusive and gender-balanced understanding of history**

Art workshop – Drip down memory lane

We crafted a workshop, focused on the idea that there is great value in finding time and opportunity to both listen in silence while creating, and also sharing in a group with others, to further discover your attitude towards the democratic transition.

In the workshop called “Drip down memory lane”, we encourage participants to focus on emotions and express them more than to lean on specific artistic skills. With this, we hope to free them and encourage them to let their inner artists out.

During the workshop, together with the participants we listen to one of the podcasts, created within the project that presents female perspectives on the historical events. In this way, the participants have the chance to get into the topic and the mood without needing to previously prepare, and they have a collective quiet and contemplative experience while they create.

To finish, we use the power of the group to encourage participants to share, think together, and reflect on the time of transition, their own memories, the way that the democratic transition has impacted their lives. The workshop creates the opportunity to lift up a heavy topic through art, while still remaining grounded and giving it the right amount of gravity.

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Combining divisive topics with opportunities for self-reflection and building resilience

Another way we found to approach this topic, where we don't usually see it discussed, was through a combination of an informative event and another one focused on resilience and well-being. As Bulgaria still struggles with severe gender inequality, we believe that in order to talk about this topic with women, we can create a space for them to also take some space and time for their own well-being. To the information about the project and the podcasts we produced, we added tools for self-care, and opportunities for sharing worries, anxieties, and troubles. During this event, we encouraged openness and seeking out support, which we believe is truly important for this topic to have enough space to be explored.

2.5 FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN CROATIA

- **Historical context and background**

In to scope of the project *Documenta* – Centre for dealing with the past focused on democratization processes in Croatia parallel to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the wars of 1990s and the first years of the new independent state marked by illiberal democracy. During the project Documenta explored Croatia's path towards democratization as illustrated in the actions of the Antiwar Campaign of Croatia.

The Antiwar Campaign was an initiative launched in the summer of 1991 in Zagreb that became one of the most important opposition voices in Croatia, gathering antimilitarist, pacifist and civic groups and activists. This network of people contributed greatly to the development of civil society in Croatia, and in particular to the establishment and promotion of peace-building and anti-war culture, as well as the protection of human rights.

A time that saw the dissolution of Yugoslavia, for Croatia the 1990s meant a transition from a member of the socialist federation to a newly independent capitalist state. The period was marked by the Croatian war of Independence that lasted from 1991 to 1995 and resulted in more than 20 thousand victims.

One could argue that the 1990s were a difficult time for people who wanted to preserve civility and a sense of human rights. As mobilization was underway and men were getting notices to join the fighting, the Antiwar Campaign supported conscientious objectors, who didn't want or couldn't take part in the armed conflict. The activists were helping men in declaring objection to military service and demanding civilian service.

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There were also other urgent matters the Antiwar Campaign was dealing with. Under the rule of the newly established Croatian democracy, some violations of human rights were associated with Croatia's socialist past. Property which formerly belonged to Yugoslavia's communist party, the Yugoslav Army or other federal organs of former Yugoslavia was transferred to the Croatian government, which then forced the eviction of people formerly affiliated with organs of the previous regime.

The Antiwar Campaign, together with the United Nations and peace initiatives from Austria participated in the launch of an international volunteer camp in the town of Pakrac, known as the Volunteer project Pakrac.

During the war the town was heavily destroyed and divided between Croatian control and the Republic of Serbian Krajina. From January 1992 until May 1995 Pakrac was within the United Nations Protected Area West.

Organized by the Volunteer project Pakrac the international volunteers helped the reconstruction of homes and social infrastructure. They were also helping in the organization of community services for women, elderly and disabled people, as well as youth in Pakrac.

If you want to learn more about the topic, consider [the book "The Antiwar Campaign 1991-2011: The Untold Story"](#) available in English. The digitized issues of Arkzin, the fanzine of the Antiwar Campaign [can be found here](#) in Croatian.

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For women in Croatia, the 1990s were a particularly demanding time. Women were subjected to retraditionalization, repatriarchalization and the growing influence of the Catholic church, conservative and nationalistic ideas.

With war raging for several years, in their homes women were also put in a difficult position, taking care of relatives and children and providing for their families.

The pressure put on women resulted in a new wave of development in the feminist movement in Croatia with many civil society organizations emerging to fight for women's rights.



Center for women war victims, Zagreb, 1994

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- **Relevant contributions to explore**

No better time witnesses could be found for this topic than **Vesna Teršelič, Vesna Janković, and Goran Božičević** who were involved in the project, met with participants from different European countries and shared their testimonies for the production of the podcast series “Female perspectives on democratization”.

Vesna Teršelič is the founder and director of *Documenta*. The central aim of her work is to establish factual truth about the war of the 1990s and to contribute to shifting the discussion from the level of a dispute over facts towards a dialogue on interpretations as well as to support survivors and advocate acknowledgement of the suffering of war crimes victims. In doing so, she continues her previous work as director of the Center for Peace Studies, Zagreb, and as the founder and coordinator of the Antiwar Campaign of Croatia. In 1998, she was joint recipient of the Right Livelihood Award along with Katarina Kruhonja of the Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights, Osijek.

In the scope of the study visit “The 90s: Anti-war activism in Croatia and Slovenia” held in Zagreb and Ljubljana in July 2023 the participants explored the archives of the Antiwar Campaign and went through the pages of *Arkzin*, the fanzine of the Antiwar Campaign that was one of the rare publications beyond the reach of the state propaganda of the time. The editor of *Arkzin*, **Vesna Janković**, talked about the ideas behind the publication, the variety of topics covered by its authors, and the media context of Croatia during the 1990s. Vesna Janković is an experienced and independent researcher with a demonstrated history of working in the research field.

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Over the last decades she has dedicated her energy to antiwar and feminist initiatives in Croatia. She is a co-author of the book "Resisting the Evil: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention".

Goran Božičević is a peace teacher, co-founder of the Pakrac Volunteer Project (1993) and the Center for Peace Studies (1997), where he teaches Peace Building topics at Peace Studies. Initiator of MIRamiDA – the first peace building trainings in post-YU countries (since 1995). He works in all the countries of SE Europe and in Ukraine. Among the pioneers of work on the inclusion of war veterans/defenders in peace building processes. He has been writing the #miramidalija column for the H-alter.org portal since 2014. At the German Academy for Conflict Transformation since 2019, he has been teaching the topics of Constructive intervention in conflict. He is close to the traditional Christian peace churches Mennonites and Quakers. For Quaker Peace & Social Witness, he worked as a representative on the Facing the Past program from 2002 to 2009.



Meeting with time witness Goran Božičević (July, 2023)

2.5 FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIZATION IN CROATIA

- **Good practices that promote a more inclusive and gender-balanced understanding of history**

1. Educational walk “Zagreb Geography of the Fight for Women’s Rights”

On March 6 2024, ahead of International Women's Day, a group of 30 activists convened to trace the history of the feminist initiatives during the 1990s in Zagreb. The event “Zagreb Geography of the Fight for Women’s Rights” commenced at the Main Railway Station and culminated at the Centre for Women's Studies, incorporating key locations pivotal to the feminist and antiwar movements.



Educational walk “Zagreb Geography of the Fight for Women’s Rights”

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The educational walk was led by activists Rada Borić, current president of the Committee for Gender Equality of the City of Zagreb and former executive director of the Center for Women's Studies Zagreb (2008-2016), activist Vesna Teršelič, co-founder of the Antiwar Campaign of Croatia and director of Documenta - Centre dealing with the past, Nela Pamuković, coordinator of the Center for Women War Victims – Rosa, Sanda Malbaša, co-founder of CESI - Center for Education, Consulting and Research, Slavica Jakobović Fribec, activist (Academic Section “Women and Society”, Women's Group Trešnjevka, Women's Help Now) and Nevenka Fiket, co-founder of Women's Help Now: SOS-phone for women and children victims of violence.

For *Documenta* the format of educational walks involving time witnesses is one of the most efficient ways to bring together relevant female perspectives to the local public and present a more gender-balanced understanding of history.



Educational walk on the Antiwar Campaign (July, 2023)

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2. Study visit "Untold story: women and anti-war activism" in Osijek and Pakrac

Documenta and its partners on the organized the study visit "Untold story: women and anti-war activism" in Osijek and Pakrac in September 2023. Young people from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Spain gathered in Osijek to take part in our program and learn more about Croatia during and 1990s and peace and other civic initiatives in Osijek and Pakrac.

The participants took part in an educational city walk around Osijek to learn more about the city before, during, and after the war in the 1990s. The group also met with time witness Lejla Šehić Relić, civil activist since 1993. From a war refugee to the president of the Centre for European Volunteering, her intertwined personal and professional stories inspired the group to explore volunteer opportunities. Later, the participants took part in a creative workshop, based on the "conflict textiles" method. Young people could choose from photographs representing the war in Osijek and Pakrac, and then create a small textile doll representing a character that fits into the story.

The participants visited the Centre for Peace, non-violence and human rights, where the Center's director Natalija Havelka presented the organization. The Center was founded in 1992 and its activities are aimed at building peace, protecting and promoting human rights and freedoms, and promoting creative methods of conflict resolution on an individual, group, and political level.

At the Center, the group met with time witness Ivana Milas, director of Nansen Dialog Center. Ivana shared her experience of working on

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social recovery and the development of multiethnic communities after the war in the 1990s.

On September 15 the group travelled to Pakrac to learn more about the history of the Pakrac Volunteer Project. Time witness Veselinka Kastratović, a researcher in Documenta led an educational city walk around Pakrac. In the afternoon the group visited the Serbian house – a community center for the Serbian minority in Pakrac.

We consider study visits that combine the benefits of on-site and non-formal education along with meetings with relevant time witnesses to be an excellent way of introducing the project's topics to youth.



Study visit for youth in Osijek and Pakrac (September, 2023)

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3. Clay workshop "850 women for 850 women"

Organizing creative workshops is another way in which we have managed to attract participants to the project and spark their interest in female perspectives of the time.

On March 6 2023, in the House of Human Rights, Documenta organized the clay workshop "850 women for 850 women". With the workshop, on the eve of International Women's Day, we reminded the public about the suffering of women on Goli otok and Sveti Grgur. In the period from 1950 to 1956, more than 850 women accused of association with the Informbiro underwent extremely cruel torture in the camp. The suffering of women in the camp is one of a series of examples of the marginalization of women in historical research and narratives.

More than 20 women joined the workshop led by visual artist Andreja Kulunčić. The workshop is part of her artistic project "You betrayed the Party when you should have helped it", created in collaboration with feminist anthropologist Renata Jambrešić Kirin and psychotherapist Dubravka Stijačić who has many years of experience at the Vrapče Psychiatric Hospital.

At the beginning of the workshop, the participants were introduced to the testimonies of female prisoners. The women in the camp had to build paths and buildings with their own hands and with the help of primitive tools, the traces of which are visible today at the camp sites.

In the second part of the workshop, each participant made a clay figurine, symbolically dedicating it to one of the female inmates. In this way, the participants participate in the transmission of collective

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memory of the traumatic past that should not be repeated and in the creation of a moving ANTI-MONUMENT as a form of contemporary memorial practices of a violent legacy around which contemporary societies have not established a consensus.



Clay workshop “850 women for 850 women” (March, 2023)

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

This chapter presents concrete recommendations for further actions that promote a more inclusive and gender balanced historical narrative. The suggestions are direct feedback from policymakers, educators, and youth involved in the project. Along with the practices shared by the project team, these recommendations outline possibilities for further action that promotes recognition of women's contributions to the democratic transitions in Europe.

- **Organize meetings with female time witnesses**

Face-to-face interaction with women who paved the way for more democracy is a key method to provide female perspectives into the mainstream historical narrative. The impact of these meetings generates awareness of the predominantly “male” understanding of Europe's contemporary history. Bringing relevant time witnesses together with youth and educators attributes importance to women's contributions to history and promotes a better understanding of the significant role women have in protection of democracy and human rights today.

- **Collect and utilize women's testimonies**

Record, record, record! It is vital to collect testimonies of relevant time witnesses so that their voice becomes a part of memorialization and educational processes related with democratization. Depending on the format of the recording (video, audio, interviews), testimonies can serve as educational sources, advocacy tools for future action, or archival units for further research. Incorporated in documentaries, podcasts, books and publications the testimonies are an important tool against oblivion and, at the same time, arguments for promotion of a more gender balanced historical narrative.

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- **Promote research on women's contributions**

Although women have played a significant role in democratization processes across Europe, their contributions remain mainly unexplored by academia and civil society organizations. It is vital to promote research on the efforts to protect democracy and human rights as it is the basis for transfer of democratic values from one generation of Europeans to the next. Advocate for more funds allocated for such research. Institutional funding is an important sign that women's contributions are recognized in society. Crowdfunding can mobilize citizens and raise awareness on gender disparity in the understanding and teaching of history.

- **Promote on-site learning with a gender perspective**

Guided tours, educational walks, and study visits have proven to be a great way to involve citizens and youth in exploration of local history. When organizing such activities, think of ways to incorporate female voices and perspectives. Invite relevant time witnesses or researchers that can provide insight into women's contributions or the impact that the historical events had on women. If possible incorporate digital tools to include recorded testimonies or provide a glimpse of related archival materials.

- **Educate educators**

Trainings for educators, seminars, and networking events that bring together formal and non-formal educators are key for building capacities to tackle the topic of democratization and promote more female perspectives. Such events are ideal for sharing of best practices, presenting materials to be used, and exploring new

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working methods. Aim to have gender balance in the groups of teachers included and to provide equal opportunities for participation following non-discriminatory principles. Respond to the group's feedback and adapt your work to their immediate needs.

- **Build transnational cooperation**

Connect with colleagues that have similar interests and initiatives. Combining efforts on local, national, and transnational level is a must for impactful work on expanding perspectives in history understanding and teaching. Widening the focus from a local to transnational level provides an European dimension of women's contributions to democratization and allows for comparative approaches.

- **Advocate for change**

Engage policy- and decision-makers into the process of dealing with the past. Insist on policies that foster gender equality, inclusion, democratic values, and human rights. Address issues that you care about and think of ways to raise awareness about them. Advocacy or crowd-funding campaigns, artistic interventions related to women's rights and contributions to society, coordination with relevant institutions, and other public initiatives can contribute to raising awareness about women's underrepresentation in history.

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