

**WOMEN AND WORK SINCE
THE LATE MODERN PERIOD**

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**INTERNATIONAL
WORKSHOP**

**ZRC SAZU
(ATRIUM),
LJUBLJANA,
16–17
JANUARY 2025**

The aim of the workshop is to present current research in labour history, women's history, and gender studies, specifically regarding the forms, conditions, and reception of work from a gender perspective. The analysis focuses on the territory of present-day Slovenia and its neighbouring regions, with regard to their multicultural dynamics (chiefly in border and urban areas) from the mid-19th to the 20th century. This temporal and spatial scope allows for a comparative analysis of women's labour markets both in peacetime and during war, across various political and economic systems (capitalism, socialism), as well as political frameworks (Austria-Hungary, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes / Yugoslavia, occupying regimes, Allied military control, socialist Yugoslavia, and independent Slovenia). Special attention will be given to the continuities and discontinuities in the formation of women's labour markets, particularly in times of institutional and political transition that coincided with cultural and ideological turning points.

Women's work reflects the structural and historical heterogeneity of the professions in which they have established themselves over the last two centuries. The workshop will pay particular attention to work sectors framed by economic sectors: farmers (primary sector), industrial workers (secondary sector), traders (tertiary sector), teachers and medical professionals (quaternary sector). Presenters will also shed light on occupations that are harder to classify within these sectors but are crucial for understanding the processes of women's emancipation in the field of work (intellectuals, cultural workers, artists, politicians), and address the ways in which the domain of work relates to women's emancipation. The workshop will also focus on the latest research methodologies and theoretical concepts that address labour history, rural and urban history, gender history, and intellectual history, both within historiography and other social sciences and humanities. We are interested in an interdisciplinary interplay of knowledge regarding political, legislative, and broader social contexts, taking into account both collective aspects (e.g. labour legislation, trade union regulations, statistical surveys) and individual perspectives (e.g. ego-documents, personnel files), as well as the methods that interconnect them (e.g. a view of labour from the perspective of the history of emotions or discourse analysis).

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

Marta Verginella, Tanja Petrović,
Urška Strle, Jovana Mihajlović
Trbovc, Manca G. Renko

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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY
(13:00-18:00)

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| 13:00 | Registration & welcome (ZRC SAZU Atrium, Novi trg 2, Ljubljana) |
| 13:45 | Introduction by Marta Verginella, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana |
| 14:00 | Keynote Lecture by Eloisa Betti, University of Padua: <i>Reconceptualising Women's Work between Informality and Precarity. Complicating Narratives of Modernisation</i> |
| 14:25–14:30 | 5 minute break |
| 14:30–18:00 | Panel 1: From War to Post-War Experience: Women's Work Between Survival and Professionalism in Comparative Perspective |
| 14:30–16:15 | Chair: Tanja Petrović |

- Marta Verginella: *Women's Work in the Postwar Political Discourse: Italian and Yugoslavian/Slovenian Women's Newspapers and Personal Narratives Compared*
- Dagmar Wernitznig: *The Lawyer, the Physician, and the Physicist: Triangular Narratives of (De)Gendered Professions, Dis/Continuities, and Austrian Socio-Politics from c. 1918 to 1955*
- Teresa Bertilotti: *Making Do after the War. Rome, 1944–1947*
- Maria Dolores Ferrara: *Cross-Border Work and Border Dimensions: The Case of the Eastern Italian Frontier*

Discussion

16:15–16:30 Coffee Break

16:30–18:00 Chair: Katarina Keber

- Francesco Toncich: *Being a Nurse and Midwife in Borderland Contexts. The Key Study of Upper Adriatic Area (1900–1938)*
- Ewa Anna Kumelowski: *Nurse, Cook, Mother? Women's Everyday Life in the Yugoslav Partisan Medical Corps*
- Tanja Petrović: *Yugoslav Female Partisan Medical Doctors and Their Post-War Professional Trajectories*

Discussion

**FRIDAY, 17 JANUARY
(10:00–18:00)**

**10:00–13:15 Panel 2: Women's Labour Across
Boundaries and Borders: Rural-
Urban Dynamics**

10:00–11:30 Chair: Marta Verginella

- Isidora Grubački: *"Peasant Woman Question":
Debating Peasant Women's Work and Empowerment
in Interwar Yugoslavia*
- Urška Strle: *Workers in the Ljubljana Tobacco
Factory Between the Urban and the Rural*
- Anđela Pepić: *Women Industrial Workers in (Post-)
Yugoslav Spaces: Become, Live, and Lose*

Discussion

11:30–11:45 Coffee break

11:45–13:15 Chair: Urška Strle

- Nina Vodopivec: *Women Workers' Participation in
Self-managed Factories*
- Jani Kozina: *The Evolution of the Female Labour
Force in Peripheral Industrial Regions*
- Iva Kosmos: *Untold Stories on Factory's Demise,
Workers' Solidarity and Resistance – the Case of Fish
Cannery Plavica on the Island of Cres*

Discussion

13:15–14:30 Lunch break

14:30–18:00 **Panel 3: Women's Labour,
Intellectual Work, and the Arts**

14:30–16:00 Chair: Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc

- Manca G. Renko: *Women, Work, and Art in Crisis: Navigating the Interwar Yugoslavia*
- Katja Praznik: *The Double-Edged Sword of Emancipation: Women's Work and Art Work in Socialist Yugoslavia*
- Katja Kobolt: *Artistic Work for Children in Socialist Yugoslavia: Feminised Work for the Masses?*

Discussion

16:00–16:15 Coffee break

16:15–17:30 Chair: Manca G. Renko

- Ana Hofman, Adriana Sabo: *From Emancipation to Empowerment: Women's Labour in the Music Industry*
- Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc: *Working as a Woman Scientist in Socialist Yugoslavia*

Discussion

17:30 Closing remarks by Tanja Petrović

18:00 Closing reception

ABSTRACTS

Eloisa Betti:

Reconceptualising Women's Work
between Informality and Precarity.
Complicating Narratives of
Modernisation

The lecture aims to deconstruct the idea of modernisation through the lens of women's work, which has been heavily characterised by precarity and informality. Precarious work has mainly been considered by social scientists, economists, and legal experts as a new phenomenon, a characteristic feature of post-industrial society following the collapse of Fordism. However, recent gender and historical studies have challenged this perception, showing that similar forms of precarious and informal labour have long been a feature of industrial capitalism in both the global North and the global South. Adopting a gender-historical perspective, this paper compares and contrasts the different interpretations of the role of precarious work in the history of global capitalism as offered by socio-economic and legal scholars, and more recently by (women) historians, feminist theorists, and postcolonial scholars. Such a historical approach helps to challenge mainstream ideas by revealing the extent to which a supposedly universal model ("standard employment model") was a historical exception, while precarious work was instead has

been a more enduring and universal condition. Drawing on critical feminist theories, the paper deconstructs the very idea of the “standard employment model” as a universal framework for Western countries during the so-called Golden Age. From this perspective, the supposed “novelty” of precarious work was exclusively associated with the decline of standard employment relationships among men, while women had long been subject to precarious labour, as shown by gender-historical. Adopting the categories of gender and intersectionality further aids the exploration of the recent proliferation of precarious work in close relation to the debate on the global feminisation of labour as a new feature of capitalism.

Eloisa Betti is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Law, and International Studies at the University of Padua and a co-coordinator of the Feminist Labour History WG of the European Labour History Network. She holds a Ph.D. in European History from the University of Bologna where she taught Labour History from 2018 to 2023. Betti had previously served as Visiting Fellow at the School of Advanced Study – University of London and as EURIAS Fellow at the Institute for Human Science in Vienna. She has written extensively, both in Italian and English, on labour history and women’s work. Her recent publications include the monograph *Precarious Workers. History of Debates, Political Mobilization, and Labor Reforms in Italy* (CEU Press, 2022), *Women, Work, and Activism. Chapters of an Inclusive History of Labor in the Long Twentieth Century* (co-edited with L. Papastefanaki, M. Tolomelli, and S. Zimmermann, CEU Press, 2022), and journal articles “Italian Women Workers and Women Activists Between Home and Factory. The Struggle Against Labour Precarity (1950s–1970s)” (*Modern Italy*, 1, 2024) and “Working-Class Women’s Writing of Activism and Imprisonment: Political Violence and Emotions in Cold War Italy” (*Labour History*, 124, May 2023).

Marta Verginella:

Women's Work in the Postwar Political Discourse: Italian and Yugoslavian/Slovenian Women's Newspapers and Personal Narratives Compared

At the end of the Second World War, women's work took centre stage in post-war political discourse in both Italy and Yugoslavia, either because of the need for women to participate in the reconstruction of war-torn national economies or because of the employment of many widows who were unable to support themselves and their children on state aid. This paper aims to highlight the differences and similarities between these two political contexts, where both calls for modernisation and demands for women's emancipation were made by those who actively participated in the resistance, particularly young women. The paper will focus on two women's publications: the Italian magazine *Noi donne* and the Slovenian newspaper *Naša žena*. The focus of the analysis will be on their appeals to women regarding domestic work and work outside the home, on their strategies for promoting women's work, and their advocacy for legislative improvements. Attention will also be paid to the extent to which the revolutionary model of the Soviet woman influenced both newspapers, despite the fact that *Noi donne* was published in capitalist Italy and *Naša žena* in socialist Yugoslavia.

Findings from the analysis of the two newspapers will also be compared with a series of published oral and autobiographical sources, which will help establish to what extent the post-war policies aimed at increasing women's employment outside the home produced concrete results (especially in Yugoslavia, and only partially in Italy, where women's employment outside the home was opposed mainly by the Church) and determine the actual extent of women politicians' contribution to these outcomes.

Marta Verginella is a full-time Professor at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, where she teaches Theory of History at the Department of History. From 2018 to 2023 she was the principal investigator on the ERC Advanced Grant project EIRENE. Verginella has authored numerous monographs and articles on border studies, memory studies, oral history, and history of the 19th and 20th centuries. She is the author or co-author of 20 books, including *La guerra di Bruno: l'identità di confine di un antieroe triestino e sloveno* (Rome, 2015); *Terre e lasciti: pratiche testamentarie nel contado triestino fra Otto e Novecento* (Trieste, 2016); *Slovenka: prvi ženski časopis (1897–1902)* (Ljubljana, 2017); *Slovenka. Il primo giornale femminile sloveno (1879–1902)* (Trieste, 2019); *Donne e confini* (Rome, 2021); *Ženske in meje* (Ljubljana, 2022); *Women, Nationalism, and Social Networks in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918* (West Lafayette, 2023).

Dagmar Wernitznig:

The Lawyer, the Physician, and the Physicist: Triangular Narratives of (De)Gendered Professions, Dis/Continuities, and Austrian Socio-Politics from c. 1918 to 1955

The proposed paper examines the intersecting life stories of three women intellectuals who stood at the forefront of early Austrian feminist efforts to break the glass ceiling during periods of significant socio-cultural and socio-economic reconstruction. Combining a biographical approach with contrastive analysis, my talk explores the work and activism of the following protagonists, all born and raised during the *fin de siècle* (two of them in Habsburg territories that are now part of Slovenia), pioneers in the fields of law, medicine, and science. In alphabetical order:

- Antoine-Trappen, Lore (*1895 Stara Sava; †1982 Vienna), physician and president of both the Organisation der Ärztinnen Österreichs (OÄÖ) [Organization of Female Doctors in Austria] and the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA).

- Karlik, Berta (*1904 Vienna; †1990 Vienna), physicist and the first woman to achieve a full professorship at the University of Vienna and full membership in the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

- Knapitsch-Jaksche, Ilse (*1899 Ljubljana; †1979 Vienna), first female lawyer in Austria outside of the capital, Vienna.

In addition to openly and directly trespassing on and deconstructing traditionally masculine domains within the professional labour market during wartime and post-war turmoil, Antoine-Trappen, Karlik, and Knapitsch-Jaksche also engaged in “behind-the-scenes” negotiations and reform of higher education and employment conditions for female academics and scholars. Their involvement in organizations such as the Verband der akademischen Frauen Österreichs [Association of Academic Women in Austria] allowed them to mould and shape future rules and regulations regarding gender, class, and work, though not always unproblematically. My discussion and dissection of the three *vitas* will also highlight certain idiosyncrasies of their personalities and ideologies, including instances of Nazi and antisemitic sentiments. Through these character studies and using a historiographic lens, the paper will further investigate transborder contexts of emancipatory movements and developments, as well as paradigm shifts, in conjunction with gendered or un/gendered profiles and agencies of occupations.

Dagmar Wernitznig is a researcher on the MOONLIGHTING project “Ženska med nelegalnim in nereguliranim delom od srede 19. stoletja do danes” (“Women Between Illegal and Unregulated Work from the Mid-19th Century to the Present”) led by Professor Marta Verginella at the University of Ljubljana. Dagmar holds a doctorate in History from the University of Oxford and an additional Ph.D. in American Studies. She has worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow and later as an Associate Fellow at the Rothermere American Institute in Oxford. In addition to gender/women's history, her research interests include peace and conflict studies, as well as life writing.

Teresa Bertilotti

Making Do after the War.
Rome, 1944–1947

Historiography on the home front and on post-war transitions has extensively investigated the daily life, price controls, rationing of foodstuffs, and the types of food consumed; however, there is little research on the illicit trade of this period, particularly on the role that women played in it (L. Pine, 2017).

Starting with Fascist food policies (autarky and rationing) and the food shortages that plagued the country from the winter of 1941/42 (C. Helstosky, 2004; M. Legnani, 1991), this paper analyses the food market of post-war Rome. Occupied by the Nazis on 10 September 1943 and liberated on 4 June 1944, the capital experienced a severe food crisis, which was mitigated by widespread reliance on the black market. This underground economy developed primarily between shopkeepers and their customers and from this point of view also represented a form of solidarity (Mafai, 1987).

Based on police sources and memoirs, the paper aims to highlight the role of women within the intricate network of the illegal market. Women were often the final link in a long chain of illegal trade, acting as sellers – especially of foodstuffs – or producing and selling goods through their shops.

Teresa Bertilotti holds a Ph.D. from the European University Institute. Her research has mainly focused on women's education in 19th-century Italy and on second-wave feminism and its relationship to current perspectives on feminist movements. She has been a member of the executive board of the Società italiana delle storiche (Italian Association of Women Historians) and the editorial board of the journal *Genesis*. Alongside Simona Bonsignori, she edits the book series *Parola di Donna*, published by manifestolibri. Her publications include *Maestre a Lucca: Comuni e scuola pubblica nell'Italia liberale* (Brescia, La Scuola, 2006); *Il femminismo degli anni Settanta* (ed. with Anna Scattigno, Rome, Viella, 2005); *Nuovi femminismi, nuove ricerche* (ed. with Cristina Galasso, Alessandra Gissi, and Francesca Lagorio, Rome, manifestolibri, 2006; new edition 2019); *Caro Presidente: Gli italiani scrivono al Quirinale (1946-1971)* (Florence, Le Monnier-Mondadori Education, 2016); *Women's History at the Cutting Edge: An Italian Perspective* (ed., Rome, Viella, 2020).

Maria Dolores Ferrara

Cross-Border Work and Border Dimensions: The Case of the Eastern Italian Frontier

Over the past few decades, migration flows to Europe and within Europe have become increasingly relevant, both in terms of their economic and social impact and their importance in public discourse. These developments intersect with the long-standing practice of cross-border workers commuting between neighbouring and adjacent member states.

In fact, in European law, cross-border workers fall into several sub-categories: frontier workers (those who live in border regions and regularly commute across borders), posted workers (those employed by an organization primarily active in one member state but posted by that organization to another member state to carry out work on its behalf), and seasonal workers (those who stay in the country of employment for part of the year while maintaining primary residence in their home country). Cross-border workers are thus present daily, or almost daily, in both countries, their country of work and their country of residence. It is only by emphasizing this peculiarity that it is possible to develop a suitable “magnifying glass” through which this form of work is to be observed in order to understand which aspects may prove problematic to such an extent that they would represent real obstacles to mobility for people who want to engage in cross-bor-

der work. Frontier workers in particular face greater exposure to forms of discrimination based on residency – discrimination that is often subtle and difficult to eradicate. Their more or less simultaneous presence in two countries means they are subject to two different national legal systems, a situation that can result in significant issues. If these legal systems are not sufficiently regulated or properly coordinated, cross-border workers may easily encounter double claims (e.g. in terms of taxation), double denial of rights (e.g. in terms of social security), or discrimination (in terms of labour legislation). It should also be mentioned that there is not a single definition of a “cross-border worker”. The concept refers to different realities depending on whether one considers the social security aspect, and thus the European regulations governing this area, or whether one takes into account the bilateral agreements between individual countries that instead mainly regulate tax regimes: these agreements are particularly relevant in the case of cross-border workers between Switzerland/Italy and France/Italy. The paper aims to investigate, from the legal perspective of labour law, the conditions and context of cross-border work in the Upper Adriatic region along the Italian-Slovenian border in order to detect emerging critical issues – particularly from a gender perspective – and identify possible solutions to meet the protection and development needs of this border region.

Maria Dolores Ferrara is an Associate Professor of Labour Law at the Department of Legal, Language, Interpreting, and Translation Studies. She serves as the Delegate for Research Activities and Director of the 2nd level University Master's Programme in Labour Law and Social Security. Since 2023, Ferrara has also been President of CUG – Comitato Unico di Garanzia, the University Standing Committee for Equal Opportunities, the Enhancement of Workers' Wellbeing, and Against Discrimination. Maria Dolores Ferrara teaches Labour Law at the Economics and Management Department, Labour Law in Public Administration, and Artificial Intelligence and Labour Law at the Department of Legal Studies. In connection with her research activities, she participates in numerous research projects. From 2023 to 2025, she is serving as the Trieste University Unit Leader for the project "Next Generation PA: Digital Transformation for an Innovative Public Administration – NgPA", funded by the relevant Italian ministry within the competitive PRIN Programme 2022. From 2022 to 2023, she served as the Trieste University Unit Leader for the project "The Right(S) Words: Language Education Against Gender Discriminations" (RWAGD), under the Erasmus+ programme – Call 2021 – Round 1 – Key action KA2. From 2021 to 2022, she was the Principal Investigator for the project "Lavorare oltre confine. Work cross-border", funded by Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia in the context of a competitive call. Ferrara is also the author of over 100 publications, including articles, essays, and books on matters of labour law and European Union labour law. She is a member of several editorial boards of scientific journals ranked "class A" by the ANVUR (Italian National Agency for University and Research Evaluation).

Francesco Toncich

Being a Nurse and Midwife in a New Borderland Contexts. The Case Study of the Upper Adriatic Area (1900–1938)

This paper aims to analyse the development of the nursing and midwifery professions in the Upper Adriatic region during the first half of the 19th century. It examines the evolution of public health structures from the Habsburg system in the Austrian Littoral, governed by imperial health laws, to the post-First World War Italian administration in the newly formed Julian March province after November 1918. The paper also addresses the critical issue of cultural and linguistic diversity in the region, focusing on integration policies affecting Italian-, Slovenian-, Croatian-, and German-speaking professionals within both the multilingual Habsburg system and the monolingual framework later imposed under Italian (fascist) rule. Adopting a long-term perspective centred on the pivotal post-Habsburg transitional period, the paper explores various forms of labour mobility and educational opportunities, including the establishment of professional training courses for women in culturally diverse border areas and the increasing enrolment of women in medical sciences university programmes. This approach illuminates the complex interplay between health and disease, labour market demands, professional skills, linguistic diversity, social class, and cultural-linguistic identity in this multifaceted borderland context. The paper examines both traditional and

emerging employment opportunities, as well as issues of economic independence and dependence, migration, and social mobility driven by the development of health and hospital systems. It also considers forms of self-organisation within local communities that operated outside state oversight. Finally, the paper reflects on the emergence of self-awareness and identity formation – both personal and collective – among women, many of whom were single, unmarried, or widowed, stemming from their educational and professional experiences during a time of significant social and political upheaval.

Francesco Toncich's academic career began at the University of Trieste, where he earned a BA in Modern and Contemporary History. He continued his studies with an MA in Eastern European History at the University of Vienna. During this time, he collaborated with the Austrian Academy of Sciences' Research Institute for Contemporary History and contributed to the project of re-editing the Austrian Biographical Lexicon. From 2015 to 2019, Toncich pursued his doctoral research at the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Tübingen, with his doctoral thesis later being published as a scientific book by Mohr Siebeck in Tübingen in 2021. From 2020 to 2021, he held a postdoctoral position at the Research Centre for Comparative European History at the University of Paris East-Créteil. Subsequently, from 2022 to 2024, Toncich conducted research funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions fellowship and hosted by the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. His research during this period focused on the fragmentation of the Habsburg Monarchy from the perspective of public health (1918–1924).

Ewa Anna Kumelowski

Nurse, Cook, Mother? Women's Everyday Life in the Yugoslav Partisan Medical Corps

The Medical Corps of the Yugoslav Partisans was defined by a complex infrastructure heavily reliant on the participation of women, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and auxiliary staff. Their prominent presence in this sector was partially the result of the reconfiguration of traditional gender norms in building support amongst conservative rural populations. As a meeting point for a variety of actors, the *sanitet* became one of the most visible spaces in which the upheaval of gender and social relations could be observed. Whereas the contributions of young girls and women have dominated the memorialization of the Partisan Medical Corps, the role of older women (aged 50 and above), often from the countryside, has largely been relegated to the sidelines. Their presence in contemporary scholarship is primarily associated with the work of the Women's Antifascist Front (AFŽ), where their role in the procurement of vital supplies for hospitals is often cited as evidence of political emancipation. However, emerging evidence suggests that older women were sometimes actively embedded within the Partisan medical infrastructure, likely playing a crucial role in the functioning of the *sanitet*, particularly in tasks traditionally associated with domestic labour. By reconsidering wartime medical

through the lens of *care labour* rather than peacetime professional standards, this paper investigates the seemingly overlooked contributions of women over fifty to the Partisan *sanitet*. In doing so, it proposes new approaches towards understanding of the gendered dimensions of everyday experiences during the Second World War.

Ewa Anna Kumelowski is a historian of 20th century Yugoslav cultural history. Her research interests extend into expressions of everyday experiences of war, particularly amongst marginalized or otherwise overlooked populations, and into the role of culture within armed conflict. She received a joint BA in Political Science from the Freie Universität Berlin and Sciences Po Paris, after which she completed an MA in History at the Doctoral School of Sciences Po Paris in 2018. She completed her Ph.D. in 2022 as part of a cotutelle procedure between the Chair of Southeastern History at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and the CETOBaC at the EHESS in Paris. Her Ph.D. examined the history of narrative production within the visual arts scene of besieged Sarajevo through a micro-historical perspective. After she had defended her doctoral thesis, Kumelowski remained at the CETOBaC as Associate Researcher and was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for East European Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin in the Autumn of 2023. She is currently a resident at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Nantes, France, working on a project titled "Parallel fortunes: a Yugoslav Arts Scene Beyond the Yugoslav State".

Tanja Petrović

Yugoslav Female Partisan Medical Doctors and Their Post-War Professional Trajectories

Tracing the activities of female Partisan doctors in Slovenia (and the broader territory of Yugoslavia) during and after the Second World War, this paper discusses three aspects of the Partisan health system that are crucial to understanding not only how this system functioned during the war, but also its wider implications for the mobilization of women in the National Liberation Struggle and their subsequent demobilization after the war, as well as the impact of the Partisan health system on the institutional and scientific development of medicine in socialist Yugoslavia and the role played by female Partisan doctors in this development.

Firstly, through the analysis of archive materials (including reports, documents, and journals), the paper discusses the nature of medical activities within the National Liberation Movement, challenging the conventional dichotomies of background/civilian vs. frontline/military life, and work vs. combat. On one hand, the organization of the Partisan health care system was closely intertwined with existing “civilian” institutions, particularly during the initial stages of organized Partisan resistance. On the other hand, once fully established, this system mirrored many aspects of peacetime healthcare, including the existence of

clearly defined and documented protocols, a focus on knowledge generation, accumulation, and transfer, as well as on education and comprehensive record-keeping. Although the Partisan medical staff did not receive wages or participate in the labour market, their activities still represented a form of labour – they drew heavily on ‘civilian’ work experience and played a crucial role in the development of the Yugoslav health-care system after the war.

Secondly, the paper provides an analysis of memoirs, ego-documents, and interviews with female Partisan doctors to understand how they experienced the transition from war to peace on both personal and professional levels. Their roles as Partisan doctors and leaders of Partisan hospitals provided these women with professional expertise valuable in peacetime, as well as significant social capital and political and military status. The paper examines their post-war biographical trajectories and the strategies they employed to navigate their political and professional positions in the context of the significant demilitarization of female Partisan fighters after the war.

Thirdly, the paper explores how the gendered experience of female Partisan doctors influenced their post-war professional careers and contributed to the institutional, educational, and scientific advancement of medicine in post-WWII Yugoslavia.

Tanja Petrović is a principal Research Associate at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies within the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. She is the author and editor of several books, as well as numerous articles and essays, in the fields of anthropology of post-socialism, memory studies, masculinity, gender history, heritage studies, linguistic anthropology, and labour history. Her works include the monograph *Yuropa: Jugoslawisches Erbe und Zukunftsstrategien in Postjugoslawischen Gesellschaften* (Verbrecher Verlag, 2015), the edited volume *Mirroring Europe: Ideas of Europe in Europeanization in Balkan Societies* (Brill Publishing, 2014), as well as *Utopia of the Uniform: Affective Afterlives of the Yugoslav People's Army* (Duke University Press, 2024).

Isidora Grubački

The “Peasant Woman Question”: Debating Peasant Women’s Work and Empowerment in Interwar Yugoslavia

In interwar Yugoslavia, feminist organizing was predominantly an urban phenomenon. However, despite this urban focus, significant efforts were made to engage with peasant women and address their concerns within the feminist movement. Although this topic has received limited attention in historiography, Yugoslav feminists were actively concerned with the status and rights of peasant women in society. This paper explores how feminist activists in Yugoslavia approached peasant women and how they framed the “peasant woman question”. By examining case studies from interwar Belgrade and Ljubljana, the paper argues that peasant women’s work was central to discussions surrounding the “peasant woman question” during this period. It further suggests that understanding this issue is essential for analysing the diverse feminist political positions that emerged in interwar Yugoslavia.

Isidora Grubački is a historian focusing on contemporary European history and specializing in the fields of transnational women’s history and intellectual history of feminism during the interwar period. She works as a Research Assistant at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana and is currently a member of the ERC project The History of Feminist Political Thought and Women’s Rights Discourses in East Central Europe 1929–2001 (HERESSEE), hosted at the University of Vienna.

Urška Strle

Workers in the Ljubljana Tobacco Factory Between the Urban and the Rural

Based on tobacco worker registers covering the period from 1876 to 1966 and other relevant historical sources concerning the workers of the Ljubljana Tobacco Factory, this paper focuses on the workforce residing in rural areas. Empirical evidence suggests that the majority of tobacco workers, particularly women, did not live in Ljubljana during their employment at the tobacco factory but commuted from their places of origin in the suburbs. This paper examines how such commuting patterns affected both rural and urban communities, referencing studies that analyse the interdependent relationship between these types of settlement. The paper also applies the concept of the *multiple burden*, supplementing the notion of women's two- or threefold female responsibilities – reproductive, productive, and, in socialist times, representative. Historical sources clearly point to the fact that female tobacco workers in Ljubljana, particularly those from rural areas, faced an array of challenges and obstacles. In addition to their work at home and in the factory, they participated in seasonal farm labour, which – particularly where agricultural mechanization was lacking – often involved entire village communities. Furthermore, compared to their urban counterparts, women of the rural agrarian proletariat were more vulnerable to gender-based disrespect, which

stemmed from the traditional perception of women's ideal vocation and which appears to have persisted in rural environments until at least the mid-20th century. Women workers were sometimes regarded as “dubious creatures”, reflecting a moralizing discourse that linked them to adultery or even prostitution – a construct perpetuated by the patriarchy and propagated by the Catholic environment.

Urška Strle is a historian affiliated with the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Scientific Research Centre in Koper. She is particularly interested in contemporary history, especially where it intersects with aspects of migration history, women's and gender history, labour history, biographical studies, memory studies, and oral history. She has spent over a decade researching women's labour from a historical perspective and has written numerous scholarly texts in the field. Together with Marta Verginella, Strle co-edited the volume *Women and Work in the North-Eastern Adriatic* (CEUP, 2025; forthcoming).

Andela Pepić

Women Industrial Workers in Post-Yugoslav Spaces: Become, Live and Lose

This paper attempts to provide an overview of the continuum of different transformative processes at the macro, mezzo and micro levels that shaped the roles and work of women in (post-)Yugoslav spaces from the end of WWII to the late 1990s. Using a combination of historical, sociological, and economic approaches, the paper investigates the processes that had led to the increasing number of women in (post-)Yugoslav spaces becoming industrial workers and examines how these changes influenced their lived experiences across different roles (productive, reproductive, and representative). Furthermore, the paper explores how the results of these transformations, particularly privatization and deindustrialization, deprived these women of their sense of belonging and sense of ownership. This analysis is based on data from the Archive of the Antifascist Struggle of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yugoslavia, factory newspapers, movies, statistical records, and other secondary sources. The key questions addressed in the paper are: (1) how macroeconomic and social policies, accompanied by the work of the Women's Antifascist Front (AFŽ), in early socialist Yugoslavia shaped the transformation of women into industrial workers; (2) what were the different roles of women industrial workers and how they were portrayed in factory newspapers and movies; (3) how the transition process affected women industrial workers.

Anđela Pepić is an Assistant Professor at the Sociology Department at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Her Ph.D. thesis, titled *Privatization and Workers' Struggles at the European Periphery: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Industrial Giants Between 1989–2020*, focused on workers' struggles within the privatization processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (with case studies of three former industrial giants from 1989–2020). Pepić has participated in different research projects focusing on economic and social rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, labour inspections, privatization, and workers' struggles, as well as labour migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, she is coordinating the Horizon Europe project Enhancing Capacities for Quality and Impactful Research on Transformations, Labour and Migration in Southeast-Europe (RETLAMI-SEE). Her primary research interests include labour, social inequalities, workers' struggles and organizing (including trade unions and syndicalism), globalization, privatization, labour migration, and labour studies.

Nina Vodopivec

Women Workers' Participation in Self-managed Factories

This paper examines how workers' participation was experienced and understood by female production workers in self-managed factories in Slovenia. Workers' participation is interpreted in the context of experiences with factory work, work ethics, and experiences with self-management institutions – specifically workers' councils and social property. The paper addresses both the macro- and micro-political institutional levels and the issue of women workers' participation in self-management on the one hand, and women's experiences of participation and agency on the other. The paper examines women workers' insistence on their labour investments and links these experiences to the concept of moral economy. It argues that it is important to examine women workers' experiences of factory work, industrial culture, and everyday practices under socialism in order to better understand women production workers' experiences of social property and the profound feelings of dispossession that emerged with privatization, market reform, and political democratization in Slovenia in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Nina Vodopivec (PhD in Social Anthropology) is a research fellow at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana, where she focuses on the experiences of industrial workers in socialism and post-socialism in Slovenia. Her research interests include the anthropology of work, post-socialism, memory, gender, deindustrialization and futures studies, intercultural communication, and global education.

Jani Kozina

The Evolution of the Female Labour Force in Peripheral Industrial Regions

Peripheral industrial regions represent a distinct and unique environment in terms of gender inequality. They are characterised by a specific economic base and occupational profiles, with women typically falling into the category of “groups at risk of exclusion”. Economic activity in peripheral industrial regions has traditionally been concentrated in sectors such as mining, manufacturing, and technology, which have been predominantly male-dominated. These traditional norms continue to shape narrow labour markets, potentially reinforcing gender stereotypes (e.g. men in high-skilled jobs, women in low-skilled jobs). Employment support systems in the form of education or training programmes and career planning also tend to favour a culture of traditional industrial masculinity. In extreme cases, the stereotypical neglect of women in the design of labour markets leads to the creation of a male-dominated workforce. As a result, women are often excluded from participation in local and regional labour markets, particularly in technological sectors. For these reasons, women often end up in precarious employment, unable to plan a career in their home region. Such circumstances inevitably force them to commute to larger regional centres or to emigrate (i.e. brain drain). This exclusion has a negative impact on women’s empowerment and

well-being, reduces regional productivity and exacerbates the core-periphery divide. The aim of this presentation is to examine the position of women in the labour markets of selected industrial regions by collecting official employment statistics across different thematic areas (e.g. employment structure, entrepreneurship, wages, managerial positions). Statistical analysis, which outlines structures and trends, is carried out for selected industrial regions in Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovenia. The results will serve as the first step in identifying women's needs and institutional barriers to creating more inclusive labour markets.

Jani Kozina is Dean of the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU and Senior Research Associate at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Anton Melik Geographical Institute. His fields of interest are cultural and economic geography, with a particular focus on investigating the links between people and places in different regional contexts and the role of local communities in regional development. His recent research focuses on the role of vulnerable and marginalised communities, such as young people and women, in the development of peripheral industrial regions.

Iva Kosmos

Untold stories on Factory's Demise, Workers' Solidarity and Resistance – The Case of Fish Cannery Plavica on the Island of Cres

The first part of this presentation encompasses different modes of ethnographic work with ex-workers from fish cannery Plavica (1896–1997) on the island of Cres, which I conducted in several phases from 2018 to 2023. Initially, I worked with colleagues and independently, and later collaborated with a local curator from the Cres Museum to create an exhibition about the factory (2023). We used different methods, including semi-structured interviews, life histories, field notes, informal meetings, photographs, and newspaper analysis. This paper will present how different modes of work influenced the data we collected and highlight the most prominent narratives of workers' experiences. These narratives address diverse topics such as working conditions, social and gender hierarchies, personal relationships, and interplay between factory and “private” life, all of which emphasize the major role the factory played in the worker's lives.

The second part of the paper identifies a specific gap in collected narratives. Plavica factory closed in the 1990s amid suspicious privatization, market problems caused by the war, and the economic depletion of the factory by the new owners. Sometimes, this would be briefly addressed in interviews with a negative sentiment, while at other times workers did not

mention it or even refused to talk about it. The narratives of the factory's closure that we gathered emphasize solidarity between workers but omit the fact that they tried to actively participate in solving the factory's difficult situation. A review of local newspapers revealed that workers had organized a strike, written letters to national officials, and attempted to arrange meetings with the factory's leadership. The paper examines this discrepancy between worker's narratives and the documented factual account of the factory's demise, trying to comprehend these untold stories from the perspective of the dominant national narrative of the 1990s, which silenced stories of worker's loss and industrial demise, as well as any potential mourning for the worker's socialist past. In addition, the paper examines other social and local factors that have contributed to the forgetting of this story and looks at how we included the factory's closure in the aforementioned exhibition. It concludes by asking how these untold stories complicate how these workers see themselves and their own role in the social processes.

Iva Kosmos, Ph.D., was a Research Associate at ZRC SAZU (2017–2023) and currently holds an ERA Fellowship – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb (2023–2026). She is a cultural and memory scholar focused on literary and everyday narratives of Yugoslav socialist past, including industrial workers' narratives and experiences. She has done research on post-Yugoslav literature in the international market, and her new MSCA project focuses on the socialist travelogue. She co-edited the monograph *Priče iz konzerve (Stories from the Tin Can: History of Canning Fish Industry in Northeast Adriatic; in Slovenian, translated to Croatian; 2020)* and *Social Impact in Art and Culture: Diverse Lives of a concept* (ZRC SAZU, 2022).

Manca G. Renko

Women, Work, and Art in Crisis: Navigating the Interwar Yugoslavia

This paper explores the impact of the economic crisis on women's professional lives in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Following a brief period of relative empowerment for women after the First World War, the late 1920s marked a significant setback, particularly for women employed in the public sector and intellectual fields. The economic downturn, exacerbated by hyperinflation and the authoritarian regime of King Alexander I, culminated in 1929, a year that saw both political upheaval (the 6 January Dictatorship) and economic turmoil (Black Friday in the USA and its aftermath), each influencing women's opportunities in the workforce. Yugoslavia, however, was mostly struck by the global economic crisis from 1932 onward.

By analysing periodicals, literature, ego-documents, and artworks, this paper aims to illuminate the struggles and resilience of women as they navigated these tumultuous times. Key questions include: How did the economic and political realities of the late 1920s and early 1930s influence women's professional lives, particularly in intellectual and artistic fields? How did women perceive their roles in this challenging landscape, and what public debates emerged about women's employment during this period of economic instability? Finally, the paper will examine how women fought for their economic and artistic freedom and

independence despite the political and social constraints of the time. The paper will address the intersection between gender, (artistic and intellectual) labor, and political transformation in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, offering insights into the broader European context of women's labour during the interwar period.

Manca G. Renko is a historian currently working at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Her research focuses on intellectual history, gender history, and popular culture. She has co-authored several works, including *Socialist Women and the Great War* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), and has contributed to *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights* (CEU Press, 2024). Renko is an affiliated researcher with the ERC project HERESSEE (*The History of Feminist Political Thought and Women's Rights Discourses in East Central Europe 1929-2001*), led by Zsófia Lóránd at the University of Vienna. In 2022, she was appointed President of the Council of the Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia. Since 2021, she has served as editor-in-chief of *Cukr*, a magazine published by the Museum and Galleries of the City of Ljubljana (MGML). Renko has also authored the book *Živalsko mesto. Eseji o popularni kulturi, zgodovini in čustvih* (*Animal City: Essays on Popular Culture, History, and Emotions*, No!Press, 2024).

Katja Kobolt

Artistic Work for Children in Socialist Yugoslavia: Feminised Work for the Masses?

After the horrors of the Second World War and the determined fight for freedom in the contest of the National Liberation Struggle (NOB), the idea of childhood as a special stage in life played a decisive role in the reconstruction and development of the nascent post-war socialist Yugoslav society (1945–1991). Education, cultural upbringing, and especially literature for children, who made up almost half of the population at the time, provided a space for creativity for a range of cultural and intellectual workers. Through word, sound, image, puppetry or movement, as well as cultural policy and professional discourse, creativity for (and with) children thus opened the doors of the arts and intellectual labour market to those who had previously mostly been excluded from it: women.

This paper will reflect on the reasons for women's increased involvement in children's production and, in some contexts, for the visibility of their contributions. Drawing on the discourses, organisation, and status of artistic production for children in socialist Yugoslavia, and through the conceptual lens of social reproduction theory, the paper particularly problematises artistic work for children as productive and socially reproductive work. Focusing on the social construction of the value of this work, the paper aims not only to reflect on the reasons for the relative feminisa-

tion of this work but also to complicate the prevalent understandings of the status of artistic work and the relation between productive and reproductive work in the socialist self-managed economy and society.

Katja Kobolt is a scholar in literary, cultural, and memory studies. Since her studies in Comparative Literature and Literary History as well as Journalism at the University of Ljubljana (1996–2002), her cross-disciplinary Ph.D. in Literary Studies at LMU Munich (2002–2010), and her many years as a curator and art educator, her research interests have focused on women's authorship and critical, particularly feminist, interventions in processes of memorialization, historicization, and institutionalisation. As a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), Kobolt is currently researching artistic labour and childhood conceptions in children's literature in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1991).

Katja Praznik

The Double-Edged Sword of Emancipation: Women's Work and Art Work in Socialist Yugoslavia

Foregrounding the context of socialist Yugoslavia, this paper explores the relationship between women's labour and art work – the processes through which artists create cultural forms. The first part examines how the socialist project of the emancipation of women as workers set the stage for understanding the paradoxical position of art workers, who were formally recognized as labourers selling their labour power. The second part considers the contradictions inherent in this recognition. While art work was paid and socially protected during the first decades of socialism, it continued to be viewed as non-work, as creativity rather than labour – a double-edged sword of emancipation that obscured the value of artistic labour.

The paper discusses how this contradiction mirrors the treatment of women's unpaid reproductive labour, which, although essential to the socialist accumulation process, was similarly dismissed as non-value-generating. Just as certain aspects of women's reproductive labour were considered free labour necessary for socialist development, art work remained mystified, preventing its full recognition as value-generating work. In the later decades of socialism, this mystification contributed to the gradual invisibilization of artistic labour.

Drawing on Maria Mies's critique of the exploitative sexual division of labour, the paper argues that the structural separation of reproductive labour from productive labour, as identified by Mies, also extends to the paradoxical treatment of art work under socialism. Both forms of labour undergo a similar process of invisibility, posing an ongoing political challenge to recognizing their value across different political and economic systems.

Katja Praznik is an Associate Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Employing Marxist feminist methodologies, she demystifies creativity and advocates against the exploitation of free labour in the arts. She is the author of *Art Work: Invisible Labour and the Legacy of Yugoslav Socialism* (University of Toronto Press, 2021) and *The Paradox of Unpaid Artistic Labor* (Založba Sophia, 2016), as well as a co-founder of the freelance art workers' union Zasuk. In her forthcoming book *Why Art Workers Don't Want to Get Paid*, she examines the value of art work through early social reproduction perspectives, emphasizing feminist understandings of labour for art workers' agency.

Ana Hofman, Adriana Sabo

From Emancipation to Empowerment: Women's Labor in the Music Industry

This paper focuses on women's labour in the entertainment industry, a field often neglected in research on gender and labour. Historically associated with illicit spheres, the gig (and often grey) economy, and sexualized bodily displays, the performance of popular music genres as a form of entertainment has been a devalued form of labour, especially for women. As such, the paper argues, it reveals the silenced aspects of women's labour and serves as an important site for a more nuanced exploration of the transformations in the dominant regimes of labour in the (post)Yugoslav context from a gender perspective.

Scholarly interest in the role of women in the music industry – including the (post)Yugoslav one – often operates within what Kai Arne Hansen termed the “empowered or objectified” dilemma. The paper argues that this is in fact a false dilemma, as it primarily considers representation and thus diverts attention away from the issues of material conditions of labour, class, and market. Interested in the latter, the paper discusses the shifts in women's labour in the music industry as shaping the subjectivity of an independent, self-made woman from a historical perspective. During socialism, as in other sectors, labour in the music

industry was a pathway to women's emancipation through economic independence that shaped the agency of self-made women as active subjects in the economic, social, and political transformation. However, following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the introduction of a capitalist market economy and neoliberal "reforms" left many aspects of labour regimes unchanged – particularly in relation to the gig economy. Contemporary discourse of independent, self-made women have become centred almost exclusively around empowerment, a category that relies heavily on discourses of (free) choice, liberation, and self-expression, significantly framed by the neoliberal production of subjectivity.

The paper therefore addresses the broader question of the transformation of the discourses of labour as a source of emancipation in the (post)Yugoslav context, arguing that a focus on music industry can unmask the processes of individualization of the struggles for equality through its framing as empowerment, which is no longer envisioned as a tool for achieving social change – for both women and society as a whole – but for personal goals of obtaining material gain and successfully navigating the challenges of the free market.

Adriana Sabo is a Ph.D. candidate at the Postgraduate School ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana, Slovenia, working on a thesis dedicated to the production of empowered femininities within the Balkan music industry. She holds Master's degrees in Musicology (2012) and Gender Studies (2015). Sabo is a member of the Serbian Musicological Society and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, as well as a co-founder of the Association for the Study of Popular Music based in Belgrade.

Ana Hofman is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana. Her research interests include music, sound, and politics in socialist and post-socialist societies, with an emphasis on memory, affect, and activism in the present-day conjuncture of neoliberalism and post-socialism in the area of former Yugoslavia. Her latest book, *Socialism Now: Singing Activism after Yugoslavia*, which explores strategic amateurism, the politics of leisure, and the musical afterlives of socialism in the post-Yugoslav context, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc

Working as Woman Scientist in Socialist Yugoslavia

The lived experience of women scientists is a research topic typically focused on exceptional women whose achievements have been marginalized in the history of science in Western academia. This paper, however, examines the working conditions of women within the specific working environment of academia in socialist Yugoslavia, which differed significantly from Western academia. Instead of focusing on exceptional individuals, often labelled as the “best” or “first” in their disciplines, this paper aims to provide a collective biography of women who worked in academia and scientific research during the socialist period in Yugoslavia. This particular historical period enabled women *en masse* to pursue higher education, gain equal pay, use systems of social provisions (e.g. affordable childcare, universal healthcare, secure jobs, and accessible housing), and work in the context of socialist modernisation where working mothers were a social norm. This period was therefore profoundly different from the pre-socialist period where intellectual and/or academic work was generally only accessible to bourgeois women without children. It also contrasts sharply with the challenges of contemporary neoliberal academia, characterised by excessive instability, competitiveness, and precarious working conditions.

Building on the analytical framework developed by sociology of science, the paper examines how the concepts of scientific excellence, epistemic authority, intellectual labour, and authorship – all deeply gendered notions – played out in the Yugoslav context. Furthermore, focusing on the gendered aspects of (both professional and personal) biographies of Yugoslav women scientists, the paper explores the following issues: social mobility, work-life balance and motherhood, professional socialisation, everyday sexism, and societal expectations of scientific work. The source material for this study includes vignettes and snippets from biographies of Yugoslav women scientists as presented in their ego-documents, archive media sources, and secondary literature.

Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc is a Research Associate at the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU), and Assistant Professor in Cultural History at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Nova Gorica. Her research focuses on social memory of wars, the history of feminist thought during socialism, and issues related to gender equality in academia. Recently, she edited the collection of biographies *How Women Co-Created Scientific Development in Yugoslavia* (in Slovenian, Založba ZRC, 2023) and co-edited the compendium of primary sources *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights: East Central Europe, Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (CEU Press, 2024).

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